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THE EDITORIAL CORNER

Welcome to the maiden edition of St Albert the Great Major Seminary Series, commonly known as SAGS SERIES! The Series is the perspective of the Seminary on certain societal issues. The attack of coronavirus disease 2019 (covid-19) triggered the birth of this Series. A mini-conference was organized on Tuesday April 21, 2020 on how the Church can continue her formation and ministry alongside covid-19 pandemic.

The conference was charged with questions of “did you ask me to ask who”? Our world, where covid-19 has initiated “a new normal” way of living, with its social distancing as an indispensable remedy, even as when its vaccines are discovered. The more puzzling thing to the conference is the knowledge that religion is by nature social, and that the Catholic religion and its formation is not excluded from this social nature of the Church. So the question becomes how can the Church freely exercise her ministry of sacraments and formation alongside social distancing?

Consequently, from the rumination of the issue emerged the theme, Covid-19: the New World Order, reflected here in this particular series. This Series comprises of eleven articles. Six articles, including a poem and some histories of coronavirus before 2019, reflect the concern about living with Covid-19 alongside formation ministry, faith and praxis. The other five articles move to cease the opportunity occasioned by Covid-19’s new normal world by re-imagining new anthropology; new approach to a health care system; problems of number politics and data collection, and challenges on our collective memory. Thus, it was a hot brainstorming at Idowu Offonran and the Seminary could not wait to brace the impact of covid-19 pandemic.

I thank the Rector- Very Rev Fr Anselm Ekhelar for initiating this Series; the amazing Formators, the editorial

consultants, the Friends of the Seminary (FOSAGS) and our publishers. While promising more oracular issues subsequently, I invite you to pick a copy, and you will never regret it. Thank you all!!

Evarestus Igwe-Alufo, CM,
Editor in Chief.

FOREWORD

It all began in Wuhan, China in the final weeks of 2019, when a viral disease was reported. The news of the outbreak did not matter much to us here in Nigeria since the outbreak was thought to be too far away to be a threat. We now realise how wrong we were. The disease, eventually named: Corona virus Disease (COVID-19), spread across the globe like wild fire. In no time, nation after nation, including Nigeria, embarked on lockdown of its population in attempts to stem the spread. The order to shut down educational institutions was announced in Ogun state, Nigeria, on March 19, 2020. St. Albert the Great Major Seminary found it necessary to shut-down on March 21, 2020.

As the lockdown wore on and the spread of the disease showed no sign of abating, the Formation Team of St. Albert the Great Major Seminary, during one of the post-dinner light-hearted chat, decided to hold a mini-conference to review the experience of COVID-19. We had observed that life's routines may never return to the usual and the sooner we began to chart a course for a 'new normal', the better. We therefore gave ourselves a week to reflect on the unfolding reality. At the end of that period, we each proposed a theme to reflect upon and present a paper at a forum which took place on April 20, 2020. The outcome of that forum constitute the content of the first edition of St. Albert the Great Seminary study series that is titled: SAGS STUDY SERIES. The serial is intended to capture for wider dissemination and for posterity, studies and reflections that members of the Formation Team and Academic Staff of St. Albert the Great Seminary shall, from time to time, undertake.

It is therefore with joy that I present to you Volume 1 of SAGS Study Series with the theme: COVID-19: The New World Order. Its content are reflections and ruminations on the ongoing pandemic and how it would likely affect the way we do things. Some of the articles went on to

project how humanity can take advantage of the experience to build a better neo- normal.

It must be reiterated that these projections and reflections took place when the experience of the pandemic was still in its early months. Though much has become known regarding the nature and characteristics of the virus since then, the pandemic remains an unfolding phenomenon. The nuances of the discourses contained herein must therefore be taken in their appropriate context.

I happily recommend this volume to you for a thorough study with a view to carrying forward the various viewpoints and insights contained in the several articles.

Fr. Anselm Ekhelar

QUEEN CORONA: BLUSH AND BLISS

REV FR CHRISTOPHER OJEAGA.

Queen indeed and nomenclature
Queen dis-ease blushing creature
Array like kings, and reformers from East
Unlike HIV, Ebola, death subjects to East-er
Novo Virus who ancient practices destroy
Schools, industries, fraternities to restore
Rome, Mecca, UK, to Ghana States lockdown
Cities, countries, rich, poor families bow down

New Vocabularies, social relations at distance
Weddings, funerals, worships at thou instance
Nose mask, hand sanitizers new fashion
Jews, Christians, Moslems united ablution
Queen Covid-19 days we county home stay
Our Shepherds and Government neither stray
You twist and turn falsehood over Trump twitter
Customs and traditional formations you scatter

Oh Queen! who new World order change
Miracles, Google, Amazon protocol change
On this mountain the Christ to Samaritan say
No worshipper in spirit and truth as Odyssey
Prophets, Mystics, and Scientists unite intention
Olympic, NBA, and championships on suspension
You may stumble and tumble our centre of gravity
But our immunity and security is our one humanity

We'll praise the Vaccine not thee oh clown
Thou Martyrs in bliss wear halo crown
Your gruesome, gory, and taunts lack celebrations
Even s you deny our Christmas Easter celebrations
Thou that came with uncertainty's confusion
Will exit certainly with global joyful jubilation
Your reign twinge of blushful disappointment
While we twiddle await your blissful disarmament.

THE POEM ANALYSIS:

This poem written by Fr. Christopher Ojeaga (April 20, 2020) at St. Albert the Great Major Seminary, Abeokuta, Nigeria, during the global and national lockdown due to the pandemic caused by the Coronavirus 2019 (Covid-19). The poem explores the sentiments and feelings of all and sundry as we grapple with uncertainties and hope against all odds. As Christians and priests, it is our divine mission to rekindle hope in all circumstances because of our common belief that goodness would ultimately triumph over evil in the final analysis.

The poem surveys the origin, development and projectile dissolution of the deadly virus. Faith believes in things not yet seen. Although there is no known vaccine at the moment, this poem anticipates the victory of humanity over “Queen Corona.” The main theme is hope and faith in science and prophecies. My expectation is that the reign of Joe Biden will joyfully bid Queen Corona farewell as we await Pfizer, Moderna, and other pharmaceutical companies to unveil their Covid-19 vaccines.

The poem is an Ode written in free versification but with metrical pattern and Stanzas, using End Rhyme of “AABB” rhyming lines, words, and sounds. Other literary devices used to convey the sentiments, emotions, ideas and beliefs include: Personification, oxymoron, alliteration, simile, imagery, assonance, metaphor, symbolism, Apostrophe, etc.

Personification: Giving human quality to non-human beings and things as in “Your reign, your martyrs...”

Oxymoron: A figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction e.g. Queen Corona

Alliteration: The repetition of consonant sounds in the same line such as /th/ in “thou that came with uncertainty”

Simile: A figure of speech for comparing something with something else e.g. “likes the kings and (religious) reformers from the East.”

Imagery: helps to visualize feelings, emotions and ideas e.g.

“Ebola, HIV, even death itself were subjects to Easter” the day or imagery for resurrection and salvation.

Assonance: The repetition of same vowel sounds in the same line such as /Am/in “stumble and tumble.”

Metaphor: Used for comparing things without the use of like/as e.g. calling Covid-19 “thee, oh clown,” the jester, the joker, and the entertainer of the 21st century who exposed human frailty and disillusionment, amidst blue-chip medical technologies. .

Apostrophe: is a literary device for calling somebody from afar. E.g. “novo virus who ancient practices destroy.”

Enjambment: The continuations of a sentence without a pause from one line to the next in a stanza such as “you may stumble...
But our immunity...”

Symbolism: Using symbols to signify ideas and qualities with symbolic meaning, e.g. “East” for Asian continent, Easter for Resurrection, and “Trump twitter” for the inconsistency and bewilderment of President Donald Trump in the face of “Chinese virus”.

Uniting in the Struggle against the Pandemic of Sin: Faith as the Strategy for a New Humanity in the Covid-19 Era

By

Rev Fr Enoch Usifo

Abstract

The desire to do what is good and remain upright has been a constant struggle for man. This relative notion of who determines what is good or evil brings an unceasing divide between people, communities and countries and there seems to be no agreement. However, for the first time in history, humanity is experiencing a global unity; thanks to the common enemy, the COVID-19 we are all facing. We have realized that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we overcome this challenge. Similarly, the subject of what constitutes sin, which is another global spiritual pandemic, is not just a question of criminal law but of morality. The church incessantly makes every effort to affect her children with a sense of the dreadfulness of sin, and our world will get better if we minimize the pandemic of sin. With all the challenges our world is facing right now, we should recall that the world had gone through tough times before. Let us learn to unite in this battle because no one does big things by themselves because if we are going to save the world from sin and future pandemics, we need to stick together.

Introduction

The notion of unity, which portrays oneness, is challenging. Not only must Christians be one by an internal and transcendent union, but this coming together must also be external and noticeable, consisting in and growing out of a unity of faith and worship. With respect to faith, it may be here opposed that in none of the Christian sects is there firm unity, since all of the members are not at all times aware of the same truths to be

believed. Some give concurrence to certain truths which others know nothing of.

Here, it is essential to note the difference concerning the subjective disposition of the believer and the object of faith. The subjective disposition of the believer, however precisely the same in all, fluctuates numerically according to persons, but the objective truth to which approval is given is the same for all. There may be as many habits of faith numerically distinct as there are different persons having the habit, but it is not conceivable that there be a diversity in the objective truths of faith.

One thing however that plague Christians, is their constant struggle against sin and its effects. It offends God and causes widespread disharmony. Sin is a subject that lies at the intersections of law, criminology and theology and one that shows the need for dialogue between these disciplines. While it is known as 'offence' in law and criminology, in theology, it is known as 'sin'. The subject of what constitutes sin is not just a question of criminal law or of social hygiene, but of morality.

The idea of sin, or the morality of sin that we propose to discuss in this write up is evident in biblical law. This is because, in any given civilization, the elements of sin and the justificatory theory of criminal law that endorses their selection, is the object of social struggle. By comparison, matters are not the same in a theocracy such as ancient Israel where law is normative. Exploring sin in biblical law is to explore the dark side of life, which has lost contact with God. It is to become conversant again with the unsavory underbelly of human nature because there is no way we can discuss sin without recourse to morality.

What makes one sin worse than another, and why? This is not an academic question. In fact, the issue cuts to the heart of criminal justice policy. This means that in any discussion of the gravity of sin we must ask whose idea of sin we are talking about. In addition, who decides what sin is considering its relative and subjective perception among people.

In this write up, it is our intention to look at sin through the lens of coronavirus. What is it that makes them unique, similar

or different? Since the arrival of the coronavirus or COVID-19, humanity finds itself lost, frightened and caught off guard by an unanticipated turbulent storm¹. We have grasped that we are in the same boat, all of us brittle and perplexed, but at the same time significant and needed, all of us are called to row together, each of us in need of reassuring the other. The wake of the COVID-19 makes us comprehend that we are perishing and we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we overcome this storm. If the world can come together to fight against regional or global pandemics, can she do the same against the perennial pandemic of sin? Understanding the offshoot of sin from the Christian and especially from the Catholic perspective, will give us a clearer idea of the direction we intend to sail.

Sin/Offence: Derivatives of Law

In any given institution or organization, the notion of sin or offence is subsumed in law. Law in the all-inclusive sense is an action about actions whereby a lawmaker makes policies on how others should act. In a more exacting sense, law is vocalized only in allusion to free beings capable of reason. That is to say, laws are the moral norms of action, binding in conscience, set up for a public, self-governing community. This is most likely the novel connotation of the word law, whence it was progressively transformed to the other kinds of law.

Aquinas' description captures this perception. From the viewpoint of the lawmaker, he wrote: "Law is an ordinance of reason for the common good made by the one who has care of the community and promulgated; from the perspective of the subject: "Law is a rule and measure of acts"² The action of the supervisor and the supervised complement one another in pursuing a common goal.

¹*UrbietOrbi*, Papal address given by Pope Francis on March 27, 2020.

²K. KNIGHT (ed.), *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Fathers of the English Dominican Province (trans.), I-II, q. 90, a. 4c; a. 1c, 2009.

Again, Kant defines law in terms of power. He uses the expression, “heteronomous decision,” whereby one person governs the conduct of another (heteros) by establishing a norm (nomos). A lawmaker does not merely instruct, he influences by communicating a policy coupled with a sanction.³

While it is true that power prop up law, law is more than sheer power. Law is power ingrained in authority⁴, which comes eventually from God; however, it may be mediated, for example, through the church, the state or the family. Law is an apparatus of love that moves in the direction of the common good in such a way that its sanctions also prove to be the strange work of love. These sanctions, which most times takes the form of punishment, are the effects a defaulter of the law has to face.

In this light, when one transgresses the law, such an individual has sinned. Sin is therefore an act regarded as a serious offence; or within the context of our work, as an immoral act considered to be a transgression against divine law. Thus, it is said that the defaulter has committed an offence or sinned against the principles of the state or society. These elements of sin, which are the objects of social struggle, are evident in biblical law.

Biblical Instruction on the Truth and Essential Sense of Sin

This aspect of our work deals with sin as an individual act. Thus, it does not focus in depth on original sin or actual sin, but only alludes to them. Again, the word ‘sinners’ will be used interchangeably with Adam and Eve. The elementary genera of sin are vividly shown in Gen 3:1-24 in the story of the “fall of Adam and Eve”. God’s identified principle is consciously sullied (Gen 3:3-6). Their noticeable act of defiance reflects an interior act

J. KOMONCHAK, *The New Dictionary of Theology*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 2000, p. 566.

By authority, we mean the right to decide for another in order to increase the subject’s good.

of disrespect, one driven to some extent by frustration over the restrictions enforced by God's edict, and somewhat by a longing for the instant good vowed by the enactment of the sinful act. This act of rebellion has damaging penalties for the sinners themselves (Gen 3:7) and harms their rapport with God and with each other (Gen 3:8-24). Confronted with their errant action, the sinners try to defend themselves by phony justifications (Gen 3:8-13), but these are of no help in averting the catastrophic effects of their sin (Gen 3:14-24). Adam and Eve, here epitomizing each of us, craved to substitute themselves for God in determining between good and evil. In so doing, distorting the rapport between God and humankind.

It is obvious, as perceived by Augustine and Gregory the Great that no one sins by an act he cannot avoid because sin is fulfilled in three ways, which are, by suggestion, by delight and by consent. Suggestion is occasioned by the tempter, delight is from the flesh and consent from the mind. For the serpent suggested the first offence (Gen 3:1-5), and Eve, as flesh, was delighted with it (Gen 3:6), but Adam consented, as the spirit, or mind (Gen 3:6). Going further in the narrative of Noah and the flood (Gen 6-9), the episode of sin is unmistakably visible. Among all men on earth, only Noah's family found favour with God and thus, were spared of the calamity that befell the earth due to her unbridled sin. This paved the way for a post-flood era, that is, a new era where God instructed Noah to begin a new world. The old is gone due to sin, and a new world must necessarily emerge if things are to work well. However, the flood ended but its cause (sin) still lives in our world.

The book of Exodus narrates the experience of the Israelites who were in Egypt for over four hundred and thirty years (Ex 12:40-41), and the hardship they had to endure. Through the power of God and the instrumentality of Moses, they gained freedom and moved towards the Promised Land. On several occasion during their journey, they defiled God by doing abominable things (Ex

17, 32; Num 20:1-13) thereby incurring God's wrath. Each time they defile God, Moses intercedes for them and restores their relationship with God. However, their habitual relapse into sin became a recurring decimal that plays throughout the Old Testament.

In both Genesis and Exodus, we see a pattern of man's attitude/response to sin.

- Divine Law is violated by
- An act of rebellion (sin)
- Man defends himself using specious rationalization in deciding between good and evil
- The resulting consequence is damaged relationship with God and with each other

Further Biblical Instruction on Sin

The understanding of sin by our limited brainpower helps to unite man more closely to God. It moves him with a constructive anxiety, a dread of his own powers, a fright, if left to himself, of dwindling from grace. Man's unpredictable character and attitude to sin, makes it necessary to search the bible further for clues concerning the notion of sin.

The concept of sin as an adamant insurrection contrary to God's instruction is dominant throughout the Old Testament. Sin is agitation against the Lord (Num 14:9; Deut 28:15), a condescending rebuffing of God (2 Sam 12:10; Isa 1:4; 43:24; Mic 4:6). Seen from the viewpoint of divine knowledge, sin is trademarked "foolishness" (Deut 32:6; Isa 29:11; Prov 1:7). Comprehended from the angle of God's sanctity, it is acknowledged an "abomination" (Lev 16:16; 18:26; Judg 20:6). Cherished from the viewpoint of the covenant⁵ concerning God and his people,

⁵Despite the fact that it is true that as soon as the covenant is recognized, sin does violence to it, one must not finalize that sin is restricted to covenant defilements. The selected people's idolatry was sinful even before the institution of the covenant (Ezek 20:7-8), and the prophets condemned strongly the sins of pagan countries who had no exceptional covenant connection with God (Amos 1:3-2:3). See also Rom 1:18-22; 2:14-16; J. KOMONCHAK, *The New Dictionary of Theology*, p. 954.

sin is acknowledged as an act of infidelity and adultery (Isa 24:5; 48:8; Jer 3:20; 9:1; Ezek 16:59; Hos 3:1).

The Old Testament steadily communicates that sin is entrenched in human freedom and involves an abuse of the gift of free choice (Sir 15:11-20), leaping from the “heart” of an individual, (1 Sam 16:7; Jer 4:4; Ezek 11:19; Ps 51). The complete endorsement of this Old Testament instruction is evident in Mark 7:20-23. The Old and New Testament use gorgeous expressions to refer to the actuality and evil of sin. In the Old Testament, three of the most frequently used words for sin are:

- *hāttā* (Ps 51:2, 3, 4): Literally, this means “missing the mark,” and highlights sin as an intentional rejection of God’s will.
- *pesha* (Ps 51:1, 3): signifies “rebellion,” and illustrates how in sinning, human persons reject God and his love.
- *‘awōn* (Ps 51:2): This means “iniquity” or “guilt,” and denotes the way in which sin twists and distorts the sinner’s inner being.

In the above, we can see that in the Miserere of David, he identifies his sin by all three of the major Old Testament terms.

In the New Testament, the following expressions refer to sin: hamartia (Matt 12:31) and hamartēma (1 Cor 6:18), anomia (Rom 6:19), adikia (Jn 7:18), pseudos (Eph 4:25) and skotos (Lk 11:35). Hamartia and hamartēma are like the Old Testament *hāttā*. Anomia, means “lawlessness” and highlights that sin comprises a spirit of revolt and disdain for God and his law. Adikia, “injustice,” stresses that sin is a rejection of God and his sovereignty revealed in Christ; a refusal to live in the justice that God has given. Pseudos, “falsehood,” and skotos, “darkness,” disclose sin as an obstruction to the truth of God, to Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life, to one’s fellow men, and to the truth

of being a human person.⁶

The leitmotif on sin in the Old Testament is expanded in the New Testament. By that we mean the profound comprehension of sin as separation from God, stems from the profound-comprehension in the New Testament of the loving affection that God wills to share with humanity. This loving affection of God was made visible and accomplished by sending his Son Jesus to reunite sinners with himself. As a result, sin is a rejection of the Father's love, a rejection imbedded in the heart. At its fundamental, sin is a free, self-determining choice to refuse God's offer of grace and friendship.

The Johannine and Pauline literature removed the attention of sin from individual sinful acts to sin itself. Sin is lawlessness (1 Jn 3:4), unrighteousness (1 Jn 5:17), endures in the sinner and is divergent to the truth (1 Jn 3:6-9). Paul treats sin without making allowances for anyone, as a thoughtful willful act, and as a power that has entered into human persons by their voluntary compliance to it, governing their flesh as a kind of pseudo-law (Rom 5-8).

In summary, sin in the Old Testament is described as an act of disobedience (Gen 2:16-17, 3:11; Isaiah 1:2-4; Jer 2:32); an offence against God (Num 27:14); as something loathed and chastised by God (Gen 3:14-19, 4:9-16); as injurious to the sinner (Tob 12:10); and to be atoned by penance (Ps 1:19). In the New Testament, although Paul teaches that sin is transgression of the law (Rom 2:23, 5:12-20), a bondage from which we are liberated by grace (Rom 6:16-18), an insubordination (Heb 2:2) reproved by God (Heb 10:26-31), and John refers to sin as an offence against God, and a malady of the will (Jn 12:43; 1 Jn 3:4-10); sin in the New Testament is much more the unitary actuality of one's single state of separation from God than the several actuality of an individual's many wicked deeds.

⁶J. STRONG, *The New Strong's Expanded Dictionary of the Words in the Greek New Testament*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 2001, pp 15-16; J. KOMONCHAK, *The New Dictionary of Theology*, p. 954; *The Outline Bible Five Translation: Practical Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 2, Chattanooga, TN, p. 1895.

The presence of some organizations do not agree with the biblical instruction and the essential sense of sin. While some bear an apparent concordance to biblical instruction, others reject or circumvent its factual concept.

Organizations that Reject Sin or Twist its Factual Concept⁷

Any organization, either religious or ethical, that refutes on the one hand, the reality of a personal creator and lawmaker different from and superior to his creation, or, on the other hand, refutes the actuality of free will and accountability in man, twists or rescind the true biblico-theological notion of sin. At the outset of Christianity, the Gnostics, whose principles differ, denied the existence of a personal creator. The notion of sin in the catholic sense is not enclosed in their structure. For them, sin does not exist except the sin of lack of knowledge. Thus, no obligation for amends.

Manichaeism with its two perpetual ideologies, good and evil, at unending war with each other, is also vicious of the proper concept of sin. All evil, and accordingly sin, is from the principle of evil. The Christian impression of God as a lawmaker is demolished. Sin is not a cognizant deliberate act of insubordination to the Divine will.

Pantheistic organizations, which reject the difference concerning God and His creation, make sin impossible. If man and God are one, then man is liable to no one for his acts, hence, morality is destroyed. If he is his own rule of action, as Thomas instructs, he cannot deviate from right. The recognition of God and the world by Pantheism leaves no abode for sin.

Materialism, which refutes the sanctity and the immortality of the soul, the presence of any spirit of any kind, and subsequently of God, does not admit sin. There is no free will; the unbending laws of motion regulate everything. Virtue and vice are worthless

⁷We can read more on these various schools in, F. COPLESTON, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. IV-VI, Doubleday, New York, NY, 1985; S. ROSEN (ed.), *The Philosopher's Handbook*, Random House Reference, New York, NY, 2000; R. AUDI (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, 1999.

⁸K. KNIGHT (ed.), *The Summa Theologica*, I:63:1

qualifications of action. Positivism places man's last end in some sensible good. His ultimate law of achievement is to pursue the maximum of pleasure. Egotism or altruism is the highest standard and benchmark of the positivistic organizations, not the eternal law of God as revealed by Him, and dictated by conscience. For the materialistic evolutionists, man is but an advanced animal, morality a product of evolution. Evolution has modernized morality, thus, sin is no more.

Materialistic Monism, now so extensive, teaches that there is, and can be, no free will. For this organization, one thing exists and this one being births all phenomena, thought included. Humans are but marionettes in its hands carried everywhere as it wills, and in the end, are cast back into oblivion. For them, there is no place for good and evil, a free adherence or a deliberate transgression of law. Sin in the true sense is impossible. Devoid of law, liberty, and a personal God, there is no sin.

Kant, having excluded all the indispensable concepts of true morality namely, liberty, the soul, God and a future life, in his "Critique of Pure Reason", tries in his "Critique of the Practical Reason" to reinstate them in the quantity in which they are essential for morality. The practical reason, he says, forces on us the awareness of law and duty. The central opinion of Kant's morality is "duty for duty's sake", not God and His law. One cannot imagine duty alone as an autonomous thing. It carries with it certain deductions, the first of which is liberty. "I ought, therefore I can", is his doctrine. Man by virtue of his practical reason has a consciousness of moral obligation. This awareness presumes three things: free will, the immortality of the soul and the existence of God. If not, man would not be able to accomplish his responsibilities; there would be no adequate approval for the Divine law, no recompense or chastisement in a future life. Kant's ethical scheme labours in incomprehensibilities and paradoxes and is damaging of much that concerns the Christian teaching of Christ. Individual self-esteem is the ultimate rule of man's actions. The idea of sin as divergent to God is repressed.

There must be some law to which man is subject, superior to and distinct from him, which can be complied with and contravened, before sin can enter into his acts. This law must

be the fiat of a superior, because the concepts of supremacy and subjection are correlative. This superior can be only God, who alone is the author and lord of man. The notion that God exists, can be known from His noticeable creation, and is different from His creatures, are matters of Christianity and especially of Catholic faith and teaching. Man is a created being endowed with free will. Due to the prevarication of Adam however, he has lost his prehistoric incorruptibility. While his free will remains, its powers are diminished.

Causes of Sin

The far-reaching and sufficient cause of sin is the will. This is controlled in its actions by reason, and acted upon by the sensitive appetites.⁹ It is paramount now, to make a distinction concerning the efficient cause of sin, that is, the agent executing the sinful action; and the occasions of sin, which are those other conditions, which spur to sin and as a result, implicate a danger more or less grave, for one who is wide-open to them.

Occasions of sin are outward situations, whether of things or individuals, which either because of their exceptional nature or because of the weakness common to humanity or peculiar to some person, spur or attract one to sin.¹⁰

It is imperative to recall that there is an extensive variance between the cause and the occasion of sin. The cause of sin is the obstinate human will and is intrinsic to the human composite. The occasion of sin is something extrinsic and, given the liberty of the will, cannot, aptly speaking, stand in causal relation to the act or vicious habit, which we call sin. Overall, the same

⁹The word appetite has a psychological connotation. It signifies "an organic need represented in consciousness by certain sensations. The appetites commonly acknowledged are those of hunger, thirst, and sex; yet the need of air, the need of exercise, and the need of sleep come under the definition." J. M. BALDWIN (ed.), "Appetite, Appetence" in *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, Macmillan Company, New York, 1920, p. 360; K. KNIGHT (ed.), *The Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q. viii, a. 1.

¹⁰J. DELANY (ed.), "Occasions of Sin" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11, Robert Appleton Company, New York, 1911, p.693.

responsibility that binds us to desist from sin obliges us to recoil from its occasion.¹¹

On the other hand, the efficient causes of sin are both interior and exterior. The foremost interior causes of sin are ignorance, infirmity or passion, and malice. Ignorance on the part of the reason, infirmity and passion on the part of the sensitive appetite, and malice on the part of the will. A sin is from certain malice when the will sins of its peculiar consensus and not under the stimulus of ignorance or passion.

The exterior causes of sin are the devil and man, who move to sin by means of suggestion, persuasion, temptation and bad example. The evil will is the source of the chaos. One sin may be the basis of another inasmuch as one sin may be intended to another as an end.

These causes of sin, if not properly put under check has dire consequences. The effect it has is that it averts man from his true last end, and deprive his soul of sanctifying grace. That is to say, this state of aversion conveys with it inevitably, the privation of grace and charity by means of which man is ordered to his supernatural end. Once more, like law in any given society that serves as a check and balance, the effect of sin is to bring about the punishment of suffering. The suffering may be meted out in this life through misfortunes, illness or temporal evils; or it may be inflicted in the life to come by the justice of God as vindictive punishment.

The comprehension of sin by our finite intellect, serves to unite man more closely to God. It stimulates him with a constructive fear, a fear of his own powers, a fear, if left to himself, of dwindling from grace; and helps him seek God's help to stand firm in the fear and love of God. Unless man comes to realize and admit that his present moral state is not that in which God created him; that his powers are weakened; that the world, the flesh, and the devil are in truth active agents fighting against him and leading him to serve them instead of God, sin cannot be understood.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²K. KNIGHT (ed.), *TheSumma Theologica*, I-II:79:2

¹³Cf. Jos 22:17; Isaiah 4:4; 1 Cor 6:11; K. KNIGHT (ed.), *TheSumma Theologica*, I-II. 86.

Focal Reason of Sin

Sin, a voluntary act deficient in outstanding righteousness, is found as in a subject, predominantly in the will. But then again, since not only acts prompted by the will are voluntary, but also those that are stimulated by other faculties at the command of the will; sin may be found in these faculties because they are subject in their actions to the command of the will and move under its guidance.

The exterior parts of the body cannot be actual main beliefs of sin. They are mere organs, which are set in motion by the soul and they do not stimulate action.¹⁵ The appetitive powers quite the reverse, can be operational ideologies of sin. They have through their close union with the will and their subordination to it, a certain nonetheless imperfect independence.¹⁶ The sensual appetites have their own appropriate sensible objects to which they logically incline. Therefore, they may be close main beliefs of sin when they move inordinately divergent to the injunctions of right reason.

It is the right of intention to rule the lower faculties, and when commotion arises in the sensual part, the reason may do one of two things: either it may approve of the sensible pleasure or it may suppress and reject it. If it approves, the sin is no longer one of the sensual part of man, but of the mental power and will. If rejected, no sin can be ascribed. There can be no sin in the sensual part of man independently of the will.

The will never agrees to a sin, which is not at the same time a sin of the superior reason. The superior reason is the ultimate judge of human acts and has no commitment of pondering and determining whether the act to be executed is agreeing to civil law or the law of God.

From the aforementioned, it is clear why sin is perceived as a pandemic because it cuts across different eras and lingers on. Adam and Eve lost prehistoric incorruptibility. Their faith in God, in conjunction with their descendants, proved to be incomplete because they could not abide nor obey God's law, thus, were not

¹⁵Ibid. I-II:74,2, ad 3um.

¹⁶Ibid. I-II:56,4, ad 3um.

in accord with God in his plan. While humanity is at liberty to pursue every humangood, their responsibilities fall short of the moral uprightness it requires. Understanding what a pandemic is will help us appreciate our discussion on the struggle against sin.

Clarification of terms for communicable diseases

Not all communicable diseases are identical; though they are erroneously and occasionally used interchangeably. The difference concerning the words ‘pandemic’, ‘epidemic’ and ‘endemic’, is often unclear even by health professionals for the reason that the explanation of each term is fluid and mutates as diseases become more or less widespread over time. As a result, knowing and understanding their variance is imperative.

Epidemic: is a disease that affects a large number of people within a community, population or region.

Pandemic: is an epidemic that is spread over multiple countries or continents.

Endemic: is something that belongs to a particular people or country.

An outbreak: is a greater than anticipated increase in the number of endemic cases. It can also be a single case in a new area. If it is not quickly controlled, an outbreak can become an epidemic.¹⁷

History of diseases caused by virus

In the late 240s AD, a severe new illness arose; causing terror all over the Roman Empire for the next two decades. This sickness would torment and wreak havoc on the populace during winter, then ease during summer. Repeatedly, it would return the next year and sometimes the next.

Modern intellectuals are not sure precisely what this sickness was. While several proposals, including smallpox and bubonic plague were diffused, it is safe to say that the disease is a virulent influenza-like illness.¹⁸

¹⁷The difference concerning the words ‘pandemic’, ‘epidemic’, ‘endemic’ and ‘outbreak’ were sourced from <http://www.intermountainhealthcare.org>, accessed on May 17, 2020 by 11:12am.

¹⁸S.BULLIVANT, Catholicism in the Time of Coronavirus, Word on Fire, Park Ridge, IL, 2020, p.6.

There are nonetheless some conspicuous resemblances. At this point, we depend on the direct evidence of Cyprian, who was bishop of Carthage when the disease hit the city around 250 AD. He speaks, for example, of the attack of fevers, austere stomach indications such as diarrhea and vomiting, which afflict a momentous number of coronavirus casualties in our present era.

The plague in Cyprians' era and our present global crisis, share a link with countless other outbreaks throughout human history. This include the overwhelming costs in terms of lives and livelihoods; the anguish (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual) afflicting millions, even billions, of people; and the stress and strains put on all, but particularly on those whose calling it is to serve, protect, treat, and care for others.

Dionysius of Alexandria captured our collective pain by noting that “now, indeed, everything is tears and everyone is mourning, and wailings resound daily through the city because of the multitude of the dead and dying.” In our present situation, we can painfully relate to these worrying words written almost eighteen hundred years ago.¹⁹

Pontius, who functioned as a deacon of Cyprian's in the course of the period in question, played a pivotal role in assisting the innumerable residents in Carthage who give in to the terrible plague. Even though others escaped to the rural area (in many cases, one assumes, taking the disease with them), a substantial number of Pontius' coreligionists remained behind to care for any in need, regardless of their faith. In Alexandria, for example, Dionysius reports that, “Most of our brethren were unsparing in their exceeding love and brotherly kindness. They held fast to each other and visited the sick fearlessly, and ministered to them continually, serving them in Christ.”²⁰

The Justinian plague (541-542AD), also known as the bubonic plague, struck in the 6th century and is projected to have claimed between 25-100 million people in the course of two centuries of reappearance, as it spread across Asia, North Africa, Arabia and Europe.

¹⁹Ibid, p.³.

²⁰Ibid, pp ^{6,7}.

Another plague, called the ‘black death’ of 1346-1353, ravaged the world. It is the greatest fatal pandemic documented in human history, resulting in the deaths of up to 75-200 million people in Eurasia, North Africa and Europe. This plague generated religious, social and economic disruptions, with weighty effects on the development of European history.²¹

In 1575, a plague descended on Milan. The bishop, Charles Borromeo, hurried both to action and to prayer. Borromeo sold his own belongings to fund the relief effort and convinced many well-to-do citizens to donate openhandedly. He organized his clergy to care, materially and spiritually, for all in need. He produced and operated hospitals and quarantine houses. Apprehensive by the growing ranks of those without a job, he created jobs for, or otherwise supported, huge numbers of laid-off workers. Though he inculcated firm social- distancing rules, he was however anxious not to relinquish his own personal interaction with the suffering.

Kyle Harper, draws informative contrasts to the global “Spanish” Flu crisis of 1918–1920 which claimed about 20-50 million lives, and the more recent outbreaks of H5N1 “avian flu” of 1956-1958 that claimed about 2 million lives.²²

Specific warning signs aside, the sickness evidently flourished on close person-to-person contact, as per our own fixations with “social distancing” and “self-isolation.” Clues from other earliest sources also advocate that, while no age group was truly “safe,” those in middle and older age brackets were at least equally, if not harder hit.²³ At this time, another equivalent willingly dives to mind: our current coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic.

²¹We can read more on the Justinian plague and Black Death on <http://www.en.m.wikipedia.org>, accessed on May 16, 2020 by 12:40pm.

²²This flu virus mainly infects birds, but can also contaminate humans. Symptoms begin within two to eight days and can appear like the common flu. This virus can carry a high mortality in humans. Some antiviral drugs, if taken within two days of symptoms, may help. See also K. HARPER, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2017, 136-144.

²³S.BULLIVANT, *Catholicism in the Time of Coronavirus*, pp¹⁻².

Effect of Coronavirus or COVID-19

The coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic is the crucial-worldwide health emergency of our time and the utmosttest the world has faced since World War II. From the time when it appeared in China, the virus has spread to every continent with cases increasingevery day. Countries are battling to slow the spread of the virus by testing and treating patients through carrying out contact tracing,confining citizens and calling off large gatherings.

My recent interaction with a medical doctor and consultant microbiologist based in the United Kingdom, gave me more insight to the scientific background of the coronavirus, just to help us understand it a bit more. The coronavirus itself has been around since 1937 and it was first isolated in chickens. It infects both humans and animals. The human coronavirus was first isolated in 1960, mainly associated with symptoms of common cold. In fact, 50% of all common cold is caused by the coronavirus, therefore, most people would have had the coronavirus at some point in their lives. It was not until 2003 that coronavirus went on to cause quite severe infection, and the first infections been encountered by the coronavirus is known as the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) infection. It started in China and it was traced back to bats. It infected over eight thousand people with over seven hundred deaths. That infection completely disappeared off the face of the planet in 2004 and we no longer have the SARS virus.

The second severe infection caused by the coronavirus is the Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome virus, also known as the MERS infection. It happened in the Arab peninsula and it infects people when they are exposed to infected camels or when they drink infected camel milk. Now, that infection is still on going. The mortality rate associated with that particular MERS coronavirus is high, about 35% of the people who get infected die.

Compare that with the COVID-19, which causes as at the time of this write up, only 3% mortality rate. So, the COVID-19, first declared as a global emergency by the World Health Organization in January 2020, has so far, spread across the whole

world and there is practically no country in the world right now that does not have cases of the coronavirus. Even though the mortality rate is small, it causes quite a contagious infection that it spreads quickly from one person to another within two meters through cough, sneezing and talking. Infection can also take place when one touches infected surfaces and uses that same hand to touch the face. The symptoms are numerous but we shall not focus on that and its period of incubation.

In every country it touches, the COVID-19 has the prospective to generate disturbing social, economic and political crisis that will leave profound scars. No doubt, the world is in an unfamiliar terrain with many communities now unrecognizable, cities empty as people stay indoors either by choice or government order, and people losing jobs and income daily with no way of knowing when normality will return.

This is what is frightening about the coronavirus. As at the time of this write up, there is no proven treatment for COVID-19, but there are trial or experimental drugs. Any person is susceptible but people that are mostly at risk include the elderly, patients who do not have a good immune system to fight the virus, patients who are obese, patients who have issues with their respiratory tract, the hypertensive and diabetics inclusive. As a result, no age group is exempt from contracting this virus.

COVID-19 and Christianity: A Synopsis

The COVID-19 pandemic has been for innumerable individuals globally, a great and bewildering trial. As at this moment, over five million people have been infected, while over three hundred thousand people have died. These numbers represent how far it has actually spread. Available data indicate that over two hundred and ten countries in the world have recorded index cases and further infected individuals. Its impact has led to the closure of markets, movie theaters, restaurants, schools, sports, and airports. Myriad of people are self-quarantining in their homes, and the global economy is showing signs of depression.

In the midst of this predicament, Christians have faced another trial, one that is not only economic, social, or medical,

but spiritual. Either church celebrations throughout the world are suspended or they grant restricted access to particular number of persons. The suspending of Masses and closing of churches is a very serious blow to our incarnational faith, Priests and laity are feeling the heartache of it. Many personnel, healthcare and religious alike, have put their own life on the line in attending and ministering to those affected by the hazardous pathogen. Thrown into the darkness of doubt, illness, and death, and separated from the life-giving power of congregating in the church and the support of church communities, Christians worldwide are feeling, justifiably enough, quite disconsolate.

However, this might also be a time of prodigious spiritual opportunity and makeover. In the first place, the coronavirus like many calamities before it, has constrained us to confront a general truth about the nature of things, a truth that we all know in our bones but we choose, typically, to cover-up or overlook: the fundamental existence of sin and the need for a unified front to combat it. Simply put, it means that everything in our experience is unstable; it comes into existence and it passes out of existence. Though we regularly distract ourselves from accepting it, this contingency applies to each of us. Every time we get sick, we lose a loved one, or a bizarre new virus threatens the universal populace, this truth of global unity succeeds in breaking through our defenses. When we are traumatized, we seek for that which is in the long run stable, and for that final cause that is not itself contingent, namely, God.

The coronavirus has also provided numerous people in quarantine with an offer to reclusive self-examination, as almost every country in the world has gone into shutdown mode. People all of a sudden, are finding themselves with plenty of time to get out their Bible and read, and to use the seclusion and silence as an occasion for prayer. There are new prospects to take in the beauty of God's creation, or to practice real works of mercy, love, and unity, particularly for those suffering the effects of the coronavirus.

Yet the practical questions remain. The laity and clergy alike are pondering not only about the long-term effect of the crisis on their own spiritual lives, but on the various Church or-

ganizations and its assignment to evangelize. The Church finds itself once again in rough waters. Down the ages, across space and time, the boat of Peter has been beset by similar storms and it follows that everyone must contribute in one way or the other to fight this deadly disease. One thing stands out, namely, that we are in a challenging moment and that a new form of living is sprouting which demands reaction from us. Physical distancing has become a normal way to social communication. Therefore, pastors cannot physically celebrate the sacraments for and with their people. The normal thing at this time appears to be a cyber liturgy.

Sin and COVID-19: Different but identical

I understand many people are scared. They say sin like COVID-19, kills our immune system, attacks our lungs, and makes it hard to breathe and it is spreading like wild fire causing havoc. Our friends and family members are going to contract sin, that is if they do not already have it. It is no doubt tragic. Not only the aged will be susceptible, but most will eventually get it; they say coronavirus is new, but no. COVID-19, like sin, has been around for centuries. Look at its history; it is just a different name, a different strain. Now, like coronavirus, it seems there is no way to contain sin, it affects everyone and it is dangerous. Everyone is on the edge, locked inside his or her home. It is obvious and we have seen it that, sin like coronavirus, spreads everywhere like an epidemic. It lives on its host internally and externally, it invades the mind, and when it mutates, it turns into hatred and blame.

Our analysis thus far concerning sin and coronavirus, shows that while they are different, they are however identical because they infect the same host, 'man'. Man has become the center stage of these two great plagues hunting him from time immemorial. While sin has been dominant and seems ever to remain, coronavirus comes intermittently in the history of humanity. The coronavirus transmission is from person to person through contact with droplets produced by cough, sneezing, talking. The transmission of sin is from person to person by either perception, thoughts, words or human influence. Coronavirus is

something we can see through the microscope; but sin is intangible. It is not a material object. It springs up in one's thoughts and most times, expressed in action. The best way to protect someone from COVID-19 is to stay away from potentially infected people by staying indoors in order to curb the spread. The best way to protect someone from sin is to stay away from the occasion of sin and from people that can lure one into sin. The words of Paul captures this succinctly when he says, "Do not be deceived: Bad company ruins good morals" (1Cor 15:34). Having stated the above, there is no guarantee that when things come back to normal the coronavirus will not resurface. Similarly, there is no guarantee that when one overcomes sin, that sin will not reemerge in the life of the person.

If this is a war, that is, the COVID-19 war, then there has to be a common front to fight it. Although the coronavirus is an 'invisible enemy', the world now, has come together to fight this battle. As there is a race to discover a vaccine for COVID-19 and the world unites in fighting this battle, there should be also a clarification call to adopt unity of faith as the strategy for a new humanity in fighting the pandemic of sin. While it remains true that sin and COVID-19 have different nomenclature, their corresponding effects is quasi similar because they spread through multiple countries or continents. Coronavirus needs a host, that is, the human person to spread, the same is true for sin; COVID-19 affects the body whereas sin affects the soul.

The commonality of COVID-19 and sin provides novelty on how sin can be tackled. If nations are cooperating to defeat COVID-19, Christianity can learn from it in the fight against sin. The next section of our work highlights salient points to ponder, to aid us to understand and defeat this common enemy.

The need to struggle against sin and its consequences

To appreciate the duties relating to the struggle against sin, it is important to comprehend that sin is a spiritual actuality that lasts. It really offends God, while causing mayhem in and beyond sinners. Diabolical oppositions, their own feebleness and the sinful world around them, make the struggle of Christians against sin still more challenging. It would be contradictory to God's

wisdom to overlook evil or to treat it as if it were good. His mercy cannot mean that he reunites sinners to himself without them overcoming their sins. Hence, the overcoming of sin, the power to win the battle is the work of God's grace.

a. Sin is a spiritual reality that lasts

Insofar as it streams from free choice, human activities are not simply elements of ephemeral conduct; rather, actions certainly constitute the life and self of an individual. Sin, then, is a choice opposing to what the sinner believes to be the moral truth. In every sinful choice, one makes oneself remorseful, whether one feels remorseful or not; and one remains guilty if and pending one has a real conversion of heart.

b. Sin offends God and causes extensive difference of opinion

Sin impedes human self-actualization and unsettles human harmony on every level. Vatican II teaches that, "often refusing to acknowledge as their source, people have disrupted not only their proper relationship to the ultimate end of the human person, but also their whole relationship to themselves, other people and all created things". However, sin overtly or covertly encroach upon God's wisdom and love, pushes away sinners from him. For those who have come into agreement with God through baptism, sin is infidelity that truly offends God inasmuch as they are against the good he wills. The widespread disharmony of sin is detectable in honest people who yearn to live uprightly but habitually identify in themselves a helplessness to temptation and a liking to sin arising from the fact that their feelings are not secondary to reason (see Rom 7:23; Gal 5:16-17; Jas 1:14-15). This experience called 'concupiscence' is the result of sin that continues even in the baptized.

c. Spiteful enemies oppose every struggle to overcome sin

The Church teaches that the fall of man was to some degree

²⁴A. FLANNERY (ed.), *Gaudium et spes*, nos. 13, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, in *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Dominican Publications, 1988, p. 914

due to the Devil, and the Devil's persistent spiteful deed is one cause of the enormous struggle that makes up human history.²⁵ Christians do not enjoy protection from diabolical destabilization, thus, the New Testament teaches them to prepare to fight through prayer for divine help since by themselves, human beings are weaker than their diabolical oppositions (Eph 6:12; 1 Pet 5:6-10).

d. The world conditioned by sin hinders one from following Jesus

Sin does not only affect those directly involved but also interfere with social arrangements and practices, cultural processes and products, so that there are real structures of sin.²⁶ These structures are continuing realities shaped by sin. They exemplify the sins which shaped them and lead to further sins. Greedy choices for instance, lead to unfair financial system in which the rich throw away goods and contaminate the environs, while the poor linger in despairing need. Reckless choices about sexual activity, imaginably together with inappropriate public programme of sex education, divorce and so on, embolden a family structure in which children are deprived of the backing and support of their fathers. Granted that such sociocultural structures of sin stem only in erroneous free choices, the sins of individuals and groups, they spread far beyond the activities and circumstances that give rise to them.

Insofar as the structure of sin splits and upsets humanity, it constitutes the sinful world, and friendship toward God is ill-willed (Jas 4:4). It influences all and sundry, while the all too human tendency to fit in, inhibits Christians from following Jesus or even thinking about their personal calling (Rom 12:12).

Faith: A new pathway

There is no straightforward theology without faith, since Christ sent by God, is predestined to gather humanity around himself as the ground and center of its salvation. Similarly, there is no faith without theology, since God, through his son Jesus, is

²⁵Ibid, nos. 13, 37, p. 914, 936.

²⁶Ibid, nos. 25, p. 926.

the source of the church's life and its lord. Our understanding of faith in our struggle against sin, originates from God, not from the broad-spectrum idea of a society.

In trying to understand faith, one sees that faith has to do with that which is dependable, that which gives safety, that which can be confidential. It presupposes a communication concerning that, which is assured and that which is realized. Something is commendable of faith, which does not disappoint. Faith is therefore far from intellectualistic; relatively it encompasses an existential surrender of the whole person. It has to do with the entirety of a person's life. Faith is therefore not belief in something but belief in someone. We cannot place trust in the assurance of an individual without in advance assenting to or trusting in that person's claim to such confidence.²⁷

a. Faith not close-minded

When people believe in someone, to be exact, God, such belief or faith is not close-minded. Pledge to Christian faith is of utmost significance because in making an act of faith in Jesus and living according to it, one's mind is not closed; rather, one opens his mind to a whole aspect of reality that helps to repel sin. However, it is noticeable that Christians like others are occasionally close-minded. Someone of weak faith, who is susceptible to sin, is likely to be apprehensive and to lack poise. If the faith of such an individual, who is susceptible to sin, hinges profoundly on egoistic intentions, elements of truth and goodness outside the church are likely to give the impression as intimidations to be rejected rather than goods to be cherished and assimilated with one's faith to cultivate and perfect it. It suffices to say that such are deficiencies in one's subjective faith rather than features of faith itself.

²⁷J. KOMONCHAK, *The New Dictionary of Theology*, p. 376.

b. Relativism and subjectivism are not the same thing as open-mindedness

One major factor that militates against faith concerning our coming together against sin is the fact that some contemplate Christian faith as narrow-minded merely because Christians uphold doctrines and embrace unprejudiced moral norms rather than submitting to religious indifferentism and moral subjectivism. However, every worldview and way of life commonsensically eliminates substitutes. Relativists and subjectivists also have a convinced worldview and way of life; they too discard every position unsuited with their own. True open-mindedness is not indifferentism and subjectivism, but reverence for those who hold another worldview and way of life. Open-mindedness is willingness to deduce good will in others and to put up with their conscientious manners insofar as one's own conscience permits.²⁸

However, it is quite conceivable to be close-minded in holding that one religion is as good as another and whatever people think right in reality, is right for them. Relativists and subjectivists continually talk about courteousness and moderation, but they are invulnerable from narrow-mindedness and fanaticism. Without a doubt, they are chiefly tempted to be arbitrary and sanctimonious, specifically because they recognize neither a higher reality to which all realistic people must succumb nor an objective moral norm by which all conscientious people must examine themselves. Not capable of calling other opponents to succumb to ideologies, which any sensible person should accept, relativists and subjectivists, without doubt, will be curious to use suppression in order to succeed.

c. Faith does not encroach on freedom

One benefit of Christianity is that whenever we exercise our faith, we can escape from captivity to sin, and together we can escape psychological manipulation and enter into trustworthy, faithful communion because far from restraining freedom, our faith in Jesus makes us free (Jn 8:31-36).

²⁸Welcome to the Catholic Church on CD-ROM- Harmony Media.

Although in the past, Christians took to unwarranted intimidation and violated other's independence in the name of the gospel. Such misapplications are at odds with Jesus' instruction, and we are of no help in disseminating and sustaining faith for as Vatican II communicates, "the truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once gently and with power".²⁹ While it remains true that faith does not encroach on one's freedom, it nevertheless involves responsibilities, but enforces nothing on believers. Thus, Christians are charged with the obligation as a member of the church to abide by her laws and comply with her pastors.

One who has pledged commitment to the faith of the Church but exhibits inconsistencies concerning doctrines and moral teachings should be called to order. In doing so, the pastor is to employ no pressure and blight nobody's religious freedom. Those who upon correction choose to remain free to speak and act as they think right, are requesting in actual sense for their specific group, the right and power to domineer the church's pastoral leaders on what the church is to teach and how she is to worship. Here, we will come across a zoo of lusts, a chaos of ambitions, a kindergarten of fear and a harem of fondled hatreds. It will be an accustomed terrain whose state of moral promiscuity and submissive receptivity has made us open-minded consumers, if not specialists, of vice and weirdness.³⁰ Nevertheless, biblical law moves us on from the acceptance of sin to the acknowledgement that human dysfunction and insensitivity is not what it means to bear the image of God

Role of unity in the service of faith

Why are things in such danger of falling apart in our world today? The answer is an open secret. Every time we look at the Nigerian coat of arms, we will see that answer to this question: "Unity and Faith". The application of this motto is not

²⁹A. FLANNERY (ed.), *Dignitatis humanae*, nos. 1, Declaration on Religious Liberty, in Vatican Council II, p. 799.

³⁰C.S. LEWIS, *Surprised by Joy*, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1955, p. 181.

restricted only to the Nigerian people, but rubs off on every individual under the face of the earth because it is difficult to preach unity when one is not offering faith. Unity and faith when admired in our struggle against sin, dictates what we ought to be, what we can be, what we should be and what we shall be. They are the rallying points: to build and unite when troubles stare at us; to regain faith when there seems to be no hope; to create peace when disharmony signals and to progress in the midst of tempestuous weather.

Regrettably, many do not take seriously to the fundamental importance of these words. The unity of the world is under threat today because many people are losing faith in national policies. Why is this happening? The answer is sad but relatively straightforward. A soldier killed in the line of duty defending the territorial sovereignty of his nation, no proper care given to the family left behind; the family lose faith. A graduate with a first class or second class upper roaming the street hunting for job. Even if he finds one, he is rejected either because of his skin colour, or asked to pay for the job he is qualified for; he or she loses faith. If you have a mother who takes her child to the hospital and must watch that child die because the government hospital is on strike. If not on strike, it has no drugs. If the drugs are available, she has to pay the full market price for treatment up front before they consider her child, then she must watch that child die on the corridor; she loses faith. When people lose faith in the nation, they take refuge in several things like tribe, drugs, sexual promiscuity etc. Simply put, they take refuge in sin.

These words, unity and faith, that many pay no attention to, are supposed to construct our basic personality and mold our roles as upholders of the population's integrity. They are to make us adequately resilient to recognize when we are feeble, and courageous enough to face our self when we are frightened.

Unity and faith instill in us to be pleased of our diversity, unassuming in our accomplishment and gentle in our triumph. These words do not imagine us to substitute subjective views for words of war, nor to seek the path of separation in the face of disconcerting trials, but to face with courage difficulties and challenges, to learn from our national difference and to master

ourselves before we strive to master. These words if frankly appreciated, generate in our hearts the sense of unity, the trustworthy expectation of what lies in the future, and the joy and motivation of our togetherness.

This period like times past, conveys painful memories with fears of an unclear future. Such doubts are first and foremost of our making because some of us have become recidivists to sin while others keep flouting government rules in the fight against COVID-19. Until we build confidence with an enthusiastic and dynamic commitment to character building, our fears of the indeterminate future will persist.

Unity of the Church

The very fact that humans are structured the same way in an anatomical manner should prompt unity. Hence, in the Christian parlance, it is the belief that all the baptized live in close, vital union with Christ. They are also united to one another: “As all the members of the human body, though they are many, form one body, so also the faithful in Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12:12)”. All are one in Christ.³¹

In the long run, this unity will be achieved eschatologically when “God will be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28). In the meantime, in its earthly journey, the militant church is in a situation of the already but not yet fully realized communion in God and with one another. The church retains the first fruits of unity but it is only the start of a definitive reality. In its earthly situation, then, the church is regarded as a duality, a dialectical structure which corresponds to its “already not yet” character.³²

The basic constituent of unity is faith grounded on a covenant relationship with God through Christ by the Spirit, in which God reveals himself and his plan of salvation. Faith, then, is essential to the unity and standard of the church because all hold the same truths in its understanding of a partaking in divine life as common to all believers. The dialectical understanding of

³¹A. FLANNERY (ed.), *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 7”, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, in *Vatican Council II*, pp. 354-355.

³²M. SCHMAUS, *Dogma: The Church, its Origin and Structure*, vol. 4, Sheed and Ward, Kansas City, 1976, pp 105-111.

the church as already given but not yet fully realized is chiefly shown in our time in the disunity of the Christian churches. Hans Küng writes: “The Church is one and therefore should be one.”- This unity given to the church from the divine wits, strives to be conveyed concretely in the life of the churches. It is an eschatological imperative, which lures Christians to seek its complete, visible expression in history.³³

Over two thousand years ago, Jesus won for us independence from sin. That historic era came as a great symbol of hope to humanity who had been imprisoned in the cage of sin. It came as a jubilant daybreak to end the long night of extraneous dominance of our spiritual lives. Today, we must face the truth that the freedom Jesus won for us, though total, has been compromised. The application of the opening line of the social contract of Jean Jacques Rousseau that says, ‘man is born free and everywhere he is in chains’, buttresses the point. More than two thousand years later, the activities of the world is still sadly, enmeshed in the claws of segregation and discrimination amongst different world religions.

The beauty of our unity, faith and hope, do not lay in those deficiencies, however awful the occurrences of our individual and collective shortcomings may be. Each one of us is challenged to offer his or her positive quota in the fight against the pandemic of sin. The will to find a true success commences with the individual. The will to win, the unquestionable understanding that though we differ as individuals, there is no substitute for a peaceful cosmos; that if you fail in this regard, the world will undergo pain as we at this time do; that the very preoccupation of our communal conviction must be unity and faith.

We should not direct our unity only to fighting an existential visible enemy like the coronavirus, we should double also our effort in fighting the perennial presence of sin which tears humanity apart more than the former.

³³Ibid, pp. 105-111; J. KOMONCHAK, *The New Dictionary of Theology*, p. 1065.

The Need for a New Humanity

Our write up refers to new humanity as the definitive goal. The concept of new humanity surfaces because our discussion uncovers the discordancy between the social, religious and personal values of the existing way of life and the way that we suggest through unity and faith.

The old humanity that has a sullied value exploits the weak and powerless, and pursues respect and honour. Their negative and egoistic actions compromise life and ignores service and sacrifice that liberates and saves life.

The image of new humanity is expounded against the damaging disordered patterns in the existing structure and value system that believe in a depraved order. Our work puts down a strategy for humanity, painting in broad strokes a visualization for how people should comport themselves against sin. The first fruit and model of new humanity is that every individual must make serious effort to liberate his or herself from the clutches and powers of sin, and create a new humanity by giving up terrible habits. Each one of us is challenged to portray the character of new humanity by reversing the culture of domination and possession by sin, and swapping it with unity and faith that contemplates others as more important.

New humanity is a way to neutralize the shattering effects of sin upon human relationships. It aims at the transformation of such structures depraved by our selfish way of living and greed, leading to dominance and revolt, and takes renewed approach to human relationships. Our collective unity and faith for humanity reveals the basis of the transformation and this new humanity as a result, functions on the principles of service and self-giving. There has to be a new understanding of anthropology. Man has to re-define his objective, purpose and goal in the world. There is need for humanity to scrutinize the connection between itself and God, the bond amongst peoples and nations, and the connection with the environment. All these dimensions are important for a holistic life.

Conclusion

We are creatures of habit and old habits may die hard. However, once dead, they are hard to revive too. Difficult though it may be, there are multiple questions to be answered if or when the pandemic is over and a vaccine is eventually discovered. Will life remain the same? Can we sustain our collective unity in the fight against coronavirus and use it as a tool to combat sin and restore practicable and upright morality? Alternatively, shall we return to the 'status quo ante', that is, the old way?

The church incessantly makes every effort to affect her children with a sense of the dreadfulness of sin that they may fear it and shun it. We are fallen living beings, and our spiritual life on earth is a struggle. Sin is our adversary, and while of our individual strength, we cannot evade sin, with God's grace we can. If we but place no hindrance to the workings of grace, we can circumvent all deliberate sin. If we have the calamity to sin, and strive for God's grace and forgiveness, He will not keep us at bay. Sin has its therapy in grace, which is given us by God, and grace can only be obtained when one has faith and is united in love in the one who dispenses it. Where sin is regarded as an indispensable and inevitable circumstance of things human, where helplessness to circumvent sin is thought of as indispensable, deterrence naturally follows. The doctrine of the creation of man in a superior state and his fall by a deliberate disobedience, destroys not only the sense of balance of the human faculties but also leaves man susceptible to evil. Left to ourselves we fall, but by keeping close to God in unity and faith and constantly seeking His help, we can stand and struggle against sin.

Our society only works when we think not just of ourselves but also of each other. It has also pulled the curtain back on another hard truth, something that we all have to eventually accept when this COVID-19 pandemic is over. If the world is going to get better, if we must minimize the pandemic of sin, it is up to us. That realization may be somewhat intimidating, but I am optimistic it is also inspiring. With all the challenges our world is facing right now, nobody can tell us: no, you are too young to understand or this is how it has always been done. Because with

so much uncertainty, with everything suddenly up for grabs, this is our generation's world to shape.

We should not be afraid of the pandemic of sin or COVID-19 because the world has gone through tough times before: famine, disease and unbridled sexual promiscuity. Each time in all of this, we came out stronger because, a new generation learned from past mistakes and figured out how to make things better. We should learn to do what is morally right, what feels morally good, what is convenient and what is easy. We should decide and learn to ground ourselves in values that last. We will not get it right every time, we will make mistakes like we all do. However, if we listen to the truth that is inside ourselves, even when it is hard, even when it is inconvenient, people will notice, they will gravitate towards us and we will be part of the solution instead of the problem.

Just like the coronavirus, the pandemic of sin has shaken up the foundation of the status quo. This should not cause us to panic because despite what we hear or see on social media, we are waves from the same sea. There is good news because like every tragedy, we can let this destroy us or we can use it to our benefit and repair relationships with our sisters and brothers. Wipe away silly grudges because when all is said and done, all we ever really had in this world was each other.

So, let us flatten the curve of sin and expand our hearts. Let us social distance from sin, boost our immune systems and be mindful of not only where we put our hands but also where we put our attention. We should be alert, not fearful because sin is a pandemic easily transmitted. If you do contract it or exhibit symptoms, we recommend that you change your way of life, decontaminate yourself by imbibing positive values.

Let us learn to unite in this battle because no one does big things by themselves. Right now when people are scared, it is easy to be cynical and say let me just look out for myself, or my family, or people who look or think or pray like me. But if we are going to get through these difficult times, if we are going to create a world where everybody has an opportunity to eliminate sin, if we are going to save the world from sin and defeat future

pandemics, then we have to do it together. Let us be alive to the struggles of each other, leave behind all the old terrible habits that divide us and set the world on a different path.

We need to be conscious of this moment. Our collective memories would give us control over how we can respond to our common experience and empower ourselves for the future. These collective memories are particularly important this time because they provide the foundation for a critical examination of the past, present and future. Let us use this challenging moment to wake up to what is important. Fighting this malaise together is the only way we can rise above the pandemic of sin. The only vaccine for sin is communal unity and faith.

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Living with COVID-19 - Faith and Practice

By

Rev Fr Emmanuel Lewis

COVID-19 or corona virus is a respiratory disease that started in Wuhan China October/November 2019. It affects the respiratory organs of the person. It has an incubation period of between two and fourteen days. During this incubation period, though an affected person might be asymptomatic (not showing symptoms) but s/he might be contagious. The symptoms include headache, fever, cold, cough and shortness of breath. This might get worse with individuals with underlying health issues. The droplets from the infected person are the means of transmission. The said droplets cannot travel far by themselves but can live for a considerable period of time on surfaces and clothes, so the need for basic hygiene such as constant and regular washing of hands with soap under running water, keeping of social/physical distance, sneezing and coughing into a tissue or the cupped elbow etc. These are all preventive measures because there is no known vaccine or cure of the disease yet.

Since the outbreak of the disease and its declaration as a pandemic in February by the World Health Organization (WHO) almost five million people have been confirmed to have been infected, with almost two million cured and almost three hundred thousand deaths all over the world. The number in Nigeria is also growing especially with more testing being carried out. Almost the entire world went on a total lock down, religious houses and places of worship are under lock and keys, schools are not left behind, people are advised not to congregate because this will be going against the latest language: 'social or physical distance/distancing'. Corona virus affects not just the health of the infected persons but it is also destroying the economic, social and political life of nations. It is simply put; an attack on humanity. Things are gradually returning to the 'new normal' all over the world right now. Most important is the fact that we might have to begin to live with this virus. As these are going on there have also

been spikes in the number of newly infected persons. How do all these affect us as Christians (Catholics in particular) and our faith and practices? These will be the concern of this paper.

Religion in general is affected by this virus because religion is a social activity. Most religious groups have to gather or congregate in a place (in most cases, an enclosed place – church, mosque, temple etc) for their worship. With the latest lingo of the world – ‘social/physical distance’, how will religious worship or practice be possible? Religion naturally involves socialization (gathering of a large number of people). What will religion become without it? Man who practices religion is a social being.

How then, do we begin to live with the virus?

For us Catholics, some parts of our worship and life in general will never be the same again post Covid-19 pandemic. Some of such will be looked into below because a new order popularly now known as the ‘new normal’ must emerge from this experience. This will be done in no particular order.

Holy Water: we believe in sanctifying ourselves both at home and in our churches with the holy water. There are holy water containers at the entrances of most of our churches. They were the very first thing that corona virus (and other viruses and diseases like Ebola and Laser fever) took away from our churches. Growing up, the holy water containers at the entrances of the churches and homes were the attraction for us (children), because we get the opportunity to play with the content - water. How dirty the water and the containers can become? Now with all this, some children will grow without the knowledge of the purpose of these containers at the entrances of their churches and homes. The same holy water is used for the renewal of baptismal promises at Easter. This year, for once in my lifetime we renewed our baptismal promises without holy water. The sprinkling of Holy water can also be a means of spreading the virus. Is the Holy water and the container dispensable? I’ll say yes. However, if we must have them, there must be a better way of keeping them constantly clean and fresh. The containers and sprinklers must be cleaned regularly.

Use of Media/Social media: prior to now, a few priests and religious have been making good use of the media, especially in the propagation of the faith and the enlightenment of the faithful. The presence of a camera man or a crew at any celebration in our churches, in the past, was an indication that there is a big celebration in the church. With COVID-19, almost all, even the most averse critics of the media, especially the social ones have had to resort to and rely on them in order to keep in touch with the faithful/parishioners. Parishes are now streaming daily and weekly Masses on Facebook and YouTube, homily are recorded and sent via WhatsApp, Viber and Telegram X. The same means are also used in the transmission of the faith content – catechesis via media. This implies that not just communication and the skills must be taught in our Seminaries but also the good use of social media networks must be encouraged. Post pandemic, these should be encouraged and continued. Even now, these efforts should be encouraged and imbibed by more priests and parishes.

Virtual Masses et al: the Holy sacrifice of the Mass is the centre of the Catholic Church's faith and practice. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10 says that: "Nevertheless the Liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows. For the goal of the apostolic endeavour is that all who are made sons 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." Almost all the other sacraments of the Church are celebrated within the Mass. At Mass there is contact so physical - social distance is difficult. However with the outbreak of the pandemic since people cannot gather together in the designated places of worship, it has been a case of 'virtual Masses' to the rescue. The Basilica and Square of St Peter in Rome were empty but the activities of Easter triduum and Easter celebrations were made available to the world. The same was the case with Holy Cross Cathedral, Lagos and Twelve Apostles Cathedral, Abuja. With the gradual easing of the total lock down orders, the practice must also come in handy. In the words of Bishop Robert Barron

of California: “The Church has rather massively responded to the crisis by providing Mass, instruction, and inspiration online. To give just one instance, my own Word on Fire ministry has been celebrating daily Mass online for the past month, and we’ve had around 5 million visitors from over two hundred countries around the world. I also applaud the way some Dioceses have provided blessings and Blessed Sacrament adoration in ways that preserve social distancing.” It must however be noted that these cannot and will never replace the reality because in the Mass, the incarnation of the Word and the sacrifice of Calvary are once again reenacted.

Holy Communion on the palm: the Covid-19 pandemic has brought to the fore once again the discussion on whether it is safer to receive Holy Communion on the tongue or on the palm. Robert Cardinal Sarah, Prefect of the Congregation of Faith and Discipline of the Sacraments, said in an interview with La Stampa that, “what is prescribed by the Congregation is the reception of Holy Communion either on the tongue or the palm.” I am torn between the two sides of the arguments for and against but I donot think that now is the best time to insist on the palm because it is with the same hand that the bill for offertory is carried and it continues to touch different surfaces before the proper reception during Mass. It is also with the palm that the virus is easily transferable from person to person. Will hand sanitizers be provided for all before the reception of Holy Communion? On the other hand, the mouth is also a source of contagion and most volatile at that. It is the droplets from the mouth that the virus is passed from person to person. Post pandemic, a definitive decision already exist and I am for the availability of options with heavy leaning towards the tongue in this case.

Spiritual Communion: I never heard of the term ‘spiritual communion’ until I got to the seminary, where it is prayed daily immediately after the mid-day prayer. I am sure that, that is the case for many Catholics in Nigeria until sometime in March 2020 when the lock down rules was imposed by some state and eventually by the federal government. In fact many of the Dio-

ceses had to make the text of the prayer available on their website pages and via social media. The physical reception of Holy Communion is of essence to the participation at Mass. What happens post pandemic? How many people will be satisfied by praying their spiritual communion? I will suggest that those who are sick and at the hospitals or at home and cannot participate at Mass or Holy Communion cannot be brought to them should always remember this prayer. Also in the new dispensation (living with Covid-19), some Catholics (especially, the very young and the aged) will have to make do with Spiritual Communion because we have to respect 'social/physical distance' and also take care of the most vulnerable.

Communion to the Sick/Homebound: This is common in the Nigerian Church, especially on first Fridays but it is not done on a weekly basis and by chosen and trained lay ministers as practiced in the Western world. In those climes, the extra-ordinary ministers of the Eucharist (lay faithful) are used to assist the church in the distribution of Holy Communion and in reaching out to the sick and homebound in the community. These are well trained and prepared for the mission. They carry with them the Blessed Sacrament and the love and affection of the entire Christian community to the medical facilities within the parish and the homes of the sick and aged. I will suggest that part of the ways we can live with this pandemic will be to look into this and train suitable people for this mission in parishes. The aged who are also quite vulnerable and susceptible to the virus can be advised to stay at home and make use of the virtual Masses or pray the Spiritual Communion and with the help of the extra-ordinary ministers they can receive Holy Communion frequently.

Kiss of Peace: The kiss of peace has always been a part of the Mass. Occasionally we have experienced celebrants who do not allow the exchange of the kiss of peace during Mass, people look at such priests as if something is wrong with them. With the pandemic, the kiss of peace was one of the parts of the Mass that was suppressed. Does that mean that it is not essential? Is it dispensable? What happens post pandemic? Are we going to develop a

new means of expressing the same thing if it is of essence? What can that be? Can it be a bow, a wave of hand, etc. it must however, be according to the different cultures and traditions? Can the exchange of peace be taken at the very beginning of the Mass along with the introductory rite? People wash their hands before meals and it is not immediately before partaking at the meal that people begin to greet one another. Do we have to change the current structure of the Mass in order to accommodate this?

The sacraments

Penance: for a long time so much effort was put into encouraging our parishioners, mostly men to frequently use the sacrament of penance or confessions. Most of the gains of this effort might have been lost to the pandemic. Parishes are sending out to their parishioners the mode of having confessions without physically coming in contact with a priest. Making do with being contrite and reciting the confetior. Will this be the new mode for the sacrament? No. However it must accompany the regular individual auricular confessions. The frequent and regular use of the sacrament of penance I highly encouraged and advised. The cubicle like confessionals will have to give way to something bigger, may be a room that is soundproof.

Baptism: there are various rites in the celebration of the sacrament of baptism like the anointing, the immersion into or pouring of water, the blessing of the ear and mouth. All these involve the coming together of people in very close quarters. With the pandemic what is to be done. Post pandemic and in the new dispensation, in the case of infant baptism, the infant must be protected; for adults too care must be taken that distancing must be observed, all involved must wear their face mask and use sanitizers/hand washing with soap under running water immediately after. What happens to the baptism of multiple candidates in a parish with a walk-in font? I will suggest that for the time being, baptism through the pouring of water should suffice.

Anointing of the Sick: the priest cannot completely abandon this very important pastoral sacrament. The priest, as well as, the sick person is at risk in the celebration of this sacrament because there are direct contacts with the hand and other parts of the body. The face mask, sanitization and immediate washing of the hands after are of essence here. The priest should also use the disposable gloves for the anointing proper but the gloves must be disposed in a dignifying way.

Dependence of our parishes on weekly collections: majority of our parishes in Nigeria are almost 100% dependent on the collection during Mass and that is why we have some of the priests multiplying the number of collections. How have the priests been able to survive the pandemic and what are their plans for survival post pandemic? What is stopping our parishes from investing a portion of the funds raised from both the regular Sunday collection and the annual proceeds from the ‘harvest’/fund raisings? What type of investments? What are our Dioceses doing in this regard also? Our parishes have to diversify their economy. Priests have to become more versatile and accountable. The Formation of our future priests should also focus on teaching the Seminarians how to build and maintain small businesses that can sustain the priest and the parish.

Family Prayer and Gathering: this is a huge gain for the church from the pandemic that should not be glossed over or disregarded. Prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, most families hardly spend time together talk less of observing family prayer time but with the total lock down, more families are having time to bond and most importantly to also pray together. Most families attend Mass together but how often do they even have the opportunity to sit together and pray together as a family in the church. While the mother is either at the choir stand or she is on the sanctuary taking the readings, the father might be involved in making sure things are going right at Mass while the children are participating in the children’s liturgy. A family called me after the first week of the lock down and the father was sharing the joy of their last

daughter teaching the family a prayer she learnt at school. Most families now sit together in front of the television screen and participate at Mass. How can this gain be sustained? Families must be encouraged to have a fixed time for their family prayers daily.

Conclusion: I am sure that there will be life after the pandemic. However before then what shall we do? Must life cease? Definitely: NO! Post COVID-19, life should not also just return to what it has always being. If this happens, it simply means that we have not learnt anything from this experience. We must implement the lessons learnt from the pandemic. We must deliberate more and work hard on how to maintain social/physical distance in our churches. We must continue to make use of the media in reaching out to our parishioners who are home bound or cannot participate at the parish activities for whatever reason. Personal hygiene must constantly be encouraged for all, especially the frequent washing of the hands with soap under flowing water. Personal hygiene we have all learnt is of utmost importance. As said: “cleanliness is next to godliness.” Our holy water pots at church entrances must receive frequent attention. We must make provisions for their constant and consistent refreshment.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND SEMINARY AS A FAMILY: A REFLECTION

BY

Rev Fr Paul Amenaghawon

Introduction:

Covid-19 is hardly accepted to be real by the people. Quite sadly, it has become a pandemic. Humans are now seeking ways to curtail its effect. Hence, efforts are directed towards manufacturing vaccines or discovering some sort of medical intervention, in order to curtail its spread and lethal effect on humans. To successfully do this, the world has to come together as one big family. Indeed, the world is one because creation story speaks about how God had made universe: male and female he made them (Gen.1-2). In other words, God made the world and humanity so that man can be bonded irrespective of nationality and language. Emergence of covid-19 seems to be threatening the human community. The response of the human community to this deadly virus goes a long way in determining her success. It is such a disease that requires communal confrontation. A while ago, I cited the creation account and noted the coming into existence of a community. As community, our first parents, Adam and Eve, lived as such, demonstrating for us their progeny, how we should live as community. It is on this note, that I want to reflect on how the advent of covid-19 should serve as an opportunity for people to live as a community. To bring this home, I shall narrow my reflection down to the seminary

Seminary as a family:

No image could describe the seminary better than that of the family. It is an image that portrays love, unity, cohesion and a sense of belonging. The seminary community as a family, means everyone needs to relate in a mutual and brotherly way. It is a life lived in Christ. Hence, it follows then that as a family, each seeks out the good of the other. In keeping with this spirit and in line

with the ravaging effect of the virus, one expects certain things to change in the way and manner life is lived in this family at this moment.

Health:

Since the disease is real, preventive measures such as fumigation of public spaces would be for the benefit of the seminary and those who live there. This would mean that gatherings have to be limited within the specified number as enunciated by the Nigeria/ National Center for Disease Control (NCDC). Similarly, seminarians may have to be certified fit by health care personnel before re-entry into the seminary premises. As soon as they get on campus, each, like a true house-hold of the family, has to demonstrate true fraternal love by keeping to all the non-pharmaceutical protocols. This includes observing the required social distancing, wearing face mask, hand washing and having on their person hand sanitizers. Christian charity requires that all those who live on campus has to seek ways of protecting their fellow brothers. A lot has to do with the environmental and personal hygiene.

Need for Environmental and Personal Hygiene:

As members of one family, each is invited and called to think first of his brother. This is necessary because we need each other to make the world a better place. How will the world get better if no one cares for it? It becomes mandatory that all will have to ensure that the seminary environment is clean enough. The implication is that one has to constantly see to it that the space inhabited is safe for all. There is also the dimension of the individual's personal hygiene. It is not sufficient to keep the premises clean and good looking, the individual living within an environment has the obligation to maintain a great amount of hygiene. What this implies is that there has to be need to concern oneself with the necessary hygiene laws. Appearance this time is important, though greater focus has to be the inward, those non-public areas. This is the blessing of Covid-19. It has turned

the focus of the world inward. Nations no longer look out for other nations, rather they look more into themselves. A similar thing should apply to hygiene. One has to pay more attention to the non-visible parts of the body and take care of them in a manner that is appropriate. The care we take of this part of the body will determine how we take care of what does not belong to us. Our public space should be respected and taken good care of.

Use of Public space:

Christian charity requires that we strive to live in a manner that no one is hurt. This is even expected more at this time of pandemic. In respect to the public spaces in the seminary, seminarians are to use them as though they were personal property. What do I mean? Here the golden rule is apt. Leave the space as you would like to meet it. For instance, if you are in the Library, do not leave droplets on the tables. If you have to cough simply follow the guidelines. However, if by error you cough or sneeze and then observe some droplets, kindly clean up after you. Same applies to the ICT, E-Library, Dining Hall, Lecture Halls and other public space. The bottom line is, observe the required hygiene rules/regulations.

Conclusion:

This reflection has been able to highlight the theme of family. It is a theme that necessarily emerged due to the manner in which covid-19 should be responded to. It is a virus that can best be handled through community effort. Tackling it from an individualistic perspective prolongs success time. It is for this reason that the reflection chose the family as an apt theme. I believe the reflection will help seminarians, staff and formators see the value in making family out of the seminary environment. Caring for each other and one another, while each contributes his quota for the good of the house/family. No doubt that covid-19 is bringing this to the fore.

RUMINATIONS ON ASPECTS OF FORMATION IN THE COVID-19 ERA

**A Paper Delivered at the Mini-Conference on Covid-19
at St. Albert the Great Major Seminary, Idowu-Offon-
ran, Abeokuta, Ogun State April 20, 2020.**

By

Very Rev Fr Anselm Ekhelar

1.0 Introduction

The times we are living in are unprecedented. Never has it been known that a health emergency like the Coronavirus pandemic, otherwise known as COVID-19, would so completely upend life as we know it. From the little countries to the big ones, the poor ones to the rich, the so-called third world countries to the advanced ones; the story has been the same. Life routines have been upended and terms of social and inter-personal interactions completely rendered obsolete.

This situation makes one wonder if life can ever be normal again. Stated differently, has our mode of living and interacting with one another not changed for good? With the unprecedented impact of the world-wide closure of sporting activities, closing down of educational institutions, businesses, travels, and mandatory lock-down of most of the world's population, it is easy to argue that things cannot be the same again, even after the covid-19 pandemic would have eased off.

It is in view of this that I would attempt to review its impact on formation to the sacred priesthood and then propose what may need to be taken into perspective as we attempt to chart a course for formation in the covid-19 era.

It is however important to keep in mind that covid-19 is presently an ongoing pandemic. Not all the facts regarding the nature of the virus are even known yet. In view of the continually evolving scenario, it is important to put the current discourse in its appropriate perspective and context.

Let me also warn that this effort is neither directed at the theory nor the praxis of formation but more precisely at the

general institutional form that formation has adopted in Nigeria.

2.0. Priestly Formation

I would that, I could go straight to the issue at hand, rather than attempting to categorize that which we all know. However, for the sake of delineating what our focus is on, I would define formation as the process of moulding the character of those who believe they have been called by God to be his special ministers as priests so that in their knowledge and disposition, they may be fitting for the special role to which they feel called. It is therefore, a process that involves a building up of and focusing of the intellect and will of candidates for the priesthood, so that in their outlook and disposition, they will be fitting tools in the hand of God for the salvation of the people of their time. An easy analogy to this is the process of training recruits into an elite military unit. It does require the breaking down of their individual perspectives and rebuilding same according to the demands and peculiar orientation of a fighting unit. This is what the Lord himself sought to do, when he called his disciples to walk with him and in the process, learn from him and come to know him.

This process, in our time, is carried out in a formal manner in specialised institutions called seminaries. A seminary is therefore a special institution, where those who feel called to serve God and society in a special way as priests are trained. This process has four major aspects, namely: Human, Academic, Spiritual, Missionary and Pastoral aspects. In our clime, this process spans a minimum of eight years.

On the one hand, given the demands of the role that priests play in the life and faith of the People of God, the importance of the process that delivers well-prepared priests cannot be overstated. On the other hand, the complexities of life and society today are such that the process of formation, more than ever before, calls for a level of thoroughness that cannot be over-emphasised. Society is more complex, and the prior life and exposure of candidates make the task of formation even more difficult. Little wonder then, that up till the moment of the outbreak of covid-19, the Church has continuously sought for ever new and more effective ways of forming candidates for the sacred

priesthood. The experience of covid-19 so far and the fear of the possible long term impact, make it an urgent task to chart a way forward.

3.0 The Covid-19 Pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic otherwise known as Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).¹ The outbreak was identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, declared to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020, and recognized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020. As of 20 April 2020, more than 2.41 million cases of COVID-19 have been reported in 185 countries and territories, resulting in more than 165,000 deaths. More than 632,000 people have recovered, although the WHO fears that there is a possibility of relapse or reinfection. The deaths per diagnosed cases varies significantly between countries.²

_____ The impact of this pandemic cannot as yet be accurately appraised. Suffices to note however that it has led to severe global socioeconomic disruption, the postponement or cancellation of sporting, religious, political and cultural events (even the 2020 Easter celebrations were severely affected world-wide), and widespread shortages of supplies exacerbated by panic buying, restriction of movement and shutting down of markets and businesses. Schools, universities and colleges (even seminaries) have closed either on a nationwide or local basis in 197 countries, affecting approximately 99.9 per cent of the world's student population.³

The immediate combined effect of these is a disruption of the order of life as we knew it. Like already noted, the long term implications can only be imagined. However, it is certain

¹"Naming the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the virus that causes it". who.int. Retrieved 4 April 2020

²"WHO | Novel Coronavirus – China". WHO. Retrieved 20 April 2020.

³"COVID-19 Educational Disruption and Response". UNESCO. 4 March 2020. Retrieved 28 March 2020.

that mode of social interaction, conduct of business, mode of religious worship and so on, will be heavily impacted; Businesses will crumble and economies will flounder. Until the pandemic is over, the extent of its impact on our world and way of life will remain a subject of speculation. One cannot however ignore the disruption of the social order and that of spiritual life and worship that it has already engendered. That it is no longer appropriate to shake hands, give hugs and stay close together; common modes of interaction between persons and common features of religious worship, is indicative of how different things have become.

This development should not be seen as relevant only for the moment. Lessons learned now are likely to remain with us. It would, therefore, be wishful thinking to expect that everything will roll back to 'normal' once the pandemic is over. For one, the new forms and standards might be encouraged in the belief that they are necessary to stave-off future outbreaks or at least, maintain a new standard of personal hygiene. Furthermore, some of these injunctions are not new. They go all the way back to the Old Testament times. When the Israelites were commanded to wash their hands and their feet when they return from a public place, it was principally for hygiene purposes, with little or no ritual relevance. Moreover, there are several peculiarities with respect to covid-19 that would make it difficult to get away from the changes that it is necessitating. Among such are the following:

1. Mode of transmission: For most transmissible diseases, physical contact with infected persons or by vector agents is the norm. So, if you don't want to be infected, you stay clear of those who are infected, or keep vectors at bay. In the case of covid-19, however, it can be contracted from contact with droplets of an infected person who may have occupied a particular space or location but has since moved on. When someone else comes along, they might not be aware that an infected person had been there before them. This might leave them exposed to contaminated surfaces without realising it. Surfaces in public transportation, desks in offices and shops, pews in churches, computer keyboards, ATM terminals and so on, can no longer be taken for granted. Furthermore, droplets produced from a cough or sneeze are said to be

able to travel up to a metre before falling on any surface.

2. Transmission window: By this is meant the period during which an infected person can infect others. It is interesting that a person infected with covid-19 can begin to infect others up to three days before the symptoms manifest. In this case, the infected person is not aware yet that they are infected, and as such feels no sense of obligation to keep a distance from others. This period is what Dr. Sanjey Gupta of CNN refers to as the pre-symptomatic phase. Even more worrisome is the fact that there are those who are said to be asymptomatic.⁴ That is, they never show symptoms, yet are infected and are able to infect others. So, you really cannot say for sure who poses a risk to others and who is not. Only a test can establish one's status, and a negative result is only valid for the period up till the test was taken. With these, the fear of covid-19 will be with us for some time till a viable vaccine is developed.

In view of the above, it makes sense why the concept, social-distancing, has acquired an unprecedented significance. By it, persons are required to physically distance themselves by, at least, two metres from each other. Handshakes or hugs as a form of greeting and which have hitherto served to initiate most forms of social encounters are now taboo. The requirement of social distancing limits the number of persons that can occupy an enclosed space. So, gatherings, even religious and social events, have been limited to a maximum of twenty persons. There has also been a concerted effort to sensitize people to the need for increased personal hygiene. Regular hand washing, use of hand sanitizers and wearing of face masks in public places are now prescribed items to be observed by all. Public transportation is also affected. Buses and taxis are to reduce their occupancy to 60% of capacity. The same goes for taxis and tricycles.

As noted above, all these requirements and modes of social interactions are not likely going to disappear soon. There

⁴Sanjay Gupta, "Connect the World with Becky Anderson" Cable News Network, Aired on 4 April, 2020.

is every likelihood that most may remain in place until a viable vaccine is developed, while others may linger on and become the ‘new norm’.

4. 0 The Structure of Formation in our Clime

It was Anthony Eze who, after reviewing Church documents on formation since the Second Vatican Council, observed that though the Fathers of the Council noted the urgent need for a radical renewal of priestly formation and began the process by issuing a Charter for Priestly Formation, upon a close look at all the documents churned out so far show that they are very rich at listing the desired qualities that formation should foster in future priests without, at the same time, indicating how those qualities are to be inculcated.⁵ Sadly, I agree with him. The various documents and efforts at revamping formation often focus on the desiderata rather than the practical means for reaching such goals. However, it must also be admitted that those directly involved in the task of priestly formation have not only heeded the expressed desires, but have also continuously sought for creative ways to realise the goals set out for them.

Yet, one cannot but admit that while formation has always been a complex task, the times we live in make it much more so. It is into this mix that covid-19 is about to add more confusion.

St. Paul in his First Letter to Timothy had laid out the broad blueprint of what formation should seek to achieve when he stated: “A church leader must be without fault; he must have only one wife, be sober, self-controlled, and orderly; he must welcome strangers in his home; he must be able to teach; he must not be a drunkard or a violent man, but gentle and peaceful; he must not love money; he must be able to manage his own family well and make his children obey him with all respect.” (1 Timothy 3:2-4)

⁵Anthony E. Eze, (ed.) Charles Hammawa, “Models in Formation”, *New Techniques in Formation Educating the Seminarians for Healthy Sexuality and Celibate Living*, Proceedings of the National Seminaries Committee Workshop, Makurdi, 2002,p.7.

Various Church documents, over the generations, have severally elaborated on what the goal of formation should be, each time clarifying the qualities that are expected of the candidate for the priesthood. What can never be overlooked however, is that a candidate in formation should be responding to a perceived call by Christ to be his other self. Then, to the measure to which one progresses in becoming another Christ becomes a fair measure of the success or otherwise of the process of formation. It is in this respect that the debate on the appropriate model of formation has raged for some time. While that would be a worthwhile discourse, it is however not the goal here. We would rather focus on how best to order the structure of formation so that it will deliver men who are adequately and appropriately conformed to Christ.

The form or structure this process has adopted in our socio-cultural context is of seminaries that cater for large numbers of seminarians at the same time. The current range of seminary population in Nigeria is from 169 (St. Albert, Idowu-Offonran) to 855 (Bigard, Enugu).⁶

The reasons for these large numbers are not far-fetched. For one, our time (socio-economic and cultural circumstance) is experiencing what may be termed a period of vocation boom. The appreciation of the relevance of the priesthood, a corresponding increase in willingness to accept a call to be one, as well as the over-abundance of encouragement that candidates receive both from family and the community, has resulted in large numbers seeking to be accepted as candidates for the priesthood. The altruistic intentions of those who apply to be accepted as candidates is not the focus of this effort. However, it is so real that in the southwestern part of Nigeria for example, from one major seminary in 1982 with a population of less than 100 seminarians, we now have three seminaries, with the newest having 169 seminarians while just in her fifth year of existence.

⁶From the Various Reports presented at ²⁰²⁰ Nigeria Seminaries Committee Meeting held in Awka, Jan ⁸⁻¹¹, ²⁰²⁰.

having 169 seminarians while just in her fifth year of existence. Further to the above is that seminaries with larger population are easier to manage. By this is meant, the financial burden of running a seminary becomes easier with a larger student's population. It makes better economic sense to concentrate resources and manage a larger number than to disperse scarce resources on small numbers here and small numbers there. Interestingly, this arrangement is not arbitrary. The Fathers of Vatican II provided for it when in *Optatam Totius*, they averred that when dioceses cannot provide adequately for separate seminaries, joint seminaries could be established and maintained.⁷

While this appears to be the option open to our clime, certain desirables in the process of formation seem to have been put at risk. Chief among such is the personal touch that the candidate must, of necessity, receive in the course of formation. Mass production maybe economically viable when producing items and articles. It is however, not suitable when the product that is in view is a human person who needs to be so conformed to Christ as to stand as his representative to the people of his time. Unless certain measures are adopted, candidates in our current setting, can only be trained to conform to customs and tradition of the priestly role, and the fear of punishment and expulsion are used to ensure conformity to rules.⁸ We must admit that such can neither allow for the personal maturity which must be occasioned by a personal encounter with Christ in the process of formation, no provide for the formators to help discern the authenticity of the vocation of individual candidates.

The point here is that it is important that the process of formation allows for the candidate to encounter and develop a personal relationship with Christ after whom he seeks to conform himself. It also must provide for the formators to develop a personal relationship with the candidate so that they can assist him in discerning the nature of his vocation. Otherwise, the emphasis

⁷Optatam Totius (Decree on the Training of Priests), Vatican II Documents ed. Austin Flannery, Dominican Publications, 1987, no.7

⁸See Anthony E. Eze, (ed.) Charles Hammawa“Models in Formation”, New Techniques in Formation .P.15

is shifted to making candidates keep the rules and regulations, and attention is not paid to interior conversion to Christ and his mission.⁹ With the current state of affairs, it appears that there are more reasons now than ever before, why the current form that the seminaries in our clime have assumed must be revisited.

5.0. Thoughts on Formation in Covid-19 Era

The Covid-19 experience would make gathering of large number of persons seem so archaic that large seminaries will be non-tenable. The point here is how will you house and organise large numbers of seminarians to meet the requirement of strict personal hygiene, whatever form of social distancing that may evolve, and the sensitivities that Covid-19 has engendered? The requirement for formation as outlined by Church documents since Vatican II, contained nuances that the experience of Covid-19 brings to the fore. For example, the Second Vatican Council Fathers, in *Optatam Totius*, required that “Each candidate should be subjected to vigilant and careful enquiry, keeping in mind his age and development concerning his right intention and freedom of choice, his spiritual, moral and intellectual fitness, adequate physical and mental health, and possible hereditary traits.”

¹⁰ This is upheld even in the very recent *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* where we are reminded that “seminarians need to be accompanied in a personal way in the various stages of their journey by those entrusted with the work of formation.” It goes on to emphasise that in the process of formation, “...it is necessary that the seminarian should know himself and let himself be known, relating to the Formators with sincerity and transparency.”¹¹

The principle that is evident here is that seminaries should be manageable such that there can be a personal accompaniment of those in formation. Admittedly, the possibility of dioceses not being able to run their own seminaries was foreseen and provision was made for joint seminaries; be they inter-dioc-

⁹See also, *Ibid*.

¹⁰*Optatam Totius*, no. 6.

¹¹*Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*(The Gift of the Priestly Vocation), Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2017, nos. 44-45.

esan, provincial or regional seminaries. However, the purpose of the task requires that the numbers be manageable.¹²

A requirement for seminaries to be small or manageable, such that the seminarians can be broken into various little groups with a view to allowing for social/physical distancing in the covid-19 era, would therefore also help to meet the very important criteria required by the very nature of the task of formation. In other words, should conditions in the covid-19 era require us to review the sizes and configuration of our seminaries, such would be in line with what the task of formation required in the first place.

Such a review would require that classes are small and manageable (an ideal class size has always been from 20 to 25), Lecture rooms would need to be spacious and sufficiently airy. Hostels cannot be crowded. There should be sufficient space between the beds to meet the condition of social distancing. For liturgical activities, fresh guidelines for participating in communal worship will be necessary and adhered to, while provisions will need to be made in the dining room setting.

St Albert the Great Seminary is fortunate in some respects when these are considered. Our hostel design provides for three persons in a room and the community configuration allows for a greater development of the concept of a small community or family within the larger seminary community. More communal celebration of house-liturgies could be provided for, while provision is made for regular full-house events.

Our lecture rooms are, for now, sufficiently spacious. An effort to limit fresh intakes per formation year will be required to help keep the number manageable. Twenty five, as maximum for each class, would be an ideal number. The dining hall however, presents a problem. Congregating to have meals at the same time might not be tenable, given the size of the refectory in place. Except, of course, we develop a 'cafeteria style' approach wherein not everyone needs to be in for meals at exactly the same time. This, as well as the need for a more spacious chapel that will

¹²See *Optatam Totius*, no. 7.

conveniently take our number with appropriate spacing observed might be items in the list of immediate needs. On the whole, there will be need for segmentation into little groups for both manageability and meeting of the requirements for social distancing.

Some might wonder if this will not create an atmosphere of over-segmented formation wherein every candidate is locked up within his small unit and not able to interact with the general group. Real as this fear might be, it is important to note that we are only dealing with a situation that the course of world events have forced upon us, yet the responses recommended are in consonance with the general outlines of the principles that should guide our formative effort. More importantly, the *New Ratio* encourages and emphasises the need for a community environment which is “rooted in the fact that the Church, as a people brought together by Christ, is called to live a strong community life, as it has done from the beginning.”¹³ Such an arrangement would therefore, provide smaller units of the community environment within which an atmosphere that favours friendship and fraternity can be fostered and nurtured.¹⁴ Furthermore, we will do well to remember that the Fathers of Vatican II had insisted that “in large seminaries, the students *should be suitably organized in smaller groups*, to enable more personal attention to be given to each student, while retaining unity of discipline and scientific training.”¹⁵

What these might entail, however, is a massive infra-structural development or some re-configuration in our seminaries. Seminaries with insufficient facilities will need to develop them and others who have enough may need to reconfigure them. If the civil authorities live up to their responsibility, it is conceivable that they shall roll out standards and specifications that we shall not be able to ignore. We can imagine that there could be specifications on how many people can be put together in a venue of certain dimensions. For instance: who would have imagined that the civil authorities can legislate and enforce the number of

¹³New Ratio, no. 51

¹⁴Optatam Totius, no.7

¹⁵Ibid. Emphasis, mine.

persons that can be in a gathering, either for worship or whatever? Besides, if this pandemic is this bad, science warns that it will neither be the last nor the worst possible. So, if we must have large seminaries, we could re-configure them to be in modular forms, where each module is a part of the whole, yet distinct within itself to afford a personalised formation that the Church insists upon.

The configuration of the modules can be in terms of Classes and Houses. Classes will be determined by the year of admission. All who fall into a particular class receive academic instructions together and could be grouped as one under a class mentor for leadership, guidance and general supervision. On the other hand, the House will consist of residents of a hostel or a segment of it. They are grouped under a house master (member of the formation team) who, preferably, resides within the hostel area. He is the de facto head of the household and offers guidance, counselling and supervises all their house activities while monitoring their growth and development in the area of human formation. In this case, members of the house are drawn from the various classes in the house in such a manner that each segment of the community is represented in each house. These are two modules that can easily be put into place where they don't already exist. They are effective in breaking down larger groups for easier and closer management. At all times, it should be borne in mind that in cases where there are multiple spiritual directors, the seminarians can be divided into groups under each spiritual director who acts as their spiritual father and confessor. Other possibilities include the grouping of clubs and associations under designated formators who take it as their responsibility to direct the activities of such association(s) and thus able to guide the candidates in their activities.

These are only recommendations on areas to which attention can be focused so that seminarians are attended to from several perspectives and required attention given from varied strata of the seminary community.

6.0. Conclusion

It is important to reiterate that Covid-19 remains an unfolding phenomenon. What it shall leave behind when it finally blows over is only a matter of speculation. Having said that, it would be sad if the world does not learn from the important lessons it has thus far taught us. A revert to status quo ante will be most regrettable. The thoughts set out here, while still in their seminal stage, are meant to find meaning in what the situation seems to be imposing upon us, while at the same time, attempting to situate such in the original principles that the Church has always maintained regarding formation. Such changes, therefore, would not do harm to formation, but rather compel us to observe what has always been a foundational principle in the process. The cost of formation might significantly rise, but nothing good comes cheap.

Covid-19 and Health Implications in the Formation of Future Priests in Nigeria

By

Very Rev Fr John Chike Nwanze

Abstract:

Corona virus (Covid-19), which started from Wuhan, China, as a respiratory disease, belongs to the same family as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) disease. The difference lies in the intensity, the way and manner it spreads and kills. Hence, it has reached a pandemic level threatening life, economic systems as well as political structures and necessitating the suspension of regular life activities. This seems to be the best way to contain, isolate, trace, treat and flatten the curve. Social life and activities have been largely affected on account of the twin evil: dwindling economy and the bid to contain the spread of the ‘monster virus.’

Humans strive better while living as a community/society. Economic growth and prosperity wax on alliances. As covid-19 continues to hinder such relationship, its constant presence shall deal a fatal blow to the economy. Consequently, the path to recovery may be charted by searching for a cure or a vaccine to the virus. It follows that one way to win the battle would be providing adequate care and creating a robust medical facility. This requires a good amount of finance. It would hardly happen on account of total lockdown. Hence, the need to always seek a middle ground between keeping the economy afloat and stemming the spread of the virus. Public health provides adequately for the community which translates in the individual care. If the individual enjoys a reasonable stable health, then such an individual would function well in the society/community. This paper is aimed at addressing in a critical manner health impact of covid-19 and proffer a pathway to live with it while engaging in the work of formation. Its major areas of target are: liturgical life; medicine and health; personal and environmental hygiene. All

these areas call for a new response in the wake of this pandemic.

Key words: Health, Hygiene, Covid-19, Virus, Economy, Community/Society

0. Introduction:

Covid-19 has exposed the fragility of the world and the evil of globalization. Before this pandemic, China was literally everywhere. Almost any product you pick has the imprint of China. From simple household wares to the most sophisticated electronic gadgets. Perhaps, there is nothing we use today that is not made in China beginning with the consumables, the perishables on our tables. This is to show how bad the situation was. Understanding the socio-economic influence of China-wares in our Nigeria and round the globe, makes it easy for one to capture graphically the fast spread of the virus through the length and breadth of the continents. How can one fathom the fact that over 200 countries have been affected by what began in the small Wuhan region in China. On 30th December 2019, Wuhan Center for Disease Control (CDC) warned the local hospitals about pneumonia cases making its round in the city hospitals. From an independent source Dr. Li Wenliang received a report about a Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in that region. Being concerned about the report, he had to share it with some of his colleagues. This information later circulated publicly and the rumors of a deadly SARS spread quickly on Chinese social media. At this point Chinese police invited him and questioned¹ him on making false comments regarding unconfirmed SARS.

Attempt to understand the disease at that time got more elusive knowing how the Chinese government struggled to keep

¹Dr. Li was playing the role of a whistle blower. Transformational positive leadership would promote whistle blowing. It is an internal mechanism that helps in building an organization against collapse. Same principle may be applied to the state/nation. This does not seem to be the case as the police invited Dr. Li to interrogate and warn him against the spread of the existing news on SARS. See Sheng-min Liu, Jian-qiao Liao and Hong-guo Wei, "Authentic Leadership and Whistleblowing: Mediating Roles of Psychological Safety and personal Identification", *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 131, no. 1 (Sept. 2015), pp. 107-119.

what was happening in Wuhan within the confines of the territory. The medical doctor who alerted the Chinese government of the evil that was coming her way in November/December 2019 was not only silenced, he contracted the disease and died on 7th February, 2020. It was after his efforts, to make this known to the Chinese government failed, that the Chinese government opened up a little bit to the situation. By this time, it was getting already out of control. In fear that this would run out of control and turn the nation into a grave yard, China had to close down Wuhan and set up a huge temporary hospital in less than ten days. The surprising thing was that the Chinese annual festival was around the corner then. One would have expected a responsible government to suspend it knowing that her citizens are all over the world and would need to travel home for the event. It must have been on account of a financial gain that the Chinese government did not consider suspending the festival in order to save lives.

It was just as the festival was concluding and the Chinese were returning to their respective domiciled countries, that this covid-19 spread unrestrained. The virus had to spread along with the Chinese on their way back to their resident countries after the annual celebration. Anyone who had been in touch with them stood the risk of being infected.

The new Covid-19 still looks elusive. Science is still learning about the behavior of the new disease. Vaccines are yet to hit the health care market. Scientists work day and night for a vaccine breakthrough. As at April, about 89 vaccines were being developed world wide.² By the time pharmaceutical companies produce the initial vaccines for clinical trial, some glimmer of hope shall be returning to an otherwise despaired people. It would require a lot of clinical trials. At the end of the clinical trials, the World Health Organization (WHO) would have to give a seal to it before such an approved vaccine will enjoy mass production. The final verdict and fiat by WHO signifies acceptability

²The New York Times, April 29, 2020

of such vaccines or medication and removes fear in the populace about their authenticity.

Regardless of whatever success that may be recorded in the pharmaceutical field, the fact of the mutation of such diseases creates a stumbling block in the research arena. The question becomes, shall vaccines and medications be specific to regions, so as to take care of a mutant-virus? A more troubling concern seems to be the uncertainty surrounding the ability of research scientists in the different continents to respond adequately to a virus of this kind. How soon will they have a hold on the disease? With this in mind, it becomes very necessary to consider how the health of the Seminararians in formation would be impacted and thus, attended to in the covid-19 era.

Clarification of terms: Health, Hygiene

The need to clarify terms and words used in treatises cannot be over emphasized. This will help for a proper understanding of the subject under conversation. In this paper, health and hygiene would require some amount of clarification. Many would take for granted that the word such as ‘health’ which has a common usage does not need clarification. Regardless of what people think and feel, understanding the word should be the point of departure for the conversation. What is health? Philosophically, Aristotle understands health to refer to a state of homeostasis. In other words, what “betokens and produces health³ are in a balanced state.”⁴ One has health, if the things that should provide health are subsequently combined in the right proportion.

³Aristotle did not list the items/things that produce health. One would here imagine that he must have been speaking in broad terms. The question becomes, what produces health? Food of all kinds, exercise, unpolluted air, clean environment, safe water, rest, sufficient sleep, good family relationship, and anything else an individual thinks produces health for him/her. One caveat is that they have to be combined in an appropriate (balanced) manner.

⁴W.A. Pickard-Cambridge. “Topics” in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* Jonathan Barnes (Ed.), (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 179

Depending on the combination, the result could be privation of ‘something’ or possession of ‘something’.⁵ When one succeeds to possess this ‘something’ then one is said to be healthy which is a particular state.⁶ Aristotle explains what he means by the concepts ‘state’ and ‘condition’ as categories descriptive of the human experience. ‘State’ implies stability and durability, while ‘condition’, its opposite; lacks stability and durability. ‘Condition’ is neither stable nor durable. From the point of view of medicine, a healthy person is, as Daniel Callahan defines health, “an individual’s experience of well-being and integrity of mind and body.”⁷ A healthy person would be regarded as the person who is able to function to some extent in society without much hindrance. This person would have achieved a *homeostasis*. World Health Organization (WHO) in defining health, associates it with the social well-being of the individual. WHO provides a twist to understanding of health by adding a social dimension-relational aspect to the understanding and definition of health. This understanding may be stretching health care to the point of providing social amenities to persons. Callahan notes that such a definition “would in principle make medicine and health care responsible for all human welfare.”⁸ They are two terms we need to understand more about their purpose in the society.

Humans, from the very beginning, attempted to strike a balance in whatever task they were preoccupied with. Quite obviously, medicine came up as a discipline to support humanity in moments of frailty. This is encapsulated in the way and manner of growth of medical schools. At the very beginning, those interested in the field of medicine had to be attached to an expe-

⁵Ibidem. P.177. The something possessed refers to the health of the individual while its opposite is deprivation, absence of health which will be illness (sickness).

⁶J.L. Ackrill. “Categories” in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* Jonathan Barnes (Ed.), (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p.14

⁷Daniel Callahan. “Ends and Means: The Goals of Health Care”. In *Ethical Dimensions of Health Policy* Marion Danis, Carolyn Clancy and Larry R. Churchill, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.4

⁸Ibidem. P.4

rienced physician to direct and coach them until such a time that he/she can now practice independent of the principal.⁹ Hippocratic oath, which dates back to 400 B.C., specifies what medicine is. There are a number of significant items mentioned in the oath: Connection with the deity-god and goddess; respect for teachers of medicine; knowledge of medicine is further handed over from one generation to another; use of regimen for health and the care of public health. It shows that there is a being to whom the physician looks up to for guidance and support to the physician while treating patient. In like manner, they provide support to the patient in the process of healing. Such healing depends quite well on the level of hygiene. Consequently, they seek to provide as much regimen as possible that will help maintain patient's hygiene. What does hygiene really entail?

Collins English Dictionary defines hygiene as the practice of keeping yourself and your surroundings clean, especially in order to prevent illness or the spread of diseases. In this regard, one is much careful about personal hygiene. To bring this concept home, it may be important to mention certain words that convey the idea of hygiene like; cleanliness, sanitation, disinfection and sterility to mention but a few. Practicing these would certainly guarantee health for the individual. Maintenance of good hygiene cannot be a wasted effort to a person and the community. In this way healing is assured. The Hippocratic oath addresses healing of the sick as obligatory on the physician. This we shall discuss in what follows next.

1. Call to heal the sick by looking at physician's obligations emanating from the Hippocratic oath

Physicians understand from the very beginning the incontrovertible role they play in society. As a result, the physician obliges to guard his life and *techné*. In doing this care has to be taken to avoid areas of conflicts of interest in order to maintain a profes-

⁹He is usually the boss of the candidate working towards becoming a medical practitioner.

sional integrity.¹⁰ Oath taking therefore prepares the ground for the physician to function seamlessly in society. It is for this reason that he is able to navigate the waters, meandering dual-loyalty problems in managed care facilities.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) is an organ monitoring body established in most medical institutions to ensure that ethical standards are applied in research involving human subjects.¹¹ Such a body would have different professionals and experts as members. One of its objectives will be to guide clinical investigators to ensure that the human person used as research subject retains respect and dignity. The American Society understands the essence of research and as such, the document from the presidential commission for the study of bioethical issues was unequivocal as it explicates what research entails:

Research is not only important as a means of advancing knowledge; it is also a core component of America's growth and prosperity in human health, energy, defense, education, and countless other components of daily life.¹²

Where research advances medical practice, institutional review board (IRB) as a monitoring organ ensures physician is duly represented during the research protocol. This would help see that a maximum level of compliance is achieved. Research covers a wide range of area, which includes, Research Involving Human In Vitro-Fertilization and Embryo Transfer,¹³ Heart Transplan-

¹⁰Steven H. Miles. *The Hippocratic Oath and the Ethics of Medicine*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.191.

¹¹Robert Amdur and Elizabeth A. Bankert. *Institutional Review Board. Member Handbook*, 3rd Edition (Sudbury, Massachusetts: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2011), p. 7.

¹²Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues. *Moral Science: Protecting Participants in Human Subjects Research*. (Washington, D.C, 2011), p.18.

¹³Albert R. Jonsen. *The Birth of Bioethics*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 55.

¹⁴*Ibidem*. P.90.

¹⁵Gregory E. Pence. *Medical Ethics: Accounts of Ground-Breaking Cases*, 6th Edition (New York: McGraw Hill, 2010).p.117ff. Cf. Leon R. Cass & James Q. Wilson. *The Ethics of Human Cloning*. (Washington, D.C: The AEI Press, 1998).

tation and Genetic Engineering¹⁴ , and Stem Cell¹⁵ research to mention a few. Medical research adds value to life by improving individual and public health care. This has a central place in the Hippocratic oath. “Into as many houses as I may enter, I will go for the benefit of the ill.”¹⁶

The oath, therefore, allows such a graduating student of medicine make a solemn promise to do all it takes to be a faithful servant of his techné. This techné finds practical utilization within an applicable existential life situation. Through the prism of the oath, medicine is presented as having the following goals: To prevent disease and injury while promoting health. To bring about relief of pain and suffering. To care and cure the sick; while it also provides care for those who cannot be cured. To prevent premature death and provide comfort for the dying (palliative care for the dying). The physician directs the affairs of medicine and gives it an enduring direction. This commitment finds enduring elasticity through the instrumentality of the oath. Hippocratic oath interlocks the fabrics of medicine and provides a foundation for best practices. Medical practice would have been stunted in the absence of such an oath. Since the physician practices publicly, he/she has to function respecting professional code of conduct making certain the protection and safety of both medical discipline and the public.

2. Some public health expectations as enunciated in the Hippocratic oath (public health)

An aspect of the oath addresses public health. What does it really say? “I will use regimens for the benefit of the ill in accordance with my ability and my judgment, but from [what is] to their harm or injustice I will keep [them].”¹⁷ Here the physician plays the role of the gate keeper, watch man. He watches after the health of the client, anticipates possible danger and provides

¹⁶Stephen H. Miles. Op. Cit.p.124.

¹⁷Ibidem. P.191.

what is essential to keep the health going. In this way, the physician acts in accordance with biomedical ethical principles. These are set of foundational moral principles which serve primarily as guide for ethical moral judgment.¹⁸ Among them is justice.¹⁹ Justice seeks to provide service adequately to all. Its application and distinctive understanding has been elusive. Terms like fairness and entitlement have been used by philosophers in the bid to explain justice.²⁰ Due to the complex and sometimes elusive nature of justice, six different theories serve as aid to unravel the varied dimensions of it-utilitarian, libertarian, communitarian and egalitarian which are regarded as traditional theories. The others are capabilities and well-being theories.²¹ These two are recent theories in the explication of justice. In summation, justice as principle of bioethics provides an environment that will enable a fair game on the part of the players-health care provider, patient and family, regulatory body/agency and policy makers (government). Providing health care services would be difficult without a theory of justice. On account of the above, a frame work is provided to resolve “important disputes about conflicting moral beliefs...”²² It allows for a proper distribution of the resources, especially in a health care setting. Little wonder Rawlsian theory of justice appeals more within the health care system. In this way, health care seeks then to keep people functioning without serious resource constraints. In other words, a health care system has to run in such a manner that accessing resources would be stress free and easy. This happens within the public domain. Jonsen, Siegler and Winslade understand public health as “science and practice of

¹⁸The moral principles are: respect for autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, and justice.

¹⁹Tom L. Beauchamp & James F. Childress. *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. Seventh Edition, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.13.

²⁰*Ibidem*. P. 250.

²¹*Ibidem*. Pp. 252-253.

²²Norman Daniels, Bruce P. Kennedy, & Ichiro Kawachi. “Justice, Health, and Health Policy” in *Ethical Dimensions of Health Policy* Marion Danis, Carolyn Clancy & Larry R. Churchill. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002),p.29.

preventing disease and promoting health in populations.”²³ It has to be directed towards curbing the spread of infectious disease, promote individual and public health by proper education and sensitization to personal and environmental hygiene. Current pandemic has put public health on a high alert.

Conscientious efforts have to be made on the part of public health officials to realize the set goals and objectives.²⁴

3. Sick bay/Clinic in the Seminary

Seminary as the word implies houses young men who respond to the call to serve God in a special way. In this house, such persons (candidates) go through a process of formation. Formation has four components: human, spiritual/emotional, intellectual and pastoral. This will enable the candidate mature physically and psychologically so that he can confront the challenges of the society. In Nigeria this takes at least 8 years. The first four years is devoted to philosophy while the last three years dedicated to a careful theological programme building on already established solid philosophy. Pastoral year takes place at the conclusion of the philosophy programme. One cannot disagree on the importance of the house of formation. The formation of these young men would be at a great risk without provision of a structure that looks and takes care of their health. The sick bay fulfils that need.

Sick bay or Clinic as the name suggests serves as venue for treating individuals with mild or semi-malady. As an important component in the Seminary, it serves the purpose of promoting health for students, staff, faculty and formators. Any other person could also have access to it as needs arise. One expects to receive some primary care in this facility in the seminary. Primary care here means that the clinic can provide some basic medication to take care of certain basic maladies like malaria, headache,

²³Alert R. Jonsen, Mark Siegler, & William J. Winslade. *Clinical Ethics: A Practical Approach to Ethical Decisions in Clinical Medicine*. Seventh Edition. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2010), p. 214.

²⁴Public health is central to living healthily. What this means is that health care officials have to engage the individual and the community on one-on-one basis. In this way, individual and community are brought to a better understanding of the health situation.

minor aches and pains, minor fractures, or even providing medication to control high blood pressure, and diabetes. As soon as the determination has been made that a particular malady might be out of control, the patient would be taken to a tertiary health care facility in town. In this way, the sick bay or clinic does not get saddled with complex medical condition. The advantage of a sick bay or clinic in the seminary cannot be over stretched. Preventive medicine is a lot cheaper than curative. The facility helps to achieve the former for the seminary and thus helps to enhance the health of the seminarians in formation. It seems inevitable at this point to really look closely at the seminarian and health and establish a connection between them.

4. Seminarian and Health

The council Fathers were precisely clear on what they wanted for candidates for the priesthood in this regard. In *OptatamTotiusno*. 6 we read: “Each candidate should be subjected to vigilant and careful enquiry, keeping in mind his age and development, ... his spiritual, moral and intellectual fitness, adequate physical and mental health, and possible hereditary traits...”²⁵ This text contains crucial information on the expectation from candidate to the priesthood in respect to his health. The council points out three major areas of health focus: physical and mental health, as well as congenital issues (hereditary traits). In short, the council fathers would desire that seminarians be in good condition of health because the ministry they are to embrace is quite demanding.²⁶ This stands to reason. A priest is everything to the people he serves. Seminarians have to learn that they are not to lord it over others, but to devote themselves in the service of Christ.²⁷ For Christ came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45; Mtt.20:28). Being sick, therefore, deprives him of the presence and service to the people. Rather, he becomes a burden on the people. The physical health of the priest

²⁵Austin Flannery (ed.). Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents. Vol. I. *OptatamTotiusno*. 6. (New Delhi: St. Pauls, 2014), p.631.

²⁶*OptatamTotiusno*. 9

²⁷*Ibidem*

would refer to what makes it difficult for him to be physically present and engage leading the people as pastor. This will translate in his inability to celebrate the sacraments, visit the sick, teach catechism, bury the dead, baptize new members, comfort bereaved members etc. The more serious dimension would be those hereditary traits. This is where the church has to really be watchful. If a candidate has to be admitted recognizing certain congenital issues, the church should be ready to take responsibility in maintaining such health. It would certainly require a huge financial support due to the focused medical care it would require. It would be unchristian to start providing care to a candidate and then stop in the middle of the process. No one should encourage such behaviour.

To maintain (good) health, the seminarian has to consciously live a moderate and balanced life. He must by law avoid extremes, for *virtūs in mediō stat* (virtue stands in the middle). Moderation would imply avoiding unnecessary involvement in things that will not enhance health. One way to achieve this might be living as prescribed in the horarium which provides for siesta, rest after lunch, and lights out. This may be well complemented by engaging in sporting activities. Sporting activities have a lot of health benefits. Medicine has shown that one way to help control diabetes will be exercise. Besides that, it equally helps maintain a balanced mental state. Hence, the seminary provides some sporting facilities. In this way, seminarians have the singular opportunity to exercise their bodies (physically), in order to reach a state of *menssana in corpore sano* (a healthy mind in a healthy body). Covid-19 has heightened the sensitivities of people around anyone who coughs or sneezes. Any of these would jolt those around and send a signal of suspicion around the person. There seems to be heightened awareness of illness. Seminarians are to exhibit same sense of awareness so that they avoid getting infected by persons who may have contracted any infectious disease. Over and beyond the present experience, candidates for the priesthood should embody some balance in life. This coincides with Aristotle's definition of health as earlier discussed, a state of homeostasis. Let me conclude this segment by pointing out a few of those illnesses that could be hereditary and

thus call the attention of those in charge for the recruiting of students to find out the medical background of students admitted into the Seminary. The tasking nature of the priesthood stretches the individual. Hence those choosing this special path have to be strong since their mission is demanding and difficult.

Table A

A tripartite Distribution of Diseases amongst Priests and Seminarians

Hereditary Disease	Infectious Disease	Mental Health Disease
Diabetes Mellitus	Tuberculosis	Sychizophrenia
Diseases of Heart	Influenza and Pneumonia	Chronic Insomnia
Congenital Anomalies	HIV/AIDS	Depression
Arthritis	Hepatitis B	Anxiety
Asthma	chicken Pox	Mental/Emotional problems
Cancer (some)		
Alcohol dependence		
Vision problems		
Alzheimer/Dementia		
Obesity		
Sickle cell anemia		

Table B

Most prevalent diseases as cause of death for Priests and Seminarians

Hereditary Disease	Infectious Disease	Mental Health Disease
Hyperthension	HIV/AIDS	Depression
Diabetes (silent killer)	Hepatitis B	Dementia
Sickle cell		

Table C

Other illnesses that lead to death of Priests and Seminarians

Common illness	
Liver Cyrosis	skin cancer
Acute RenalDysfunction (ARD)	Prostate cancer
Malaria	
Obesity	

Tables A, B and C as appropriately titled present an overview of most prevalent diseases and those that lead to death of priests and

seminarians. Mentioning these illnesses provides knowledge/information to priests and seminarians. Such information serves as deterrent to living care free. In this way, priests and seminarians would be mindful in living their lives. Keeping oneself healthy has its positive outcomes. To achieve the wish of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in *OptatamTotiusno*. 9, vocation directors have to do more serious ground work in the selection process particularly in reference to physical, mental health of the candidate, as well as some hereditary issues. There is need to carry out a profound medical background check. This will necessarily involve getting to know the family background of the candidate. In this way, some knowledge is acquired regarding certain medical conditions of the parents; or certain prevalent health issues in the family. It is important to state that, early detection of some of these diseases, has been found to be helpful in the cure of the disease. For instance, if melanoma (skin cancer) is detected in its early stages through doctor's visit, positive remedial steps that are useful would be taken. In such a situation the percentage of success for cure seems quite promising. One thing seems to be central here, namely regular check up and adhering (compliance) to medical advice. The contrary to this has often led to the death of priests and seminarians even in cases where the illness seems curable. Some people do not think that malaria can kill. This can truly kill and as such adherence to prescribed medication by a medical professional is most appropriate. It may be disingenuous to self-medicate even in the case of what some may regard as a regular illness of an African. Having said this, a word of warning should be sent to all those who self-medicate. This goes contrary to medical practice. In a clinical setting, a medical practitioner upon encountering a patient does three things: diagnose, prescribe, and treat. This is why we all need someone else to take us through the process and then treat the disease.

In this way one has a certain amount of assurance for proper medical care. Most times regrettably so, a good number of priests as well as seminarians do not follow the clinical pathway.

²⁸Ibidem

Danger looms in the face of such behavior. Dialysis seems to be on the increase in the country. This may be attributed to Acute Renal Dysfunction (ARD).²⁹ The kidney helps to regulate the toxins in the body system. Herbal drinks are composed of several plant-leaves mixed together for consumption. These extracts contain a reasonable amount of toxins. Unfortunately, studies are not carried out to know the amount of toxins in bitter leaf, dogonyaro, pawpaw leaves just to name a few; or even in the bark of plants whose extracts are ingested. One simply drinks such a herbal mixture ignorant about its constituent elements. Every extract ingested must go through the filtering process of the body. The kidney has to perform this 'dirty job' and that is why it stands the greater risk of exposure to a huge amount of toxins. This is where one has to be mindful of certain herbal drinks one ingests in the name of preventing malaria or typhoid or any other illness. If the kidney is over worked as a result of the overwhelming amount of toxins in the system, then there exists some risk for the organ. In like manner, abuse of alcohol can have serious consequences on our organs. One of such organs is the liver. As one would observe under table C, liver cyrosis is at the top of the list. It is a disease of the liver caused by excessive use of alcohol or in some exceptional situations, it can also be caused by intake of certain uncontrolled medication. The disease can progressively advance to the point of death of patient if not aggressively treated. One way to avoid such is the control use of alcohol or regular medical checkup in the use of certain therapeutic medications.

5. Diocesan Collaboration

Every seminarian that finds his way to the seminary has been sent by a specific diocese. Each diocese has its peculiar way of recruiting candidates she prepares for the priesthood. Among other things, the recruitment process has to be such that there is room for the seminarian to undergo series of medical check ups. This

²⁹This is the sickness of the kidney.

will help early detection of any chronic disease or even hereditary disease. In this way, the diocese shall have a good knowledge of the health condition of a candidate being sent to the seminary. Information on the health of a candidate for the diocese should not end at the bishop's desk or the vocation director's desk either. The seminary where the candidate eventually settles in for formation shall receive a comprehensive report on the seminarian. What this means is that, the diocese and the seminary have to synergize the medical report of every candidate. In other words, the seminary has to update the diocese about the well-being of her candidate, just as much as the diocese briefs the seminary on the health condition of her candidate. To this effect, yearly physical examination will not be out of place. If for anything, it will be a learning process for the candidate. Yearly medical check up is the gold standard in medicine. Such a health check serves the purpose of early detection of any medical problem, so that immediate attention shall be given towards therapeutic cure. When the candidate shall have grown use to such a life style, as priest he would certainly take care of his medical health. All this has been found to be important on account of the present situation. The health of one person affects the other person. In the same vein, the ill-health of one person affects the many in the community. We are witnessing to a changing world. There is need for us to respond to this changing world in a coordinated manner. Dioceses have to be involved in checking the health status of their candidates. In the final analysis, any candidate with a curable underlining disease has to be supported through therapy by the diocese. In this way the diocese would have lived out Matthew 25:31-46. Part of living out this Gospel message would be provision of concrete examples in real life situations. These recommendations are simply attempts at achieving the set objective of this paper in a more concrete fashion.

6. Recommendations

Health of seminarians preparing for the sacred priesthood has to be at its best. This has to be realized through the concerted efforts of all. The candidate himself has to take proactive steps in achieving the set objective and goal. Good hygiene, healthy

environment and life style should be quite central for such candidates preparing for the catholic sacred priesthood. Holy mother church needs virile and energetic men for work in the vineyard. In line with the above, I wish to recommend the following as a way forward in the face of covid-19:

i. Directors of vocations are advised to note the various illnesses as provided in the tables. The list does not cover everything. It is meant to serve as a guide and create awareness.

ii. All candidates to the priesthood have to undergo proper medical check up in their respective dioceses before: (a.) commencement of spiritual year (b.) prior to resumption in the major seminary (c.) after pastoral year before resumption for theology(d.) before the diaconate ordination. These four different moments of medical check-up are important because as the candidate ages, the cells in the system undergo changes also. In other words, if there are any underlying medical issues, at the time the four medical examinations are performed, it would have been discovered.

iii. Compulsory physical (medical) examination and a copy should be sent to the seminary, while the diocese retains a copy

iv. Directors of Vocations are to understand the genetics of the candidates and advice the local ordinary appropriately. A candidate from a background with a heavy medical condition should be carefully observed

v. Health talks are to be organized quarterly or as needs arise. However, candidates who have been diagnosed for diabetes or/and hypertension may have to attend health talk in the seminary. Further arrangement would have to be done by whoever is in-charge. These two health conditions change radically the life of an individual. Interestingly, both can be managed well if patients check their blood pressure and glucose level on a regular basis. One does not have to feel a sense of condemnation or abandonment. Again, the key here shall always be a good understanding of what it takes to maintain such a health condition. The reason diabetic or/and hypertensive patients have to be quite careful is for reasons of their vulnerability. For instance, if covid-19 is contracted by persons having underlining medical conditions, they face the risk of complication and perhaps eventual death.

If such complications are to be avoided, these persons shall pay attention to their life style.

vi. Students living in the same hostel area are to organize/constitute a monitoring team, amongst themselves, for the purpose of checking the level of hygiene/cleanliness, that is maintained in the hostel areas and its surroundings. As a corollary to that, another team of students drawn from the different hostels are to check the rooms of students on a weekly basis. This has to include the hostel environment.

vii. The water containers for drinking should be cleaned regularly and preserved in a way that it promotes health.

viii. The kitchen has to be properly and thoroughly cleaned up all the time. If it is possible, it should be decontaminated.

7. Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper, I drew the connection of the twin evil caused by the advent of coronavirus, namely financial melt-down and a challenged health care system. It went further to state that if these are left, much harm would be done to society. On account of this, it behooves any well-meaning government to put things in place to arrest the situation. One way to do this was to provide an enabling health care environment, that can match the disease, so that it could be brought under control. Once the disease comes under control, social life can once more thrive and society may get back to functionality. Functional society does not necessarily mean death to the virus. All it means is that the society now functions in a different way as against the time preceding the advent of the virus. This time calls for a new way of living. Taking precautionary steps to prevent contracting covid-19 is just a dimension of what should concern the present-day seminarian. In the light of this, the seminarian has to pay a lot of attention to his health while in formation and even beyond formative years. Whatever he has acquired while in formation, has to guide him in the future ministry. The paper concluded recommending a number of practical steps to be adopted by the seminarian, if he has to reap the fruits of formation in the current dispensation.

SANITIZATION OF THE HEART: A PANACEA FOR A CHRISTOCENTRIC LIFE

BY

Rev Fr Gabriel Anekwe

Abstract

The advent of coronavirus with code name “covid-19” has re-awakened in us the consciousness of sanitizing our hands as an antidote of preventing the possibility of contacting the deadly virus.

Let the coronavirus also re-awaken in us the need to, with constant and consistent need to sanitize our hearts to avoid evil from taking roots, and also against the attitude of taking God’s love for granted; since evil attitude is a consequence of a dirty heart.

INTRODUCTION

It was Isaac Newton who said, “Action and reaction are equal and opposite”¹. That for every action, there is always a reaction. This truth cannot be alienated from the present situation; notably, the outbreak of “**CORONA VIRUS**”.

When this pandemic broke out, one was at sea as to what its implication means to the world. When the danger it poses to humanity was finally spelt out, it dawned on all that vigorous steps needed to be taken in order to stamp it out completely to destroy the danger it poses to human existence in general: One of such precautionary measure is “*Hand Sanitizing*”, whose aim and objective is to prevent the contracting of the virus after one must have touched a potential contaminated object or surface: through the use of a recommended hand sanitizer.

In this write-up, terms such as; virus, sanitizers, heart, Christocentric and life, would be defined appropriately, so that

¹Michael Nelkon, Principle of Physics, 7th edition (Great Britain: CSS Bookshop and Hart-Davis Educational, 1977), p.51.

their usage in this write up would bring out clearly, the message intended, and that their application would sow the seed of transformation in our lives as men, desiring to live with God for eternity.

Clarification of Terms

Virus: According to Longman dictionary of Contemporary English, “virus is a very small living thing that causes infectious illnesses”. Virus therefore is inimical to the well-being of every individual, therefore, must not be allowed to inhabit any human person; thus ‘sanitizers’ are adequately employed to stamp them out. Similarly, sin is a ‘Virus’ of its own if takes root in the human heart. If allowed to fester, it would destroy the life of God in us, which is reactivated through the Sacrament of Baptism.

Sanitizer: To sanitize, according to Oxford English dictionary is, “to make something free from anything that may damage it health”

The use of sanitizers is therefore to prevent one from being infected when he or she comes in contact with a supposed contaminated object or persons as the case may be, which would not only be endangering his health but also one’s life.

Heart: According to Bovenmars, G. Jan, “The heart symbolizes the center or core of the human person. It is the locus not only of our activity but also of our freedom and consciousness, the place where we accept or reject the mystery of ourselves, human existence and God.”²

Heart here is used principally as the center of human activity.

Christo-centric: this means “Christ Centered Life”. A condition, whereby, one’s thoughts, imagination and deeds begin from and end in Christ. “Christianity... is the personal following of Christ, the God-man”³ This is the experience that elicited from

²Bovenmars, G. Jan. *A Biblical Spirituality of the Heart*; New York; (c.) 1991: p.1.

³Lobo, V. George. *Christian Living: According to Vatican II*. Bangalore, Theological Publication India: (c.) 1995: p. 107.

Paul this declaration, “for in him we live and move and have our being”

Life: The appreciation of life and the adequate attention that should be paid to it would emerge from a proper understanding of what the word ‘life’ stands for; in the New Testament, “Life is viewed as the fullness of power, the pleasure which accompanies the exercise of vital functions, integrations with the world and with ones’ society”⁴. Life, here is associated with activity. Activity in itself, but what is the goal of every activity?

In the New Testament, Life is view differently. The synoptic gospels, echoes the old Testament passage from Deut.8:3, quoted in Mathew 4:4; Luke 4:4. Life is obtained by keeping the commandment, (Mathew 19:16f; Mark 10: 17-19; Luke 10:28, 18:18-20).

Life is granted to those who renounces all things for Christ (Mathew 19:29; Mark 10:30; Luke 18: 30).

Life is not measured by wealth (Luke 12:15). God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living⁵

To live Christ Centered life, we are invited to imitate him in all ramification, that would remain a mirage or an exercise in futility, if we do not have a certain degree, an understanding about the ‘Heart’ of God.

Heart of God, in the Old Testament or general understanding of the word ‘Heart’:The heart is the key word in the Bible. Proverbs 4: 23 says; “More than all else keep watch over your heart, since here is the wellspring of life.”The Heart here indicates what is present and living in the depth of a person.⁶

The Heart as the seat of human activity cannot be ignored. Wisdom literature: Uses the term “Heart” 403 times. Here

⁴John L. Mckenzie. Dictionary of the Bible: Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore. (c.) 2002: p. 507.

⁵Mckenzie, L. John. Dictionary of the Bible: Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore. (c.) 2002: p.509.

⁶Bovenmar, G. Jan. Biblical spirituality of the Heart: Alba House, New york. (c.) 1998: p. ix.

are they, that is, the Hebrew works: (Proverbs, Psalms, Job, Ecclesiastes or Qoheleth and the Song of Songs). It needs to be meticulously sanitized for it to play the role or be the channel through which God speaks to us and engineer within us the spirit of obedience and sacrifice. Furthermore, bearing in mind that it is the source of our feelings, decisions, thinking, what and which we want, what we say and do.⁷

Our external behaviors is determined by this interior center. Since this is the case, we cannot allow ourselves everything; we must keep watch over our desires, our plans, our decisions, for the quality of a person depends on the quality of the heart⁸. Therefore, the need to keep the heart pure becomes a binding duty for all who claims to be a Child of God.

Heart of God: Revelation in general speaks of God's heart. All created order reveals his generosity, his wisdom and power. For the people of Israel, He is a God of people, Emmanuel! Who desires to enter into covenant with us, to lead us to eternal life⁹. This is God's mission that is love, emanating from his heart. Some text mentions his heart explicitly. This gives us a glimpse of God's heart. There are 28 texts that mentions Yahweh's heart, 27 in the Old Testament and 1 in the New Testament which is a quotation from the Old Testament.

There are many dimensions of Gods heart that will help us to think about him as a means of determination to strive to imitate him. I will limit myself to five (5)

Yahweh's thinking and remembering: His heart is wise, and his strength is great: who can successfully defy him (Job 9:4). This indicates the supremacy of God overall and no one can contend with him.

Yahweh's planning holds ground forever the intention of his heart from age to age (ps.33:11). We must remember always that

⁷Bovenmar, G. Jan. Biblical spirituality of the Heart: Alba House, New york. (c.) 1998: p. ix.

⁸Bovenmar, G. Jan. Biblical spirituality of the Heart: Alba House, New york. (c.) 1998: p.1.

⁹Bovenmar, G. Jan. Biblical spirituality of the Heart: Alba House, New york. (c.) 1998 p.25.

Yahweh is the one who molds human heart. Psalm 33:15 Stresses that God is he who molds every heart. So what God does for us demands of us the attitude of gratefulness, which can only be expressed from an “Upright Right” heart.

The Sorrow of Yahweh’s heart: Yahweh regretted having made man on earth, and his heart grieved(Gen 6:6). Let us recall that in the creation story, Yahweh is presented as being delighted with the works of his hands: he saw that it was good. He grieved because of the wickedness of the human heart, “Yahweh saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that the thoughts in his heart fashioned nothing but wickedness all day long” (Gen 6:5). For the sorrow of Yahweh is about the wickedness of the human heart. There is therefore, the need for us to change by eradicating all evil inclination from our hearts.

Yahweh’s anger: as a matter of seriousness and emphasis, this aspect of Yahweh’s feelings cannot be ignored. “The anger of Yahweh will not turn aside until he has performed, and has carried out the decision of his heart.” (Jn. 23:20 and 30:24). It is worthy of note to know that more than 200 passages refers to it. This calls for a deep sober reflection that will help us to desist from taking him for granted, his mercy and love.

The Heart of Man: The conviction that we are creatures of God, his children, with hope of eternal life with him at the end of our earthly journey, should instill within us the desire to harbor Him in our hearts, for his guidance. This text says, what the human heart is prone to; “Thoughts are rooted in the heart, and this sends out four branches, good and evil, life and death and always the mistress of them all is the tongue”. This text presented human heart as the source of what is good as well as evil; that would lead to death. There are general statement about the wickedness of the human heart that needs to be taken cognizance of; this would go a long way in assisting us to know the areas we need to battle with.

Sin is often described as originating in the heart. These texts from the psalms alludes to this “you men, why shut your

hearts so long, loving delusions, chasing after lies (4:2). Their hearts are gross and fat (119:70). Malice is in their hearts (28:3). The wicked man's oracle is sin in the depths of his heart (36:1). From people plotting evil (lit "devising evil in their hearts"). Forever intent on stirring up strife(140:2)"¹⁰.

The greatest sin that so touches Yahweh's heart deeply is ejecting Yahweh and turning to idols. These are various offences against God mentioned by some of the wisdom literature. "Job would say, my sons have sinned and their hearts offended God" (Job 1:5). Deliberately (lit. "from the heart") challenging God by demanding their favourite food (Ps 78:18), do not be unsubmitive to the fear of the lord, do not practice it with a double heart (Si. 1:27), for not having the fear of the Lord, and for having a heart full of deceit (Si. 1:30). Because this people approaches me only in words, honour me only in lip service while its heart is far from me (Si. 29:13)". This refers to the refusal of man to listen to God, clinging to his own parochial choices rather than God. Wisdom literature further links the human heart to many kinds of morally evil acts;

-Taking pleasure in evil: taking pleasure in evil earns condemnation (lit "he who in his heart takes pleasure in evil..." (Is. 19:5).

-Envy: do not let your heart be envious of sinners (Pr. 23:17)

-Deception: "All they do is to lie to one another". Flattering lips, talk from a double heart (Ps 12:3). Deceit in his heart always scheming evil, he sows dissension (Pr. 6:11)

-Oppression: on the contrary, in your hearts you meditate oppression; with your hands you dole out tyranny on earth (Ps. 58:12)

-Violence: for their heart is scheming violence. (Pr. 24:2)

-Hatred: He made his people fertile and more rigorous than their oppressors, whose hearts he then dispose to hatred of his people and double dealing with his servants (Ps. 105:25)

¹⁰Bovenmar, G. Jan. Biblical spirituality of the Heart: Alba House, New york. (c.) 1998 p.42.

-Impure desires: do not covet her beauty in your heart (Pr. 6:32)
-Adultery: but the adulterer has no sense (lit “lacks heart”) (Pr. 6:32)

-Scoffing: who scoffs at a neighbor is a fool (Is. 36:32)

God in his love to deliver us from all that enslaves us promised a new heart. He manifested that through prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah is the prophet with a fire burning in his heart (Jer. 20:9). Through him, God promised, “I will give them a heart to acknowledge that I am Yahweh. They shall be my people and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart (Jn. 24:5-7)”.

This returning to the lord will not be by coercion, but requires the effort based on the sincerity of the individual. Consequently, Prophet Jeremiah admonishes this in his words: “wash your heart clean of wickedness, Jerusalem, and so be saved. How long will you harbor in your breast pernicious thoughts” (Jer.4:14) circumcise yourselves for Yahweh, off with the foreskin of your hearts (men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest, my wrath should leap out like a fire (Jer. 4:4).

Christ Centered Life: to aspire to live Christ Centered life, the individual Christ follower or disciple, must strive to have a basic understanding of the heart of the one, the Christian aspires to emulate.

Jesus’ Heart: The Heart of Jesus is a mystery. It has a divine depth. His heart is the care of his being, as the son of God, the source of living water: “if any man is thirsty, let him come”.

The Heart of a Son: these are some of texts from the four gospel and Pauline writings where Jesus is presented as “the son of God”. In St. Paul in Galatians 4:4-5, says “God sent his son ... to enable us to be adopted sons”. John in his gospel (Jn. 20:31) teaches that “Jesus is the Christ, the only son of God”. In his book, *The Prayers of Jesus* by J. Jeremias (SCM.1974), he pointed out that Jesus used the word father for God, 170 times. A classic example is in Luke 11:7, where Jesus teaches that; when you pray, say, Father, hallowed be your name, your king-

dom come”. In Mark 13:32, “he spoke of God as his own father, and so made himself equal to God”...In Mathew 11:25-27, Jesus, turning his whole attention to God exclaimed “I give praise to you, father, lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and have reached them to the child-like; Yes Father, such has been your gracious will”. From the on-going, a fact emerges and that is Jesus, spoke to God as a child to his father. This is a consequence of ‘A Relationship of Son-ship, of familiarity and intimacy, of simplicity and confidence of surrender and confidence of surrender and obedience’¹¹ that Christ already enjoyed with God, the father. This commitment of total surrender to God, the father was not a consequence of coercion, but of the conviction that God is enough. Nothing gives or has meaning outside God. What emerged out of this conviction was an attitude of total reliance and obedience. Prophet Isaiah revealed this about Him, ‘You who wanted no sacrifice or oblation, opened my ears. You asked no holocaust or sacrifice for sin: then I said, “Here I am! Coming!! In the scroll at the book am I not commanded to obey your will” I carry your law in the midst of my heart”. Therefore, obedience is a basic attitude of Jesus, a dimension of his heart and a surrender of himself.

Or Our Relationship with Christ: There is a basic fact which we cannot deny and it is that the heart is the seat of morality. “One can be externally pure but internally dirty, acquitted by man but condemned by God who sees the heart”¹². We cannot deny the fact that a heart enslaved in worldliness can hardly be productive and creative; thus the need for purity of heart becomes imperative. But all hope is not lost. Jesus, whose life, we are called to imitate, has opened the door to us. Let us always remember that Jesus, the new Adam, carried God’s law in the

¹¹Bovenmar, G. Jan. *Biblical spirituality of the Heart*: Alba House, New York. (c.) 1998 p.79.

¹²Orji, Godwin. *Purity of the heart*; Imo state, Chimarvin Production Ltd. (c.) 2004: p.23.

midst of his heart, this, he cherished and meditated upon and lived. St. Paul reminds us in Roman 5: 19 that for just as by the disobedience of the one the many are constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the one, the many will be constituted just.”

Sanitization of our hearts: to sanitize or remove all hindrances to the love of God, obedience to God, respect for him and holding him in high esteem, the attitude of Jesus Christ to God must also be our attitude. The consciousness that Jesus was servant with an open ear, always ready to listen, always doing what was pleasing to the father as (Jn. 8:9) remarked, must never escape us. For Jesus, doing the will of the father was his mission he was hungry for it, it was his food.” For he asserted, “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, to complete his work” (Jn. 4:34). This is the attitude every Christian should yearn for, that is if we really desire authentically to live the kind of life that he lived and desires to allow him continuously live every moment in us and through us.

This would ultimately remain a mirage if we accept that as humans, it would amount to an exercise in futility if we attempt to be Jesus in this world. If that is the case let us remember the Christ event in our lives at baptism. Christ entered into you asking into his kingdom. His divine life, His very spirit, signified by the baptismal water, was, through the action of baptizing” planted in your soul, “poured” into it”¹³ .

Thus, baptism is an empowerment to assume a new responsibility, a new life, and a new mission. Through it and in it we became Christ, collaborators in his salvific mission to the world. God’s word tells us “as many as we are baptized into Christ have put on Christ, God has sent the spirit of his son into our hearts, crying “Abba Father” it is no longer I whom lives then , but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 3:27; 4:6; 2:20). An un-sanitized heart cannot yearn for God, his Glory, His honor, and will

¹³Fernandes, J.B. *Becoming Christ*. St. Pauls publication.Mumbai. (c.) 2010: p.15.

not have any regard for God or things that pertaineth to God. Perhaps, knowing what this life of Christ in a soul is called could help us to strive to live it out. It is called Christian life because it is Christ life in a soul; it is called spiritual life because it is the life of the Holy Spirit.

“The third person of the blessed trinity; as it is the life shared in common by the three divine persons, it is also called ‘supernatural’ life because it is not natural not born of the flesh and blood, and ‘divine’ life, because it is the life of God: it is called interior life too, so as to distinguish it from life lived on natural impulse.”¹⁴

Our understanding of what life really means will not only enable us to appreciate it, but infuse in us the desire to live it to the full.

In Pauline writings, life is a present reality which began by ‘baptism’ (Rm. 6:4). It is a new life initiated by union with the death and resurrection of Christ which is symbolized and effected by baptism” therefore with baptism we begin a new life with God. Life therefore not according to the flesh (Rm. 8:12) but a resurrection from the death to sin (Rm. 6:13) it is life conferred by holiness (Rm. 5: 18-21). It is active within the Christian (2cor. 4:11)”.

The concept of life here is a pragmatic one, to be lived every moment.

It is not a hypothetical ideals compiled to showcase knowledge. There, the Christian lives ... he kills the deeds of the flesh by the spirit (Rm. 5:25). He lives by the spirit (rm 5:25) by the law of the spirit of Christ Jesus (Rm. 8:2)”. The understanding of this new life and its acceptance empowers the Christian to pay more attention to God and not to himself. He aims at God

¹⁴Fernandes, J.B. *Becoming Christ*. St. Pauls publication.Mumbai.(c.) 2010: p.15.

and not to himself. He aims at doing Gods will rather than satisfy himself. This is because “the newness of life of the Christian life consists in the relationship established between the Christian and God through Christ in the spirit”. As a result “the Christian does not live for himself(2Co.r 5:15, indeed it is no longer the Christian who lives but Christ who lives in him: the life that Paul lives in the body he lives by faith in the son of God (Gal 2:20).”Every Christian is living a life of participation in the resurrection of our savior Jesus Christ, a life that does not yield to evil powers but that which triumphs and illuminate the world concretely with charity and eternal presence.

Necessity of purity of heart: For the Christian to yield to the power of the spirit, in order to be the Christ that people see, the need to be pure in heart becomes ultimately necessary. The Spirit of Christ in one energizes and controls bodily purity. The heart is the seat of morality and the agent of purity of heart is the Holy spirit.

When the church prays, ‘Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of the faithful’ she prays for the spirit of holiness which also that of purity, the spirit who sanctifies and cleanses, making the heart a real abode for heavenly gifts.¹⁵

The Holy Spirit, the agent of purity of heart, is directly opposed by the spirit of the flesh, the spirit of impurity and desires of the flesh (gal 5: 16-17). “He, the Holy Spirit, purges and burns up the putrefaction in the heart with the furnace of his refining fire and bedews the heart with the shower of its sanctifying graces; that is, he quenches the desires for evil replacing them with good ones.

To sanitize the heart one need to invoke and abide in this spirit always. How do we go about in search of purity of heart? Humanly speaking, it is a herculean task, but for God, all things are possible. Purity of heart as a virtue, requires special grace

¹⁵Orji, Godwin. Purity of the heart; Chimarvin Production Ltd.Imo state, (c.) 2004: p.28.

from God with ardent co-operation of the individual: again we must note that “for everything is possible for he who believes” (Matt. 9:23)

Some of these ways could help one in realizing this precious state.

- **Total surrender to God:** Paul in Eph. 3:20 says “Now to him who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine by the power at work within us”. This surrendering entails one invoking God, the driving force and longing of one’s entire life. “In handing over one’s self totally to God, all the aspects of one’s life, both exterior and interior, material and spiritual without a no-go-area are also subjected to him”.¹⁶ At this level, one is expected to boycott those attachments harmful to the new relationship entered into with God. One’s entire will and desire are also subjected to him.¹⁶ This will result in God’s spirit becoming and remaining the guiding principles of one’s life sustaining the self-control needed for the virtue.

- **Taking custody of the senses:** senses are windows of the mind, and consequently the heart. It was Aristotle who said, ‘nothing enters the mind except through senses’. The objects of human mind comes from the senses such as sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Besides divine inspiration, the nature of these materials has positive or negative effects on the heart. From the ongoing I arrive at the conclusion that a longing for purity of heart cannot be real when the mind is fed with filth. So, any desire for Cleanliness of heart without restraint from lustful ideas and imagination arising from the senses amounts to self-deception. That is, the scripture would say in James 1:14-15 that “one is tempted by ones desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown gives birth to death.”¹⁷

¹⁶Orji, Godwin. Purity of the heart;Chimarvin Production Ltd.Imo state, (c.) 2004: p.32.

¹⁹Orji, Godwin. Purity of the heart; Chimarvin Production Ltd.Imo state, (c.) 2004: p.35.

- **Through allied virtues:** Man is an entity. One aspect of him – physical or spiritual- affects other aspect directly or indirectly. The presence of some virtues makes it easier to cultivate others. For instance, humility, poverty and mortification easily pave way for purity of heart. Real humility hinges on “discovery of one’s nothingness before God, one’s total dependence and ever looking into him”¹⁸. The consequences of this attitude is that one discovers ones in ability to achieve anything without God and they wholly submits to him.

- **Through inner spirit and will power:** when God says through Paul’s letter to the Rm 8: 13, if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body... in Titus 2:16 “likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled”. It implies how man’s spirit and will power can, when built up, assist one in the struggle for purity of heart’

Remember that Man’s spirit is the spirit of God inherent in him...simply put, it is the voice of the conscience, the inner voice: the will power itself is strengthened when it anchors firmly on well-founded goals.

Another aspect is the way of ‘Prayer’. Renewed by the power of his strength”(Isaiah 40-32). They are energized for good and protected from evil. Those who constantly wait on God in prayer especially in meditation before the blessed sacrament ‘experience reformation from old to new self, weakness to strength, sorrow to joy would leave in the individual, an impression of something divine, a cleansing of the dirty heart and indeed a real rejuvenation of the entire self. He deserves defilement through the blood of Jesus which washes from all sin (cf. Jn. 1:7)’.

- **Recourse to Virgin Most Pure:** When requests are hard to obtain, going through mothers makes it a bit easier. This implies to man’s relation to God, through our Blessed Mother Virgin Mary. A classic example is the wedding party in Galilee

¹⁸Orji, Godwin. Purity of the heart; Chimarvin Production Ltd.Imo state, (c.) 2004: p.36.

(cf. Jn. 2:1-11)

-Through desire and courage: to achieve any meaningful feat in life both physically or spiritually, a burning desire to succeed must be exhibited before its realization. Such in-depth yearning produces the consequent force and courage necessary for withstanding the difficulties” for example, Elisha had a desire to have a double portion of Elijah’s spirit, and it was granted him. David had a desire to build a temple for God. It was awarded him through his son, Solomon.

- **Through the spirit of selflessness and love:** Vices against purity of heart, arises through self-indulgence, the virtues that build-up purity of heart come through selflessness. With this spirit, one learns not to gratify but sacrifice, to please ones interest but others, God inclusive.

-Through maturity of mind: this means the struggle to control oneself from meddling into matters not pertaining to self. It will save one from knowledge likely to soil ones heart.

-Through confession: Sin, as we know stains the soul. It impresses guilt on it and deprives it of the sanctifying grace. But confession more or less restores the heart to its original sanctity.

- **Through Holy Communion:** The body of Christ received in Holy Communion is pure and sacred. ‘it’s effect includes increasing the sanctifying grace of God in the soul when received worthily’. Holy Communion increases divine love and calms the fire of concupiscence- it is very effective in purifying the soul.

Result of purity of heart: It responds to this renewal of the heart to attain purity, ‘a total surrender would give a depth, a greater urgency and a transcendental value to your human task’. Effort, therefore should be geared towards a constant and consistent sanitization of those areas in our lives for the life of God to actually work in us. Every trace of hatred, envy, gluttony, discrimination, slander, lying, egoism, pride, vanity, vice and distemper, laziness, every sensuality, arrogance, avarice and impatience, etc.

The success of this exercise would bear the following fruits of our lives.

- i. Joy of rejoicing over the good and frowning at the evil.
- ii. **Peace:** this is a kind of inner restfulness as well as harmony which result from the purity of heart.
- iii. **Enlightenment:** this is the unveiling of the mind to see beyond the visible and the common, “this is made possible by the light of God which radiates more clearly to the pure of heart”. A classic example are (cf. rev 14:3:4) and (cf. Daniel 10-11).
- iv. **Creativity:** as a result of its enlightenment, purity of heart unlocks the door of creativity and productivity in man. This becomes possible because the heart is now preoccupied with materials that are not only noble but also divine.
- v. **Love:** purity of the heart makes one the beloved of God and consequently one is filled with true love of God and neighbor.
- vi. **Charm:** it makes one charming and loving. A lover of truth.
- vii. **Openness:** when the heart is pure, there is a resulting openness emanating from oneself.
- viii. **Prayerfulness:** purity of the heart makes one really a temple of the holy spirit who intercedes for us in prayer with sighs for deep for words (cf. 8: 26), “the heart is drawn to prayer since it is inundated with the divine.
- ix. **Self- control:** purity of the heart brings self-control. It creates in the heart a kind of natural repulsion for stains and uncleanness.
- x. **Divine glory:** The beatitude vision is promoted for purity of heart. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God (Mt. 5:8). ‘Who shall climb the mountain of the lord...the man with clean hands and pure heart’ (cf. Ps. 24:3-4)

Conclusion

The aim of any serious minded individual should be stick to one’s belief and conviction. To sacrifice to live out one’s conviction in life. This should be the goal of every Christian, to live

out Christ in one's daily life. This aim would remain a mirage if conscious effort is not made to avoid all negativism that hinders one from living a life of unalloyed faithfulness to Christ, when sacrificed his life for the sanctification and salvation of souls.

Therefore, sanctification of the heart, which is the seat of morality, should be a task to be taken seriously by all Christ faithful.

The success of it would endear Christ to the individual's heart as it enables one to appreciate and love God unconditionally, and to help one to accept that the authenticity of life revolves in and around God. It engraves in one's heart the conviction that God is enough.

It would create the consciousness of ones near failings and the sincere effort to make amends and to begin ones journey a new with God. The joy of the lord would ultimately be sufficient for the individual. Therefore, as we consciously and deliberately strive to wash and sanitize our hands in order not to get contaminated by coronavirus... let us also meticulously strive to sanitize our heart to avoid the possibility of becoming an agent of the evil one who induces in us the desire to do evil, but to keep our heart pure, a dwelling place of God the most high in order to be his authentic witness to the world.

ATTITUDINAL CHANGES AS THE ANTIDOTE TO LIVING WITH COVID-19 PANDEMIC ERA

BY

Rev Fr Francis Olufunmilayo

Abstract

A score of persons across the globe has opined that year 2020 should be considered not existent because of the abnormality it exudes that adversely affects every facet of life. Even though the virus of Covid 19 may not leave us as quickly we can imagine, change of attitudes from our end will help to nip it at board in no distant time. This must have its coverage from reviewing not only our mode of worship, socializing, idiosyncrasies, and upholding of our different cultural values that define us as persons but also to make us responsible for our actions. Thus, the existing realities must be assessed as they really are and not as they seem to some selected few while our response need to aim at building, restructuring, salvaging, constructing and making rather than shifting blame or destroying. Joharis Window throws more light into this whereby an individual will be helped by others to come to knowledge and realization of the facts about self and life. A situation in which both the blind and subconscious areas of the Window will blend and a new world and better persons emerge.

“There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens....”

The number of confirmed cases of Covid-19 have soared on daily basis globally with hundreds of thousands casualties recorded. This deadly disease turned pandemic was first diagnosed at Wuhan in China late 2019 and has swung many medical experts into actions to see to its curtailment. Several measures have also being imposed by the government to contain it but the harder

¹Ecclesiastes 3:1

the measures the more it spreads. Up till date, all efforts for its cure are on trials and errors which make the solution to be rather remote from us. What seems to be a short time battle to control has become a marathon or a long time response. World Health Organization (W.H.O) referred to this virus at initial stage simply as disease, then as epidemic and later as pandemic considering its swift spreading like wild-fire that comes along with the high rate of fatality. W.H.O.'s president held that this pandemic will be with us for a long while. Others say that if the disease subsides at all for a while, it can at any moment rear its ugly head. Without mincing words, the rippling effects of this perilous time are better imagined than experienced. Nevertheless, living with this new virus calls for attitudinal changes in every ramification of our existence:

1. Attitude / Mode of Worship: Human beings are socio-religious animals, even at the very act of denying the existence or presence of God, facts are staring us at face of His indubitably Supremacy over all that exists. Many people are lamenting especially the older folks that the time has come for the extermination of religion whereby the civil authority has to rule on the religious leaders' authorities. The compliance of Vatican City to the government's orders of total lockdown in which other nations follow suit, not only of Christendom but other religious professions, is highly a thing of concern for many with several questions perturbing their minds. The fact remains that the church stands for salvation of souls "Salus animarum" and nothing can displace her stance. She is to lead, to teach and to sanctify – but in the face of trepidation of highly contagious corona virus, every measure that can put it into a halt would not be compromised.

Faith and reason are two sides of a coin; religion is a thing of the heart just as rationalization is a thing of the mind. Jesus retorted the man who brought his mute and deaf' son for healing when he said that "“if you can!’ everything is possible to one who has faith”. Then the father cried out, “I do believe, help

my unbelief!”². In other words, we cannot remove the triad form in the mode of true and authentic worship, namely: the vocation, the incarnation and the communion. The first is that which God calls us to be according to our capacity, the second is our acceptance and readiness to internalize what we believe, and the latter is the consummation of our “Yes” to God. The triad serves as true rungs of a ladder for smooth or rough Christians’ journey, as the case may be, towards a union with God. Saint Theresa of Avila’s *The Interior Castle* may give better explanation on this.

In her *The Interior Castle*, St. Theresa of Avila identifies seven dwelling places in relating her experience of ardent faith that leads to perfect union with Christ. According to her, the first three dwelling places are classified external and without any activity of the soul. It is the time to fan into flame one’s faith while the soul undergoes purification through a life of prayer and self-giving. The fourth dwelling place reveals the illumination phase that precedes the self-knowing. It serves as intermediary state of the conflict with the self-will to accept or to reject God’s love. The last three dwelling places are found inwardly where soul is passive with total submission to God’s will. It is the phase that permits the self-knowledge of God in communion with Him in love³. As a corollary, the four characteristic elements of the first set of believers as specified by the Acts of the Apostles add credence to this:

- All the members follow faithfully the teachings of the apostles
- They have all their goods in common
- They meet together for celebration of the Eucharist (called “breaking of bread”)
- They meet to pray together⁴.

²Mark 9:23-24.

³Kavanaugh, Kieran; Rodriguez, Otilio. (2012) (Transl.). *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*. Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications. Pp. 263-452.

⁴Acts of the Apostles 2:42.

The restriction of movements or lockdown may prevent people of movements at will or to gather at different places of worship, it does not prevent anyone from worshiping his/her God in the heart. “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth”⁵. The human family remains a domestic church where faith, moral, virtues and civility are being taught. Charity begins at home but does not end there. If restrictions prevent anyone from worshiping God, there will be little or no difference when there is freedom. The head of the family must not shy away from his responsibility as the father and priest of his family to herald the teachings of Christ deposited to us by the Apostles of which the Church stands through her character. He must keep his family together by praying and eating together in loving-charity and good-will without failing because:

The Christian family is the first place of education in prayer. Based on the sacrament of marriage, the family is the “domestic church” where God’s children learn to pray “as the Church”, and to persevere in prayer. For young children in particular, daily family prayer is the first witness of the Church’s living memory as awakened patiently by the Holy Spirit.⁶

We must realize that the mode of worship will not remain the same of what we are used to after this pandemic. It will rather take another look of the same contents while the value of faith will have to be all encompassing in its profession and propagation to the next generation. Mindful of the fact that, the Church is not necessarily the concrete structures we see and touch but structures of ourselves and of our beings that exhibit the aura of authentic faith to the outside world.

2. *Socio-Cultural Attitude*: Nature and nurture form a man and each person is a product of his/her society as well as of the age

⁵John 4:24.

⁶Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2685.

he/she lives. Man lives simultaneously in two different worlds: the world of values and the world of actuality. The world of value says: absolute, spirit, transcendence, immortality. The world of actuality says: relative, want, material, necessity. The reality of a person is open to the Absolute, but limited by the relative and then becomes a paradox: other-centered and at the same time self-centered. The psychological integration of three levels of human mind of Sigmund Freud comes to play – id, *ego*, and *superego*. Id is a part of the unconscious mind where many of a person's basic needs, feelings and desires are supposed to exist. Ego is the part of the mind that responsible for the sense of who one is with its constituting components of the actual self and the ideal self and that of its contents of needs-attitudes-values. Superego is the part of the mind that makes one aware of right and wrong and makes one feels guilty if any wrong is done. Nevertheless, let us emphasize on Johari Window. Johari Window was developed by American psychologists, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in the 1950's, calling it 'Johari' after combining their first names, Joe and Harry. The four rectangles represent the four areas of the self:

- A. That which is known to the self and others: public area (conscious)*
- B. That which is unknown to the self, but known to others: blind area (unconscious)*
- C. That which is known to the self, but unknown to others: secret area (preconscious)*
- D. That which is unknown to the self as well as to others: subconscious* area, specially the unconscious and the profoundly preconscious.

⁷Cencini, A. and Manenti, A. (1982). Psychology and Formation. Transl. by Plathara, Anne; Mattappallil, Anne fsp. Bologna: Centro Editoriale Dehoniano, pp.63-64.

* Conscious: expresses the normal area of awareness that one has of oneself or of things as they are present, all that is immediately present or accessible to awareness; Subconscious: comprises all that area of psychic experience which is not present to the actual consciousness of the individual and cannot be evoked at leisure rather it is all that is not known; Preconscious: comprises those psychic contents not immediately present to our consciousness, but which could be brought to awareness through ordinary means – reflection, introspection, examination of conscience, meditation etc.; Unconscious: comprises those psychic contents which can be brought back into our awareness only through professional means e.g. certain psychotherapeutic techniques.

If the projection of W.H.O that epi-centre of Covid 19 might be shifted to Africa in no distant time is true as a result of the slow but geometrical progression in number of the pandemic she is experiencing, we can't but to be our brothers' and sisters' keepers to reduce and curtail the spread. The following may not be out of place:

- Daily hygiene on food, utensils, regular hands and feet nails' cutting, constant hygienic washing with soap and water or the use of sanitizer while maintaining social distancing.
- Emphasis on "Operation do it yourself" – Cook your food, bake your cake, toast your bread, grow your crops and tend your animals etc. with little or no dependence on others.
- Ability to study and understand one's body chemistry and to attend to any infirmity as soon as it is noticed.
- Observing of table etiquettes and developing of a good eating habit.
- Making face-mask's wearing part of our dressing code until pandemic is relatively over.
- Fidelity to the state of life one has chosen: be it celibate or married.
- Review on some of our cultural attitudes and practices that are abhorrent or serve as obstacles to the spirit of time.
- Having courage by not allowing fear to rule our lives. Bearing in mind that courage is not about having the strength to go on about certain things but going on when one doesn't have the strength to do so.

3. *Response / Reactionary Attitude*: William Shakespeare more eloquently in Hamlet said "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so". Psychologist Albert Ellis has expressed the same sentiment: "You largely feel the way you think". This is based on the assumption that "people are not disturbed by things but rather by their view of things". He came to term with this in his theory 'rational-emotive therapy'⁸. Rational-emotive therapy

⁸Albert Ellis and Rational-Emotive Therapy in Hockenbury & Hockenbury. (2013). Psychology (Sixth Edition), New York: Worth Publishers. p. 621.

(RET) of Ellis focuses on changing the patterns of irrational thinking that are believed to be the primary cause of the client's emotional distress and psychological problems. Thus, our responses or reactions to certain stimuli depend majorly on whom we are and the amount of formation we appropriated and internalized. There are no two identical situations in life. The ability to cope with what the situation at hand demands, speaks volume of the level of maturity attained by an individual spiritually, socially, psychologically, and intellectually. Although psycho-physiological, psycho-social and rational-spiritual form three levels of our psychic life, to strike an "equilibrium is a fundamental necessity arising from the simultaneous presence of these three levels in our behaviour. In itself, it is something that really happens as a human being is a physical-relational-rational unity who expresses his/her essential composite nature in every action"⁹.

There is no doubt that the atmosphere in which Covid 19 pandemic operates is quite tense and queer which can make one easily fall away into reactionary when a response is needed. The fact is that times will pass away but human beings remain the same. The capacity to come to term with reality rather than chasing shadow goes a long way in building a good and integral personality of one-self. Less energy will be exerted, more understanding will be reached and serene with peaceful atmosphere will emerge to see a renewed world after Covid 19 pandemic gives way. We should stop creating the situations that would eventually boomerang to taunt us. There is power in positive thinking. If you think positively the result will be positive while negative thinking brings about negative result. We can never substitute dialogue as a surest way to justice, peace and development, even as we battle with Covid 19 pandemic, bearing in mind that if a man's education is finished, he is finished. Thereafter, new song will re-echo: "Not to us, Lord, not to us but to your name give glory because of your faithfulness and love"¹⁰; having grown an immunity to cope with the virus.

⁹Cencini, A.; Manenti, A. (1982). Psychology and Formation. Pp. 19-32

¹⁰Psalms 115:1.

Covid-19: Number Politics and Data Collection in Nigeria Health Sector

BY

Rev Fr Francis Fabidun

Abstract

Data collection was one among the numerous issues that became manifest in Nigeria with the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. This inadequacy reflected in other areas within the country with adverse effects on different aspects of the people's life. This paper examined the negative effects of the poor culture of data management in Nigeria. This is done with particular reference to the difficult of contract tracing of those who came in contact with the index case. It argued that such problem could have been averted in the first instance, if the country had a good attitude of keeping adequate data in every sector. Through a historical survey of issues relating to data collection particularly census in the country, the paper showed that deficiency in data management is an age long problem in Nigeria. It argued that this deficiency in data processes has taken its turn on the country, and it is doing a disservice to the entire system. It is, therefore, recommended that government at all levels need to brace up in their responsibility toward effective and efficient data management. One way to achieving this is that all agencies in the Nigerian government that are responsible for data collection should learn the importance and practice of data collection as it is being done in advance nations. Furthermore, government can collaborate with private bodies that are into data collection with the aim of achieving better results in this regard.

Keywords: Data collection; Covid-19 pandemic; index case; census, contract tracing

Introduction

Evidently, the outbreak of Coronavirus (Covid-19) exposed the inadequacies in government structures in countries around the world. However, the situation among African countries is compounded because of the lack of data. Data collection is an indispensable element in the 21st century and it is considered as an asset of immense value. Data collection is also an indispensable element as far as scientific and technological developments are concerned. This is evident in medicine as a sector that employs the procedures of science and technology in its procedures and activities. Therefore, deficiency in data processes in such a sector could best be considered a disadvantage and disservice to the entire system. This will significantly slow down the outcome of the final study, and lead to waste of resources.¹ Consequently, this paper examines data collection in the Nigerian health Sector because it is the sector that is at the forefront of the Covid-19 experience in Nigeria. The experience revealed the height of deficiency in data collection within the country as evident in the rigour the health sector went through in the management of Covid-19 cases in Nigeria. The paper further argues that the situation in the health sector is an instance of the prevalent challenge in other sectors within the country with regards to data management. This is substantiated with the inability of the country to give an up-to-date figure of the Nigerian population. Thus, making her to rely solely on 2006 population census as the point of departure for population estimations. The submission of this paper is that data collection is a problem in Nigeria and some other African countries as a result of negligence and lack of commitment to basic responsibility both at the individual and governmental levels. Therefore, it is pertinent that all hands must be on deck in order to effect a positive and lasting change.

¹Mary Adejo, Problems of Data Collection in Nigeria and their Possible Solutions, <https://www.legit.ng/1216674-problems-data-collection-nigeria-solutions.html> Retrieved on 30/05/2020.

Information and Data Collection

It is generally said that information is power. To be informed is to have an awareness of basic details of a particular thing. It is having the necessary data at one's disposal; the availability of what is important to know at a given time. This situates information with human consciousness. Consciousness is the quality of being aware of something. In his writings on consciousness, Daniel Dennett stresses the connection between information and awareness in many forms of life, and discusses the impact of information on consciousness. In a certain sense, he considers information as referring to an intentional stance.² To a large extent it can be said that information determines the tread of an individual's action. For instance, the moment a child becomes aware that hot objects hurt, the next line of action on the basis of such information is for the child to restrain from any hot object. That is why Madden opines that information, in connection to awareness, "is widely regarded as being a property of living organisms".³ Non-living organisms cannot be attributed with awareness.

This above idea can also be found in Information Science where information is regarded as a property of all living organisms. However, Information Science considers information as a property humans share with lower animals. Information is not exclusively limited to human capacity, but an activity humans share with non-humans such as animals. Wyatt and Sullivan define information as the data and knowledge that humans and intelligent systems need to support their decisions.⁴

Nonetheless, humans are the only species capable of information as a scientific activity. Only human activities translate

²Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*. London: Penguin, 1993, p. 24.

³Andrew Madden, "A Definition of Information" in *Aslib Proceedings* Vol 52, No.9, 2000, 343 – 349.

⁴AtherAkhlaq et al., "Barriers and Facilitators to Health Information Exchange in Low- and Middle-Income Country Settings: A Systematic Review", in *Health Policy and Planning*, vol. 31, 2016, pp. 1310 – 1325, doi: 10.1093/heapol/czw056 <https://academic.oup.com/heapol/article-abstract/31/9/1310/2452989> Retrieved on 01/06/2020

information into data. So, data becomes information as a result of the interpretative activity of people. Hence, information can simply be considered as processed data. As a chain of activities, information involves collection and collation, processing and storage, updating, retrieval and usage of data. This chain of activities reveals the deliberate and purposeful dimensions of information and its relationship with data collection.

It is instructive to note that the word “data” is the plural of the Latin word datum translated as ‘something given’ which is from the neuter past participle of dare ‘give’. Kohler defines datum as any single observation about a specified characteristic of interest. It is the raw material for data collection. It could be univariate, bivariate or multivariate depending on whether it contains information on one variable only, on two variables, or on more than two as the case maybe.⁵ Data refers to “things known or assumed as facts, making the basis of reasoning or calculation.” Data is divided into two types - quantitative and qualitative data.

Surendran defines quantitative data as any quantifiable information that can be used for mathematical calculation or statistical analysis. This form of data helps in making real-life decisions based on mathematical derivations. This category of data is in the form of numbers e.g. percentages, comparison, etc. Quantitative data are used to answer questions like how many? how often? how much? This data can be validated and verified. While qualitative data refers to the data that approximates and characterizes. Such data can be observed and recorded, and it is non-numerical in nature. This type of data is collected through methods of observations, one-to-one interviews, conducting focus groups, and similar methods. Qualitative data in statistics is also known as categorical data i.e., data that can be arranged

⁵Heinz Kohler, *Statistics for Business and Economics*, 2nd ed., Illinois: Scoot, Foresman and Company, 1985, p. 9.

categorically based on the attributes and properties of a thing or a phenomenon. They are in the form of words, e.g. description of quality, appearance, etc. The difference between qualitative and quantitative data is qualitative data does not include numbers in its definition of traits, whereas quantitative data is all about numbers.⁶

Sakovich defines data collection as the ongoing systematic process of gathering, analyzing and interpreting various types of information from various sources. In general, data collection is done for research purposes in order to understand the full picture of an area of interest and to build a foundation for decision-making.⁷ Adejo defines data collection as the process of collecting and evaluating information on various topics, established systematically. It provides the answers to the actual question and assesses the results.⁸ According to this definition, data collection is simply the capacity to gather and evaluate information, this entails that we gather all possible information and evaluate their truth value as well as certainty. Hence, data collection is a natural phenomenon. Humanity has a long history of data collection evident in her culture and socialization, basically it can be individualistic, personal, simple and oral depending on the context. However, as human society grew bigger, it became more complex. It can therefore be said that data collection is as complex as the society whose activities constitute the content of data collection. This complexity makes data collection the pre-occupation of different areas of study, and an area of interest for different disciplines. That is why Adejo stated that data collection component can be of all areas of study, such as physics, social

⁶Anup Surendran, "Qualitative Data - Definition, Types, Analysis and Examples", in QuestionPro, <https://www.questionpro.com/blog/qualitative-data/> Retrieved on 01/06/2020.

⁷Natalia Sakovich, "The Importance of Data Collection" in Healthcare, 2019, <https://www.sam-solutions.com/blog/the-importance-of-data-collection-in-healthcare/> Retrieved on 30/05/2020.

⁸Adejo M., Problems of Data Collection in Nigeria.

sciences, humanities and business, which can help to take the significant points of all the collected information.⁹

To serve as a valid source of information, collection of data needs to be carefully done using the best means available. Hence, activities of data collection demands employing the best possible means, instruments and agents. To be up-to-date, data collection must move with the trend of time.

Nigerian Experience of Data Collection

Data collection has been a serious challenge in Nigeria both in the private and public sectors of the country, a situation that has made many Nigerians to question the credibility of data collection in the country. AbiodunOloyedePopoola, one of the media crew in the Covid-19 Presidential Task Force, during the briefing on 1st of June, 2020 expressed partial skepticism concerning availability of data and the ability to combine data with science in handling the Covid-19. She cynically asked: “Data and science in Nigeria? Do we really have the data? How possible will it be to use data in Nigeria and how effective will it be? Do we have reliable data? These series of questions capture the precarious situation of data collection in Nigeria.¹⁰

According to Adejo, poor quality assurance; wrong investigation methods; choosing an inappropriate time; insufficient financing; issues with logistics; lack of equipment and facilities; lack of qualified personnel; problems arising due to site work; protocol violation when collecting data and systematic errors are some of the factors responsible for poor data collection in Nigeria.¹¹ As a matter of fact, the problems highlighted are serious impediments to reliable data collection, and they are capable of producing research findings that hampers the process of effective formulation of policy. This is because data is the most crucial in-

⁹Mary Adejo, Problems of Data.

¹⁰AbiodunPopoola, Addressing the Covid-19 Presidential Task Force on Channels Television, June 1st, 2020.

¹¹Mary Adejo

put in research findings. Hence the quality of data collection determines the quality of policy, planning and evaluation.¹² This is evident in the history of population census which clearly shows the nation's inability to appropriately collect and manage data.

A census is a count of everyone who lives in the country.¹³ While a population census commonly refers to the complete count of the persons and housing units found in a country on a fixed date.¹⁴ The main characteristics of population are size, geographical distribution, sex and age divisions, employment and so on.¹⁵ An x-ray of the history of population census in Nigeria reveals that the last national census took place in 2006 with the total number of Nigerians recorded as 140,431,790. It follows that since then Nigeria has not been able to conduct another census. This makes the 2006 census the point of reference despite various issues that raise doubt on its outcome and validity.

The issues raised against the 2006 census include socio-cultural, geo-political and religious beliefs. Socio-political issues are the outcome of tribal affiliation considering the fact that Nigeria is a federation of many ethnic groups of different traditions and cultural practices. This played out in the political arena as figures were apportioned to certain states. This generated concern and controversy among many Nigerians. Kazeem refers to the situation as “politicization of census number”.¹⁶ While

¹²Aliyummani, “How Reliable Are Nigerian Published Statistical Data for Development Planning? Evidence from an Indirect Approach” in *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, Vol. 13, No.8, Pennsylvania: Clarion University of Pennsylvania, Clarion, 2011, p. 1.

¹³John Macionis, and Kenneth Plummer, *Sociology: A Global Introduction*, 3rd ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2002, p. 55.

¹⁴L. Kish, “Statistical Systems: Censuses of Population” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2001 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/computer-science/population-census>. Retrieved on 07/06/2020.

¹⁵William. Brass, “The improvement of the Quantity and Quality of Demographic Statistics”, in Caldwell J. C. and Okonjo C, (eds.), *The Population of Tropical Africa*, London and Harlow: Longmans, Green and Co. Limited, 1969, p. 34.

¹⁶Yomi Kazeem, *African Governments Need to Fix their Problematic Relationship with Data on their Own Countries*. <https://qz.com/africa/1725537/africa-has-a-data-problem-says-mo-ibrahim-governance-report/> Retrieved on 29/05/2020.

religious beliefs prevented some Nigerians from giving the exact number of persons in their household. These issues are indications of a people that undermine the importance of diligence required in data collection and the risk associated with such attitudes

Aside that, the inability of the nation to conduct another census after that of 2006, made government and non-governmental bodies result in estimates in going about matters of serious importance. Estimation, notwithstanding, is allowed within statistical parlance, and it is technically defined as the process of inferring the values of unknown population parameters from known sample statistics.¹⁷ However, this is not appreciated when it is arbitrarily done or adopted in instances where proper census is possible, because estimated figures do not capture neither does it represent the real situation of things. This is coupled with the possibility of error in any estimate. Then, getting the near accurate population of the citizenry is one important duty of government, since without census, there is no other medium the government can embark on policies that can adequately meet the people's needs.

Kazeem alleged that the inability of the government to adequately fund the activities of Nigeria's Statistics Bureau (NBS) [the government agency charged with coordination of data in all government agencies and ministries across the three tiers of government] contributes to problems of data collection. He alleged that plans for Nigeria to conduct another census have, so far, stalled due to lack of funding. In addition to the obvious funding gaps, the agency also lacks strong institutional support from the government.¹⁸ This is because both census counts and modern scientific population censuses have relied heavily on the sponsorship of governments for their satisfactory execution. Government sponsors national censuses and takes full responsi-

¹⁷Heinz Kohler, *Statistics for Business and Economics.*, p. 286.

¹⁸Yomi Kazeem, *African governments Need to Fix their Problem.*

bility for the operations.¹⁹ Government takes total responsibility for the census because of the high cost of conducting census, the provision of a legal basis for census enumeration, administrative requirement, large body of professionals, adequate transportation and so on. These requirements are difficult for any non-government to shoulder. This situation also gives room for the government to manipulate census figures to their interest.

Furthermore, climatic conditions and geographical terrains were also identified among issues that militate against impeccable census in Nigeria. For instance, in the 1952 census heavy rainfall in deltaic and coastal regions of the divisions of Brass, Degema, Ogoni, Opobo and Eket imposed a grave handicap to the successful completion of census counts from those areas. The situation made loose surfaced roads impassable for motor vehicles. This led to estimation and manipulation of figures such that in an instance Degema was given a figure that was three times the size of the estimate.²⁰ This clearly shows the problem with estimation in census.

Also, lack of proper education and information on the significance of census impeded the conduct of credible census in Nigeria. According to Udo, experience during the 1953 count had shown that many people associated census with taxation. Also, there were superstitious fears in some districts that it was dangerous to reveal the size of one's family to a stranger. As a result people under these categories dodged census officers.²¹ On the other hand, there were areas where people increased figures since they saw census as a tool the government uses in knowing where to provide social amenities and to allocate seats in the

¹⁹Emmanuel Omaboe, "The Role of Government in Population Census Projects in Africa", in Caldwell J. C. and Okonjo C. (eds.), *The Population of Tropical Africa*, London and Harlow: Longmans, Green and Co. Limited, 1969, p. 40.

²⁰R. C. Duru Problem of Data Collection for Population Studies in Nigeria with Particular Reference to the 1952/53 Census and the Western Region, in Caldwell J. C. and Okonjo C. (eds.), *The Population of Tropical Africa*, London and Harlow: Longmans, Green and Co. Limited, 1969, p. 72.

²¹R. K. Udo, *Population and Politics in Nigeria (problem of Census-taking in Nigeria Federation)*, in Caldwell J. C. and Okonjo C., (eds.), *The Population of Tropical Africa*, London and Harlow: Longmans, Green and Co. Limited, 1969, p. 100.

legislature. So, enumerators were suspended in some part of the country for listing down more names than they are expected to do.²²

These problems affect the quality of data collection, and provide justification for Okafor's claim that, over the years, Nigeria had been struggling with census problems, which mainly have to do with appropriate data collection and management. This situation has drastically affected the quality of population data made available to the public and by implication, discourages sensitive research ventures which mainly rely on the census data in the country.²³

Data Collection and Management in Healthcare Sector

Considering the complexity of activities taking place within any health facility, one cannot justifiably limit data collection to the information provided by patients at their visit to a health facility. Nkuma-Udah defines data collection in this context as the collection of health-related facts from which information is constructed via processing or interpretation and conclusions drawn. In health care, data are captured about a patient in paper or electronic format during his or her attendance at a hospital, a clinic, community health centre, or his or her admission to a hospital.²⁴

It is expected that patients provide correct information of their medical condition and medical history as this will help health workers in diagnosing and treating such patients. Also, the health workers have the obligation to carefully record and properly store patients' data for easy retrieval and usage if and when necessary whether for the issues pertaining to the patients,

²²R. K. Udo, *Population and Politics.*, p. 101.

²³Samuel Okafor, 2006 Nigeria Population Census and Errors in Age Reporting: A Critical Assessment of the Priority Table, Conference Paper Presented at the Biennial Conference on Interdisciplinary Studies (BCIS) Organized by the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences Godfrey Okoye University Enugu, Enugu State Nigeria, 2016. (Unpop).

²⁴Kenneth Nkuma-Udah, *Health Data Management*, Abuja: National Open University of Nigeria, 2011, p. 1.

health workers, institutions or policy makers. Ohiri et al. hold that for a policy maker to make use of data, the data must be relevant, readily available, comprehensive, timely and current (data availability), and of good quality - accurate, credible, and consistent. These factors constitute the supply side. At the same time, for those at the frontline of the health system to continue generating data, it is important that policy makers review these data, use them to make decisions, and set targets and expectations (demand-side factors).²⁵ This is the standard practice.

This presupposes that data collection and management in healthcare can be especially complex, time-consuming and risky if not done properly. This is further compounded in Nigeria due to lack of uniformity of method in the medical records. Ogunsola lamented the difficulty that comes with this situation.

All we have now is data from the various hospitals and these hospitals used different methodologies that will be difficult to bring together as standardised data. In population rules, some of them are so small that we cannot even use their data because it does not make sense statistically.²⁶

This justifies the claim that health data of acceptable quality are scarce if not unavailable and underutilized in sub-Saharan Africa. Data collected through routine reporting from health facilities (Health Management Information Systems, HMIS) are rarely complete and usually not representative.²⁷

This affirms Obansa's claim that

there is an ineffective and fragmented information system in place. The health management information system is weak and has not been able to provide adequate data and evidence for policy/programme development and implementation.²⁸

²⁵Kelechi Ohiri, et al., *An Assessment of Data Availability, Quality, and Use in Malaria Program Decision Making in Nigeria*, *Health Systems & Reform*, Health Systems & Reform, Vol. 2, No. 4, 2006, p. 4.

²⁶Prof. FolasadeOgunsola is the Chair, Scientific Review Committee, AstraZeneca Research Trust. Quoted by Choma "Tackling menace of poor data collection in Nigeria's health, sector" in *Vanguard* of December 17, 2015. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/12/tackling-menace-of-poor-data-collection-in-nigerias-health-sector/> Retrieved on 29/05/2020.

²⁷Kelechi Ohiri. p.6.

²⁸SumailaObansa., "Health Care Financing in Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* Vol. 4 (1) January 2013, pp. 221 – 236.

This is also supported by the report of a research group led by Bosch-Capblanch, during the group's research it was discovered that the challenges in the Nigerian health sector, particularly as it relates to health managers, are centered around data. The group reported that common challenges of the HMIS in Nigeria included: (i) limited funding and inadequate human resources; (ii) irregular supply of data tools; (iii) lateral data collection by partners; (iv) lack of data analysis at the level of the data collection; and (v) lack of data use in decision making.²⁹ In addition, health policy formulation, human and material resources, underfunding of the health sector, weak facilities/infrastructure, poor motivation of health workers, insecurity challenges, political and bureaucratic corruption, health sector budget, federal governments breach of agreements, use of telemedicine³⁰ were also identified within the sector.

From the above, it is evident that the health sector is not exempted from the problem of data collection, and it is said to be among one of the sectors mostly affected. That is why El-Rufai remarked that “no sectors have suffered more than education and healthcare from our abandonment of development planning in our governance strategies.³¹ According to Obioma, the dearth of standardized data is a great problem in Nigeria and has affected planning on healthcare.³² It is of interest to note that data collection is one among the problems facing the health sector.

²⁹Xavier Bosch-Capblanch, *Characterisation of the Health Information System in Nigeria (Report of Findings)*, Switzerland: Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, 2017, P. 11.

³⁰IshaqOmoleke and BisiriyuTaleat, “Contemporary Issues and Challenges of Health Sector in Nigeria,” *Journal of Health Science*, Vol 5(4), Oct./Dec., 2017, pp. 210 -216.

³¹Nasiru El-Rufai, *No Health, No Wealth* (1), 2011, <https://www.el-rufai.com/no-health-no-wealth-1/> Retrieved on 29/05/2020.

³²ChiomaObinna, “Tackling menace of poor data collection in Nigeria’s health, in sector” *Vanguard* of December 17, 2015. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/12/tackling-menace-of-poor-data-collection-in-nigerias-health-sector/> Retrieved on 29/05/2020.

The health system remains overstretched by a burgeoning population; physical facilities are decaying, equipment is obsolete and there is scarcity of skilled health professionals...the roles of stakeholders are misaligned and coordination systems are weak. These are further compounded by the dearth of data which renders evidence based planning, policy formulation and health systems management weak.³³

The situation in the country is such that the management of the health system cannot give the total number of medical professionals who transfer their service to advanced countries on yearly basis for better appreciation of service and greener pastures.

Health officials and managers do not shy away from this, and would always lament the poor state of things within the sector. For example, in 2009, while the ministry of health was working on the National Strategic Health Development Plan Framework (2009-2015) data collection under the health information system was identified as one of the eight priority areas of concern to improve the Nigerian health system.

The existing gaps in the national HIS include non-adherence to reporting guidelines, poor availability and utilization of standardized tools, dearth of skills for interrogation of data, non-involvement of private providers, etc. Recommended interventions include modernization of the HIS; increased funding to HIS; capacity building at all levels for data collection and interpretation; availability of data collection tools at all levels; collaboration with the private sector; institution of sanctions for defaulters; harmonization of data collecting systems with key indicators; utilization of data to inform policy formulation and programming.³⁴

³³Clara Ejemi, The National Strategic Health Development Plan Framework (2009-2015), Abuja: Twg- Nshdp/Health Sector Development Team, 2009, p. 13.

³⁴Clara Ejemi, The National Strategic.

Financial, lack of infrastructure, alternate sources of electricity, stable and transparent political system, evidence-based decision making culture, secure environment, cultural and environmental factors, and lack of trained human resource are among other challenges within the health sector.³⁵

In particular reference to data collection, Adebayo and Ofoebu identify inadequacy of medical practitioners' proficient in the use of ICT tools; lack of centralized national healthcare database; grossly deficient budgetary allocation for the health sector, lack of proper policy formulation and implementation emanating from bureaucracy and corruption in governmental institutions as the major challenges. They also identify the following as part of the problems in the health sector as regards data collection: poor access to basic qualitative and affordable health care services, mostly pronounced in the rural communities; Poor structural development and lack of maintenance culture which allow waste of resources in terms of finance, equipment and human resources; Difficulties in medical referral system which dis-joints proper follow up and avoid repetition of treatment, and inadequate IT facility and technology.³⁶

Data Collection and the Nigerian Experience of Covid-19

The deficit in data collection is a concern for many in Nigeria particularly during this Covid-19 pandemic. This has been expressed in different avenues. A recent instance is cited earlier: one of the media crew in the Presidential Task-Force on Covid-19 who doubted the authenticity of data collection within the system. Though the coordinator insisted that the team relied on data from Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC).

³⁵Karen Eden, Annette Totten and Steven Kassakian, et al. "Barriers and Facilitators to Exchanging Health Information: A Systematic Review", in *International Journal of Medical Informatics*, vol. 88, pp. 44–51.

³⁶Kolawole Adebayo, and Edward Ofoegbu, "Issues on E-health Adoption in Nigeria" in *I.J. Modern Education and Computer Science*, 2014, 9, 36-46 Published Online September 2014 in MECS <http://www.mecspress.org> Retrieved on 29/05/2020.

According to him, data and decision revolve around science, and data generated by the NCDC was made possible through the help of experts both within and outside the country. This, he believes, has helped to answer questions like: what will be the impact of the pandemic if we open interstates movement? What are the consequences of a continuous restriction of movement in terms of complete lockdown or precision lockdown? This goes to show that a lot of decisions are made based on data.³⁷

However, these claims do not remove the laxity associated with absence of data in the country. This was obvious in the index case of Covid-19 in Nigeria, as the making of progressive moves in combatting the pandemic became a herculean task. Contact tracing was almost impossible. Contact tracing consists of identification and tracking of individuals who have had contact with Covid-19 victims. The aim of contact tracing was to guide the government through its medical experts to spring into action in order to remove possible carriers of the virus from the public, thereby curtailing community spreading of the disease. Nevertheless, there was a serious setback doing this, since the particulars of these persons were difficult to come by. This is compounded by the absence of passengers' manifest at motor parks.

According to Sakovich, accurate information is a powerful tool for the monitoring of patient health conditions in order to provide adequate treatment and prevent the deterioration of health.³⁸ However, in Nigeria, all we could see was a situation whereby getting the medical history of Covid-19 infected patients was an issue because there was no coordinated medical record that could easily provide detailed information of the patient's health history. It is so shameful that this could happen despite the fact that record keeping is a compulsory routine

³⁷The is part of the response of the National Coordinator to the question raised by Abiodun Oloyede Popoola during the briefing of the Presidential Task Force on June 1st, 2020.

³⁸Natallia Sakovich, The Importance of Data Collection in Healthcare

demanded of patients at any visit to medical centers. Such records are usually not processed in a manner that makes them available to those who might need them at any given point in time. This is consequent to lack of comprehensive medical records that indicate the medical status of all Nigerians. Presumably, a number of the Covid-19 confirmed cases had underlying illnesses such as hypertension, diabetes, kidney diseases, HIV, tuberculosis et cetera which were not contained in their medical records. Such illnesses are capable of jeopardizing the health condition of Covid-19 patients, and could even lead to death if not identified early enough and managed properly.

Nigeria Ministry of Health has no database that contains information analysis uploaded to the National Web-portal by all the states and districts across the country, which would have provided the details of patients in such states. But the situation remains pitiable since such is not available. We also have a similar situation in the transportation sector and this also played out during Covid-19 era in Nigeria.

The best practice in the 21st century transportation system places high importance on collection of passenger's manifest (a document where passengers record basic information about themselves). The pieces of information provided in such documents provide some knowledge about those being transported from one point to another. Such information becomes a reference point in case of any eventuality. However, such standard practice is lacking in Nigeria with particular reference to road transportation. In most cases, transporters and commuters ply their trade with almost no regard for some regulation. The implication of this is that there is no information available on a good percentage of those who make use of road transportation. The most unfortunate aspect of this is that road transport is the most available means of transportation in Nigeria. As the most patronized means of transportation, road transportation ought to serve as a means to retrieve information about people. However, this is not so because of the absence of organized data collection in

Nigerian. This was also a problem during the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

At the imposition of lockdown, all in a bid to curtail the spread of Covid-19, the federal government came up with palliative measure to mitigate the hash effects that this might have on Nigerians. Government was clear that such palliatives are meant for the poor and the vulnerable within the various communities. Good as this intention was, it became a serious problem. On the one hand, it was difficult identifying the targeted citizen. Coupled with this was the record of how the palliative was distributed. Government ministries and agencies saddled with responsibility cannot provide a convincing report of their activities. These are further evidences that inadequate data collection debars government activities and reduces the efficacy of its initiatives.

Worrisome Responses to Data Collection during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Consequent to the non-availability of proper data management, both government and non-government agencies resorted to using whatever is available in conducting vital investigations. For instance, in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic and the incidences in Kaduna state, the NMA chairman of the state openly attested to this saying “what is available is what we take”. Furthermore, he said:

Whether we like it or not we have to believe the cemetery attendants and the undertakers because there is no mechanism to which the government is keeping vital statistics, and if you want to argue, you have to argue with the statistics of your mortality and we don't have that...what needs to be done, as a matter of urgency, is to get these statistics right and monitored, we look at its analysis and we take action on them.³⁹

³⁹This was the claim of Dr. SanusiBala, NMA Chairman, Kano State on Channels Television Sunshine Daily on 22 April, 2020.

This portrays a case where the available is not just desirable, but a case that the available is the only thing to fall on even when it is not desirable. However, this does not remove the fact that adopting an approach of this sort takes a whole lot of issues for granted. Such a practice is not conscious of the level of inaccuracy, inconsistency and total lack of education or training of the cemetery attendants. To what degree, therefore, can data collected under such circumstances be considered accurate and valid? Unfortunately, this is the level at which we operate due to the prevailing poor attitude towards data collection in Nigeria.

Another shocking, but a hard reality during the pandemic is the inability to say with precision the total number of hospitals in the country, in their category of primary, secondary and tertiary health centers. The National Health Insurance (NHI), despite the important role it plays in regards to the management of the health sector in the country, could not provide the figures. The only figure about the number of hospitals is that of the 431 owned by the Catholic Church. These were available for release, in view of supporting government-owned hospitals during the pandemic.

This shows what is prevalent in all sectors of the country. This is below the expectation of a nation that has existed for sixty years. It is a justified claim that the culture of data collection is one among the numerous practices that Nigerians have relegated to the background. Perhaps one reason for this is the lack of enforcement policy but this would have been too modest and prudent on the issue, and neither is it justifiable even in the face of the claim that issues of poor data collection is not peculiar to Nigeria alone because it is a problem with most African countries too.

The latest African Governance Report by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation highlights “data challenges” across the continent: only one third of data sources on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators on Africa are from direct country sources and, on average, fewer than 40% of the indicators for the SDGs have sufficient data to track progress accurately on the continent, it states.⁴⁰

It is important to note that poor attitude towards data collection is not a problem in Africa because we are dark skinned, it is, rather, a result of negligence and lack of commitment to basic responsibility both on the individual and governmental level. It is imperative to always remember that inadequacy of data collection is an impediment to government at all levels, and it debars provision of adequate, effective, affordable and efficient health care and other services.

During the pandemic, the Nigerian government embarked on distribution of palliatives as a measure to cushion the effects of the outbreak on Nigeria especially with the lockdown order that started on 30th March 2020. Through the ministry of finance and budgeting, it was reported that vulnerable and indigent Nigerian were given raw cash, food stuff, toiletries etc. But the reality on the ground is a far cry from the promises made; only a small proportion of the population attest to receiving any support.⁴¹ Hence, there were complaints in some quarters on the uneven quantity in the distribution of the palliatives. Palliativesshared was a determined preferential treatment basedon consideration of affinity to political parties, sociopolitical zones etc. all of which constituted the guides for the distribution of

⁴⁰Zainab Umar, African Governance Report 2019: Agendas 2063 & 2030: Is Africa on Track?, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/african-governance-report-2019-agendas-2063-2030-africa-track>. Retrieved on 30/05/2020

⁴¹Bernard Kalu, “Covid-19 in Nigeria: a disease of hunger”, *The Lancet*, 2020, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2213-2600\(20\)30220-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2213-2600(20)30220-4) 02/06/2020. Retrieved on 30/05/2020.

palliatives. Hence, the problem of preferential treatment was partly due to the modality adopted to share them while a bulk of the problem pertains to data collection.

The deficiency in data collection in Nigeria has caused a lot of setbacks in regards to development and this has dire consequences on the Country. Therefore, it is important that every sector braces up to correct this anomaly of data collection.

Recommendations

It is imperative that the health sector be more committed to creating a functional and reliable health database that will truly contain correct information of the health status of people living in the country. Records in the database need to credibly reveal the correct status of citizens' data such as; age and gender, contact information, geographical localization, occupation etc. These are necessary as they help in providing information about all persons within the shores of Nigeria, and making those details readily available and easily accessible. A right step to begin this is through computing of citizens' bio-data at the designated centers which should necessarily include health facilities.

For effective data collection, it is pertinent that the government mobilizes the Private Sectors to be proactive in their collaboration with the government. This will enhance the process and management of data in the country. That explains why National Strategic Health Development Plan Framework (2009-2015) emphasizes the need for collaboration between the government and private sector. As reality has shown, such collaborations yield remarkable outcomes. For example, in the privately owned transportation firms, passengers' manifest is readily available to record necessary information of passengers. Also, in such firms, commuters have access to on-line bookings and several other services are provided with the aid of modern technology. What takes place in the sector is an indication that private involvement in data collection would be a step in the right direction

towards achieving the desired goals in the area of data collection in Nigeria.

Similarly, it is important that the government creates more awareness about the importance of data collection. Such sensitization would assist them to know that data collection is not solely a government responsibility. Citizens can help the government achieve a lot if they take data collection as a commitment that is capable of yielding them benefits. This commitment would require that they provide correct information about themselves in all areas where they are demanded to do so. In addition to this is that citizens register and obtain vital documents and certificates such as birth certificate, certificate of state of origin, health certificate etc. These are documents that contribute to helping the government in accurate data collection. This means citizens need to be responsible and responsive by collaborating with the government and by providing correct and prompt information about themselves. From this we can talk of responsible citizenry, a situation in which everyone considers providing correct information as a duty to the nation. Such an outlook would be a veritable ground for census figures.

Furthermore, the necessity of a census in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized in a country that has been unable to conduct population census in fourteen years which in the long run has posed serious questioning on the credibility of the last national census. More so, this failure to conduct population census runs against the recommendation of the United Nations that a national census be taken at least every 10 years.⁴²

The advantages of regular census are enormous for the general development of a nation. It is the recommendation of this paper that the federal government gives serious consideration to conducting a national census soonest.

⁴²United Nations, Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Census, New York: United Nations Publications, 2008, p. 7.

Data collection is the way to go for every section of the nation. This is because data management determines where the government ought to focus more attention. For this to happen, what is recorded must be a true representation of facts. That is why Sakovich reiterated that decision-making should be based on facts, regardless of industry.⁴³ Inferably, data collection should be devoid of all political, cultural or religious colourations and interference. A balanced data collection is a representation of the true state of affairs without marginalization or exaggeration of any part in favour of another. With the health sector as a focal point, Savarese alludes that:

Effective data governance within a healthcare organization can help you better manage and use data, create processes for resolving data issues and eventually, enable users to make decisions based on high-quality information assets. However, all this begins with better data collection – ensuring that the data that’s collected is accurate, up-to-date, complete and in compliance with regulatory standards.⁴⁴

Such a responsible representation of data collection will help the government in decision making. In the words of Sakovich, “the more accurate the information gathered, the sounder the decisions made, and the better the results that can be achieved”.⁴⁵

As a series of human activities, collection of data places a responsibility on the shoulders of everyone. Government, non-government agencies and individuals within the state are equally responsible for this. On the part of the government, since it is important for decision making and implementation of her policies, government agencies have a duty of ensuring that

⁴³Natallia Sakovich., The Importance of Data.

⁴⁴Cedrick Savarese, “Data Collection is the response of section Challenges in Health-care and How to Overcome Them” in Form Assembly 2018, https://hitconsultant.net/2018/08/13/data-collection-challenges/#.XtRCfsAo_IU. Retrieved on 30/05/2020.

⁴⁵Cedrick Sakovich., “The Importance of Data.”

they collect and keep accurate information of the life of the people under their administration. In doing so, it is necessary that government personnel encourage people to provide correct information about themselves or those about individuals they give information at any point in time. On the other hand, it is a civic responsibility for non- government agencies to ensure that they take proper records of those who make use of their services. Furthermore, such pieces of information must be well preserved and made available for retrieval when need be. In this way, those who do not use government facilities in certain aspects of their life will still have their particulars readily available for use. This places an onus on individuals to provide correct information about themselves at every circumstance, because information is what translates data into knowledge. Patrice Harris puts this in perspective of Covid-19 pandemic as she addresses Americans:

The role of America's physicians in this pandemic is, of course, to care for patients with COVID-19, using the best, most up-to-date evidence available. But as skilled as physicians and other health care workers are, and as hard as they are working in our hospitals and intensive care units, they cannot carry this burden alone. Everyone has a role to play in containing this pandemic. The strategies we are asking the public to universally adopt may seem "simplistic," but they are, in fact, based in science and evidence...Every person in this nation shares accountability in fighting this virus. And we all have a responsibility to do our part.⁴⁶

Moreover, it is important that the government should collaborate with other institutions like Religious and traditional institutions, this is because their leaders are, in most cases closer and more accessible to the people than those in government.

⁴⁶Patrice Harris, "COVID-19: The Importance of Science in an Era of Distrust and Disinformation", National address on COVID-19, 2020, <https://www.ama-assn.org/press-center/press-videos/covid-19-importance-science-era-distrust-and-disinformation>. Retrieved on 02/06/2020.

Being close to the people, they also have influence on them and, being involved in the daily events of the lives of the people, they have previewed facts about the people. Consequently, to arrive at accurate data collection, all recognized leadership should be involved – the traditional and religious leaders. The complexity of data collection coupled with the vast nature of Nigeria’s population requires the conscious effort of all recognized leadership in the country.

The Ministry of Health in Nigeria needs to emulate developed nations on how to be committed to issues concerning data collection. For example, Dr. Patrice Harris, president, American Medical Association highlighted the importance of evidence, data, science and economy. She also pointed out that data increases the confidence of the citizens in government.

Since the beginning at the AMA, we have been talking about the critical need to focus on science and evidence and data, and that really should be all about response. This is not political. This is a public health crisis. And if we use the data correctly we can again get on the other side of this boat. We cannot deny the data; the data and the facts are there and knowing that information really helps us, it does hurt us, data and facts doesn’t, it normally helps. Public confidence goes a long way in getting our economy back on track.⁴⁷

Therefore, there is a need for a change in mentality towards data collection. As a way forward, Healthcare organizations need to re-direct their operations towards a data-driven mentality: Administrators and physicians must be diligent about collecting patient data, marketing departments must base their programs around data insights, and patients must be prompted to provide updated data whenever possible. Making data man-

⁴⁷Dr. Patrice Harris is the president, American Medical Association. This is a quotation from her on one of the Soundbite on CNNDate and Time

agement a priority requires involvement from all players in the healthcare industry – and this can present a challenge.⁴⁸

This calls for conscious and genuine efforts of Nigerian Government in conjunction with the Private sector towards creating a functional database. Health institutions in the country are encouraged to adopt a digitalized method of medical record-keeping at all levels. Information collected from patients should be forwarded to a database managed by an organ in the ministry of health or such assignment could be contracted to reputable data firms to handle. This will go a long way in easing the challenges of the ever-changing data landscape. This will also require that we pay attention to other sectors within the country. The transportation system, particularly road transport, needs some attention and reforms. It is imperative that the ministry of transportation put measures in place to improve the present modes of operation within the country. It needs to incorporate the products of technological advancement in the operations of commuters and transporters. In the interim, the ministry needs to ensure that passengers provide right information about themselves before they move from one place to another. The ministry needs to create a task force that would be charged with ensuring that at every motor park passengers' manifests are always provided. The task force should also see to it that all passengers fill in correct information about themselves. Such a move would make the tracing of passengers' travel history easy.

Conclusion

This paper carefully revealed how advent of Covid-19 exposed deficiency in different sectors of our existence as a nation. It focused on the health sector arguably because it is considered as the most affected sector. From the discourse, it is evident that there was hardly a sector that did not feel the impact of this

⁴⁸John Newman, "What is Healthcare Data Management and Why is it Important?" in Evariant (Healthcare Data Management_Resources), <https://www.evariant.com/faq/why-is-healthcare-data-management-important>. Retrieved on 30/05/2020.

pandemic. Situating its argument in the Nigerian context, this paper argued that the improper management of Covid-19 as an issue in the health sector, was compounded due to the lack of proper data collection. This is substantiated with the claim that data collection is a perennial problem in Nigeria even before her independence in 1960. Population censuses were usually conducted in a manner below the United Nations recommendation, and due to this, the country has not been able to derive the desired result of such exercises. This situation is as a result of the absence of working government policies which ensure or prioritize data management in Nigeria. It was further argued that non-availability of accurate data seems to have a political undertone that is easily manipulated for the desired goals of the political class. The situation is redeemable in the light of the recommendations of this paper and the suggestions from other scholars; that all Nigerians must consider data collection as a necessity and be committed to creating a reliable database in the country.

COVID-19 AND THE CHALLENGES OF OUR COLLECTIVE MEMORY

BY

Rev Fr Peter Egbe

ABSTRACT

In a moment like ours, life is tried and tested. The strong become witnesses to posterity. One would normally hear people say, nothing is new under the sun. This is because people remember things. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we look at memory and the role it should play in dealing with the current problem in view of a better future.

Memory bothers on the areas of philosophy of mind, epistemology and more. It is an ontological issue, about the human person realising a practical and meaningful life. It is hoped that, it opens the mind to ordinary but critical issues of healthier living. It will help those engaged in formation and all peoples. People recount the Nigerian civil war and their awe for war and its dangers. Memories of the Holocaust and the world wars abound. Memory should help us fashion a new-world-order and seek harmony. The-United-Nations-Organisation needs another Charter to re-evaluate its Human Rights Declaration, global relations and discussions on anthropology. The past is our heritage. Memories of them will lead to the desired knowledge for a better future.

Key words: Memory, Relation, Anthropology, Formation, Harmony, Virus

Introduction

In a moment like ours, life is tried and people are tested and the strong become witnesses to posterity. The one thing that makes this very assertion possible is the fact of memory. One would normally hear people say and rightly so that, nothing is *new under the face of the sun*. You hear people say ‘in those days’ and ‘gone are the days’ or ‘in the good old days.’ Even celebrations

of events, seasons, public and personal activities: people talk about in memory of, going memory lane and so forth. However ordinary and complex the implications are, the point is not just the content or the truth of the above claims, but the fact that these sayings are common among people now as it was in the past. Memory make such enormous impact on people that one can say that unconsciously we are affected by memory directly or indirectly. This is because people always remember things. People always recollect things and their impressions make a lot of difference in their life and in the life of their community or the society in general. "Everything a person lives through enlarges the framework of his pre-givennesses, can emerge again in memory whether clearly or obscurely, can affect the ego and motivate action."¹ One can say experience makes the person. This will be ultimate in the realization of the individual in the opinion of the existentialist. There are different reasons people mentally recall things. People remember things because at such moments they have experience(s) similar to what they have experienced in the past and they re-live the experience(s). They remember or are reminded of past experiences because they are impacted and are awakened by the present moment. People also recollect or re-live particular structures of experiences because it becomes routine which they go through on a daily, weekly, monthly and in fact seasonal basis. Such experiences are not restricted to particular sentiments; they either bring joy or they are neutral or even pain. Memory has been studied basically as a personal or private issue. This project recognizes the individual-dimension of memory and goes beyond this personal nuance to a collective consideration. This is not just in the manner of the positive or the social sciences, but a synthetic-speculative approach (research). In the wake of this pandemic of the dreaded coronavirus, I am constrained to look at the power of memory and the role it should play in

¹Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, Second Book, R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer, trans. Dordrecht/Boston/London, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002, pg. 283.

the current confusion and help us to be better prepared for future occurrence of such or similar experiences.

The paper is meant to draw a critical attention to memory as a human capacity that is ordinary and complex. It will emphasise the role of memory in our daily life albeit unknown. It goes to the heart of some of the issues that are often taken for granted without realising the impact they make on our common destiny and our consciousness. Memory influences our decisions and changes the course of action in concrete life-experience. We might take the capacity of memory to influence us for granted but it exerts a lot of pressure on our daily life.

Memory is not just our psychological expression, but it has its own ontological structure. In the discipline of philosophy memory, bothers on the area of the philosophy of mind, even epistemology and beyond. Our task is to establish its ontological nuance, psychological implications and the sociological importance. Our common memory will deal with our lived-experience and our common hope and the heritage and legacy we bring to our world.

The meaning of Memory

What is memory? “Memory. Term used for a variety of systems in the brain with different characteristics. In all cases, however, it implies the ability to reinvoke or repeat a specific mental image or a physical act. It is a system property that depends on changes in synaptic strengths.”² For Bergson,

Memory ... is not a faculty of putting away recollections in a drawer, or of inscribing them in a register. There is no register, no drawer; there is not even, properly speaking, a faculty, for a faculty works intermittently, when it will or when it can, whilst the piling up of the past upon the past goes without relaxation. In reality, the past is preserved by itself, automatically. In its entirety, probably, it follows us at every instant; all that we have felt, thought and willed from

our earliest infancy is there, leaning over the present which is about to join it, pressing against the portals of consciousness that would fain leave it outside.³

In philosophy, memory bothers on the area of the study of philosophy of mind and more. This is not a psychological discussion, but an ontological issue about the human person in the process of realizing a meaningful and practical life. For Bergson again; “These memories, messengers from the unconscious, remind us of what we are dragging behind us unawares.”⁴ We cannot run away from our past as they are what make us what we are today. “What are we, in fact, what is our character, if not the condensation of the history we have lived from our birth–nay, even before our birth, since we bring with us prenatal disposition?”⁵ It is the hope of this project that it will at least open the mind to some of the ordinary issues of our lives that are taken for granted but are critical to our living our common experience in a healthier manner. I have heard people talk about the Nigerian civil war and their memory of it and the awe that they transmit about the danger of wars and the consequences that they leave behind. We cannot forget so soon about the Holocaust from the testimonies even though many were not there; the world wars too; all these indicate something about the reality of memory. These are moments in a long history that are only separated from us by our contingency. Though the movement of events and time is uninterrupted, our participations in them are contingent therefore, interrupted. Hence, the moment we live through now is a critical one and should not pass-by without our taking advantage of it. We need to be conscious of this and inquire. It would give us control over our response to it at the moment and empower us

³Henri Bergson and Arthur Mitchell, *Creative Evolution*, Macmillan and Co., London 1920. Pg. 5.

⁴Ibid

⁵Ibid

for the future. There are critical questions to be asked and issues to deal with.

... two key questions that Henri Bergson sought to establish as the foundation for a philosophical treatment of memory. First, what is the relation between past and present? Is it merely a difference in degree, or it [is [sic] possible to locate the difference between them as one of kind? If we can do the latter, what will this reveal about memory? Second, what is the status of the past? Is it something merely psychological, or might it be possible to ascribe an ontological status to it? In other words, what is the reality of the past?⁶

What is memory? "... *it is our capacity to retain what we sense, enjoy and suffer, and thus to become knowing in our perception and other activities.*"⁷ It is not just a retention for the fact of it, but it goes beyond that to reliving of experiences and making sense of the present and projection in the future. "*This recall of events and facts which enables us to recognize things as our own, is more than just the ability to give correctly an account of them.*"⁸ Memory always involved a movement of the mental state or even our consciousness of such in experiences which accumulate and bear on the present. "My memory is there, which conveys something of the past into the present. My mental state, as it advances on the road of time, is continually swelling with the duration which it accumulates: it goes on increasing – rolling upon itself, as a snowball on the snow."⁹ This is not just a mechanical operation as Descartes would claim, but a systematic and purposeful activity that involves the entire human consciousness and destiny. It is the opinion of Bergson that memory has a teleological implication. Without memory life is, quite literally, devoid of meaning.¹⁰

⁶Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Bergson on Memory*, pg. 61.

⁷Max Deutscher, "Memory", in: *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, pgs. 296 – 300.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Henri Bergson and Arthur Mitchell, *Creative Evolution*, pg. 2.

¹⁰Keith Ansell-Pearson, "Bergson on Memory", in: *Memory*, SUSANNAH RADSTONE, BILL SCHWARZ, eds. Fordham University Press, 2010, 61 – 76 (76). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1c999bq.8>, downloaded on the 20 Apr 2020

Bergson's great text is significant for a number of reasons, including its attempts to demonstrate the ontological status of the past, to provide a genuinely dynamical model of memory's operations, to show the virtual character of (pure) memory, and, finally, its advancement of the argument that memory is not simply the mechanical reproduction of the past but sense. Without memory life is, quite literally, devoid of meaning.¹¹

The concept of memory has been used in different ways at different times. The task of the moment will be to look at this in details.

Historical evolvement of Memory

Philosophy is *locus in quo* of the dynamism of opinions and arguments. In such activities, history is of crucial reckoning. If memory is a critical aspect of the human reality, it is important that the historical evolvement is taking into consideration. Hence this project seeks the understanding of the concept in its historical application to make sense out of its relevance at the moment in view of a future benefit to humanity. Memory is an integral part of human experience. It means wherever human beings live they do so with the heritage of memory. The nuances of such experience may differ from place to place at different times.

...any human being will speak of what they did at some time earlier; children begin to speak spontaneously of what they did the day before, and remark with delight or distress at things they have seen earlier. But memory as a philosophical preoccupation is specific to certain cultural periods; memory as our powers of retention is so central to intelligent activity as to be subsumed under intellect.¹²

As much as the above citation is reasonable and acceptable, there is a mistake that the academia has always been culpable

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Max Deutscher, "Memory", in: Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, op.cit. pg. 296.

of: namely, the tendency of the pretext that it is only when something is written that such thing is intellectual or credible. This is an argument that will hardly enjoy general acceptance, since even the tradition that is written in human investigations reveals that a lot of what was not written can be philosophical and indeed is philosophical. There are two things that are very critical here: the fact that every human person philosophizes in a way. Secondly, memory is not a property of the individual or a right of any group of individuals, neither is it made available in the person as a result of the engagement or its practical application by the individual; but it is a human capacity that is present everywhere human beings exist as long as they live. "It is striking that in two standard compendia of Chinese and of Indian philosophy, there are no entries under memory, remembering, reminiscence or recall. Naturally, there are words used in those cultures which roughly match terms in European languages - ..."¹³ But let us bear in mind and it is open knowledge that even Plato and in fact Socrates his teacher are claimed to have learnt their trade from the Egyptian mystery experts.

According to documented history and as it is with philosophical evolution, the first facts of the presence of memory in philosophical discourse dates back to platonic dialogues. In its different application, it has ontological status and an epistemological undertone. As in *Meno*, Socrates already gave indications of the capacity of memory.

As the soul is immortal, has been born often and has seen all things here and in the underworld, there is nothing which it has not learned; so it is in no way surprising that it can recollect the things it knew before, both about virtues and other things. As the whole of nature is akin, and the soul has learned everything, nothing prevents a man, after recalling one thing only—a process men call learning—discovering everything else for himself, if he is brave and does not tire of search, for searching and learning are, as a whole, recollection.¹⁴

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Plato, *Meno*, G.M.A. Grube, trans. in: *Plato Complete works*, John Cooper & D. S. Hutchinson, Indianapolis/Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, 1997, pg. 880.

Plato only consolidated his position in later works like *Theaetetus* ¹⁵“In place of Plato’s allegory of knowledge as recollection of a state in which knowledge was gained without the impurities of the sensory experience we find this more scientific speculation about possible mechanisms of memory, an idea taking up by his student and successor, Aristotle.”¹⁶

Aristotle sees memory not only as a necessary part of the human person but an exclusive activity of the human being. Its development in Aristotle cuts across all spheres of life – from epistemology to ethical principles which proceed from wisdom, enhancement and accompaniment of wisdom. “Memory, experience, tact, good judgement, sagacity—each of these either arises from wisdom or accompanies it. Or possibly some of them are, as it were, subsidiary causes of wisdom (such as experience and memory), while others are, as it were, parts of it, e.g. good judgement and sagacity.” Aristotle discussed extensively on the topic of memory and the different implications of it.¹⁷

St. Augustine

Memory did not elude the medieval mind. Augustine also contributed to the discussions. It is the opinion of scholars that;

Augustine’s theory of sense perception seems not to be representational in the sense of making it an image or sense-datum the object, or at least the direct object, of perception, his account of memory does seem to be representational. He is inclined to think of what is remembered, or perhaps what is remembered directly, as an image rather than as what the memory image portrays.¹⁸

¹⁵Plato, *Theaetetus*, M. J. Levett, rev. Myles Burnyeat, trans. Plato Complete works, op.cit., pgs. 182ff.

¹⁶Max Deutscher, “Memory”, in: Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, op.cit.

¹⁷Aristotle, *Complete Works of Aristotle*, Revised Oxford Translation, Jonathan Barnes, ed., Vols 1 & 2. New Jersey & West Sussex, Princeton University Press, 1995. On Sleep, 456a 25ff; On Memory, 453b10f; *History of Animals*, 488b 25ff; *Metaphysics*, 980a 29ff; *Eudemian Ethics*, 1248b 2; *On Virtue and Vices*, 1250a 35ff.

¹⁸Gareth B. Matthews, “Augustine”, in: Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy,

The important thing here is the discussion about memory and opinions in history. The project is interested in historical activity rather than particular veracity of the different arguments, except it is of interest to go otherwise. One would assert that **Aquinas** has the same opinion as Augustine when it comes to the issue of memory. It is a part of the human person and much more as result of the fact that the human person has a tripartite-powers: “Only the soul of a human being is analyzed as nutritive + sensory + rational. Aquinas thinks of this soul not as three nested, cooperating forms, but as the single substantial form that gives a human being its specifically human mode of existence.”¹⁹ Where there is abstraction and intellection, memory is inevitable. The argument for the exclusivity that the human person enjoys when it comes to memory is only reinforced by the fact that it is the opinion of Aquinas that ... “the human soul, unlike the souls of plants and beasts, is subsistent: that is, it continues to exist after separating from the body in death.”²⁰ What is the dynamics of the discussions about memory and its role in human existence in the modern and subsequent period? This is the next point to be looked into in this paper.

Modern View about memory

Descartes is usually referred to as the bedrock of the modern period. His view on the issue of memory and the opinion of many others in the modern period is not farfetched. Their opinions ranged from relegating memory to seeing memory *as-conductiosinequanone* of epistemological realism.

In the seventeenth century Descartes excepted memory from his radical questioning of the senses, while his notion of his instantaneous reasoning was to avoid the reliance of reasoning on memory in any case. That all understanding of the past rest-

¹⁹Norman Kretzmann, Eleonore Stump, Aquinas, Thomas, in: Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 1. Op.cit.

²⁰Ibid.

ed on personal memory remained unquestioned by Locke and Hume, ... Memory, as retaining an awareness of what something is like over some finite period of time, for instance, as such a condition of intelligible experience.²¹

It is, however, worthy of note to state that with Husserl, there was a particular intensity in the emphasis of the role of memory in philosophical use. Husserl transformed the term and applied it in varied ways and after that the term assumed a different dimension in every sphere of investigation. It is pertinent to look at some of the ways in which Husserl used the term memory.

For Husserl, memory is an instrument of intentional consciousness which is concretised in remembering. Remembering is a lived experience. Consciousness is always consciousness of something. "In every consciousness we find an 'immanent content.' In the case of contents that are called 'appearances,' this immanent content is either the appearance of something individual ... or appearance of something not in time"²² So remembering is a conscious intentional act that is located in the body as a locus and has to do with perception, duration and it is an unbroken time succession and transcendent.²³ This has a lot of implications in later study as the instrument of memory is concerned. Husserl asked a question and gave an answer:

But, one could object, does the fact not remain that every lived experience, together with its horizon, in its full concretion, is thinkable as repeated? Certainly, we answer, I think it is repeated; but I still think it necessarily as an individual lived experience that is the same as unique, as one and self-same.²⁴

²²Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, John Barnett Brough, trans. Dordrecht/Boston/London, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991. Pg. 80.

²³Ibid,cf. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, op.cit. pg. 353ff. Also Cf. Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, Op.cit., pg. 22f.

²⁴Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, Op.cit. pg. 314.

Memory becomes an awake-ness to the past that perdures in time and po-tents the future. It is a product of consciousness and it animates consciousness in intentionality. It will be difficult if not impossible to talk about consciousness as a stream of active lived-experience without an analysis of memory which makes remembering both a cognitive and a psycho-somatic part of intentionality. “In the now, consciousness has a content of originary lived experiences and a horizon of past ones which is represented in the now in the form of a lived horizon of ‘primary memory,’ of retention, and the originary and the horizational are continuously transformed into one another.”²⁵ There is never a dull moment in the interplay between the past, the present and indeed the future. Intention anticipates either the effective realization of the self in the future and likewise the effective realization of the self of something that is co-present through perception, or the realization of the self of what is past through remembering.”²⁶ Memory is protention and retention, paradoxical and epistemological. ²⁷“Memories emerge as awakenings of components of the subsoil of memory.”²⁸ Indeed, memory is constituted.²⁹“Memory is the re-presentation of something itself in the sense of the past.”³⁰ It is an internal dynamics that does not change the substance of what is remembered, but represents it in its natural state but within extended internal-time difference.

²⁵Ibid. and Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, Op.cit.pg. 123.

²⁶Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis – Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, Anthony J. Steinbock, trans. Dordrecht/Boston/London, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001. Pg. 130.

²⁷Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis – Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, Op.ci.t, pgs. 127/130& Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, Op.cit.pg. 101

²⁸Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis – Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, Op.cit., pg. 245.

²⁹Cf. Ibid.

³⁰Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, Op.cit., pg. 61.

What is essential to the sort of reproductions called memory and expectation lies in the insertion of the reproduced in appearance into the context of the being of internal time, the flowing of sequence of my experiences. The positing normally extends also to what is given objectively in the external appearance. But this positing can be annulled, can be contradicted, and yet memory – or, respectively, expectation – will still remain; that is, we will not cease to speak of memory and expectation, even if we designate the earlier perception or the perception to come as merely supposed³¹

In Husserl's understanding there are primary and secondary memories – they are presentation and re-presentation. But they are always an act of retention.³² We will return to this point eventually under types of memory. But it suffices to state here that the post-modern expression of the concept of memory has a lot to do with the Husserlian understanding and expressions.

Postmodern views about memory

In the view of Max Deutscher, “Remembering is one of the activities by which we hold bodily sway in the world. This approach was developed by Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. Alternatives to mind-centred empiricism were also developed during much the same period within analytic philosophy by Wittgenstein, Ryle and J.L. Austin.”³³ Here, one is dealing with the content and structure of memory.³⁴ The above two citations simply concretise the influence of Husserl on the subsequent discussions about memory and its implications in the different fields of investigations. The paper will look at some of them.

³¹Ibid, pgs. 61/62.

³²Ibid, pgs. 37,43.

³³Max Deutscher, “Memory”, in: Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 6, Op.cit., pg. 297.

³⁴Cf. Edmund Husserl, On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time, Op.cit.pg. 26.

Heidegger explores the opportunity of the Bergsonian and Husserlian study on memory to advance his position on the body as a place of the drama of the human experience. It is interesting to note that for Heidegger, memory as it has to do with temporality is not a clear-cut application and it is not as simple in Heideggerian usage as in Husserl because of the dual influences on Heidegger. When we talk about temporality there are different meanings. If we talk about the past, present and future and regarding memory as used by Husserl it does not exist for Heidegger. This is because being is always in the present and it is being there. So, what is the structure of the past, present and future? “The conception of ‘future’, ‘past’ and ‘Present’ have first arisen in terms of inauthentic way of understanding time.”³⁵ This is because for Heidegger talking about temporality: “In our terminological use of this expression, we must hold ourselves aloof from all those signification of ‘future’, ‘past’ and ‘Present’ which thrust themselves upon us from the ordinary conception of time.”³⁶ It is important to note that temporality is a question of being there and the facticity of the existential experience of being. The difference between Husserl and Heidegger is explained by the influence of Bergson on Heidegger.

Sartre is not far from this Heideggerian view and in fact he only strengthened the position of the existential application of temporality. He opined that:

Thus we have gained nothing by conceding being to the past, for by the terms of this concession, the past must be for us as non-being. Whether the past is, as Bergson and Husserl claim, or is not any longer, as Descartes claims, is hardly of any importance if we are to begin by cutting down all bridges between it and our present.³⁷

³⁵Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, John Macquarie & Edward Robinson, trans. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, Ltd. 2002, pg. 374.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, Hazel Barnes, trans. with Introduction, New York, Philosophical Library, Inc., 1956. Pg. 109.

It follows therefore, that the past is relevant because of the present. Hence, we talk about the presence and value everything and anything with the optics of the present. This is phenomenological and certainly existential. It is phenomenological as a given and it is existential as a concrete individual *presence*. “The past is characterized as a past of something or somebody; one has a past. It is this instrument, this society, this man who have their past. There is not first a universal past which would later be particularized in the concrete past.”³⁸ If there is anything like the past, it has to be as a result of the present and its concreteness. Therefore, our project is critical to the present experience and a way of *peeking* into the future.

Types of memory

In Bergson, we have two principal types of memory. They are mechanical cerebral activities and deliberate recollection. They are both the functions of consciousness. “The past survives, then, under two distinct forms: in motor mechanisms and in independent recollections. Both serve the requirements of the present.”³⁹ According to Ansell-Pearson, only independent recollection is properly speaking can be referred to as memory.⁴⁰ Bergson is very close to Husserl and phenomenological understanding of memory. Just as it is well developed in phenomenological consideration, memory is an independent capacity of the human person different from the activities of the brain. In the view of Ansell-Pearson once again, Bergson opined:

In not wishing to privilege the brain as the progenitor of our representations of the world Bergson shows that he has an affinity with phenomenological approaches. He conceives perception and memory, for example, in the context of the lived body, conceives of cognition as fundamentally vital, not speculative, and grants primacy to action or praxis in our relation to the world.⁴¹

³⁸Ibid. pgs. 112ff.

³⁹Keith Ansell-Pearson, “Bergson on Memory”, Op.cit. pg. 66.

⁴⁰Cf. Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid. pg. 63.

For Husserl, memory forms a major part of lived-experience and it is carried out with the body as a place of action. It is akin to what Bergson opined, but Husserl is not particularly influenced by Bergson. Husserl also went beyond the position of Bergson to particularly diversify the application of memory to more widespread areas. Just like Bergson, Husserl upheld two major types of memory. He referred to as Primary and Secondary memories. Within these two major branches however, there are a lot more nuances than what can be identified in Bergson's position.

In the view of Husserl, memory has to do with perception. However, it is not the same as perception. Perception, primary memory and secondary memory are different but related. Perception is the act of my capacity to harvest and retain information. Primary memory is my capacity to relive my retention without having to go back to the point of raw contact with the object. Whereas, my recalling of the recalled perception and phantasy of it is what Husserl will refer to as secondary memory. Husserl holds:

If retention attaches itself to the actually present perception, whether during this perceptual flow or in continuous union with it after it has completely elapsed, it is natural to say at first ... that the actually present perception becomes constituted as presentation on the basis of sensations and that primary memory becomes constituted as representation [Repräsentation], as re-presentation [Vergegenwärtigung], on the basis of phantasies. Now just as re-presentations can attach themselves immediately to the perceptions, they can also occur independently without being joined to perceptions, and these are secondary memories.⁴²

Husserl's reflection on memory is tied to time and temporal succession. Here he dwells on Brentano's explanation and critique it on the basis of its general framework of consciousness and

⁴²Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, Op.cit. pg. 37.

temporal contiguity. Such becomes relevant because there has to be difference between perception as an objective apprehension and perception as a recollection in idea. “The representation of succession comes about only if the earlier sensation does not persist unchanged in consciousness but is modified in an original manner; that is, only if it is continuously modified from moment to moment.”⁴³ But the case changes when it is about phantasy. “With the shift into phantasy, the sensation receives the continuously changing temporal character; ... But then the sensation itself becomes productive: it produces for itself a phantasy-representation the same or almost the same in content and enriched by the temporal character.”⁴⁴ The problem Husserl had with the position of Brentano’s theory is the emphasis of the psychological over and above other important possibilities like epistemological implication. “It therefore presents itself as a theory of the psychological origin of the representation of time. But it also contains fragments of an epistemological consideration of the conditions of the possibility of consciousness of objective temporality – a consciousness that itself appears ... temporal.”⁴⁵ One can further assert that: “Pointing out succinctly the inadequacy of the one sided psychological approach of Brentano, he combines both the inner capacity analysis with the outer given of the objective world, quality with matter.”⁴⁶ It goes also for the Freudian bifurcation of the composition of the individual’s conscious and unconscious activities.⁴⁷ Husserl sees both the conscious and unconscious as the function of the stream of consciousness in a concrete existent.

⁴³Ibid. pg. 13.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Peter Egbe, *Harmony: A Philosophical Investigation from Phenomenology to Metaphysics*, Pontificia Università Lateranese, Theses Ad Doctoratum in Philosophiae, Rome, 2008. Pg. 60.

⁴⁷Cf. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, Op. cit., pg. 50.

Bergson calls memory “a privileged problem” precisely because an adequate conception of it will enable us to speak seriously of unconscious psychical states. In this respect Bergson anticipates the arguments Freud put forward four years later in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. ... Deleuze contends that Bergson introduces an ontological unconscious over and above the psychological one and that is this that enables us to speak of the being of the past and to grant the past a genuine existence. The past is not simply reducible to the status of a former present, and neither can it be solely identified with the phenomenon of psychological recollection. ... Bergson’s conception of the unconscious does not concern itself with the problems of psychological explanation that so occupied the attention of Freud.⁴⁸

There are other possibilities about the discussion on memory, but here we already see the ontological nature of memory. According to Richard Joyce, Descartes had indicated the possibility of a soulless mechanical being having the capacity of memory. He asserts; “I will outline Descartes’s theory of corporeal memory; my objective is to establish that Descartes held that a purely mechanistic, soulless system is capable of having a memory faculty.”⁴⁹ My opinion about this citation cannot be less than an affirmation because its veracity does not need further proof as recent breakthroughs in the science and technology world can only be footnotes to Cartesian conception. This will be clearer as we substantiate our view on this issue. Nevertheless, let it be put on record here that the importance of the discussion on memory is much more than a faculty. As we have already demonstrated earlier in this paper, it is clear that memory is not a faculty.⁵⁰ With this in mind let us look at other possibilities about memory.

⁴⁸Keith Ansell-Pearson, “Bergson on Memory”, *Op.cit.*pg. 62.

⁴⁹Richard Joyce, “: Cartesian Memory”, in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 35, Number 3, July 1997, pgs. 375-393 (376).

⁵⁰Cf. footnote 3.

Further Discussion on memory

In their work titled “memory”, MichaelianKourken and Sutton John, went as far as discussing other various kinds of memory and even the issue of identity. In their discussion one obvious fact is that, memory is considered as a faculty. Hence, they presented a number of different forms of memory viz; declarative memory and nondeclarative memory. There are also alternative taxonomies like working memory; prospective memory; autobiographical memory; natural kinds in memory research. The third class is episodicity which has the following: First-order content; second-order content; Phenomenology; Functional perspectives on episodicity and so on.⁵¹ These are very critical because of the advancement of inquiry and especially as move towards artificial intelligence. As space permit some of these issues will be dealt with in some particular details and as deemed relevant to the work.

More than any other area, the metaphysics of memory reflects the trend towards interdisciplinarity noted above, and work in this area sometimes shades into philosophy of psychology (Rowlands 2009) and philosophy of neuroscience (Bickle 2011). ... The central aim of mainstream research on the metaphysics of memory is to develop *a theory of remembering*: a general but informative account of what it is for someone to remember something. As we will see, however, there are multiple kinds of memory. It is unclear whether it is feasible to develop a theory of remembering that applies to all of these, and ultimately it may prove necessary to develop multiple theories of remembering, corresponding to the multiple kinds of memory.⁵²

⁵¹Cf. MichaelianKourken and Sutton John, “Memory”, in: The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/memory/>>. Accessed 23/07/2020.

⁵² Ibid.

It is true that one cannot exhaust all ideas about a particular issue in one paper; hence, a general treatment as above regarding new forms of memory. But it suffices to look at a few of them. The question is: what is a declarative memory?

Declarative memory

Let us begin this item with the following idea which becomes informative in the understanding of the different references that researchers make when it comes to philosophical discussions side-by-side other disciplines.

Philosophers generally distinguish among three main kinds of memory. In early treatments, Bergson ([1896] 1911) and Russell (1921), for example, distinguished between habit memory and recollective memory, while Broad (1925) and Furlong (1951) further distinguished between recollective memory and propositional memory ... These distinctions align reasonably well with those drawn by a taxonomy which, originating in psychology, has increasingly become standard in more recent philosophy ⁵³

Declarative memory "... involves the encoding, storage, and retrieval of content that the subject can, at least in principle, bring to consciousness; ..." ⁵⁴This means that memory is the exclusive affair of the individual. Declarative memory according to the same source is further divided into various forms. "Declarative memory, in turn, is divided into episodic memory, corresponding roughly to recollective memory, and semantic memory, corresponding roughly to propositional memory." ⁵⁵There is another side to it. This is the nondeclarative memory.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

Nondeclarative memory

“Nondeclarative memory is usually defined in negative terms: a form of memory is declarative if it involves the encoding, storage, and retrieval of content that the subject can, at least in principle, bring to consciousness; it is nondeclarative if it does not ...” consequently, one is the opposite of the other. This research by Michaelian Kourken and Sutton John, is very enlightening but inciting as well. In the opinion of this paper, they have been able to expose the greatest struggle of philosophical inquiry since the modern time and that is the issue of fragmentation. It is not only fragmentation, but the absolute authority given to the individual is also a problem of the modern era. “Locke ([1689] 1998)—who was perhaps anticipated in this by Spinoza (Lin 2005)—discussed the idea that what makes a person at a given time count as the same person as a person at an earlier time is that he remembers the earlier person’s experiences.” One cannot reduce the human person to a windowless monad as we have seen in the case of Descartes and Leibniz. We are individuals, but one is able to understand his or her individuality because of the presence of others. Hence, it will be presumptuous to isolate and absolutise the individual. It is pertinent at this point to look at how to synchronize this project and recourse will be made to harmony.

Memory and Harmony

It holds even without mention that at the background of every discussion and research is a philosophical nuance. Hence the principal concepts of this investigation are linked by this perennial philosophical truism. Harmony, Phenomenology and Metaphysics have their philosophical accentuation in every culture and studies. The onus is on researchers to harness the riches of the human creative capacity to organise this newness in research method that the present century and beyond offers to humanity in whatever fields of study whatsoever. Therefore[,] har-

mony proposes both a philosophical disposition and an assiduous research attitude.⁵⁸

The idea of this project besides other things is a re-awakening of a collective consciousness in order to be able to have a cohesive world and a concerted willingness to constant dialogue. A dialogue that opens the human mind to the perennial symphony of our common heritage. The idea is a common acknowledgement of what contingency imposes on us, as one can express in the existentialists' term of *facticity*; accept the fragments of our *fallenness* and harness the potency of our strength to build a common monument for our age and reap the exaltation of posterity. Here, history becomes lived-experience that inundates and illumines the path of our common inquiry. What role has history to play?

Collective Memory and History

This paper accepts the concept of memory that takes account of the recollection of the past in whatever form as a tool to enlighten the life of the present and make possible projection in estimation for the good of the future. This is particularly important as a result of the present circumstances of the new coronavirus – 2019. In the view of the Fourth Edition of Webster's New World College Dictionary, history is "what has happened in the life or development of a people, country, institution, etc. ... a systematic account of this, usually in chronological order with an analysis and explanation."⁵⁹ Records are kept because reference will be made to them. One can justifiably refer to these records as memory of those who kept them or about whom they are kept. "*Philosophy of history is the application of philosophical conceptions and analysis to history in both senses, the study of the past and the past itself.*"⁶⁰ So we can inquire into the studies in

⁵⁸Peter Egbe, *Harmony: A Philosophical Investigation from Phenomenology to Metaphysics*, Op. cit. pg. 34.

⁵⁹Michael Agnes, David B. Guralnik, eds., "History", in: Webster's New World College Dictionary, Fourth Edition, Cleveland, Ohio, Willey Publishing Inc., 2002.

⁶⁰Gordon Graham, "History, Philosophy Of", in: Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 4, op. cit.,pg. 453.

the past and the past itself can be a subject of our investigation. In either case, memory is an underlining prerequisite.

The memory of slavery or the study of slave trade is a very practical example of an experience that is common in the past and this is beyond the memory of an individual to what one can call collective memory. In Nigeria as a country for instance, the amalgamation of the North and South in 1914 is what we refer to as our common life. The Nigerian Nation celebrates every first of October as a memorial or in memory of the same day in 1960. This is a collective remembrance and it is not just about the individual person or persons, but the collective memory of a people called Nigerians. So, history and memory cannot be reasonably separated in any meaningful investigation that merit such credibility. One can then claim that – if there is no history, one cannot talk about memory and if memory is lost, history is annihilated. Is history important to us as a matter of collective memory that enhance life in today's world? Do we need a collective memory and how does it contribute to our commonwealth?

The benefits of our collective memory

- Social Contract is a child of history and its application a product of memory. The evolvement of society and civility which culminate in the United Nations Organisation (UNO) is a product of history nurtured by memory.
 - Globalization is response to the fragility of a fragmented humanity and a check on isolationism, albeit its exploitative side.
 - Common trade that has evolved into global economy (e.g. WTO) is a product of history and a check on fragmented benefits as a result of mutual deceit.
 - The non-proliferation treaty is a product of history and based on the memory of the danger humanity faced in an unchecked acceleration of the production of ammunitions.
 - Cyber security treaties are a testimony to the checks and balances humanity is inventing to regulate internet activities.
- One can go on in the list of the good that collective memory can be to humanity, but the question is: has humanity learnt the neces-

sary lesson from her heritage? The answer to this question is not a straight forward one. One can say: yes, in some way and at the same time say no in another way. Yes, because the above bullet points are a product of collective memory and a good sense and positive use of history. In the same breath one can say the world has not showed sufficient consciousness of the consequences of irresponsible use of our collective memory. The question is what do we need to do?

It is the opinion of this paper that humanity has received from nature and its guidance sufficient resources that will make the world be a beautiful home. But what is obvious is that humanity groans under the burden of a self-inflicted *hardship*. The use of emphasis is to say hardship in this context is not just as a result of material wretchedness, but the seeming hopelessness of the human species in our time. So, the remedy is within the reach of a concerted effort and willingness to re-awaken our common responsibilities.

What we can do

First of all, is the recognition of our contingency and the consequent relevance of a cohesion that cuts across the bounds of human experience. The global submission to what can be regarded as the American ideology or heritage is a result of collective bargaining based on historical antecedents. Such coalition with the American leadership took time to build and gave rise to different monitoring organisations. But what the American system is offering today could be viewed as derailing from that traditional American hegemony. The world is at a crossroad; where she goes from here can already be intuited. If a system is allowed to evolve from the present circumstances and consequent lived-experience, what emerges will be more calamitous than the experiences that led to social-contract society. In the wake of the pandemic of the Coronavirus 2019, the global response and the obvious American instability; what can be done? This question should pre-occupy thinkers and policy makers at the same time. Yet, the world is not static and life-duration does not wait. It is

the view of this paper that the global community should wake up and act. The following action need to be implemented as a matter of urgency.

- The basis of a profitable development is a theoretical background that upholds values and promote integrity. One wonders why the founding fathers of the American world would build their society on the trust they had in God. Yet, today all signs and symbols that depict such foundation are being plundered and set-aside.
- History from the cradle of human development presents purpose driven investigations based on the search for the rationale behind the obvious; now people hold that what is apparent is all that matters and ideologies and organisations have been established as a result. All these need to be seriously looked into and care should be taken to retrace our path of intellectual journey.
- America needs to wake up to her responsibilities of providing a measure of control in global affairs as result of her strategic position and the different global organisations that have evolved over time.
- The present American system and the deterioration into the cold-war experience, that is growing at the moment should be checked with a true dialectic honesty on the part of the various stakeholders in the American society and the global bodies. Governments cannot be allowed to degenerate into despotic situations as a result of bigotry, racism and the pretext of nationalism as it is gradually becoming today.
- Existing global organisations should be strengthened and new accords to care for human environment should be encouraged. The present withdrawals by the United States of America from the different regulatory bodies on climate accords, nuclear non-proliferation treaties and the United Nations Organisation outfits is not a good sign for the moment.

Conclusion

The harmonization of the crisis and the possible antidotes above will necessitate a reconvening of the United Nations Organisation. The dialectics that will follow and honest driven narratives will help to forge ahead in the post covid-19 world. To help address the issues is the critical role of memory. Memory will help to understand that the society had not always been socially organised as we have it today. The global stakeholders will look to history and see how we began to drift from the mind of those who left the semblance of the order we have in the world today and harnessed the opportunity of the moment to reconcile our journey so far.

The world has been shut down for some timenow because of the outbreak of the coronavirus 2019 and the moment becomes an opportunity to dialogue and repairs. But if nothing is done and urgently, the new world order might be the expectation of many who are skeptics at the moment. I am convinced that a good sense of memory of the past and humble acknowledgment of human fragility will be a great instrument going forward.

Re-imagining Anthropology for an integrative Priestly Formation in Covid-19 Era

BY

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Abstract

The biggest loss people should fear about Coronavirus December 2019 (covid-19) should be anthropological rather than economic “recession” as many world leaders fidget about. Anthropological recession, in the sense of, surrendering the gains in human understanding the crisis has occasioned.

Responsibly, we see “global solidarity” as one of the major emerging effects of the covid-19 pandemic. It follows a reflection on a new study of man as a creature of God with other creatures (Eco-spiritual Anthropology), as against the ideology of “man” that created God (Anthropocentrism). Also we see in an Integrative anthropology, an anthropology that opens for eco-system and climate change.

Consequently, living in Covid-19 era initiates a new dialogue and approach in Catholic priestly formation and ministry. Emphasis, more than before, have to go to the “human formation” as it is most concerned with candidates’ growth and maturity as a healthy individuals. Individual initiative and creativity have to be harmoniously welcome into the Church’s formation and ministry.

KeyTerms: Re-imagining Anthropology, Anthropocentrism, Eco-spiritual Anthropology or Integrative Anthropology, Priestly Formation, auto-Formation and Internalization of Values.

Introduction

The biggest loss people should fear about the onslaught of Coronavirus December 2019 (covid-19) should be anthropological rather than “economic recession” as many world leaders fidget about. Anthropological recession, in the sense of, surren-

dering the gains in human understanding the crisis has occasioned.¹ Covid-19 serves the call to do ourselves a favour and imagine what is possible, rather than letting us be afraid of the invitation to change and adapt.² Invention, they say, is born of necessity. Covid-19 specifically could be the crisis and the changes of our view of human being, a catalyst that propels a long overdue transformation of our perception of man and his humanness.

Responsibly, we see “global solidarity” as one of the major emerging effects of the covid-19 pandemic. Reverend Father Raniero Cantalamessa, the Preacher of the Papal Household, during the April 2020 pandemic in Rome, wondered, “when, in the memory of humanity, have the people of all nations ever felt themselves so united, so equal, so less in conflict than at this moment of pain? We have forgotten about building walls, global solidarity has become one of the major emerging effects of the covid-19.”³ Such emerging global solidarity calls for an inquiry, a reimagining of our humanity and a new study of man that brings together views beyond modern anthropocentrism. Such a review of our humanity as a creation of God along with other creatures will be against the ideology of ‘man’ that created God. Perhaps, an anthropology that have to open up to climate change and changes in eco-system.

Consequently, living in Covid-19 will initiate a new dialogue and approach to Catholic priestly formation and by implication adaptation of the ministry to a post- covid-19 era. The emphasis now, more than before, has to be on the “human formation” as it most concerns maturity and healthy growth of the individual candidate for priestly ministry . More so, individual

¹Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., “Homily for Good Friday” in the Catholic News Agency (Vatican City-Rome: St Peter’s Basilica, April 10, 2020) from <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/full-texts-frCantalamessa-homily-for-good-friday-97954>. Henceforth: Cantalamessa, “Homily for Good Friday”, April 2020.

²Rashedle Chase, “I’m an educator, and I have 4 things to say about the CDC’s guidelines for reopening schools” in Scary Mommy (May 21, 2020), from <https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/m-educator-4-things-cdc-080514284.html>

³Cantalamessa, “Homily For Good Friday”, April 2020.

initiative and creativity, together seeking for more disposition to the use of modern technology, which has to be harmoniously blended into the program of formation of candidates for Catholic priestly ministry. This blending view will conspicuously display the vocational value of the Catholic priestly sacrifice, over and against the view of priestly ministry as a profession and occupation. Shocking to hear some priests and pastors lamenting over the covid-19 lockdown of public Masses and services, not out of pastoral concerns, but rather fear of economic sustenance of the priests themselves.

As the human, in its entirety and objectivity, is studied by both “phenomenological and transcendental methods,”⁴ and with the ‘new normal’ life of covid-19, this paper explores the following themes: (i) An x-ray of modern anthropology, (ii) Re-imagining the human person, (iii) Re-imagining the priestly formation, and (iv) Evaluation and conclusion. Perhaps, it is worth noting that covid-19 has to be seen as an opportunity that should not be wasted. Either with or without vaccines, reverting to the prior time when this moment has passed should not be the case. In other words, returning to the way things were is the recession we should fear the most.

(i) An X-Ray of Modern Anthropology

Battista Mondin (1926 -2015) wrote that the history of anthropology is considered according to the characteristics which prevailed at a given time, and such can be distinguished into cosmocentric, theocentric, and anthropocentric characteristics. He therefore, enables us to see that the ancient Greek thinkers studied man on the plane of nature, of the cosmos. Hence cosmocentric. Thus, man realizes himself only when he behaves according to the laws of nature.

⁴Battista Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology* (Bangalore-India: Theological Publications in India, 1985), p. 10. Henceforth: Mondin, year and page.

Mondin explains that it was Christian Patristic and Medieval thought that understood man from the theocentric perspective. That the Christian authors studied man on the plane of God, by which man realizes himself by conforming to the laws of God and taking God as his own model.

The concern of this paper and the opportunity of re-imagining the human occurs in the third phase, the anthropocentric. In the modern phase, man is studied in the light of and on the plane of man. Thus, man is deified and placed above God by making him the measure of all things, which implies that there cannot be any scope wider than him.⁵ From the perspective of modern anthropology therefore, man is conceived of as “a bundle of possibilities- man, as an impossible project?”⁶ Mondin may be echoing in the great humanistic path charted by pre-Socratic Protagoras of Abdera (c. 490-420 BCE), who is most famous for his claim that ‘man is the measure of all things’. “Of all things the measure is Man, of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not.”⁷

Mondin is not alone in towing this view that the ‘human person’ is the measure of all possibilities. For instance, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), the German existentialist thinker presupposed, anticipated, and incorporated the view in his philosophy, which is more of an anthropological metaphysics, when he realized that the death of man is the end of all possibilities.⁸

Almost a century before Heidegger, Ludwig Andreas von Feuerbach (1804-1872), a German philosopher and modern anthropologist, conceived human nature as the starting point of his philosophy of religion. Feuerbach went on to say that human

⁵Mondin, 1985, p. 14.

⁶Ibid., title page.

⁷Sextus 7. 60-65, which last locus Diels and Kranz (henceforth DK: English translation in Sprague) reproduce as Fragments 80.B.1 and 82.B.3. in Brian R. Donovan, “The Project of Protagoras” in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1, (Winter: Taylor & Francis publishers, 1993), pp. 35-47.

⁸Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harp and Row, 1962), p. 298.

beings are constructed in such a way that they are needy and searching, intelligent and learning, and able to be both subject and object. In his attempt to humanize God while deifying man,⁹ Feuerbach states that:

the divine being is nothing else than the human being ... freed from the limits of the individual, that is, real physical man, made objective, that is, contemplated and revered as another a distinct being.¹⁰

Feuerbach capped his thought that “in worshipping God, men are really paying homage to their own relinquished essence, viewed at an ideal distance. Man creates God that he returns to worship.”¹¹

Henri de Lubac (1896-1991), a French Jesuit priest and a Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, reflecting modern anthropocentrism, traces the origin of the 19th century attempts to construct a humanism without God, reveals that “the turning point in history will be the moment man becomes aware that the only god of man is man himself.”¹² Perhaps, the moment is here. The reign of populist, nationalist-supremacist, anti-global solidarities and anti- ecological living.

Besides the ungodded anthropocentric nature of modern anthropology, there is an ecological concern of the anthropocentric anthropology of today. Eileen Crist, an Associate Professor, Virginia Tech, USA, has since 2011, been critiquing and confronting anthropocentrism. According to her, this worldview of

⁹Richard H. Bell, *The Humanization of God in Wagner's Ring Cycle: The Composer's Appropriation of the Theology and Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach* (Eugene-Oregon: Cascade Books, 2016), p. 227.

¹⁰Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, Second Edition, trans. Marian Evans (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, Ltd, 1884), p. 14.

¹¹Ludwig Feuerbach, “God is a human invention”, Lecture 1841, cf. *The Essence of Christianity* (New York: C. Blanchard, 1855), online book, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/atheism/history/science.shtml>

¹²Henri de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, edited by Edith M. Riley (San Francisco-California: Ignatius Press, 1995), p. 30.

‘humanity’ is setting society on the precipice of self-induced destruction if “man” does not come to grips with the multiple dimensions of collective hari-kari.¹³ She states that the earth is in the throes of a mass extinction event and climate change upheaval, risking a planetary shift into conditions that will be extremely challenging, if not catastrophic, for complex life. She argues that “man” must scale down and pull back to abandon the notion of human supremacy and dominance in favour of a more gentle relationship with the earth.¹⁴

Beyond the critique of anthropocentrism and invocation of a worldview based on an all-encompassing... belief system of human supremacy, David Barkin, a distinguished University Professor at the Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, suggests that we inquire into the root causes of human greatness with dominance within the ecosphere and domination of the nonhumans. Barkin would want to replace Crist’s invocation of anthropocentrism with capitalocentrism. This is so because, Barkin recognizes the dominant patterns of social organization, consumption, and resource extraction based on the unrelenting pursuit of accumulation by profit seeking entities that shape global economy and public policy internationally and within each of the countries.¹⁵ But Barkin would move further recognizing the plethora of alternative worldviews that guide peoples whose governance systems ensure and deepen their ability as well as a balance between social wellbeing and environmental balance.¹⁶

However, some thinkers queried the image and caption associated with Crist’s perspective of reimagining the human. For such thinkers, it is important to recognize that human su-

¹³David Barkin, “Re: Reimagining the Human” (Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, April 18, 2019) in *Confronting Anthropocentrism*, in *Science*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZkFj9uPKXo>. Henceforth: Barkin, April 18, 2019.

¹⁴Eileen Crist, “Reimagining the Human,” in *Science*, Vol. 362, Issue 6420 (14 Dec 2018), pp. 1242_1244 DOI: 10.1126/science.aau6026 retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-ZkFj9uPKXo>.”

¹⁵Barkin, April 18, 2019.

¹⁶M. Fluente, et al., “Governance from below and environmental justice,” in *Science, EcoLEco*, 52_61, 60 (2019).

premacry is neither culturally nor individually universal, nor is it derived in any straightforward way from human nature. But western civilization has elaborated its most forceful, long-standing expression, and through the West's ascendancy the influence of the worldview has spread across the globe.

“This is unscientific wishful thinking. Humans everywhere, always, believe they are each and together, exceptional. If people continue to blame external influences, like capitalism, agriculture, or western civilization, for human expansionist, invasive, hierarchical behavior, humans will never be able to acknowledge the innate driver for collapse, let alone ameliorate it.”¹⁷

(ii) Re-imagining the Human Eco-spiritual Anthropology

No other educator than Rashedle Chase, who asks his fellow human beings to do themselves a favour and imagine what is possible, and not being afraid of the call to change and adapt. This is because, changing and adapting is literally ... growth.¹⁸ Covid-19, in this present historical context, invites us to open up our imagination toward a new vision of humanity no longer obstructed by the worldview of human supremacy but that which is open to global solidarity. This, of course, requires a new anthropology.

Re-imagining implies to reinterpret (an event, work of art, etc) imaginatively. It means to think about again (a rethinking) especially in order to change or improve. It also means to imagine anew in order; to form a new concept of, or to re-create. For instance, the director reimagined the classic movie for a new generation.¹⁹ It is exactly forming the new concept of an-

¹⁷Gail Maris Zawacki, “Re: Human Nature” in Science, (16 December 2018), retrieved from <http://witsendnj.blogspot.com/2013/11/life-vanishing.html>

¹⁸Rashedle Chase, Scary Mommy, May 21, 2020.

¹⁹“Reimagine” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reimagine>. Accessed 30 May, 2020.

thropology, re-imagining the human person from the perspective of global solidarity, which is what covid-19 has challenged us to do. It follows therefore that for anthropology to re-define its goal, purpose and objective in the world, there is need for the human person to re-examine its relationship with God; its relationship amongst peoples and nations, and its relationship with the environment. All these dimensions are important for a holistic living. Reimagining the human is vital because learning to inhabit the earth with care, grace, and proper measure promises material and spiritual abundance for all.

What do I really mean by re-imagining the human person? I mean rethinking the modern anthropocentric anthropology to some kind of integral ecology. I mean eco-spiritual anthropology or integrative anthropology, which has much to do with eco-spirituality. By eco-spirituality, I understand that “manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the environment; which incorporates an intuitive and embodied awareness of all life, and engages a rational view of person to planet, inner to outer land-scale and soul to soil.”²⁰ This is the definition of eco-spirituality by academics who focused on holistic nurses, with deep spiritual nature and a sense of the importance of the environment. Added to this notion is the environmentalist, Sister Virginia Jones’ idea that eco-spirituality is about helping people experience ‘the holy’ in the natural world and recognize their relationship as human beings to all creation. It brings together religion and environmental activism.²¹

In rethinking the human, in eco-spiritual anthropology, man remains “the measure of all things” but more of, “in a solidarity manner”. The human, as the measure of all things in integrative anthropology or ecospiritual anthropology is still valid in

²⁰Valerie Lincoln, “Ecospirituality: A Pattern that Connects” in *SAGE Journal of Holistic Nursing*, Vol. 18, Issue: 3 (PubMed, Sage Pub., Sept. 1, 2000), pp. 227-244. Accessed from <https://doi.org/10.1177/089801010001800305>

²¹Olga Bonfiglio, “Celebrating Earth Day Through Eco-Spirituality” in *The Huffington Post* (April 21, 2012). Retrieved May 31, 2020.

the sense that dialectical humanism neither contradicts nor nullifies what some thinkers hold and apply; which is that every human individual is a micro-universe of meaning and significance. This is so because it captures the beautiful essence resident in the human phenomenon, which the human individual possesses in itself, the majestic immensity and sovereign infinity of the universe. In other words, man summarizes the universe, and to this end, man could be seen as a social animal that is a micro-universe of infinite possibilities. Thus, the human society, to this end, becomes a conglomeration of micro-universes.²²

Correspondingly, on the other side of the coin is, “in solidarity manner.” Eco-spiritual anthropology deals with solidarity, known as, ecospiritual solidarity or integrative solidarity. A common understanding of the word solidarity refers to a “support by one person or group of people for another because they share feelings, opinions, aims, etc.”²³ The binding clause is that ‘they share feelings, opinions, aims, etc.’ To a larger extent among the humans, there is a global solidarity- which is a call to recognize each individual person as a part of one human family, regardless of ethnic, national, racial, gender, economic, political, or ideological differences. Catholic Social Teaching puts the call to recognize the oneness of humanity more clearly- when she states that global solidarity is when “we all have a common origin having been created in the image of God.”²⁴

²²Joshua J. Mark, “Protagoras of Abdera: Of All Things Man Is The Measure.” Ancient History Encyclopedia. Last modified January 18, 2012. Retrieved from <https://www.ancient.eu/article/61/>. It is good to add here that Joshua J. Mark is a freelance writer and a former part-time Professor of Philosophy at Marist College, New York. He has lived in Greece and Germany and have traveled through Egypt. He has taught history, writing, literature, and philosophy at the college level.

²³A S Hornby, Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, New 8th edition (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²⁴Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Global Solidarity, <https://www.archindy.org/cc//global-solidarity/index.html>

Over and above global solidarity is what I call eco-spiritual solidarity, integrative solidarity or universal solidarity as in Pope Francis' ecological spirituality encyclical: *Laudato Si* (2015)²⁵, which highlights the unity of all creation, both human and nonhuman beings. It is a universal oneness, more than global oneness, that deals with having a common home. "It cannot be emphasized enough how everything in creation is interconnected. This is true of all creation of which humanity is a part..."²⁶ Pope Francis "care for our common home" is very important for this rethinking of modern anthropocentric anthropology.

Laudato Si' has both ecological education and spirituality that would be very relevant for the Covid-19 initiated anthropology, known as ecospiritual anthropology. Chapter six of the Encyclical emphasizes that

many things have to change course, but it is we, human beings above all, who need to change. We lack the awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.²⁷

What is the trouble? Perhaps most fundamentally, the Encyclical stresses that environmental harm is caused by sin understood as broken relationships with God, with our neighbour

²⁵*Laudato Si'* is the integral ecological encyclical document of Pope Francis. The encyclical has the subtitle "on care for our common home." In it, the Pope critiques consumerism and irresponsible development, laments environmental degradation and global warming, and calls all people of the world to take swift and unified global action.

²⁶Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, *On the Care for Our Common Home* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana: St Paul Publication, 2015), nos. 138-155. Henceforth: Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, date & number or *Ibid* and number.

²⁷*Ibid.*, no. 202.

and with the earth itself. These relationships are broken in part because humans presume to take the place of God and refuse to acknowledge our creaturely limitations- a dynamic that causes us to mistake God's command for humans to 'have dominion' over creation (Gen 1: 28), as a license for exploitation rather than a vocation to 'cultivate and care for' God's good gift of creation (Gen 2: 15).²⁸ Hence Covid-19 stands straight to push the rethinking of the modern anthropocentric anthropology to a more inclusive and eco-friendly in ecospiritual anthropology or integrative anthropology. There is no other time better than now for integrative anthropology.

Reimagining the Priestly Formation : Integrative Formation

As Covid-19 pandemic continues, anthropological insights are valuable research and teaching resources for health promotion, disease prevention, and the strengthening of health systems, all for the human being, as body and soul. More so, as anthropology of religion is not about discovering the truth or falsehood of religion, but interested more about how religious ideas express a people's cosmology, reimagining the Catholic priestly formation for a post covid-19 world becomes necessary. By religious ideas expressing people's cosmology, I refer to notions of how the universe is organized and the role of humans within the world.²⁹

²⁸Ibid., no. 66.

²⁹Simon Coleman, "Interview with the Anthropologist Simon Coleman by Marijana Belaj" (Etnoloska Tribina ³⁸, 2015), religion.utoronto.ca>people>faculty>simon>coleman. Retrieved June 4, 2020.

Note: Simon Coleman is currently working as a Chancellor Jackman Professor at the University of Toronto, Department for the Study of Religion. Before this he worked as a Full Professor at the Department of Anthropology, University of Sussex and as a Reader at the Department of Anthropology, University of Durham. Among other awards, in 2012 he was listed as one of the three most-influential Religion researchers in Canada (Globe and Mail, March 27, derived from Hirsch-Index Benchmarking of Academic Research). In the same year his paper 'Prosperity Unbound? Debating the "Sacrificial Economy"', Research in Economic Anthropology (2011, 31: 23-45) was chosen as Outstanding Author Contribution Award Winner at the Emerald Literati Network Awards for Excellence.

Of course, many people study rituals which incorporate symbols, and note how these often help to bring communities together in times of crisis, like covid-19 pandemic or special points in the calendar. The actions of the religious specialists, whether these are priests (like in our case here), prophets, shamans or spirit mediums are also part of our purview here. This is because, in many societies, such specialists, other than religious roles, have important political and economic roles to play as well.³⁰ For instance, just as the President of the United States, Donald Trump, Friday May 22, 2020, ordered all places of worship in the US to open, declaring them essential: “Today, I am identifying houses of worship, Churches, Synagogues, and Mosques, as ‘essential places’ that provide essential services.”³¹ This declaration is not about whether Mr. Trump was making a political statement or courting his constituency, but rather indicates that the role and actions of the religious specialists are essential in the universe.

The essentiality of the service of Catholic priests, and in this case, ‘priest to be’ in Covid-19 world, brings us to the anthropological idea of a new dialogue and approach, a rethinking of Catholic priestly formation and by implication adaptation of the ministry to a Covid-19 era. Emphasis, more than before, has to be on “human formation” as it most concerns maturity and healthy growth of the individual candidate. Pragmatically, the candidate for Catholic priestly formation would have to be creative in the way he responds to the call; for which shall constitute a central piece in the assessment of the initiative of any candidate, who is on the way to answer the call.

This is particularly important as it has been observed that some priests already in the ministry believe and think that

³⁰Ibid

³¹Ebony Bowden and Bob Fredericks, “Trump orders all places of worship to open, declaring them essential” in the New York Post, (May ²², ²⁰²⁰). Retrieved from <https://nypost.com/2020/05/22/trump-order-all-places-of-worship-to-open-declaring-them-essential/>

all they need to do is celebrate public Holy Mass. It is also the reason why so many priests felt afraid, emaciated and emasculated during the covid-19 lockdown, when religious activities, including the celebration of public Holy Mass, were prohibited. Even though, their fear is existential, internalization of gospel values would have moderated the impact. But this fear is because many priests are formed only to the level of compliance to law and authority, at the expense of integrative path that inclusively welcomes candidates' use of initiative and creativity, that results from the internalization of values. This could be pastorally crippling, since such priests will find the ministry boring especially in this era of covid-19 pandemic.

However, the process of achieving internalization of gospel values and creative initiative by the candidate under formation is not a one sided approach. Complementarity is the word. There have to be a free, convincing, and enabling environment that allows for internalization of values. Neither compliance to law and authority nor identification with a group can achieve internalization of values in the anthropology of Christian vocation.³² But in reimagining spiritual formation, in integrative formation, internalization of the gospel value is the goal. By Internalization I mean the “process of adopting a way of behaving or thinking because it is congruent with one’s value system.”³³

When we talk about reimagining spiritual formation, we refer to how people become Christians and live in and by faith. In the 19th century, people thought that the effective way to deepen a person’s spiritual life was by increasing one’s knowledge of God. Even some formators still hold such idea till date. But holding the idea then emboldens Christians to behave as though the spiritual part of a person is a different component that can be worked on and developed in isolation from the rest of the person.

³³Luigi M. Rulla, *Depth Psychology and Vocation* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1990), p. 32. Henceforth: Rulla, *Depth Psychology and Vocation*, p.

However, such approach has been refined and reimagined with great fervour over the last one hundred years and in some ways has just recently hit its stride.³⁴

Perhaps what is reimagined, I suppose, is speaking of spiritual life in dualistic terms as if the spiritual component of a person makes the whole person. The revision should be to work with people in a holistic sense, showing no distinction between the spiritual, emotional, physical, social, professional and private aspects of life. The hope of rethinking is focused on the holistic formation (integrative formation) of people who are in harmony with God in all areas of life, and who seek to live in the way of Jesus in every relationship, every situation, and every moment.³⁵ Fortunately, holistic / integrative formation is achieved systemically based on human formation, as grace is said to perfect nature.³⁶

Many may ask; what has been the model of Catholic priestly formation for decades? “Formator-curriculum” centered formation or “perennialist” based formation? Should it not be the reason for blaming the formators or formation whenever a priest misbehaves? For the unction for functioning is always running down from “above” - the formators. No doubt, I do believe that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of formation. The bishops are responsible for the entire formative process. While the educational community of the seminary forms the “formal formators”, as the diocesan clergy and laity, and diocesan community become the “informal formators”^{37/38}. Where is the place of the

³⁴Doug Pagitt, *Reimagining Spiritual Formation: A Week in the Life of an Experimental Church*. (Missouri: Zondervan Publication Grand Rapids, 2004), p. 20.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 22.

³⁶James T. Bretzke, Latin quotes by St Thomas Aquinas- *Summa Theologiae*: 1,1,8 ad 2, (Collegeville: Liturgy Press, 2003).

³⁷John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, (Nairobi-Kenya: Paulines Publication Africa, 1992), Nos. 65-69. Henceforth: PDV, no.

³⁸Anselm Jimoh, “The Dialectics of Auto-Guided Formation: The Seminarian as an Agent of Formation,” a paper presentation at the International Conference of Formation, at Uhiele, Ekpoma, Edo state, Nigeria: March 19, 2020, p. 5. Henceforth: Jimoh, “the Dialectics of Auto-Guided Formation,” 2020.

formandi (the seminarians) in the formation? Always and only at the receiving end, there have to be a rethinking about their place in formation in order to ensure the internalization of gospel values.

However, from different views and according to the Office of the Vocations Director, Archdiocese of Boston, “it is to the seminarian to open-up and entrust himself to the Church in his formation while he recognizes that he is primarily responsible for his own formation.”³⁹ The Archdiocese of Boston is not alone in this regard that the seminarian is primarily responsible for his own formation. The Catholic Archbishop and Metropolitan of Calabar (Nigeria), Most Rev Joseph Ekuwem, always tells seminarians that 75% of their formation is in their hands. He says this most times he visits the St Joseph Major Seminary, Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria, and even before the new Ratio 2016. He always adds that formation is all about accompaniment, friendly accompaniment for that matter.

Consequently, that the seminarian is primarily responsible for his formation serves to raise the course of integrative formation. That is, “formator-curriculum-seminarian” centered formation, or the famous ‘auto-formation’ or “auto-guided formation,”⁴⁰ (as some have coined the idea as such), considering inclusively the three official block of formation. This is a rethinking from the perennial ‘formator-curriculum’ centered formation, a model that seemed to have turned out many compliant priests in vocation and ministry. With compliance to law and authority, internalization as a process of adopting a way of behaving or thinking because it is congruent with one’s value system, becomes difficult, if not impossible. But how could such compliant

³⁹Office of the Vocations Director, Archbishop of Boston, “What is Seminary Formation?” from <https://vocationsboston.org>. Retrieved June 5, 2020.

⁴⁰Jimoh, “the Dialectics of Auto-Guided Formation,” 2020.

formation be juxtapose with Archbishop Carlos Wong's⁴¹*Foundations of Priestly Formation* (2019)?

For Archbishop Wong, in expounding the new Ratio (2016), states that "it is helpful to note that formation is a process of internalization, in the proper sense, a priestly lifestyle, which aims to ingrain the values that are proper to life and to priestly ministry in the personality of the candidate for the priesthood. That the internalization opposes itself to mere external behaviour and more so, to the simple fulfillment of a series of norms and requisites.⁴² Therefore, this is internalization versus compliant formation. For the first person responsible for his own formation is the seminarian, because, in the future, he will be the subject of ongoing formation. The new Ratio *Fundamentalis* states:

Each seminarian is the protagonist of his own formation, as has already been mentioned, and is called to a journey of ongoing growth in the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral areas, taking into account his own personal and family background. Seminarians are likewise responsible for establishing and maintaining a climate of formation that is consistent with the values of the gospel.⁴³

In the Foreword of the *Models of Priestly Formation* (2019) by Carlos Wong, Archbishop Eamon Martin (the Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland), writes:

Now, more than thirty (30) years later, we have a new edition of the Ratio promulgated on 8 December 2016 titled 'the Gift of Priestly Vocation.' The new Ratio envisions a paradigm shift

⁴²Jorge Carlos Patron Wong, "The Subject of Formation" in *Foundations of Priestly Formation*" (2018) p.3, from www.clerus.va>clerus>Dox. Retrieved June 7, 2020.

⁴³Congregation for the Clergy, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (Rome: L'Osservatore Romano, 2016), no. 130. Henceforth: RFIS, no.

in priestly formation which calls for a considerable rethink of the structures and relationships in priestly formation. While the Conciliar and post-Conciliar documents on priestly formation have provided an excellent framework for bishops and seminaries, the recent *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, together with Pope Francis's various discourses about priestly lifestyle, offers a new vision, requiring new structures - new wine requires fresh wineskins.⁴⁴

To solidify the call for a considerable reimagining of the structures and relationships in priestly formation at the foot of internalization of the gospel values in Catholic priestly formation, the new *Ratio* has this to say: "Seminarians are bound both individually and as a group, to demonstrate and not only in their external behaviour that they have internalized an authentically priestly way of life, in humility and in service of their brothers. This is a sign of a mature choice to give themselves to following Christ in a special way."⁴⁵

Integrative Formation: Auto-Formation

Integrative formation embraces all human agents of formation, including the seminarian (the *formandi*). It is about "formator-curriculum-seminarian" centered formation, a rethinking from the perennial "formator-curriculum" based formation. Hence, the goal of integrative or auto-formation is the internalization of the gospel values of Christ.

It is not surprising to see that some formators have problem with the concept and nomenclature of the idea: auto-formation (self-formation), which for them seem like allowing freedom for a seminarian to form himself or do what he likes during

⁴⁴Carlos Wong, *Models of Priestly Formation: Assessing the Past Reflecting on the Present and Imagining the Future*, Edited by Declan Marmion, Michael Mullaney, Salvador

⁴⁵Ryan (Minnesota: Liturgical Press Collegeville, 2019), p. vi.

RFIS, no. 131.

his initial formation. Contrary to it, the idea is about a seminarian being more responsible for his actions. The concept of self (auto) formation came from Pope John Paul II, in his *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 69:

..., we must not forget that the candidate himself is a necessary and irreplaceable agent in his own formation: all formation, priestly formation included, is ultimately a self-formation. No one can replace us in the responsible freedom that we have as individual persons.⁴⁶

Reflecting on the above quote from St John Paul II, two important phrases stand out to illumine and brighten the object of discourse here. They are: “all formation is self-formation” and “responsible freedom as individual persons.” These phrases can better be grasped and appreciated when viewed from the metaphysics of art. In his lectures in *Philosophy of Art*⁴⁷, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854) identified auto-formation as the power whereby something ideal is simultaneously something real, the soul simultaneously the body, the power of individuation that is the real creative power.⁴⁸ Remembering that the goal of formation is the internalization of the gospel values of Christ. Then, how can the soul be simultaneously the body; and the ideal, (the word) simultaneously be something real (material)?

Schelling located the connection between self-formation and responsible freedom as individual persons to the definition of imagination as he taught that:

⁴⁶John Paul II, *PDV*, no. 69.

⁴⁷Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (FWJ Schelling), *Die Weltalter*, in *Samtliche Werke*, 14 vols, ed. K.F.A. Schelling (Stuttgart and Augsburg: J.G. Cotta, 1856-61). English translation: Jason Wirth, *The Ages of the World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), XXXV.

⁴⁸Friedrich Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst* (1802-1804) (1/5, 357-487, §22). *The Philosophy of Art*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p.32.

Imagination (einbildungskraft) means the power of mutual informing into unity (ineinsbildung) upon which all creation is really based. It is the power whereby something ideal is simultaneously something real, the soul simultaneously the body, the power of individuation that is the real creative power.⁴⁹

Indubitably, the imagination expresses, according to ancient philosophers, the “*principium individuationis*” (the principle of individuation), which Friedrich Nietzsche later in the modern period called the “Apollinean impulse” toward form. This concerns the instant or moment of delimitation; the instant in which something presents itself in its singularity. The German word “ineinsbildung” names the formation or imagination of the manifold into a unity. This unity is the unity of an image as the force of existing as this very singularity.⁵⁰

It should not be forgotten that when Schelling translates the ancient *principium individuationis* into the imagination as the force of the self or auto formation (of the interiority of the art) into the unity of a one, he translates the very sense of the individual. Imagination, consequently, is for Schelling a principle of singularity, the very transformation of individuality into singularity, which can be defined as the vital concept of the individual. However, Schelling puts it this way: “we desire above all not the individual, but rather, we desire more to see its vital conception, the force, the auto formation that something ideal simultaneously something real.”⁵¹

Based on the responsible freedom that individual candidates in formation have, which cannot be replaced, auto formation becomes the key to the internalization of the gospel value.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰John Sallis, *Force of Imagination: The Sense of the Elemental* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), esp. 77-97.

⁵¹Friedrich Schelling, *Über das Verhältnis der bildende kunst zu der natur* (1807) (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1986), p.16.

It becomes the force that make something ideal simultaneously become something real, the soul-the gospel value, simultaneously the body.

The issue of internalization of the gospel values of Christ as the goal of formation serves here a brief highlight on the Anthropology of the Christian Vocations, as well as, on the Depth Psychology and Vocation books (1990) by Luigi M. Rulla, F. Imoda and J. Ridick. These three Depth Psychologists identified three levels in the process of internalization of values to include: compliance, identification and active internalization. Each level, according to them, defines the degree of maturity of an individual in relation to values.⁵² The target is for a morally mature person, one who does things out of one's convictions, and not because one is told to do so by an authority or expected to do so by a group he/she belongs.⁵³

According to them, compliance occurs when an individual accepts influence from another person or group with the hope of gaining some reward or avoiding some punishment controlled by this person or group. Attitudes are not adopted because the individual believes in their content, but simply in order to gain external incentives.⁵⁴ The Depth Psychologists concluded that remaining at the level of compliance in the observance of rules and the practice of virtue is indicative of psychological, moral and vocational immaturity.⁵⁵

At the level of identification, the trio observed that the individual still lives by an external locus of control. The difference between the identification and compliance levels is the underlying motivation. In the compliance level, the individual follows the dictates of authority figures, which may be physically or psychologically present as a voice within him or her

⁵²Rulla, et al., *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, pp. 26-32.

⁵³Richard M Gula, *Reason Informed By Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), p. 124.

⁵⁴Rulla, *Depth Psychology and Vocation*, p. 219.

⁵⁵Rulla, et al., *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, pp. 94-95.

for the singular purpose of gaining love and approval (reward) and avoiding disapproval or unacceptability (punishment). Thus, such people live under the control of others, both present and past. While at the identification level, the motivation is basically to have or maintain a satisfying relationship with the other (authority figure). Identification occurs when an individual adopts another person's or group's beliefs because these beliefs are associated with a satisfying self-defining relationship with this person or group.⁵⁶ The person here still functions within an external control system; operating still, not out of personal conviction, but for self-satisfaction. Thus, the good practice, or living of moral religious values lasts as long as the relationship with the other lasts, although in some cases (internalizing identification), the individual may eventually assume the values into his or her own value system even after the satisfying relationship ceases to exist.

Last of the three processes, the so sought for, and mature level for a well formed priest and religious is the internalization of value; whose more acceptable definition is by Rulla as “the process of adopting a way of behaving or thinking because it is congruent with one's value system.”⁵⁷ In the course of formation, the conducive environment for internalization of values is more in the court of formators. If formators were to see themselves as friendly accompaniments, servants, mothers and nurses to their formandee, internalizing the values of formation could be easier reached, unlike an environment where formation is like military training camps, police colleges, etc. What would be expected if not compliance and identifiable personnel.

Let me commend the great work of my friend, formator and Associate Professor, SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Major Seminary, Bodija, Ibadan, in the person of Reverend Father Anselm

⁵⁶Rulla, *Depth Psychology and Vocation*, p. ¹⁵⁰

⁵⁷Luigi M. Rulla, *Psychological Structure and Vocation* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1990), p. 223. Henceforth: Rulla, PS&V,

K. Jimoh. In his article on “the Dialectics of Auto-Guided Formation: the Seminarian as an Agent of Formation,”(2020), Jimoh did not mean auto-guided as self-guidance in the sense that the seminarian guides himself in his formation, but that the seminarian forms himself following the guidance of his formators and other agents of formation. He clarified that the part of a seminarian in auto-guided formation is his availability and docility to his formation.⁵⁸

More so, Jimoh explained further that the dialectics of auto-guided formation implies the interaction between the formation-given, which constitute the thesis of the dialectics, and the formation-received, which is the antithesis, in the production of the formed, where the formed is the output of the resolution between the thesis and antithesis, is the synthesis. Jimoh concluded that in the dialectics of auto-guided formation, the seminarian’s role as an agent of his own formation (availability and docility) is crucial to how he is formed. If the seminarian is positively disposed, he will be open to the inputs of the other agents of formation and he would allow himself be guided by their inputs.⁵⁹

Even though I appreciate Jimoh’s explanation of auto-formation; first, on the nomenclature- “auto-guided formation”, which I suppose that many formators may tolerate better than ‘auto-formation’ unqualified. Second, the seminarian is conspicuously highlighted as agent of his own formation, at least, in availability and docility. However, the seminarian’s agency in his own formation based on his availability and docility to other agents of formation got me some concern. I think this way because I put before me the process of internalization of values. I think the seminarian should be more involved in his formation. How do I mean by that? I will go straight to the formative or educational ideas of Pestalozzi.

⁵⁹Ibid.

Jean Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) was a Swiss pedagogue and one of the notable Western philosophers of Education. Pestalozzi believed that the teacher's duty was not to impose or bank knowledge on his pupils, but to tend them as a gardener would tend a plant, remove stubborn grasses from the garden, and supply healthy, fertile soil and the right portion of sun, water and other necessary inputs for proper growth. The pupils, in turn, would develop through self-activity, guided by the teacher. Pestalozzi believed that the teacher has to be taught how to develop the child, for the act of good teaching cannot be learnt from book alone, but from practice, listening and trusting the child.⁶⁰

To a large extent I share with Pestalozzi in the role of seminarians in their own formation. I have said earlier that auto-formation or auto-guided formation is integrative, embracing all the human agents of formation, including the seminarian himself. It is “formator-curriculum-formandi” centered formation. Besides, the formation curriculum will include courses on the care for our common home, ecology. For a seminarian cannot be an eco-spiritual priest at ordination, if he has not been exposed to it. No one gives what he has not. I often wonder, where is the place of priests at this pandemic?

Conclusion

Having come thus far, it is important to recognize the opportunity that coronavirus (covid-19) pandemic has offered us in reimagining or rethinking the human. Covid-19 has also asked us not to be afraid of the call to change and adapt, for changing and adapting is literally growth.

In reimagining the modern anthropology through phenomenological and transcendental approaches, we found that modern anthropology is anthropocentric, that is, man is studied by the moderns in the light of and on the plane of man. Man is the

⁶⁰Patrick O. Akinsanya, *Philosophising About Education* (Lagos-Nigeria: University of Lagos Press, 2015), pp. ⁹⁰⁻⁹⁴.

supreme being and the measure of all things, and therefore there cannot be any scope wider than it. Besides man's claim of inventing God and worship what he created in modern anthropology, there is a critique of the worldview of "humanity"- of all-encompassing belief system of human supremacy and dominance, that is setting society on the precipice of self-induced destruction.

Eileen Crist's argument that man must scale down and pull back to abandon the idea of human supremacy in favour of a gentler relationship with the earth is x-rayed. Even though it is my belief in this article that man remains the measure of all things, the author moves further to search and to introduce integrative anthropology with integrative solidarity in this *ecospiritual* anthropology with its ecospiritual solidarity. Rethinking the modern anthropocentrism broadens the horizons to a new vision of *ecospiritual* anthropology, following the call of Pope Francis on the care for the common home.

Perhaps the vision of *ecospiritual* anthropology gets clearer when we hear Pope Francis reminds us that "It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is inter-connected... When we speak of 'environment', what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it."⁶¹ Thus, the scope of this integrative anthropology is widened enough by the advice of an erudite scholar, Albert Einstein (1879-1955), a German theoretical physicist and developer of the theory of relativity. He cautioned:

A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and

⁶¹Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 2015, no. 138.

to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.⁶²

More so, as global solidarity is recognized as one of the emerging effects of the covid-19 pandemic, the reimagined anthropology in ecospiritual anthropology opens up, correspondingly, with its ecospiritual or integrative solidarity or universal solidarity as Pope Francis calls it.

Consequently, as the anthropology of religion is about how religious ideas express a people's cosmology, reimagining the Catholic priestly formation for a covid-19 world becomes necessary. Preparing priests for covid-19 era demands internalization of the gospel values for effective use of initiative and creativity, necessary for adapting to the changing world. It is my stand in this article that more emphasis on human formation by integrative or auto-formation could keep the gospel flag flying. Also, it could push further on the perennialist model of formation, in order to minimize the turning out of compliant priests.

This article made it clear that auto-formation is not about unrestrained freedom for a seminarian to do what he wants, when he wants it and how he wants it, for there is no such freedom in the world. But auto formation is an invitation to integrative responsibility, a responsible freedom, where formators accompany their formandee with compassion and empathy, in imitation of Christ and His apostles, thereby produce men after the heart of Christ. Above all, this article recommends Ecospirituality be a

⁶²Albert Einstein (1879-1955) "his Advice on the Global Oneness Day and United Nations Day October 24th" by the Catholic Climate Covenant (CCC)'s Feast day, concluding their Reflection on 'Who is My Neighbor in Climate Threatened World', with special focuses on the interconnections among immigration, refugees and climate change (Sept. 14, 2018), cf. www.un.org/en/sections/history/history-united-nations/index.html Accessed June 10, 2020.

required and independent course in the course-curriculum of the Seminaries.

Finally, it is historical that covid-19 pandemic invites us to reimagine the human in a register that no longer identifies human invention of God that he turns out to worship, and no longer identifies human supremacy with dominance within the ecosphere and domination over nonhumans. Rather, the present pandemic invites us to open our imagination towards a new vision of humanity,- ecospiritual anthropology that is no longer obstructed by anthropocentrism. But learning to inhabit the earth with care, grace, and proper measure promises material and spiritual abundance for all.