

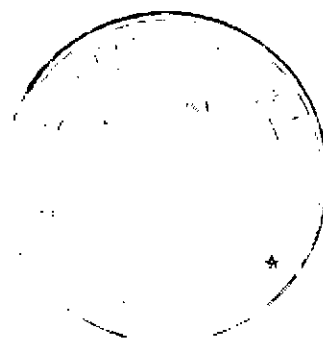
TANGAZA COLLEGE
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

M'BOUA BOGUI DEGNI PHILIPPE, SMA

**SELF-KNOWLEDGE:
AN ESSENTIAL KEY TO EFFICIENT MINISTRY**

Moderator

Mr. Michael G. Smyth

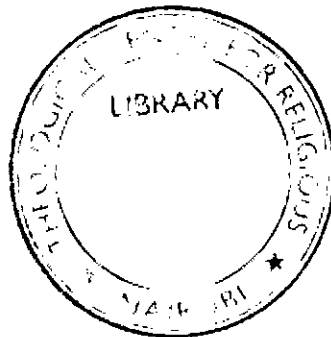


A long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Ecclesiastical Degree of Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology

NAIROBI 2011

DEDICATION

**TO MY SWEET, DEARLY AND LOVING MOTHER DJENEBA TRAORE,
WHOSE LOVE, COURAGE AND DETERMINATION THOUGHT ME NEVER
TO GIVE UP IN LIFE.**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost I realize that my most dependence and reliance is on God, the source of all goodness. Through his Christ and in the Holy Spirit he enlightens us and renews us daily in his love and mercy. Endless praise and honor therefore goes to Him whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ever imagine.

I express my sincere loving gratitude to my mother and to my siblings for their understanding to let me pursue the voice of God in my heart that calls me to serve the people of Africa within the Society of African Missions.

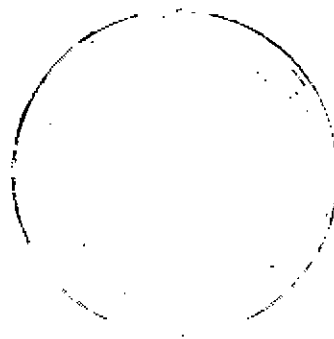
My heartfelt thanks goes to the entire members of the Society of African Missions, all the formators who led my steps and those who are still leading me on the way to priesthood. I am grateful to the many priests who have sown the love of the Job well done in my heart in one way or the other.

Sincere thanks to my moderator, Mr. Michael G. Smyth who has willingly accepted to moderate this work. Thanks for making this work a reality with your enriching advice.

I am mindful of my fellow SMA students both philosophers and theologians for the hardship with shared together during the four years I spent in our House of Studies in Nairobi.

I am very grateful to my friends in Kenya. You helped me with your prayers and goodwill in order to keep going when things were rough and inspiration was low. May God bless you abundantly.

Finally, I wish to thank my classmates Adam F., Yves P., Kevin C., Remy M., and Przemyslay N.



STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, undersigned, declare that this Long Essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ecclesiastical Degree of Baccalaureate in Theology. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed: *M. G. Smyth*.....

Name of Student: M'Boua, Bogui Degni Philippe

Date: *9/23/2011*.....

This Long Essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the College Supervisor.

Signed: *M. G. Smyth*.....

Name of Supervisor: Mr. Michael G. Smyth

Date: *9/03/11*.....

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

0.1 The Concept of Self

The self is a concept which defines what is most personal and unique about an individual. The self includes the body, mind, and spirit; abilities and limitations; and repressed and remembered experience both positive and negative, bodily experience, relational experience, cultural experience, religious experience. I think there is a great need to know and to accept ourselves just as we are. Those of us with power and social standing have subtle ways of hiding our inner handicaps, our difficulties in relationships, our inner darkness and violence, our depression and lack of self-confidence. When all is well we may fall into conceit or pride; when there are difficulties or failures, we can fall into self-depreciation and depression.

How difficult it is to accept our limitations and our handicaps as well as our gifts and capacities. We feel that if others see us as we really are they might reject us. So we cover over our weaknesses. I have experienced my own limits at certain moments, when I realized there was great anger and violence rising up in me with respects to certain members of my family. That truth was first revealed to me by my novice master. He called me one day during my Spiritual year and told me that he could perceive that I was carrying a deep sense of anger. He could see it, he said, in my actions and behaviors. He said that this problem was affecting my relationship with the other members of the community. He told me that I was aggressive. Of course I did not agree with him. I told him I have always been a quiet man and very focused. He asked me just to think about what he had just told me. Since then, I have never been at peace with myself. Deep inside me, I started feeling the need to know why my novice master mentioned to me that I was carrying anger in my mind. What could be the origin of this anger? Some years later, I talked to a

counselor about my troubled mind. He helped me discover things I never suspected in my life. I have discovered that my actions were motivated by a sense of winning approvals, acceptance, and love. I was searching ways to affirm myself, to demonstrate that I was capable, that I was somebody. And to achieve my goal, I have developed an ability to 'sacrifice' my emotions and feelings, and anything that I loved. I ended up losing my sense of self-appreciation. Unless someone else appreciated me or my actions, I was not able to be pleased. My counselling sessions helped me on one hand to understand that the root of this problem was to be found in my early age, through my family background and in the other hand I discovered that I do not have to live my present life with the motive to prove to others, especially some family members, or myself that I was somebody. I learned that I do not have to compete with other people, but that I could work hand in hand with them to have a better result.

I have often come head-to-head with my own handicaps, limitations, and inner poverty. I did not always find it easy, especially when my failure was evident to others. But then I began to realize that in order to accept other people's disabilities and to help them to grow, it was fundamental for me to accept my own. I have, after all, learned something of my own character. I am gradually learning to accept my own shadow areas and to work with them in order to diminish their power over me.

How many people, just like me, are more or less governed by instincts and drives that originate in the beautiful and painful experiences of childhood? How many people still believe that to be a success and to be admired, means that we be competent in what we do? But for most of us, it is not enough just to be good at something. True success, we feel, comes from the recognition of others. This desire for success and admiration can be a good thing, for it encourages us to work well and hard; however, such a desire for success can draw us away from acting justly and

serving others. It is true that everyone needs approval and recognition, but if the lack of these causes intense anxiety and anguish with a feeling of being unworthy and unloved, then something is wrong with the person's self concept. I believe that the development of a healthy personality brings a person closer to God and others.

0.2 Statement of the problem

The pastoral ministry by its very nature is complex and demanding and our seminaries train people as though they must be competent in all its varied functions. Yet we believe there are few who can bring excellence to *all* the functions of ministry demanded by Christian communities.

Experiences proved there are people who fall down in their ability to handle personal issues and challenging situations. Some lack certain administrative and organizational abilities. Others lack the extraversion called for in many parish settings. But at the same time each of those persons can have many capacities and strengths. At best, these bring excellence to some of the functions of ministry and are less capable in the remaining pastoral duties. And we believe this is how it should be. Why? Because we believe the inability of most people to bring competence to every pastoral function is a scriptural reality.

In 1 Corinthians 12: 4 – 12 we read:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working but it is the same God who inspires them all in very one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to

another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are inspired by the one and the same Spirit who apportions each one individually as he wills.

The writer of I Corinthians obviously does not believe that all the gifts of the Spirit reside in one person. We want to affirm a new understanding of the pastorate in which the ministry is shared by the whole body and not just owned by those who are ordained.

Following is a list of the functions of ministry normally expected of the ordained person:

To be a man of prayer, leading in worship; preparing and delivering homilies; teaching both adults and children; visiting the sick, bereaved and dying; accepting outside speaking engagements; administering the church office; conflict resolution/building harmony with the parish; visiting and recruiting new members; counselling persons with personal difficulties; representing the parish in ecumenical affairs; engaging in continuing professional and spiritual development; assisting victims of social neglect, injustice and prejudice; youth ministry; administering sacraments; leading fund-raising drives; leading in parish goal setting and helping in its implementation; recruiting and training parish leaders; visiting people in their homes; promoting enthusiasm for parish activities; etc

When a community calls for a priest, it expects that he will be good at all of the above activities. People tend to have non-rational, unconscious expectations of their resident priest. To get them to think differently, clergy must teach them. It is a wonder anyone responds to such an impossible role. But how do you teach people not to expect so much from you while at the same time maintaining their trust and respect for you?

The above list of pastoral functions may be deceptive in one way. The priest does far more than perform certain jobs. A role encompasses far more than specific functions. For example, being a

good parent involves more than providing food and clothing for children, disciplining and loving them. The role of parent involves *being* as well as *doing*. A parent's character, personality and inner disciplines are more important than any specific things he/she does for the child. Likewise, a good pastor is far more than someone who performs certain functions for parishioners.

A good pastor bears the role with equanimity. He is able to deal with the role projections of parishioners and respond with integrity. The pastor's job is to promote the spiritual maturation of parish members. Yet in order to grow spiritually we must face the fear and pain of our lives.

0.3 Aim and objective

Jean Vanier, the founder of L'Arche and Faith and Light communities once said that "Weakness is at the heart of each one of us. Weakness becomes a place of chaos and confusion if in our weakness we are not wanted; it becomes a place of peace and joy if we are accepted, listened to, appreciated, and loved."¹ If we deny our weakness, we deny a part of our being, we live in illusion. According to Vanier, "to be human is to accept who we are, this mixture of strength and weakness. To be human is to accept and love others just as they are. To be human is to be bonded together, each with our weaknesses and strengths, because we need each other."² These statements sound simple and obvious. However many people find it so difficult to live according to these fundamental truths. When this is proved in the life of seminarians and priests, the consequences can be devastating, not only for themselves, but also for the people that will be entrusted to them.

¹ J. VANIER, *Becoming Human*, 41

² J. VANIER, *Becoming Human*, 41

It is to minimize such damages and to help achieve in the best of one's ability the complex ministry of the pastor that I now wish to focus my attention in studying the matter by underlining self-knowledge as an essential key for an efficient ministry.

0.4 Methodology and Work Overview

I will set my own life experiences as a basic case of my study. I will then search in the field of psychology, ministry, theology and spirituality the necessary elements that will help any minister to have an efficient ministry which will be fueled by his or her self-knowledge.

This work is divided into four parts. The first is the General Introduction. It starts by highlighting the concept of self-knowledge and its effects. The statement of the problem as well as the aim and objective of the study follow. This part concludes with a description of the methodology and scope of the investigation. There are three major chapters and a General Conclusion.

Chapter One examines my inward journey; it tells how the environment in which I was born and lived the early years of my life shaped my personality.

Chapter Two focuses on the interest of building a good relationship with self and with others. It is entitled growth to rational and emotional maturity. The main point here is to try to understand in one hand by what means do people learn to be so displeased with themselves and in the other hand provide an insight that could free us from the environmental imprisonment and help us to grow towards maturity.

In the last Chapter, attention is directed to collaboration as a means for an efficient ministry. This chapter touches on some of the pastoral situations where collaboration and self-appreciation and mutual acceptance are inevitable. Examples are drawn from my personal

experiences as well as the pastoral experiences I witnessed from some priests with whom I lived in countries such as Ivory Coast, Ghana, Benin Republic, Nigeria, Tanzania and Kenya. Finally, the General Conclusion follows.

0.5 Scope of the Study

This work does not describe the process of acquiring self-knowledge, for example, what to do in order to know oneself. Rather, it is intended to challenge seminarians, priests and any pastoral agents (religious and lay) to be conscious of the fact that people are different. These differences, if appreciated, will help as stepping stones for achieving a more fruitful ministry. If disregarded and not welcomed, they could appear as stumbling stones hindering the harmonious atmosphere necessary for an efficient ministry.

CHAPTER ONE

JOURNEY INWARD

1.0 Introduction

Often priests are perceived by people in non-human terms. Priesthood has long been surrounded with assertions and traditions setting apart priests as extraordinary personages in the eyes of people. This is reflected in the way priesthood has been written about, the social reinforcement of priesthood by the Catholic population and also by its share in the general esteem accorded to priests. In the eyes of Catholics, priests are expected to possess very special qualities. They prefer to keep their priests on pedestals. They seem to forget the fact that priests are also ordinary humans like themselves. During the formation they have been encouraged to look up on themselves as separate, called to a very high vocation of service, and asked to transform their own personalities into that of Jesus Christ. "Priest is another Christ". These are the words repeated often during the formation years. This reflects in a very real sense the priests' ideal self-image, and at the same time intimates the staggering demands on their hearts and consciences if they are to fulfill them. By perceiving themselves a super-human figure many priests are locked in a double-bind to themselves and to others. They are not allowed the privilege to be human. Hence, many priests experience a conflict between the 'ideal-self' and the 'real-self. They often seek approval and appreciation from others. The lack of insight about one's personality and inner dynamics often lead to personal frustration and unhappiness. According to Henry Nouwen, priests are wounded healers. Their ministry is to heal the wounded, but they themselves are wounded in many ways. Jesus has given a new meaning to our human frailty and

wounds. He has made his own broken body the way to health, liberation and new life. Thus like Jesus, the priest is called not only to care for his own wounds and wounds of others, but also to make his wounds a major source of his healing power. Psychology would say that self-knowledge and self-acceptance are very important factors in mental health for an efficient ministry.

We need to explore first the natural dynamics between psychology and spirituality for us to more sensibly correlate them both into our thinking.

1.1 Psychology's Interface with Spirituality

One popular psychologist who has surveyed broadly the current spiritual landscape asserts that much of what passes off as contemporary spirituality is nothing but an offshoot of modern psychology³. Whatever the case may be, there is no mistaking. The interface between the two fields is reviving in an ever-increasing measure these days. From the observant eyes of some Christian psychologists, "The swirling winds of postmodernism have created the possibility of using spirituality and psychology in the same sentence"⁴. The truth is that "psychology and religion may be separated entities, yet they share blurred boundaries."⁵ After all, both embody lived experiences that incorporate psychological functioning, making their fusion not merely logical but absolutely necessary.⁶

Still, there was a time when Christianity and psychology were viewed as arch rivals – diametrically opposed to each other and locked in a state of perpetual conflict.

³G. COLLINS., *The Soul Search: A Spiritual Journey to Authentic Intimacy with God*, 2.

⁴M.R. MCMINN – T.W. HALL, "Christian Spirituality: Introduction to Special Issue –part 2," *Journal of Psychology and theology* 29, 3.

⁵Cf. G. FALLER, "Psychology Versus Religion," *The Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 36, 21-22.

⁶E. BECKER, *The Denial of Death*, 275.

Henri Nouwen had an intuitive sense, very early on, that the discipline of psychology could well serve as an important ally of pastoral theology.

Indeed, now it is no longer rare to find professionals from both camps who recognize the need for rigorous study of the relationship between Christianity and psychology as a legitimate pursuit. Many Christian counselors testify to the immense benefits they derive from seriously studying psychology. Openly they acknowledge that selective insights from psychology can be relied upon to deepen the work of soul care. Similarly, many psychotherapists nowadays exhibit less qualms in drawing upon the wisdom and resources of spirituality and applying them without apology to their professional practice.⁷

Theologians, too, are adopting a posture of greater openness to the potential of psychology to contribute legitimately toward doing constructive theology⁸. The current relationship between psychology and spirituality can be likened to an interactive loop even as they inform and influence each other in greater ways. Together, psychology and spirituality continue to forge their complementary relationship.

Henri Nouwen himself recognized with clarity this inherent link between psychology and theology, and he, like many others in the pastoral theology movement of his days, consciously tried to hold both of them in a dialectical tension⁹. He stood convinced that “spiritual dynamics cannot be reduced to.... psychological dynamics.”¹⁰

While remaining appreciative of the numerous insights psychology has offered to the work of pastoral ministry in general, we should also be aware of the danger for Christian spirituality to be

⁷ M.R. McMINN – T.W. HALL, “Introduction,” in *Spiritual Formation, Counseling, and Psychotherapy*, ix.

⁸ Cf. D.S. HARDY, “Implicit Theologies in Psychologies: Claiming Experience as an Authoritative Source for Theologizing,” *Cross Currents* 53, 370-374.

⁹ K.L. HENDERSON, “The Reformation of Pastoral Theology in the Life and Works of H. J. M. Nouwen”, 66.

¹⁰ T. BRENNAN,, “A Visit with Henri Nouwen”, 47.

unwittingly overpowered by psychology. We should know psychology's limitations and not to allow the biblical language to be replaced with a psychological one.

In her groundbreaking book, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling*, Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger argues that the effective practice of pastoral counseling demands a combination of psychological and theological expertise on the part of the counselor: He/she must be adept at speaking two distinct languages –one containing the vocabulary of faith and the other the vocabulary of psychology. In other words, pastoral counselors –and everyone ministering to people– need to acquire bilingual proficiency without necessarily integrating theology and psychology into a single, unified whole. Theology need not become psychological nor psychology become theological¹¹.

1.2 Spirituality and the Self

Pollster George Gallup remarked that instead of focusing on outer space, the people's preoccupation on the first decades of the twenty-first century may well be on inner space.¹² The subject of interiority is indeed fast becoming a new fascination for many. In reality, broad differences continue to exist in the way Christian psychologists and theologians themselves understand and articulate the whole concept of the "self". Thus in approaching this complex matter, we need not be too dogmatic.

The inward journey toward the self, sine qua non for self-knowledge is a journey well worth taking. For one thing, it is not a solitary journey since the self necessarily intersects with the Divine. In Christian history, St Augustine has so eloquently described the nature of this interior experience. With his view of the introspective conscience, Augustine stands out as one of the

¹¹ Cf. D.D. HUNSINGER, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach*, 6.

¹² D.B. WOOD, "Buddhist Practices Make Inroads in U.S.," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 9.

very first Christian thinkers to articulate a psychological understanding of the soul or the self or the heart that is consonant with the knowledge of the triune God.¹³ His articulation is so profound that it recalibrates our focus more clearly toward the coinherent nature of the relationship between psychology and spirituality, which involves knowing self and knowing God.

1.2.1 *Knowing Self, Knowing God*

“I want to know God and the soul” sums up Augustine’s opening prayer in his famous *Soliloquies*¹⁴. For Augustine, the knowledge of self is the first step toward the soul’s knowledge of God. As Henri Nouwen put it very directly: “You cannot know God if you don’t even know who you are.”¹⁵ The contemplative Trappist monk Thomas Merton likens the spiritual life to “a journey in which we discover ourselves in discovering God, and discover God in discovering our true self hidden in God.”¹⁶ Søren Kierkegaard could thus assert: “The more conception of God, the more self; the more self, the more conception of God.”¹⁷

1.2.2 *The “Self” in Varying Perspectives*

At the risk of oversimplification, Christians generally tend to view the self in the extreme: either in the positive or in the negative, as problem or as answer.¹⁸ On the negative side, most people’s construal of the self indicates an inordinate focus inward. Despite certain claims to the contrary, many remain immersed in a highly narcissistic culture in which self is enthroned above all else. As is now more apparent than before, our everyday vocabulary is peppered with endless

¹³ E.T. CHARRY, “Theology After Psychology,” in *Care of the Soul*, 125.

¹⁴ Cf. K. PAFFENROTH, *Augustine’s Interior Dialogue*, 23.

¹⁵ S. KENDRICK, “Christian Century,” 319.

¹⁶ J. Finley, *Merton’s Palace of Nowhere*, 35.

¹⁷ S. KIERKEGAARD, *Fear and Trembling and the Sickness Unto Death*, 221.

¹⁸ Cf. R. WUTHNOW, *After Heaven*, 142, 167.

jargon that begins with the prefix “self”: self-discovery, self-fulfillment, self-actualization, self-knowledge --to include my own topic--, and so on. The self has become not just our main focus but practically our ultimate obsession. We commonly refer to a ‘lost self’ that needs to be rediscovered; an ‘empty or deprived self’ that has to be filled, fulfilled, realized, actualized, and known. This type of overly self-directed, inward mood, according to Jeffrey Hadden, “seems unbridled by any social norm or tradition and almost void of notions for exercise of responsibility toward others.”¹⁹ Psychologist Paul Vitz labels this co-called cult of self as “selfism,” and charges such obsessive inward proclivity a outright idolatry.²⁰

On the other hand, others, like Ray Anderson, insist that only a positive concept of the self can take responsibility for being guilty of sin in a healthy way. Anderson argues persuasively that the self remains in the “image” of God and retains its self-identity through God’s grace and love. The recovery of this self, Anderson adds, is what is promised in the Gospel.²¹ Henri Nouwen declares that from God’s perspective, our true identity as his children is one that is defined by himself and is hidden in the center of our being from where we must live.²²

1.3 Psychology: A Journey Inward

Self-knowledge is integral to the development of spiritual life. Knowing our self does pave the way for us to get in touch with our inner core. “As people on an inward journey”, Elizabeth O’connor reminds us, “... we are committed to growing in consciousness, to becoming people in touch with our real selves, so that we know not only what flows at the surface, but what goes

¹⁹ Cf. J.K. HADDEN, “The Private Generation,” *Psychology Today* 3, 32-35.

²⁰ P.VITZ, *Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worshi*, 126.

²¹ Cf. R.S. ANDERSON, *Self Care: A Theology of Personal Empowerment and spiritual Healin*, chaps. 5 and 6.

²² Cf. H. NOUWEN, “Living in the Center Enables Us to Care,” *Healing Progress*, 53-54.

on in the depths of us²³. This deep part of us is what Henri Nouwen called the inner sanctuary of our being,²⁴ where God chooses to reach in and dwell. Profound God-awareness can lead to self-awareness; deep self-awareness can lead to real conversion. It is this quality of inner transformation that brings about true integration within a person – a deep sense of integrity²⁵.

1.4 My inward journey

My objective in sharing my personal inward journey is to invite many to discover their inner selves, enabling them to deal with their problems, understand their family and friends and cope with the wide variety of interpersonal relationship which we all experience in the modern world. Most of us find it difficult to face up the negative elements in our personality. Over the years we have built up defense mechanisms which enable us to block out our shadow side. Sometimes these are so ingrained that we are no longer consciously aware of them and so do not see them as a problem. But, if we are ever going to discover our personality type and our true selves, it is vital that we courageously face up to the dark side of ourselves, and seek healing and personal growth.

Dr. Maxwell Maltz, a plastic surgeon, discovered that when his surgical arts had removed some physical ugliness or helped to achieve a more pleasing physical appearance, patients frequently undergo a transformation of personality. They became more confident, more outgoing, and exhibited a newly emancipated human spirit. In pursuing his investigation of this phenomenon, the surgeon turned to the inner image, as opposed to the external physical appearance, and discovered that this inner self-image controls so much of human conduct and happiness. The

²³ E. O'CONNOR, *Journey Inward, Journey Outward*, 13.

²⁴ Cf. H. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming*, 16-18.

²⁵ J. IMBACH, *The River Within: Loving God, Living Passionately*, 61.

self-image lies at the root of most human conduct. What is more difficult to accept is that the self-image that each of us is really the product of what other people, rightly or wrongly, have told us that we are.

1.4.1 *My childhood*

Psychologist Paul H. Mussen argued that “many of a person’s motives, feelings, attitudes, and interests are strongly conditioned by the social group to which he belongs, whether social class, or minority, racial, or religious group; anthropology and sociology have provided extremely valuable data about the impact of these elements of social structure on personality, social characteristics, and development.”²⁶ I was born from a very large family. My father had four wives. My mother occupies the third place among my father’s wife. All together, my father had twenty children, one from his first wife, two from his second wife, nine from my mother and eight from his fourth wife. As far as religion is concerned, my father was a catholic and my mother came from a Muslim family. My father comes from the southern part of my country while my mother comes from the center of the country. These details have played a major role in shaping my childhood.

The patristic line of my family never accepted the fact that their son, my father, went ahead and married a “Muslim lady”. In the same way, the parents of my mother especially her father, who was a Muslim, never welcomed this union. So in both side, we, children of my mother never felt a sense of belonging in either part of our family. My father however sent us (the first four children of my mother) to his village in order to attain our primary school. I was the youngest of the group, aged 6. Those years of my primary school have been full of frustrations and lack of

²⁶ P. H. MUSSEN, *The Psychological Development of the Child*, 4.

affection. I grew up with a lot of resentments and anger which I never really showed or shared even with my siblings. As soon as the academic year starts, all my prayers were that it comes at its end so that I go back to my mother's house. My mother is a courageous woman. Despite the fact that my father gave her very little financial supports, she used to work very hard in order to provide for herself -- abandoned by her family -- and also to provide for us her children. Anytime spent at my mother's side was a time of formation. She had great confidence in me and was sharing with me more than any other of my siblings, her difficulties and sorrows. If I am asked what was the central message that I received as a child from my mother I will reply without hesitation: "work hard, be serious, and do not be a 'bad boy'." I quickly learned what the rules of life are and tried hard to put them in practice. By doing so, I won the love of my mother and many significant adults in our neighborhood. This gave me great joy because very often, I was doing whatever was asked of me with extreme precautions and I was doing them in the very best way I could. And so I was always complemented and given approval. With these rules I had my standard in which to judge others.

1.4.2 *My self-image*

The many criticisms I received from my father's people led me to develop a negative self-image of myself, I became resentful and humorless, finding fault with everything. Nothing is ever good enough, not even myself. As a man today, I take life very seriously; I am very sensitive to criticism. I judge myself very harshly than I judge others, and I find it hard to accept compliments. I am stickler for detail, checking and double-checking to make sure everything is correct. I feel there is never enough time in the day and I feel depressed when pressurized too much. I am very impatient and carry a list of frustrations. I like getting things done in my own

way. I am very tense and I find it very difficult to relax. I am always searching ways for my self-improvement. I take pleasure in works well done. I always try to meet all the demands others make on me, because only then I feel loved and appreciated. I work very hard to get rid of my faults. I find I apologize for all sorts of things. It upsets me enormously when people are not fair. I have an inbuilt conscience which continually nags at me. Finding the least flaw in something puts me off. I get upset when things aren't the way they should be. I am a fighter. I like to be right; I don't like to be wrong. I resent it when people don't measure up to what they should be. I can be very strict at times. I am always finding fault and noticing what is missing. When things go wrong I keep analyzing precisely why. I feel everyone should be honest, myself most of all. I object strongly to wasting time. I am continually blaming myself for not being better. I am generally restless, striving continuously for what is beyond my grasp.

It was only recently that I really took time to reflect about my life. I was feeling ever angry against myself. So I came to ask to myself why is it that I can not be happy for a while. Why am I always waiting for others to affirm me before I can appreciate myself? I discovered that I did not really know myself, and that I tremendously lack confidence in myself. Conscious that I am heading towards the end of my formation to be ordained priest, I felt that this essential problem that paralyzes me was to be addressed. I then resolved to meet with some counselors in order to be helped. The discoveries I made out of these counseling sessions have constituted a U-turn in my life. I was in need of being self-confident.

1.5 My Personality type according to MBTI

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a finely tuned psychological instrument, which indicates the direction of an individual's preference for either Extraversion or Introversion, either Sensing or iNtuition, either Thinking or Feeling, and either Judging or Perceiving.²⁷

To summarize the MBTI, the following schema might be helpful. If we remember that for most of us our personality is composed of four of the eight characteristics, we have:

Introvert (inclined to be private)
or
Extravert (inclined to be public).

Regardless of whether we are an Introvert or an Extravert we all need to do two things in life:

A. take in information

by: Perceiving either by:
 Sensing (five senses)
 or
 iNtuition (seeing possibilities)

B. make decisions

by: Judging either by:
 Feeling (emotions)
 or
 Thinking (reason).

Four of the underlined letters are combined to describe a particular type of personality: either E or I, either S or N, either F or T, either P or J.

I discovered according to the questionnaire of the MBTI, that I am an INFJ personality type. That means I am an Introverted iNtuitive Feeling Judging; (Introverted Intuition with

²⁷ M. ROY – K. OTTO, *Personality type and religious leadership*, 11.

Extraverted Feeling). The lines that follow are an exposé on the INFJ type²⁸. It helped me to understand myself better, my strengths and my weaknesses. It also provides me with some suggestions to becoming a better me.

1.5.1 *INFJ Strengths*

As an INFJ, you have gifts that are specific to your personality type that aren't natural strengths for other types. By recognizing your special gifts and encouraging their growth and development, you will more readily see your place in the world, and be more content with your role.

INFJs are extremely insightful, and see things that are not obvious to others. This ability to see patterns and meanings in the world can help the INFJ in many different ways. INFJs usually have a great deal of insight into different people and situations. When given a goal or context, an INFJ is able to generate all kinds of possibilities. They're able to see the problem from many different angles. They understand how others are feeling, and are genuinely concerned with others. This natural empathy and caring helps to be really effective at helping others through problems. In this manner, they make great friends, counselors, teachers, and mates.

An INFJ has a "stick to it" attitude. They're not afraid of hard work, and will put forth a great deal of effort towards something that they believe in. This persistence will help the INFJ to achieve an identified goal. Perfectionistic and idealistic, they always strive for the best. Usually intelligent and able to concentrate and focus, the INFJ can usually grasp difficult ideas and concepts.

²⁸ "Infj personal growth", <http://www.personalitypage.com/INFJ_per.html>,02/10/2010.

1.5.2 *Potential Problem Areas of INFJ*

With any gift of strength, there is an associated weakness. Without "bad", there would be no "good". Without "difficult", there would be no "easy". We value our strengths, but we often curse and ignore our weaknesses. To grow as a person and get what we want out of life, we must not only capitalize upon our strengths, but also face our weaknesses and deal with them. That means taking a hard look at our personality type's potential problem areas.

INFJs are rare and intelligent people with many special gifts. This should be kept in mind as you read some of the more negative material about INFJ weaknesses. Remember that these weaknesses are natural. We offer this information to enact positive change, rather than as blatant criticism. We want you to grow into your full potential, and be the happiest and most successful person that you can become.

Most of the weaker characteristics that are found in INFJs are due to their dominant function (Introverted iNtuition) overtaking their personality to the point that the other forces in their personality exist merely to serve the purposes of Introverted iNtuition. In such cases, an INFJ may show some or all of the following weaknesses in varying degrees:

- May be unaware (and sometimes uncaring) of how they come across to others.
- May quickly dismiss input from others without really considering it.
- May apply their judgment more often towards others, rather than towards themselves.

With their ability to see an issue from many sides, they may always find others at fault for any problems in their lives.

- May have unrealistic and/or unreasonable expectations of others.
- May be intolerant of weaknesses in others.

- May believe that they're always right.
- May be obsessive and passionate about details that may be unimportant to the big picture.
- May be cuttingly derisive and sarcastic towards others .
- May have an intense and quick temper.
- May be tense, wound up, have high blood pressure and find it difficult to relax.
- May hold grudges, and have difficulty forgiving people.
- May be wishy-washy and unsure how to act in situations that require quick decision making.
- May have difficulty communicating their thoughts and feelings to others.
- May see so many tangents everywhere that they can't stay focused on the bottom line or the big picture.

1.5.3 *Suggestions to INFJ for a better life*

To grow as an individual, the INFJ needs to focus on applying their judgment to things only after they have gone through their intuition. In other words, the INFJ needs to consciously try not to use their judgment to dismiss ideas prematurely. Rather, they should use their judgment against their own ideas. One cannot effectively judge something that they don't understand. The INFJ needs to take things entirely into their intuition in order to understand them. It may be necessary to give your intuition enough time to work through the new information so that it can rebuild its global framework of understanding. INFJs need to focus on using their judgment not to dismiss ideas, but rather to support their intuitive framework.

An INFJ who is concerned with personal growth will pay close attention to the subject of their judgments, and their motivation for making judgments. Are they judging something external to themselves, or are they judging something that they have sifted through their intuition? Is the motivation for judging something to be able to understand its usefulness in the world, or to

dismiss it? Too often, an INFJ will judge something without properly understanding it, and with the intention of dismissing it. Seek first to understand, then to judge.

It's not uncommon for the INFJ to express their displeasure with biting sarcasm. They become so emotionally upset that they are generally not aware of how their behavior comes across to others. Even if the consequences of their attitudes and behaviors are pointed out to them, they may be agitated to the point that they don't care. This kind of situation can be devastating to the INFJ on many levels, and should be avoided. There isn't much that can be done once the INFJ has reached the point where they are too upset to care about others, but the INFJ can prevent this problem from occurring by ensuring that they never get to that point. How can you, as an INFJ, ensure that you won't get that upset? It probably seems to you that these kinds of upsets are caused by external circumstances and situations. Well, that's not really true. It's true that things will happen over which you have no control. But you certainly have control over how you perceive these things, or more appropriately, how you judge these things.

Conclusion

It is very important that a person knows his or her capabilities and limitations so that he or she knows what his or her role is in the community.

It is on this ground that the MBTI categories offer clergy and other church professionals a valuable tool for understanding themselves, their role and those with whom they work and minister. First and foremost, the MBTI encourages deeper self-understanding. Our four letters imply both giftedness and liabilities; our preferences indicate that we will be good at certain tasks and not so good at others. The MBTI help us honor our giftedness and also stop beating ourselves over tasks that do not come easily for us. Secondly, the categories help us better

understand our relationships with others. Things that have puzzled us for years about certain family relationships often will become clearer as we gain greater understanding of type. Thirdly, the MBTI help us see our relationships with colleagues in a new light. We begin to understand why we are attracted to some people and their style of ministry and turned off by others. We experience how those people, who annoy us, frustrate us, and even make us down right angry become much less offensive as we understand their type and the implication of their preferences. The MBTI instrument has produced much healing in our relations as through it we get to know more ourselves and others. We really believe that in our church ministry, it can be used as a team-building tool to help members know and appreciate each others' unique talents and contributions. It seems inevitable that objective knowledge of oneself be the basic condition for a realistic self-esteem: lack of sufficient self-knowledge provokes an artificial esteem or no esteem at all. We believe it is very important to consider the fact that the first indication of maturity is that a person knows how to become autonomous-independent: living by the strength of interior convictions, rather than by leaning on outside support. To live in the greater depth according to what one has decided to believe, a process of progressive integration between psychic structure of personality and the demands posed by ideals. This is what every human person should try to realize in life. It is really thanks to this interior unity that one is capable of interacting constructively with the other.

CHAPTER TWO

GROWTH TO RATIONAL AND EMOTIONAL MATURITY

2.0 Introduction

In his book entitled *Adam, God's beloved*, Henri Nouwen related the story of Cathy:

“One day a black stretch limousine with darkened windows turned in to the Daybreak property. Several people who saw the car were quite puzzled. Why would anyone who drives around in such a vehicle ever come to Daybreak?

When the limousine came to stop in front of the Daybreak, a short, very thin woman emerged. “I am Cathy,” she said. “I have come from New York City and need some help with my problems.” Sister Sue Mosteller, the host of the Daybreak, and I led her into the house. “How can we help you?” we asked. “Well, to be frank with you,” she said, “I am terribly depressed. I have been seeing a psychiatrist for many years now, and he hasn’t been able to help me. To the contrary, it is getting worse and worse. So my brother, who knows about Daybreak, said to me, ‘Why don’t you go there? Maybe those people can help you.’ So, here I am.” Henri remarks: “She was meticulously dressed and seemed quite self-possessed. Why would she be depressed? Sue said, “Can you tell us a little bit more? Are there any events that trigger your depression?” “Oh, yes,” Cathy replied. “It might sound strange to you, but every time I look in the social section of the *New York Times* and read the names of all the people who have been invited by the President of the United States and the First Lady to the White House for lunch, I get depressed because I am

not on the list!” Cathy went on, “I am always comparing myself to others, and as I get older I realize that more and more people forget me. And then when I see that people who have not even half the money I have or half the connections are more desirable than I am, I get very, very depressed.

Henri concluded, “Here was a woman who had everything a human being can dream of – money, fame, connections, and great power – wondering whether anyone really loved her. Rich but poor. Famous but self-doubting. Great but very small.

Sue said, “Cathy, do you believe that you are a good person simply because you are Cathy?” Tears came to her eyes. She said, “I don’t know. I don’t even know who I am without all the stuff that surrounds me. I don’t know what it would mean if people loved me simply as Cathy. Would they? I often wonder!”²⁹

My intention in telling this story, is of twofold. In one hand I introduce it as the curative factor of universality as developed in the book *The Theory and Practice of Group Therapy* by the noted psychiatrist Dr. Irvin D. Yalom. The curative factor of universality is the fact that a group therapy provides a powerful antidote to the feeling of isolation, being unique and apart from others that a new member experience in such a group³⁰. It provides a sense of relief by the recognition that one is not alone in his or her struggle against a particular problem. In my case I share the depression of Cathy in the story of related by Henri Nouwen. And this provides me with an enormous relief. And on the other hand, due to the fact that my essay has a quota of pages that I must not exceed, I don’t feel the need to multiply examples to support the point that

²⁹ Cf. H.J.M. NOUWEN, *Adam, God's beloved*, 71-73.

³⁰ Cf. I.D. YALOM, *The Theory and Practice of Group Therapy*, 78.

I want to develop. The point is as follow: by what means do people learn to be so displeased with themselves?

Richard L. Bednar and Scott R. Peterson seem to have a response. According to them, “people come to view and to value themselves in much the same way in which they are viewed and valued by others.”³¹ They assert that “it is the level of emotional acceptance in social environment that fosters the condition under which individuals become more or less self-accepting and self-congruent”³².

Our task in this chapter will be to examine some factors that will free us from such an environmental imprisonment and help us to grow toward maturity to becoming the best person we can be.

2.1 Personal Growth

2.1.1 *The Shadow*

“Self-knowledge and the courage to embrace one’s humanness are essential ingredients in both spiritual and psychological growth. In the psychology of Carl Jung, getting to know one’s “shadow” is considered to be the very cornerstone of such growth”³³. Human growth and development depend on one’s willingness to look at and accept the truth of who one is.

Carl Jung used the term shadow to describe the dark and unknown part of the human psyche. It is the part of me that contains all the unwanted and undeveloped aspect of my personality, the things I am unaware of either because they are incompatible with my conscious personality or because they are potentials unknown to me; for example, sexual impulses, ambition, secret

³¹L.B. RICHARD – R.P. SCOTT., *Self-Esteem, Paradoxes and Innovations in Clinical Theory and Practice*, 9.

³²L.B. RICHARD – R.P. SCOTT., *Self-Esteem, Paradoxes and Innovations in Clinical Theory and Practice*, 9.

³³ N. CANNON, “Getting to know your shadow”, *Human Development*, (Winter 1985) 32.

faults, and unused talents. The shadow is like another person in me; it has a personality all its own, one that is likely to be guilt-ridden and seemingly inferior, since it carries all the rejected aspects of my conscious personality³⁴. As young children we are taught certain values and are judged good when we conform to them and bad when we do not. Gradually we learn to hide, lie about, or repress those “bad” aspects of ourselves, since these are the things that bring the pain of parental disapproval and punishment. These rejected and repressed parts do not disappear, however; rather, they go underground and form part of what Jung called the personal shadow.

As a child, my parents were affectionate and considerate. I went to school and had friends. Yet I was depressed, anxious, tired, discouraged and without self-esteem. I was about to begin life, and I was already captive in my emotional prison. I should have been out playing; instead I was being oppressed by negative ideas. Since my childhood I have been bombarded, by media, and by adult dialogue about death, pain, accidents, violence, and financial worries. My memory, instead of storing pleasant ideas, was chock full of societal problems. As narrated in the first chapter, the rejection my mother experienced from her father together with the way in which my siblings and myself were treated in the village of my father left a deep deception in my life. At that time, I never understood why my father insisted that we go to his village for our primary school. I never accepted the decision of my father but I was to obey. Thus I spent eight years of my early age in that environment. This factor, together with others linked to my developing personality, made me sick. I did not only feel awkward, I felt guilty simply at being in the world in the first place. But this was not to be known by the family members with whom I was living less they treat me more harshly. With everyone I began to operate with a false-self system, based on compliance with their wishes and my own ambitions. The worse part of all is that I had no

³⁴ Cf. C. JUNG, *The Shadow*, 112.

one to whom I could share my misery. I started losing my smile and became more and more angry because of negative ideas out of control.

How many lives of young people and adults lose their brightness when their minds become sources of anxiety? They were not trained to speak of themselves. Their emotions and thoughts had been repressed. I discovered after many years that we can, and must take control of those ideas that perturb us silently. If we don't control them, they will imprison our emotions.

2.2 Moulding the Personality

2.2.1 *Definition of personality*

Emmy Gichinga describes personality as “the outward expression of ourselves which is carefully edited and may or may not be the same as our character depending on how genuine we are.”³⁵ The word Personality comes from the Latin word ‘persona’, which was used to refer to the masks actors wore when they were acting a role in a play to distinguish them from others actors. According to Gichinga, people tend to act role that may not be necessary representative of themselves. A person’s personality therefore is that unique individual and relatively consistent pattern of behaving, thinking and feeling that is only characteristic of that person³⁶. Simply put, it is a person’s unique pattern of behavior that is so tied to specific situations in his or her life.

2.2.2 *Growth to maturity*

Maturity is necessary for deep and full human relationship and it is only within this context that effective pastoral work can be accomplished. The more mature a disciple is, the more credible will be his witness, and the more effective his or her proclamation of the Good News. It is only

³⁵ E.M. GICHINGA, *Counseling in the African context*, 35.

³⁶ E.M. GICHINGA, *Counseling in the African context*, 35.

the one who has plumbed the depths of his or her own heart who will be capable of the empathy that enables one person to truly minister to another. As Pope John Paul II points out, the formation task of each minister is to mould his or her personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle to others in their meeting with Christ.

“In order that his ministry be as humanly credible and acceptable as possible, it is important that the priest should mould his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle to others in their meeting Jesus Christ the Redeemer of man. It is necessary that, following the example of Jesus ‘who knew what was in a man’ (Jn2:25), the priest should be able to know the depths of the human heart, to perceive difficulties and problems, to express serene and objective judgements” (P.D.V 43).

The use of the word ‘mould’ by the Pope in relation to the work that one must do on developing his or her personality implies that the personality has a certain plasticity, suppleness, pliability, a potential for reshaping, for configuration to something other than its present form. Opposed to this quality would be a certain rigidity or inflexibility. Something rigid and inflexible simply cannot be moulded, it cannot bend or yield, attempting to make it do so always brings the risk of breaking rather than reshaping. Self-awareness is very important for healthy personality development. Self awareness will be of great help for priests in developing an effective ministry.

Growth to full maturity must pay attention to development in two distinct operations of the human psyche, namely, the intellect, the emotions. The intellect organizes and interprets the data of experience that floods into it through the senses. This is what enables us to come to an understanding of the world around us. The more adequate our organization and interpretation of the data, and the wider the perspective from which we judge it, the more thorough is our grasp of objective reality. The emotions, on the other hand, are energy surges that charge one’s reflexes

and ready the body for action. Growing in maturity must develop in each of these two dimensions; otherwise the whole growth process will be retarded. I know through experience that those who isolate themselves in their world without learning how to share their emotions lower their self-confidence and self-esteem.

2.3 Self-Confidence and Self-esteem

2.3.1 *What is self-confidence?*

Self-confidence is the inner feeling of certainty. It is a feeling of certainty about who you are and what you have to offer to the world. It is also the feeling that you are worthwhile and valuable. Everyone craves to possess self-confidence because it makes life so much easier and so much more meaningful. Self-confidence gives us the energy to create our dreams. Self-confidence is an essential element to being able to create powerfully. I have learned that self-confidence is absolutely necessary to be able to create our dreams in a more powerful and meaningful way.

2.3.2 *What self-confidence is not*

Self-confidence is not acting like you are better than others. Self-confidence never feels the false. It is not something that you should feel guilty for wanting. Self-confidence is not the ability to step on others or promote oneself by tearing someone else down. Many people are afraid to desire great gifts for themselves. They feel if they desire great things for themselves it will mean that they are filled with pride and that might mean they are not worthy, loving people, but nothing could be further from the truth. It takes a level of self-confidence to desire great things for oneself and we never achieve great things without first having the desire for them. Having self-confidence does not mean one is unworthy. Self-confidence is not boastful or mean

or taking advantage of others. From my counseling sessions, I discovered that my lack of confidence was due to the kind of life I lived in an environment where I was often feeling fearful, guilty and discouraged. Then as a grown up, I keep on beating myself too much. I learned that this process literally kills my spirit and my drive.

2.3.3 *Self-Esteem*

Self-esteem is a natural and central need, so much so that certain psychologists base their concept of personality on it³⁷. Without self-esteem life is difficult: we feel incompetent, inferior to others, and every circumstance of life becomes a threat, until we withdraw into ourselves or have recourse to defence mechanisms which should delude us of the contrary. Self-esteem, instead, gives rise to a certain security and trust in ourselves which are fundamental to us in facing the duties of life and also in our rapport with others: only if we are sure of ourselves, can we freely give and love. Then only can we abandon and lose ourselves without needing any defence or artificial support for our identity. According to the common thought of the psychologists, to have resolved the problem of self-esteem signifies that the person is able to give a realistic evaluation of himself or herself which is substantially positive and stable³⁸.

2.4 Growth to cognitive maturity

2.4.1 *The journey from blindness to sight*

The journey to cognitive maturity is a journey from blindness to sight. Jesus saw his mission in terms of bringing new sight to the blind; “He has sent me to bring... new sight to the blind” (Lk4:18), and again, “It is for judgment that I have come into the world, so that those without

³⁷ Cf. A.W. COMBS-D., *Individual behavior*, 55.

³⁸ M.D. LYNCH, *Self-concept: advances in theory and research*, 94.

sight may see and those with sight turn blind” (Jn9:39). The Pharisees refused to all their ‘sight’, their view of things, to be challenged at the depth that will have allow Jesus to lead them into a new and more adequate vision of things. Jesus could only give ‘new sight’ to those who allowed their former ‘sight’ to be stripped away, who allowed their ideas to be challenged an broken down by his word.

Part of the problem is that, like the people in the gospel, we are locked into particular ways of seeing things. We view an object or an issue from one angle and remain blind to other perspectives. We become convinced that the way we see something is the way that thing is, and this conviction is very resistant to change and does not easily give way to another vision. To some extent, we are all caught in the predicament of ‘the four blind men of Hindustan’ in the children’s story quoted by Fr. Kiely in “ Psychology and Moral Theology”:

“This six blind men set out to examine an elephant; each examined, by touch, a different part of the elephant; and each generalized his impressions. One found the flank of the elephant, and concluded that the elephant was like a wall; another found a leg, and thought the elephant was like a tree; a third, the trunk, and pronounced the elephant like a snake; and last failed to find the elephant and said that it did not exist.”³⁹

It is hard to accept that we are ‘blind’, that our ‘seeing’ is so limited that it does not adequately correspond to the objective truth of things, or that it distorts reality by isolating one facet of it and taking this to be the totality. And yet if we do not admit this, if we are not prepared to lose the ‘sight’ we have and stand uncertain in the darkness of our own unknowing, we simply cannot come to see in a better, more adequate, manner. If we do not come to realize the limitation of our present vision, the inherent weaknesses in our inherited modes of thought, and the manner in

³⁹ Cf. B. KIELY, *Psychology and Moral Theology*, 37.

which subjective issues can distort our perception of things, we will never stretch out to receive a more objective grasp of reality.

It is very threatening to have the inadequacy of one's 'sight' exposed, to realize that the vision of things on which one has built his or her life is beginning to fall apart. One inevitably shields or protects oneself by refusing to admit into consciousness data that would disturb one's sense of security. So for example, a person's perception of himself or herself will lack objectivity because of the various defenses one evolves to keep at bay facts about himself or herself that would diminish self-esteem and heighten anxiety. In this way subjective distortion can prevent individuals for grasping the truth about themselves, and their relationship with God and the world around them. We are also conditioned by our own personal histories to interpret events and experience in a particular way.

Growth to cognitive maturity is of special importance with regard to the development of moral conscience. As the Pope points out:

"Intimately connected with formation to responsible freedom is education of the moral conscience. Such education calls from the depth of one's own 'self' obedience to moral obligations and at the same time the deep meaning of such obedience. It is a conscious and free response, and therefore a loving response, to God's demands, to God's love. 'The human maturity of the priest should include especially the formation of his conscience.'" (P.D.V. 44)

2.4.2 *A Paradigm Shift*

The word paradigm comes from the Greek. It was originally a scientific term, and is more commonly used today to mean a model, theory, perception, assumption, or frame of reference. In

the more general sense, it is the way we “see” the world that is in terms of perceiving, understanding, interpreting. For our purpose, a simple way to understand paradigms is to see them as maps.

According to Stephen R. Covey, each of us has many maps in our head, which can be divided into two categories: maps in of the way things are, or realities and maps of the way things should be, or values⁴⁰. We interpret everything we experience through these mental maps. We seldom question their accuracy; we are usually even unaware that we have them. We simply assume that the way we see things is the way the really are or the way they should be. And our attitudes and our behaviors grow out of those assumptions. The way we see things is the source of the way we think and the way we act. To make his ideas more explicit, let us have an intellectual and emotional experience. It consists to take a few seconds and just look at the picture on the appendix one. Now have a look at the picture on appendix two and carefully describe what we see. This experience is narrated by Stephen R. Cover, and those are some questions that he asks us to answer: Do you see a woman? How old would you say she is? What does she look like? What is she wearing? In what kind of roles do you see her?⁴¹

“You probably would describe the woman in the second picture to be about 25 years old, very lovely, rather fashionable with a petite nose and a demure presence. If you were a single man you might like to take her out. If you were in retailing, you might hire her as a fashion model⁴².

Then Stephen reveals: “But what if I were to tell you that you are wrong? What if I said this picture is a woman in her 60’s or 70’s who looks sad, has a huge nose, and is certainly no model.

She is someone you probably would help across the street. Who is right? Look at the picture

⁴⁰ Cf. S.R. COVEY, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, 24.

⁴¹ Cf. S.R. COVEY, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, 24.

⁴²S.R. COVEY, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, 24.

again. Can you see the old woman? If you can't, keep trying. Can you see her big hook nose? Her shawl?"⁴³

While reading this description that Stephen made of the woman, I could see myself say to him that is perception was totally wrong. Till he referred me to another page and to study the picture which I have on the appendix three. He then ask to look at the picture on the appendix two again. It was amazing.

I first encountered this exercise six years ago while having a workshop on Myers-Bridges Personality Types in our SMA House of Formation in Anyama, Ivory Coast. The instructor was using it to demonstrate clearly and eloquently that two people can see the same thing, disagree, and yet both be right. "This is not logical; but psychological"⁴⁴. The reactions we had during the presentation is exactly as narrated by Stephen.

The instructor brought into the room a stack of large cards, half of which had the image of eh young woman we saw on the appendix one, and the other half of which had the image of the old woman on the appendix three. He passed them out to the class, the picture of the young woman to one side of the room and the picture of the old woman to the other. He asked us to look at the cards, concentrate on them for about ten seconds and then pass them back in. He then projected upon the screen the second picture we saw on the appendix two combining both images and asked the class to describe what we saw. Almost every person in that class who had first seen the young woman's image on a card saw the young woman on the picture. And almost every person who had first seen the old woman's image on a card saw on old woman in the picture. The

⁴³S.R. COVEY, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, 24.

⁴⁴S.R. COVEY, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, 27.

instructor then asked one student to explain what he saw to a student on the opposite side of the room. As we talked back and forth, communication problems flared up and similar way:

“ “What do you mean, ‘old lady’? She couldn’t be more than 20 or 22 years old”

“Oh, come on. You have to be joking. She’s 70, could be pushing 80!”

“What’s the matter with you? Are you blind? This lady is young, good looking. I’d like to take her out. She’s lovely.”

“Lovely? She’s an old hag.”⁴⁵

The argument went back and forth, each person sure of, and adamant in, his position. Stephen explains that all of this occurred in spite of one exceedingly important advantage the students had –most of them knew early in the demonstration that another point of view did, in fact, exist—something many of us would never admit⁴⁶. After a period of futile communication, one student went up to the screen and pointed to the line on the drawing. “There is the young woman’s necklace.” The other one said, “No, that is the old woman’s mouth.” Gradually, they began to calmly discuss specific points of difference, and finally one student, and then another, experienced sudden recognition when the image of both came into focus. Through continued calm, respectful, and specific communication, each of us in the room was finally able to see the other point of view. But when we looked away and back, most of us would immediately see the image we had been conditioned to see in the ten-second period of time.

This narration shows, first of all, how powerfully conditioning affects our perceptions, our paradigms. “If ten seconds can have that kind of impact on the way we see things, what about the conditioning of a lifetime? The influences in our lives – family, school, church, work

⁴⁵S.R. COVEY, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, 27.

⁴⁶S.R. COVEY, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, 27.

environment, friends, associates, etc – all have their silent unconscious impact on us and help shape our frame of reference, our paradigms, our maps. It also shows that these paradigms are the source of our attitudes and behaviors.”⁴⁷

This brings into focus one of the basic flaws of growth towards a cognitive maturity. To try to change outward attitudes and behaviors does very little good in the long run if we fail to examine the basic paradigms from which those attitudes and behaviors flow. This exercise also shows how powerfully our paradigms affect the way we interact with other people. As clearly and objectively as we think we see things, we begin to realize that others see them differently from their own apparently equally clear and objective point of view. Each of us tends to think we see things as they are, that we are objective. But this is not always the case. “We see the world, not as it is, but as we are, or as we are conditioned to see it”⁴⁸. When we open our mouths to describe what we see, we in effect describe ourselves, our perceptions, our paradigms. When other people disagree with us, we immediately think something is wrong with them. But, as the demonstration shows, sincere, clearheaded people see things differently, each looking through his or her unique lens of experience. However, this does not mean that there are no facts. Nevertheless, the more aware we are of our basic paradigms, assumptions, and the extent to which we have been influenced by our experience, the more we can take responsibility for those paradigms, examine them, test them against reality, listen to others and be open to their perceptions, thereby getting a larger picture and a far more objective view. It becomes obvious that if we want to make relatively minor changes in our lives, we can perhaps appropriately focus on our attitudes and behaviors. But if we want to make significant change, we need to work on our basic paradigms.

⁴⁷S.R. COVEY, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, 28.

⁴⁸S.R. COVEY, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, 28.

In other words we can only achieve significant improvements in our lives as we quit hacking at the leaves of attitude and behavior and get to work on the root, from which our attitudes and behaviors flow.

2.5 Growth to emotional maturity

2.5.1 *Difficulty with emotions*

Though it is true that for a boy to become a man he must learn about his emotional and psychological state of being, this is not easy as it sounds because boys often do not like to think that they have a problem or that they are not in control. This is especially true for many African boys. Because as boys, we are taught that we are to be in control of our lives. So we learn to pretend to be in control in our lives even when we are not. We are caught up in the pretext that all is well and that we are painless, emotionally together and impenetrable. Boys are taught that they are “not supposed to be vulnerable. Pain is something we are to rise above. He who has been brought down by it will most likely see himself as shameful”⁴⁹. This attitude prevents many people to grow mature because it prevents them from dealing with difficult situations and emotions that they have experienced. So, it is difficult for a boy to learn the truth about himself because it will bring him face to face with the reality that he is vulnerable; that he may have emotions such as fear, that he is frightened and that he is not in full control of himself or his life. The main reason why men tend to suppress their emotions and have a high level of awkwardness when it comes to the whole issue of emotions is because society encourages them to behave in ways that lead to this awkwardness:

⁴⁹B.M. LYNCH - L.H. ROBBINS., *First Archeoastronomical Evidence in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 55.

We have more respect for the walking wounded – those who deny their difficulties – than we have for those who ‘let’ their conditions ‘get to them’... We have not liked men to be very emotional or very vulnerable. An overtly depressed man is both – someone who not only has feelings but who has allowed those feelings to swamp his competence. A man brought down by his own unmanageable feelings – for many, that is unseemly...Recent research indicated that... most males have difficulty not just in expressing, but even in identifying their feelings.⁵⁰

2.5.2 *Feelings energize intentional consciousness*

The importance of integrating buried emotions becomes all the more obvious when we realize that feelings provide the energy source for achieving the goals that we set ourselves in life. A passage from the philosopher Bernard Lonergan captures vividly and articulately the importance of our emotions as a driving force:

“The feeling... relates us to an object. Such feeling gives intentional consciousness its mass, momentum, drive, power. Without these feelings, our desires and our fears, our hope or despair, our joys and sorrows, our enthusiasm and indignation, our esteem and contempt, our trust and distrust, our love and hatred, our tenderness and wrath, our admiration, veneration, reverence, our dread, horror, terror, we are oriented massively and dynamically in a world mediated by meaning. We have feelings about other persons, we feel for them, we feel with them. We have feelings about our respective situations, about the past, about the future, about evils to be lamented or remedied, about the good that can, might, must be accomplished”⁵¹

⁵⁰ R. TERRENCE, *I Don't want to Talk about It: Overcoming the Secret Legacy of Male Depression*, 146.

⁵¹ B. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, 31-32.

It is the force of our feelings and the strength of our desires that orient us “massively and dynamically”⁵² in life.

2.5.3 *Emotional maturity*

Emotional maturity has to do with awareness of the various feelings that sweep over me, the direction these feelings tend to move me in, and the ability to master these feelings in such a way that I remain free to respond to any particular situation according as my reason and values rather than being swept along in the direction dictated by my feelings. “In general, one can judge as mature a person... who has acquired an easy and habitual emotional self control by integrating his or her emotional drives and placing them at the service of his or her reason” (G.F.P.C no.18).

Here it is sufficient to note the clear teaching of the Church on the subject:

“Maturity must be acquired in all its aspects, including, naturally and above all, emotional maturity. Indeed the role of the emotions must be considered a fundamental element in the building of the personality. For this element is one of the major contributory processes in personality-integration, in the unfolding of emotional and sexual relationships, finding responsible fulfillment in work or a profession, and in cultivating friendly social contacts. Precisely because emotions are looked at as basic to a person, emotional maturity can be held to be an indispensable requirement for the best functioning of the personality. Considered as a part of psychic life, the emotions are variously understood: either as the complex of internal and external reactions to satisfaction, or as the ability to show feelings, or as the ability to love, or as the potential for a person to form attachments. A well integrated person knows how to make his

⁵² B. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, 32.

reason rule his emotional nature, while the less adjusted a person is, the more his emotions will dominate his rational nature.” (G.F.P.C. no.20).

Therefore as future minister in the church, we must above all endeavor to acquire the ability to balance our emotions. In the light of my life experience, people views and criticism have had tremendous damages on me. I feel a need to grow mature as regard to criticism.

2.5.4 *Handling Criticism*

Every one of us will have times when we are criticized, sometimes fairly, but more often unfairly, creating stress in our hearts and minds and tension in our relationships. Somebody in our social circle speaks negatively about you or blames you for something, trying to make you look bad, or blowing some minor incident out of proportion. Usually, our critics have no interest in helping us; they are simply trying to drag us down.

Certainly, constructive criticism can be helpful. An insightful point can illuminate an area where we need to improve. Sad to say, most criticism is not intended to build up another person; quite the opposite. It is not given with the spirit of blessing, but is more often presented with an intentional sting. I have found that unwarranted criticism is a reflection more often based on jealousy. It stems from a competitive spirit. You have something that somebody else wants. Instead of being happy for you, jealousy rises up in the critical person. They try to cover their own insecurity by being critical, cynical toward others.

I discovered that the best way for me to handle such criticism is never to take it personally. Many times, it is not even about you, even though it may be directed at you. If the critic weren't tearing you apart, he would be complaining about somebody else. It is something on the inside of the critical person that lashes out at others.

If I am going to become better I said to myself, I need to know how to deal with critics –people who are talking about me, judging me, or maybe even making false accusations.

The truth is we all have some slingers in our lives, people who try to bring us down with their words or actions. They may be friends to your face, but behind your back, they would shred you if given an opportunity. The way to overcome unwarranted criticism is by not allowing myself to take revenge. The way to defeat a slinger is to shake it off and keep moving forward. This is what Jesus told his disciples to do when he sent them out to various towns to teach the people, to heal the sick, and to care for their needs. Jesus knew his followers would sometimes suffer rejection. Not everybody would like them or gladly receive their message. Some people would get jealous and start talking negatively about them, trying to make them look bad. Jesus knew the slingers would be out there, so he instructed his disciples, “When you go into a town, whoever will not receive and welcome your message, when you leave that place, shake the dust off of your feet.” (...). Jesus did not advise his disciples to become defensive or worried. He simply said, “Shake the dust off of your feet.” That was a symbolic way of saying, “you are not going to steal my joy. You may reject me or speak badly about me, but I am not going to sink down to you level. I am not going to fight with you. I am going to let God be my vindicator.” When somebody is critical or negative toward me, my attitude should be, “I am better than that. I am not going to let their jealous spirit poison my life. I am going to stay full of joy.”

I have understood that never should I let negative words or other people’s opinions totally ruin my life. As I used to do, many people live to please other people and honestly think that they can be happy by trying to keep everyone else happy. They don’t want anybody to say a negative word about them. That is simply impossible. We have to accept the fact that not everybody is going to like us, not everybody is going to accept us, and certainly we cannot keep everybody

happy. Some people will find fault, no matter what we do. You can be there for them a thousand times in a row, but they will remind you repeatedly of that one time when you couldn't show up. Tremendous freedom results when you accept the fact that not everybody is going to like you. I can't afford to let critics and negative voices distract me. Here again we can quote Henry Nouwen when he says "our inward ability to relate to and be at home with our own self is what enables us to live life from the center of our existence and thereby relate with others in terms of who we are and not so much by what we do"⁵³.

Conclusion

In our endeavour to grow to rational and emotional maturity, it will be fitting here to embrace the teaching of Dr. Harper and Dr. Ellis about their theory of rational therapy best known as Rational and Emotive Therapy, (RET). According to this theory, Drs. Harper and Ellis teach us that the human feelings significantly overlap with thoughts. In other words, the principle of RET stipulates that we feel the way we think. According to Drs. Harper and Ellis, "human emotions do not magically exist in their own right, and do not mysteriously flow from unconscious needs and desires. Rather, they almost always directly steam from ideas, thoughts, attitudes, or beliefs, and can usually get radically changed by modifying our thinking processes."⁵⁴ According to them, "humans do not get upset, but that they upset themselves by devoutly convincing themselves, at point B, of irrational Beliefs about what happens to them (the Activating Events or Activating Experiences of their lives) at point A"⁵⁵. So we learned that our emotions are linked with our thinking. We can live the most self-fulfilling, creative, and

⁵³Cf. H. NOUWEN, *Intimacy*, 149.

⁵⁴A. ELLIS – R.A. HARPER, *A New Guide to Rational Living*, 11.

⁵⁵A. ELLIS – R.A. HARPER, *A New Guide to Rational Living*, 11.

emotionally satisfying lives by disciplining our thinking. This however does not mean that we can or should control all our emotions by reason; reasoning need not interfere seriously with intense feeling. The good news about the Rational Emotive Therapy is that it helps us to get in touch with our feelings, and acknowledge their intensity. We can choose to accept ourselves with our feelings, even the crummy ones of depression and hatred. We can also discriminate our appropriate and inappropriate feelings, in other words we can choose to feel what we want to feel and what will help us to get more of what we want out of live. Along line with this insight, the advice of Eleanor Roosevelt can be of great help when she says:

“Whatever size, color, religion, gender, race, or sexual orientation, don’t be afraid to be yourself. Nobody but you has the right to dictate what you do, what you think, and what you believe in. There is only one you; nobody has more rights over another person to live. Everybody comes into the world the same way; we all age, feel, analyze, and eventually, we have different experiences, and we feel different emotions. Even identical twins are different from each other. We all will always have room for improvement; nobody is flawless, whether it is on the outside or on the inside. As much as some people may want to believe otherwise, nobody is perfect. It would be wise to stop letting people get to you, and be open-minded and aware of what you are doing to others.”⁵⁶

⁵⁶<http://www.wikihow.com/Stop-Comparing-Yourself-to-Others>, 26/11/10.

CHAPTER THREE

TOWARDS AN EFFICIENT MINISTRY

3.0 Introduction

The Second Vatican Council challenged all Christians with a threefold call to holiness, to ministry and to community (LG, 10, 44). That same council also introduced an integrative context for responding to that triple call, the concept of People of God. Previously the framework for ministry accented the call of the individual Christian. And the “Church” for some people meant Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, Sisters, Clergy, Vatican, Curia, Hierarchy, Institution, Structures, Liturgy, Building, Cathedral, Basilica, Parish. Now the focus is upon the holiness and ministry of “the people,” a mutual, shared, collaborative approach. The belief that every baptized person is gifted and called to ministry is the basis for collaboration.

When the Lord sent out his disciples on their apostolic missions, he assigned them to work in pairs. It is not hard to guess why, they were headed for difficulties and failures as well as successes and joys. Mutual support could help them to persevere and grow spiritually through the painful experiences. And the sharing of their toils and struggles, for his sake, could enable them to engage in prayer and labor and celebration in a way that no loner ever can. Perhaps more profoundly, the Master must have intended that those he chose for ministry should work in pairs or larger groups so that they could pool the efforts of their minds and hearts in the pursuit of a more comprehensive understanding of the Father and his actions. Reflecting on their experiences

in ministry might teach them infinitely more about God than an isolated laborer could ever be expected to discover. Moreover, different workers bring different gifts into the vineyard. Combining the talents, experience and wisdom God has distributed among those he sends out together in service makes possible a quality that no solitary ministry trying to meet the complex spiritual, moral and other human needs of God's children could ever hope to provide. Our capacity to live together as a community of people with mutual forgiveness and deep concern for the well being of all is the way we come to know what the actual word 'God' means. As John says: "Anyone who says "I love God" but hates their brother and sister is a liar!" (1Jn 4: 20). The way we can discover who God is, is through one's experience of community, and this is what the Church provides, a community of persons who attempt to live the mystery of God together. Being a member of the Society of African Missions, I am called to take part to the missionary activity of this society. It is within the context, the vision and the charism of this society that I endeavor to the best of my ability to bring my modest contribution to the fulfillment of our founder's vision which finds its source in the entire mission of the Church.

3.1 The Society of African Missions

The Society of African Missions (SMA) was founded on December 8th, 1856 by Bishop Melchior De Marion Bresillac in France. According to the understanding of Bishop Melchior De Marion Bresillac, the purpose of the Society would be the evangelisation of the countries of Africa where the light of faith had not yet penetrated and which were most in need of missionaries. Candidates would become members by taking a solemn resolution to devote their lives to the work of the missions confided to the Society. At the end, he stated in his own handwriting that the Society would do everything in its power to form a native clergy.

The continuing relevance of that vision was highlighted by Pope John Paul II in an Address to the SMA General Assembly of 1989:

'Many bishops in Africa are still calling you, thereby recognizing your vocation. They know that the needs of evangelisation are still immense, and will long remain so. Respond to those calls; they are in line with your vocation. First announce the Gospel, especially to the most deprived. Help form clergy and lay leaders. Cooperate in everything that makes for justice and peace and the protection of the environment for future generations. Sons of Monsignor de Bresillac, go forward Africa has great need of you'.

3.1.1 *The Ministry of society in the light of the Founder's charism*

De Marion Bresillac was inspired to found a missionary Society for the evangelisation of the "most abandoned" in Africa. This sentence encompasses the essential components of his charism: *evangelisation, "the most abandoned", Africa*. By evangelisation he meant going as directly as possible to the people with the Gospel; "*the most abandoned*" were those who had *no* missionaries; Africa was the focus of his attention, particularly Dahomey (actual Benin Republic).

As he said himself, his society was for "the most difficult missions in Africa". The difficulties and dangers involved in a mission in a country such as Dahomey lead to another aspect of the charism: *consecration of life to mission*. In view of the circumstances prevailing in Dahomey, de Marion Bresillac was looking for men who were willing to sacrifice their lives. Such willingness was necessary as premature death was almost an inevitability.

3.2 Full self-appropriation and Ministry

3.2.1 "Know thyself"

This prescription is relevant for everyone, but especially for people in Christian ministry⁵⁷. Knowing yourself is a first step; the second is to live like yourself. Michael Heher quotes an Abba Theodore of Pherme wisdom on this: "He who wishes to be edified, let him be edified, he who wishes to be shocked, let him be shocked; as for me , I meet people as they find me."⁵⁸ Being true to self does not prevent change to happen in self; it promotes it. None of us is whole, at least not yet. We are a damaged, broken, and wounded people. Just as "Jesus' wounds remain visible in his risen body ... our wounds are not taken away, but become sources of hope to others"⁵⁹. If one is to truly care for others' well-being, "one must offer one's own vulnerable self to others as a sources of healing"⁶⁰ According to Henri Nouwen, ministry has to be underpinned by spirituality⁶¹. For Nouwen, the crucial question is not "'How can we hide our wounds?' so we don't have to be embarrassed but 'How can we put our woundedness in the service of others?' When our wounds cease to be a source of shame and become a source of healing, we have become wounded healers"⁶². Ministry is not about finding ways to get rid of people's pain, but about enabling others to welcome and embrace it. For healing to take place, pain needs to be confronted for what is really is. However, Henri, in his book *The Wounded Healer*, was in no way promoting the morbid idea of wallowing in our woundedness. Elsewhere, He talk about the importance of 'tending our wounds first' for he truly believed that "as long as

⁵⁷ L. MAGESA., *Rethinking Mission, Evangelization in Africa in a New Era*, 69.

⁵⁸ M. HEHER, "The Lost Art", 41.

⁵⁹ J.H. NOUWEN, *The Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey*, 136.

⁶⁰ W. HERNANDEZ, *Henri Nouwen, A Spirituality of Imperfection*, 116.

⁶¹ J.H. Nouwen, "Education to Ministry," *Theological Education*, 51.

⁶² J.H. Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*, 8.

our wounds are open and bleeding, we scare others away. But after someone has tended to our wounds, they no longer frighten us or others”⁶³.

3.2.2 *Spirituality of Ministry*

Many believers who embark on ministry sooner or later discover that the demands of the task can prove very overwhelming. The question is this: Why is it that not too many people make it over the long time? One chief condition among many others that perennially afflicts most ministries as well as ministers is what Eugene Peterson labels as the crisis of “under-capitalized vocation.”⁶⁴ We all are in dire need of an adequate spiritual capital to sustain us throughout our ministry journey. To not only survive but flourish in the ministry, we must possess a strong spiritual interior able to stand up to the exterior demands of ministry. In short, we need a deep spirituality of ministry that flows continually through our “ministerial veins.”⁶⁵

3.2.3 *Communion: The Foundation of spirituality*

One of the best interior spirituality that can support us through our ongoing process of formation in Christ is that which firmly roots itself in an abiding communion with God. Communion is what being in “union with” means. It involves nourishing the already existing connection we have with God and raising it to an intimate level where come closest to experiencing what we have created for: full communion. Indeed, “God has given us a heart that will be restless until it has found full communion.”⁶⁶ Only a deeply rooted communion can enable the growth of our character in Christ and consequently empower our service for him. A discernible pattern of spiritual progression emerges out of this perspective: The emphasis will be

⁶³ J.H. Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*, 9.

⁶⁴ E.H. PETERSON, *Under the Unpredictable Plant*, 3.

⁶⁵ W. HERNANDEZ, *Henri Nouwen, A Spirituality of Imperfection*, 27

⁶⁶ J.H. Nouwen, *Here and Now: Living in the Spirit*, 43.

on intimacy (being with Christ), following by formation (being like Christ), and lastly service (living for Christ)⁶⁷.

3.2.4 *From believing in Jesus to being with Jesus*

We all desire intimacy, both we and God. For our end, we need only to be with Christ so we can experience the reality of God's loving presence. Jesus' invitation to abide in his love as expressed in John 15:10 is, "an invitation to a total belonging, to full intimacy, to an unlimited being-with."⁶⁸ In the gospel of Mark we are told that Jesus "appointed twelve ... to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message" (Mk 3:14). From this passage we understand that intimacy comes first before ministry—a chronology most of us reverse by becoming aggressive workers for God first before becoming humble worshipers of God.

In this regard, Mike Yaconelli issued a confession many of us, if we are honest enough to admit it, can resonate with: "I knew what it meant to believe in Jesus; I did not know what it meant to be with Jesus. ... I found it easy to do the work of God, but have no idea how to let God work in me."⁶⁹ We do become like the person upon whom we concentrate the most. To the degree that we spend time communing with Christ; our character becomes shaped more like him. Jesus' "primary concern was to be obedient to his Father, to live constantly in his presence. Only then did it become clear to him that his task was in relationship with people."⁷⁰ Jesus never claimed anything for himself; he always viewed his work as accomplishing the will of God, his Father. The very core of his own ministry lies in his intimate relationship with his Father. In short, Christ's ministry simply flowed out of his deep communion with God. "If it is true that only

⁶⁷ A.B. ARONIS, *Developing Intimacy with God*, 9

⁶⁸ J.H. Nouwen, *Sabbatical Journey*, 165.

⁶⁹ A. BOERS, *What Henri Nouwen Found at Daybreak*, 29.

⁷⁰ J.H. Nouwen, *The Living Reminder*, 31.

with, in and through Jesus Christ can our ministry bear fruits, then our first concern must be to live in an ongoing communion with him who has sent us out to witness in his name.”⁷¹

In sum, we experience a genuine inflow of intimacy by simply being with Christ, constantly deepening our communion with him. The natural outgrowth of such ongoing communion is the increasing formation of our character in Christ. Out of our growing character flows the equally growing conviction to live for Christ in his service for the full benefit of others. However this communion with Christ can not take place apart from the inner dynamic of prayer.

3.3 Qualities needed for an efficient ministry

We might at this time say something about the exercise of ministry. We have indicated what style of ministry we are called for, that is the style that reflects care, presence and concern to the margins. In order to do that, we need to cultivate certain qualities in ourselves, until our dying day. They constitute the exercise of the ministry.

3.3.1 *Basic Human Wholeness*

No matter the ministry at issue every candidate and every minister must exhibit basic human wholeness. In other words, each must be a healthy person in mind and in body. For as it is said, “grace builds on nature.” One can not give what one does not have. You can’t become a catechist or religious educator if you can’t even provide a stranger with uncomplicated direction from one place to another. Catechesis and religious education are teaching ministries. They require teaching skills, which include the ability to explain things in a clear, orderly, and interesting manner. Nor can you become a preacher or enter a ministry that requires public

⁷¹ J.H. NOUWEN, *The Monk and the Cripple*, 207.

speaking if you freeze in the presence of crowd or if you have an uncontrollable stutter. No can people with deep-seated emotional problems expect the Church to welcome them with open arms into ministries that require psychic serenity and self-confidence. Mentally unhealthy people almost inevitably project their own problems onto others. If a minister is pathologically guilt-ridden, that minister won't be satisfied until his or her pastoral 'client' feels just as guilty about some form of human behavior as the minister feels. Here is a typical example that I experienced: in one of the parish, the parish priest looked upon himself as the father of his family. The assistants were his sons and there was to be definite family atmosphere of sharing and living and recreation. The principle was that the priests were to have a certain community among themselves. They were to be an exclusive club of priests apart from the laity. Any act of independence was unpriestly. An invitation to dinner could be accepted only if all the priests went. It was a sort of "We all go together or no one goes." I recall a case when the parish priest forbade an assistant to go to a birthday party because the people giving the party failed to invite the parish priest. Unfortunately, the laity picked this up, too, and they acted accordingly. At large gatherings they would always sit the priests together lest those poor lonely isolated men be stuck with no other priests to talk to and to have fun.

3.3.2 *Communication Skills*

Beyond the preceding criteria, ministry in most instances requires the ability to facilitate communication and to be opened and profit from feedback. Insofar as ministry is always in the service of community (the Church) and community is always created and sustained by communication, every minister must exhibit at least a basic aptitude for communication. The ability to communicate is especially necessary in such ministerial tasks as preaching, teaching,

counseling, group leadership, and pastoring. Here I will like to emphasize on the skills of listening.

3.3.2.1 Listening

According to the New Oxford Dictionary of English, listening is, “to make a conscious effort to hear; attend closely so as to hear, to pay close attention”. From this definition, we can deduce that it is a conscious effort that demands being attentive. Conscious means intentional or purposeful, while attention means the art of keeping one’s mind closely alert on something. This is why listening involves the best part of our physical presence. Listening is done with the head, the heart and the gut. In short, it involves the five senses.⁷² Thus listening has an intentional and attentional aspect, and both are prerequisites to true listening. One might be very intentional –“I will make every effort to listen”– and yet fail to attend to what is being said or communicated⁷³. Though listening is deliberate, focused, inclusive rather than selective, it demands a lot of concentration, attention, silence and memory⁷⁴. It calls attention to feelings as well as facts, the unspoken thoughts expressed in body language or movement including the silences and pauses of the person; all these must be actively listened to⁷⁵.

To listen adequately or actively is a very difficult task. It demands a lot of effort, time and energy. The physical and emotional presence is very important. Listening is a helping skill. Though it is a concept used in the counselling realm, missionaries cannot ignore it in their work and hope to be effective. It is our duty as ministers to help people by listening actively to their plights.

⁷² J.Ellin, *Listening Helpfully*, 41.

⁷³ D. Capps, *Giving Counsel: A Minister’s Guidebook*, 14.

⁷⁴ J. Ellin, *Listening Helpfully*, 43.

⁷⁵ J. Ellin, *Listening Helpfully*, 41.

3.3.2.2 My Listening Experience

During my counselling sessions, I was amused at the ability of listening of my counselor. He was able to tell me in few words exactly what our previous discussion was about. That is what I could call active listening. An active listening is much more than sitting with another person. It is a desire to hear someone, wanting to hear. It is a genuine desire to respect and care for the other person. In other words, to be present, is not just being physically present –but rather providing a relational presence, namely, that genuine desire to care and be present to the other with respect.

From my counseling experience, I marveled the way I was ready to go on with my life after sharing with my counselor. I was able to rise above my problems and move on. Something important I have learned from active listening is deep respect for people and the tremendous strength it can provide. I wondered, “the power of God is being manifested in my life– that heals. I often ask myself, what has he done? The answer that comes is simply ‘listening’. This has been a source of strength for me too”.

On my part, I was happy that I was not left feeling judged while telling my stories. I was happy to be in the presence of someone who saw in me the goodness I couldn't see at that moment. Due to this active presence and listening I experienced, the process of healing, transformation and restoration began to emerge; hence I began to believe in myself. This exactly, is the task of an active listener; and I think all ministers must develop it. Ministers do not need to be professional counselors, but the relational presence, genuine care and respect for people around us is necessary. Though our society is making it harder and harder to listen actively because of the many distractions around us, the element of that genuine desire to care is of utmost importance.

This is why we are ordained, to be available and be present to them so that they can grow in faith.

3.3.3 *Theological Virtues*

Is it really too much to expect that those who present themselves for the service of the Church should be people of virtue? A virtue is, literally, a “power” (from the Latin word, *virtus*). It is a power to realize some moral good and to do it joyfully and with perseverance in spite of obstacles. The theological virtues are those that have been infused by God: faith, hope, and charity.

3.3.3.1 Faith

Faith involves conviction, trust, and commitment. The object of faith is God. To be a person of faith, therefore, is to be someone who is convinced (and lives by the conviction) that there is more to life than meets the eye, that there is a spiritual dimension beyond the material world, and that all reality comes from the creative hand of God and is sustained and guided by God’s providential power and care. It goes without saying that every one of the Church’s ministers must be people of faith. They must believe in a living God who is present and active in our lives, in history, and in the world at large. But in the spirit of the First Vatican Council, faith is not credulity. Blind faith is no faith. Our faith must always be consistent with reason. It does not mean that we can argue our way into faith. It is still a gift, a virtue infused by God.

We can claim to believe in Jesus Christ if we show some signs of being a forgiving, compassionate and generous person; if we have a sense of humor. People who claim to have deep faith but who look as if they’d break in two if they laughed are people who do not see

reality in its proper perspective. In theological terms those with an inauthentic faith have confused something less than God with God.

3.3.3.2 Hope

Hope enables us to take responsibility for the future, both our personal future and that of the world in which we live. Hope, therefore, is always oriented toward the kingdom of God. Like all virtues, hope stands in the middle between presumption and despair. Presumption sins against hope by excess; we presume that God will save us, regardless of what we do or what effort we make. Despair sins against hope by defect; we despair of ever achieving salvation, no matter what we do, or even what God does. Hope is as much a cardinal virtue as faith and charity. The absence of hope is as serious a deficiency in a minister as the absence of faith or love. Too often we seem to forget that. The Church's ministers must be hopeful people, which is not to say that they must be naively optimistic. Pessimism, however, is not a virtue for it implies looking upon the world and its human history as nothing more than a 'vale of tears' denies the dignity and redemptive possibilities of God's own creation. (Rom 8: 18-25). Optimism is no virtue either. Hope is different from mere optimism. Hope is grounded in faith – in a faith that sees creation and history as guided and protected always by the creative and healing hand of God. “Without this kind of optimistic hope, not only is the enthusiasm for mission diminished, people will hardly notice the “good news” we are trying to bring to them.”⁷⁶

3.3.3.3 Charity

Charity enables us to participate in the life of God who is love (1Jn 4:8, 16). Charity is lived faith and lived hope. It is love of God and love of neighbor, that is, the total dedication and

⁷⁶ L. Magesa, *Rethinking Mission*, 69.

devotion to the welfare of the other, regardless of the sacrifices required and regardless of the personal cost. Such love is rooted in the Cross and empowered by the resurrection. Love is possible, however, only for personally mature people, namely, those who can accept themselves and others for who and what they are. Jesus reminded us that we can not really love our neighbor unless we first can love ourselves. Those who reject themselves tend to reject others as well.

The opposite of love is not hate; it is apathy, which is a suspension of commitment, a lack of concern. Love is the soul of all the other Christian virtues. Without it, St Paul insisted, we are nothing more than “a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal” (1 Cor. 13: 1-13). It should also go without saying, therefore, that every minister of the Church regardless of the ministry he or she exercises or aspires to exercise, must be a loving person, ready at all times to sacrifice his or her selfish individual interests to the needs of others.

Because charity is so central and indispensable to the Christian life, it is central and indispensable to the Christian ministry. It also depends so much on healthy personality. One again we see here that ‘grace builds on nature’. “So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13).

3.3.4 *Moral (Cardinal) Virtues*

The moral, or cardinal, virtues are those that have to be acquired through cooperation with God’s grace. The moral virtues are prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude.

3.3.4.1 Prudence

Prudence is the ability to discern, to make moral choices. It answers the question, ‘What is the best way for me, in this situation, to do the right things?’ It involves conducting an inquiry,

taking counsel from others, judging, and then making a decision. St. Thomas Aquinas called prudence the “rudder virtue.” Without prudence a person is like a ship drifting aimlessly at sea. Prudent people profit from their experience, have an instinct for asking the right people the right questions, have the foresight to anticipate difficulties and to see the consequences of their moral decisions, and finally, to sift through all that they have learned and then make a decision consistent with the situation and circumstances before them. A minister without prudence is a danger to the Church. Good judgment is not a luxury in ministry; it is an absolute necessity.

3.3.4.2 Justice

Justice is concerned with rights and with the duties that correspond to those rights. A right is a power to do whatever is necessary for achieving the end or purpose for which we are destined as human beings. Since we are radically social beings, justice is concerned with our social relationships at various levels. The minister must be just at every level; commutative justice gives each persons his or her due, distributive justice gives all persons in a social grouping what is due to them from the community’s resources, legal justice gives the government and other responsible agencies what is due them for the sake of the common good and social justice contributes out of one’s resources and gifts to the common good of the society at large.

A minister who is unjust in his or her dealing with others is obviously not a fit person for ministry. But neither is one who is indifferent to issues of justice or who simply does not get involved when others are victimized by unfair practices and procedures, whether inside or outside the Church.

Here, each minister is called for a basic minimum awareness of and be faithful to the Church's social teachings, as contained in various papal encyclicals from Pope Leo XIII to the present pope, in the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gadium et Spes*), in various synodal documents and in various pastoral letters and pronouncements of national Episcopal conferences.

3.3.4.3 Temperance

Temperance enables us to achieve some balance in the exercise of our desires for food, drink, sex, tobacco, and other creature comforts. Temperance humanizes but does not repress those human pleasures. It helps us to regulate the conflict between the spirit and the flesh. It involves painful struggle, self-denial, and renunciation.

3.3.4.4 Fortitude

Fortitude enables us to overcome an instinctive fear in order to pursue the good. It has an active and passive side: taking bold action for the sake of the Kingdom of God and enduring pain, suffering, and even death for the sake of the Kingdom. People who do not have the courage of their convictions, who will not speak up or speak out in "prudence" for what is right and against what is wrong and unjust, lack the cardinal virtue of fortitude.

It must be said that all these virtues, theological and moral alike, are closely interrelated. Thus those who are prudent can never use their prudence as an excuse not to act with courage (fortitude). Those with fortitude can not act without charity. Indeed Christians and Christian ministers in particular, are always called to a life of mercy. Mercy, unlike justice, gives to others more than they deserve or have a right to. Ministers must be Christians who practice both corporal works of mercy –feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked,

sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick, ransoming the captive, and burying the dead– and the spiritual works of mercy –instructing the ignorant, counseling the doubtful, admonishing the sinner, bearing wrong patiently, forgiving offenses, comforting the afflicted, and praying for the living and the dead. Mercy reminds us that our obligations to others go beyond even the demands of social justice. It goes without saying that a merciless minister is a contradiction in terms.

3.4 Social, Political, and Cultural Awareness

3.4.1 *Cultural shock*

Nobody is completely objective, dispassionate, or open-minded. Wherever we go, we bring with us our hidden agendas and preferences, our culturally formed interpretations and judgments, our personal tastes. We carry with us pre-understandings: tendencies, biases, assumptions that we use to make sense of the world. None of us come to a new situations utterly naïve or entirely opened. Cultural shock usually refers to the impact of a different culture on newly arrived and consequently disoriented persons. As a member of the Society of African Missions, I have experienced this disorientation any time I left my country to another country like Ghana, Benin Republic, Nigeria or Kenya and Tanzania. I can recall my first cultural shock when I was in Ghana. I was living in a family where the dinner meal was supposed to be taken before 6.00 pm. I had a great difficulty to adapt myself to this practice. The fact that I couldn't join the family for supper, ended up creating a discomfort in the house. My hosts couldn't understand that I was waiting till 8.00 pm and even sometimes 9.00 pm to have my super which was ready before 5. 30 pm. Many of my colleagues with whom I went to Ghana and were living in different families complained also of the same problem. Another shock was on the liturgy of the Eucharistic Celebration. In our Churches back at home, the congregation would listen to the Gospel reading while sitting no matter the length of the reading. But in Ghana, we would remain

standing at the reading of the Gospel. At the time of the collection, each and every body was to leave his or her seat to go in front of the altar to put his or her contribution in the basket prepared for this intention. Such practice will be unconceivable in our Churches in Ivory Coast. I still remember how uneasy I was in such a way that I asked to myself whether I was attending the Eucharist Celebration in a Catholic Church. But with time I learned to be tolerant and relatively relaxed. I was not psychologically prepared for any adjustments. Today, my eyes are opened and my judgments have been modified by my experiences in another culture. When I find myself back in my home place, I am surprised to discover that the homeland I anticipated really is like a new found land. I find myself not only struggling to adjust but I am also critical of persons and situations I previously tolerated, loved, or took for granted. Here is the strong voice of a social psychologist about cultural shock:

One need not sojourn outside one's own country to experience cultural shock or to undergo a cross-cultural experience. Such transitional experiences happen to minority students entering college, to parolees from prison, to returning veterans, to married couples who divorce, and to those who change roles or occupations in mid-career. The frustrations as well as the growth and development inherent in such interactions can be experienced in one's own culture. The phases, the difficulties involved, and the consequences of such experiences, however, are most readily understood in the cross-cultural experience where psychological, social and cultural differences are most distinct.⁷⁷

Unless able or helped to adjust appropriately, a person exposed to another culture may be ill at ease and even offensive to others. But a cultural shock handled positively may bear great fruits.

⁷⁷ Peter S. Adler, "The Transitional Experience: An Alternative View of Culture Shock. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 15, 4 (1975): 13.

One of the essential missions of the Church is its social apostolate. Those who sometimes pride themselves on never watching television or never following news events actually convict themselves of a lack of readiness for important ministries in the Church. To be indifferent to the social, economic, political, and cultural contexts of the people they are called to serve is, in effect, to deny the incarnational principle, whereby, “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (Jn 1:14). We can not avoid the basic fact that this principle presents to us a clear recognition of the importance of context in understanding the Christian faith. “We can compare this faith to a seed: just as a seed cannot take root and grow without falling on a soil, faith cannot develop, let alone be understood, without situating it in context. Context is to faith what soil is to a seed”⁷⁸

To be indifferent, to the people, the places, the events, and the things in which the Word has become flesh is almost like being indifferent to the Word itself. Indeed it is impossible to grasp the Word or to be grasped by it apart from the human and natural condition in which it inserts itself continually. The minister must always be prepared to read the “signs of the times” and then to interpret them “in the light of the gospel” (G.S, 4)

People do need to make sense of other worlds of meaning. So, individual people must be committed to learning from others and to moderating an unwholesome self-centeredness. We must learn to acknowledge and respect other people and their perspectives. None of us entirely escape the tendency to privilege our point of view, to place ourselves at the center of the world. This is inevitable and often unconscious. The challenge is to unmask this potentially virulent disease before it spreads. Any Christian who is not committed to respecting different points of

⁷⁸ A.E. Orabator, “Contextual theological methodologies” in *Methodological issues in African theology*, 5.

view, to learn from others, and to learning from mistakes would seem to have forgotten the following passage:

Do not judge and you will not be judged; because the judgments you give are the judgments you will get, and the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given. Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own? How dare you say to your brother, "Let me take the splinter out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brother's eye. (Mt 7: 1-5)

This does not remove the fact that there will always be some tension between culture and gospel. The gospel message will always challenge people's behavior and belief (Cf. Mk7: 8, 9, 13).

3.4.2 Collaborative ministry

In my few years of missionary experiences, I met different types of personality displayed by parish priests and assistant priests. I noticed unfortunately that many of my confreres who are priests in parishes have been faced with personality challenges which ended up by creating not only awkward situations as regard their own living atmosphere, meaning the presbytery, but also contributing to the split of the parish: the parishioners were divided according to which one of the priests in conflict they supported. This situation of course made it impossible for any one to have an efficient ministry. At this point, I will like to give a practical example. But for the sake of inconveniences, characters will remain anonymous. To be fair in my judgment, I start by saying that many of our community priests (The SMA Fathers) experienced also happy times in their missions, but here I would like to dwell on our dark experience in order to emphasize the need of a collaborative ministry as an essential key to efficient ministry.

One of our parishes -St Mary's Parish- was held by Fr Paul, the parish priest and Fr. Barnabas was his assistant priest. For some reasons which have not been properly disclosed to us, our two priests became so bitter to each other at a point that their misunderstanding was heavily felt in the parish. I happened to visit them at several occasions. Great was my surprise to see that even our two priests would sit in the sitting room together. They would not share their meals at the same time; worse, if one of them had had his meal in the house at the absence of the other, the second to come would not eat the remaining food kept for him. An atmosphere of distrust was 'reigning' in the presbytery. The parishioners also were divided according to which one of the priests they were standing for. Obviously, ministry became a burden both for the priests as well as for the Christian community as they were receiving constant threats from each side. Things went from bad to worst. Today, our two priests Paul and Barnabas have been assigned to different occupations and two other priests, Fr John and Fr Matthew, are in charge of the St Mary's Parish. Fr John who is the actual parish priest seems very conscious of the division among the parishioners, division which he has inherited from his predecessors. He seems determined not to repeat any of the mistakes of Fr Paul and Fr Barnabas: none of the two groups in conflict should feel that he is standing for or against it. To achieve his mission, he chose to isolate himself from his parishioners. He is very straight minded with everybody and anybody. No favoritism. Everybody will be treated in the same way. At the end of the day, his congregation feels that their parish priest is so distant from them. There is no real community life going on. Many of the parishioners confessed to me that they have invited their priests for meals in their houses, but the fathers would not come. One woman has even shared with me the humiliation she received from the parish priest: she came to greet him with some of her friends, but Fr John refused to shake hands with them. She said that she was so embarrassed that "never

will she ever approach ‘that priest’ for anything.” I have been told how harshly he talks to his Christians. To some of the Christians I asked ‘why are you still coming here for mass?’ To my enjoyment, some responded saying: “this is our Church; we will not go any where else. We are waiting for him to leave.” That is not the end of the story. Fr Matthew, the assistant priest is not in agreement with the policy of his parish priest. But the image of the presbytery has to be maintained. And so he chose to suffer silently: he won’t enter into obvious disagreement with his parish priest.

My reading of the situation is that Fr. John and Fr. Matthew are guided in their conducts by the constant awareness of avoiding by all means the mistakes of their predecessors. And this consciousness does not allow them to have an authentic relationship with their parishioners. As a result, everybody can see that the pastoral ministry at St Mary’s Parish is not dealt with to the best of the ability of both the pastors and the parishioners.

Unfortunately, this dramatic story is not an exception of the SMA Fathers. In many parishes and dioceses, things such as this happen. I believe that in every human set up, conflict is inevitable. Suppressing conflict in any group results in apathy and tension which are obstacles to collaboration. If collaboration is to occur, conflict must be confronted and dealt with. “Too many ministers are so fearful to conflict that they constantly function from a stance of ‘peace at any price,’ not realizing that the price is a steep one. Failure to deal with conflict condemns people to a state of no collaboration.”⁷⁹ It is our belief that the ultimate reason for choosing to become collaborative is that the church is the People of God, that every baptized person is both called and gifted for ministry. Ministry, then, is not a choice for the Christian, but, a privilege and an

⁷⁹ L.Sofield · C.Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry*, 37.

obligation. Beyond the individual call for ministry, there is a call as a people. Movement toward this ideal is accomplished by challenging specific populations and situations within the church:

- Men and women, especially priests and women religious, to minister together more harmoniously;
- Parish staffs to develop greater collaborative skills and to be models for parishioners of what collaboration is all about;
- Chancery and parish staffs to relate to each other as allies rather than adversaries;
- Neighboring parishes to combine efforts to meet the needs of suffering people;
- Organizations within the same parish to discover ways to work together;
- Etc

Conclusion

As missionaries, working especially in countries other than our own, we are strangers and as such, we should show respect to the hosts, admit our uncertainty and powerlessness, ask for assistance, and thus demonstrate our openness, integrity, and desire for relationships. But we missionaries are sometimes our own worst enemies. The very qualities that facilitate our cross-cultural encounters (adaptability, initiative, risk taking, creativity, independence, and so on) may create problems for our hosts. The hosts need to see indications of dependence, conformity, and predictability. So to have an efficient ministry among our hosts, we must trust the skills and virtues that facilitate our survival in other cultures; but we must listen to the voices and read the expectations and reactions of our hosts in order to adapt and be comprehensible, able to be understood and able to be grasped or embraced.

To realize our potential as cross-cultural communications and allies, we need to work constantly to accept our marginal and ambiguous status. We are not the primary agents of mission but collaborators and assistants: servants. The primary agent is God's Spirit, and we must not muzzle the Spirit or try to wrest initiatives from God. The primary respondents of God's call are the people themselves. We may need to learn how that modifies our own position. If we try to intercept God's message in the hopes of relaying it to the people, we may badly distort it. If we try to model the only possible and authentic response to the gospel, we will certainly reflect only a shadow of God's glory. If we presume too quickly to be God's spokesmen, we may overlook the still, small voice with which God likes to animate the silence. If we patronize and dominate the interaction with other people, they may never gain access to the light so necessary for their own growth. It is good for us to be on the edges, at the margins of our own worlds. That locates us where we really have to work with others. It also calls us to learn the meaning of their language and their world.

All this demands of us a role shift and a status change. The measure of our missionary commitment is that we do not cling to privilege and comfortable certainties but choose to become servants and learners. That is difficult for anyone but especially one sent by an institutional church with a proud history. We are called to repent and be converted as much as we are called to call others to repentance and conversion. Here again, we understand that self-knowledge is a foundation for an efficient ministry.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

According to Freudian psychology, unconscious feelings, desires, needs and expectations have notable effects on one's behavior. These inner dynamics can also influence one's ministerial functioning. While most people are aware of this, they do not realize the degree to which it is true. Many still believe that they can successfully put aside self-knowledge and self-awareness and the effects of unconscious perceptions, feelings, needs, desires and expectations as they go about their ministerial duties. Self awareness means the understanding and the acceptance of both our weaknesses and our strengths. We would be incapable of understanding our behaviors and activities unless we understand ourselves first. Unless we accept the reality that self is the centre of our personality, our activities and relationships will remain empty, devoid of meaning and happiness. Wholeness of personality is possible only when the individual is fully aware and present to oneself.

Unfortunately, our society shuns weakness and glorifies strengths. This theory has forced so many of us to live with a false self image. In one of his book, the historian and ecumenical theologian Donald Nicholl speaks of the liberation that comes from the death of the false "I", the ego. He explains that "if the heart is not to be hindered in its deepest aspirations, then the ego, that partial self, which is always watching itself and composing a role for it to play, must disappear."⁸⁰

Donald Nicholl touches on a great truth. Don't all spiritual masters speak of the dying of self in order for the real self to emerge? The false self they refer to is not just the visible passions, but all those hidden compulsions that push us to seek our own glory. When Jesus talked about the liberation of love, he said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falls into the

⁸⁰ D. NICHOLL, *The beatitude of Truth: Reflections of a Lifetime*, 160-61.

ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves their life, will lose it; whoever hates their life in this world, will keep it for eternal life” (Jn 12:24-25). Jean Vanier comments that the “life” is that of the false ego, and the “eternal life” is not life after death, but the life that we are called to live in freedom of love⁸¹. This freedom that comes through the death of the false self is the acceptance of ourselves just as we are. It is also the acceptance of others as being different from us. It is finally the acceptance of the world as it is together with the will to struggle to make it a better place for us to live. This inner liberation is for those whose true self is hidden behind high walls, for those whose character and personality have been built on fear but who trust in the liberating force of God’s love. It is for all those who are locked up in prisons of past hurts and who are discovering little by little the road of forgiveness.

Priests are to have a mature capacity to relate to others. To be responsible for a community and to be a man of communion, it is necessary that, on one hand, priests be self-aware. Without a knowledge of our own weaknesses, wounds and shadow, we will never be able to lead or liberate others into their true selves. We can only walk with others, sensitively and usefully, as far as we have walked with ourselves. We can only win the minds and the hearts of others to the extent that we have won over our own. On the other hand, priests have to be ready to serve collaboratively. Unfortunately, the desire to move toward collaboration is often coupled with fear. However, I think that helping individuals in the Christian community respond to their call to ministry is a major role for anyone in ministry. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* reminds the Church’s pastors that ‘they were not ordained by Christ to take

⁸¹ C.f., J. Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 111.

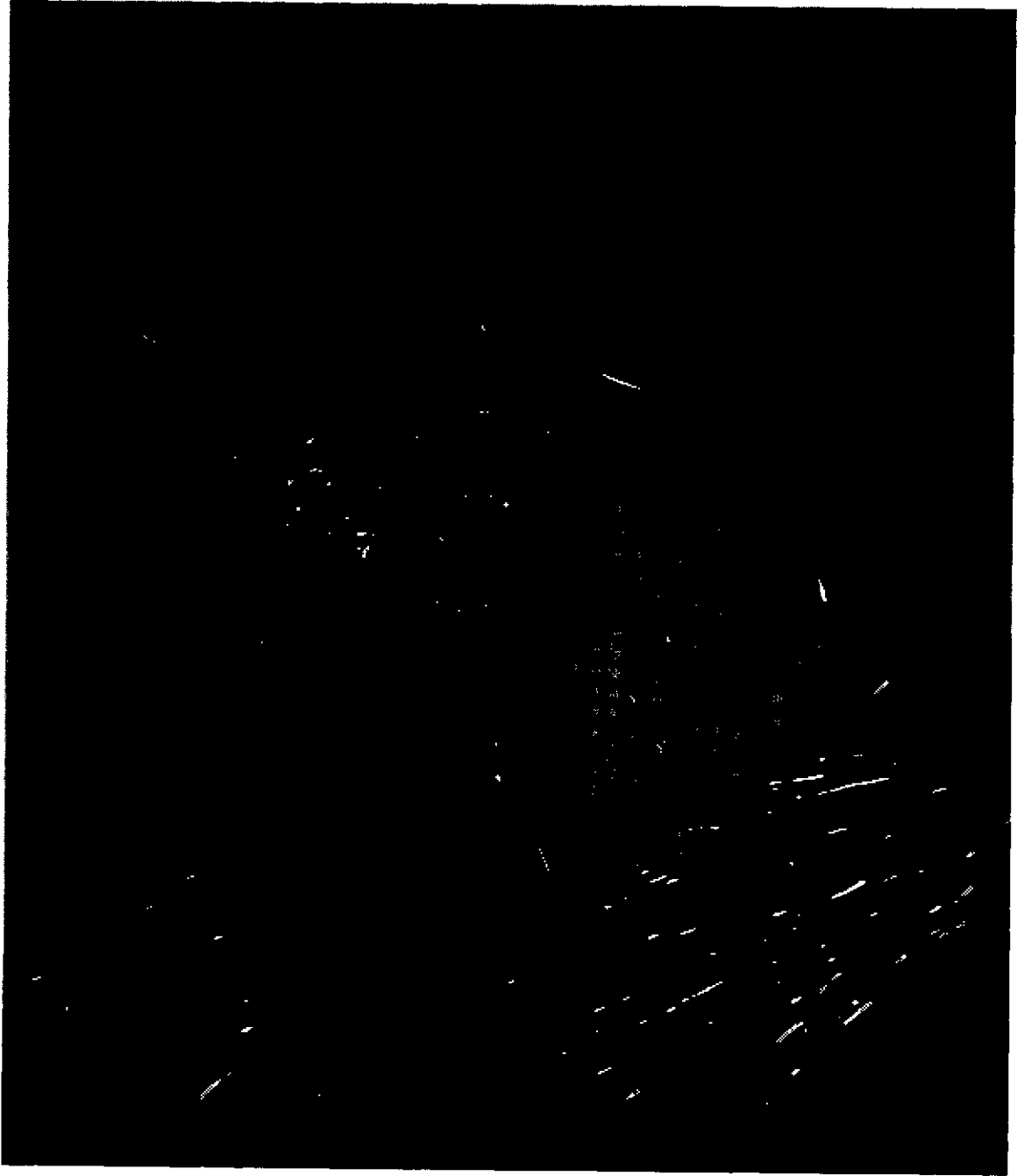
upon themselves alone the entire salvific mission of the Church to the world', and thus are asked to recognize the ministries and charisms of the laity. (LG, 30).

I will like to close with some additional comments of my own regarding what collaborative ministry should mean in practice. The task of the Church in a particular parish is the shared task of the whole parish, not just of the clergy. All members of the parish have a shared responsibility for this task. They are all co-laborers, i.e. involved in collaborative ministry. Hence, it is vital that everyone feels a shared 'ownership' of the parish, its life and mission. Collaborative ministry does not happen just because people work together or cooperate in some way. It is a gradual and mutual evolution of new patterns, new attitudes and new self-understanding. The decision to make a parish more collaborative needs to be made by priests and laypeople together; both have to be willing to change themselves, rather than anxious to change each other. Thus, for an efficient ministry, self-knowledge is an answer. It heals, comforts, transforms, converts and restores life. Dear readers, I hope that in your own ministry you have made the basic decision for collaboration: We should; we want to; we can; we will.

APPENDIX 1



APPENDIX 2



APPENDIX 3



ABBREVIATIONS

1Cor	First letter St Paul to the Corinthians
1Jn	First letter of St John
GFPC	A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy
GS	Gadium et Spes
Jn	Gospel according to St John
LG	Lumen Gentium
MBTI	Myers-Briggs Type Indicators
Mk	Gospel according to St Mark
Mt	Gospel according to St Mathew
PDV	Pastoral Dabo Vobis
RET	Rational and Emotive Therapy
Rom	Letter to St Paul to the Romans

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