

**SEMINAR FOR BISHOPS OF ASIA
CARING FOR PRIESTS – ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE WITH
DIFFICULTIES**

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I. INTRODUCTION – Fr. Lawrence Pinto MSIJ, Executive Secretary, FABC – OC.

Background and Overview

This FABC document consists of four of the nine papers read at the above mentioned Bishops' Seminar organized by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences—Office of Clergy. The Final Statement of the seminar is also included which reflects the experience of the participant-Bishops.

The Kandy-Meeting of the FABC-Office of Clergy, held in December, 2004, had planned to have a seminar for Bishops to discuss problems affecting priests—this would help Bishops to care for priests-in-difficulties with more compassion and in effective ways. The consultation on Human Formation of Priests—Challenges in the Asian Context, planned and organized by the FABC-Office of Clergy was held in May, 2006, for the Rectors of the Major Seminaries of Asia, which highlighted, that we in Asia are in need of a clear identity and vision of the priest. The consultation spelled out that a priest in Asia must be a person of God-experience, and is driven by pastoral charity, a person of evangelical counsels and moral integrity; a person who is welcoming and compassionate; a person in solidarity with the poor, a person of relationship and who is able to live in, and form communities, a person of dialogue, justice and peace, a humble companion—a brother, father, mother, and friend on the journey to God, and one who is a servant leader in a servant church.

Against the backdrop of the above, it has been observed that priests in Asia are challenged by the lack of faith, secularism, materialism, individualism, apathy, indifference, ignorance, passivity, problematic parishioners and the whole gamut of fast cultural changes. Besides, our priests are also confronted by workload, burnout, inability to meet people's expectations, no time given to prayer or spiritual life, lack of perseverance, loneliness, excessive administrative demands, lack of accountability, problems with women and alcoholism, psychosexual problems, relational problems with bishops, priest-companions and people. The above may be perceived from the part of priests as their difficulties.

But from the perspectives of Bishops and the people in general, these issues amount to lack of human and spiritual maturity in priests, and lack of motivation to lead healthy priestly lives. They are affected by psychosexual and psychological problems. They lack zeal in the ministry and the mission of the church, and in financial accountability, and are lax with responsibilities of priestly life. They suffer from relational problems with bishops and fellow-priests in the presbyterium, and they lack seriousness with regard to moral and spiritual values.

The FABC-Office of Clergy, at its special Preparatory Meeting, held at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, Kuala Lumpur, West Malaysia, from 3rd to 4th of October, 2006, with Bishops from India, Myanmar, Pakistan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka, and three Rectors of Major Seminaries of Bombay, Singapore and Myanmar discussed in detail what requires to be presented at the seminar for Bishops. Views on Priests' problems from the Bishops' Conference of Vietnam were also incorporated.

The members of the group at this meeting strongly felt that a seminar of this nature would certainly help Bishops in their task of caring for priests in difficulties. It was also decided that this Seminar would strictly be held for the Bishops of Asia. After much discussion, the following objectives were chosen for this Seminar: 1. Helping Bishops to reflect on the identity and vision of the Priest in the Asian Context. 2. Helping Bishops to identify obstacles which priests face in their life and ministry. 3. Helping Bishops to care for priests in their difficulties with regard to their relationships with their own self, Bishops, brother-priests, people, and the other problems that negatively affect their pastoral ministry and priestly life.

The topics of the seminar were: Shepherding Role of the Bishop in relation to his Priests in his mission of the Church in a Key-note address set the tone to the whole seminar. Relational Problems and Issues which affect the pastoral ministry and priestly life were highlighted in order to realize that these issues and problems need to be resolved for the effective conduct of pastoral ministry, and to help priests lead a healthy priestly life. A discussion on a topic such as unhealthy moral and spiritual values brought to the awareness of the bishops that priests need to be admonished and guided constantly in order to help them work within the framework of priestly functions delineated by Canon Law of the Church, and they must also function in the world with respect to the priestly dignity.

While reflecting on priests' life in the Asian context, we must become cognizant of the priests in Asia who suffer from personality disorders, anxiety disorders and other psychological problems, like any other human person in the world. The seminar talks on these disorders, which were presented in a lengthy way to cover all aspects such as symptoms, causal factors and available therapeutic measures in order make bishops understand that these priests need caring, compassion and therapeutic help. If they are cared for, then they will be able to turn a new leaf and revert to their regular pastoral ministry and priestly life.

The very last issue that was discussed in detail was the 'on-going formation and helping measures' for priests in difficulties. A model was presented, which could help bishops coming from different parts of Asia, to organize an on-going formation and rehabilitative programme for priests in their respective countries and dioceses.

The papers presented in this document give a clear and informative knowledge regarding the identity and vision of the priest in the Asian context, and spell out details regarding caring aspects of priests who need understanding and attention from their bishops.

I. IDENTITY AND VISION OF PRIESTHOOD IN THE ASIAN CONTEXT

- Fr. Vimal Tirimanna, CSsR, Executive Secretary, FABC – OTC.

There have been priests and priestesses of different religions down through the ages ever since humanity institutionalized its relationship with the phenomenon of the 'sacred', in the form of a religion. Thus, we have had priests and priestesses in ancient civilizations and in their associated religions. However, the Catholic priesthood, ever since its institution, has been evolving into something unique with its specific identity¹; and by the nineteenth/twentieth centuries, Catholic priesthood had gained social recognition and moral credibility and respect not only in Christian Europe but even in many parts of the largely non-Christian Asia. Accordingly, in the by-gone years, Catholic priests were looked up to with reverence and respect in most of our Asian countries: *They were the men who reminded their parishioners of God's scandalous, unconditional love*². People knew who a Catholic priest was and what the specific behaviour

¹For a substantial discussion on the historical evolution of Catholic Priesthood, see Kenan B. Osborne, *Priesthood: A History of the Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, New York: Paulist Press, 1988.

²Donald B. Cozzens, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood: A Reflection on the Priest's Crisis of Soul*, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2000,p.3.

expected of him was; there was “a priestly culture” so to say, a priestly way of doing things. A Catholic priest had his identity clearly defined, all over the world; it was a universal identity.

However, with the overall radical Church reforms brought about by the Second Vatican Council, Catholic priesthood, too, went through a sort of an identity crisis. Consequently, in the years following the Council, thousands of priests walked out of their priesthood, and some others continued to remain but with an identity crisis. A few decades later, today, this identity crisis of Catholic priesthood seems to be going from bad to worse. Moreover, various scientific surveys conducted in some countries of Asia regarding the image of priests among the laity, also indicate a serious crisis of credibility affecting a vast number of priests today³.

Although the post-Vatican II era may have blurred the universal identity of Catholic priesthood, and though like any other vocation, priesthood, too, continues to evolve, in the essentials, that identity remained the same and will remain the same even in future. In this paper, I am asked to speak on the identity and vision of priesthood in the Asian context. In what follows, I have assumed that both identity and vision are not only intrinsically linked to each other through the very mission of priesthood, of course, within a given context, but that they are also the two sides of the same coin. As such, what is said below about priestly identity may also be valid often with regard to priestly vision, and vice versa. For both the contents of identity and vision often do overlap and meet each other in the mission of priesthood within a given context. I shall go about my task by first dealing with priestly identity, especially in enumerating the essentials of that identity in Asia, and then, by endeavouring to establish very briefly what vision the Catholic priesthood ought to have in our Asian contexts, precisely because of that identity.

1. Priestly Identity in Asia

1.1. Ordination confers a special ‘seal’/character

In the Ordination Rite, there is one place when the ordaining bishop says that priests are taken from among human beings and consecrated to God to sanctify human beings. Accordingly, priests are set apart...they are consecrated, they are ‘holy’, by the very definition of priesthood. In fact, in the Ordination Ritual the ordaining bishop prays the following prayer: “Almighty Father, grant to these servants of yours the dignity of the priesthood. Renew within them the spirit of holiness”. According to the cherished Catholic belief, then, this consecration involves a real and deep change, thanks to the divine ‘seal’, the ‘character’ that entitles a priest to act *in persona Christi*. According to the cherished Catholic tradition, this is one of the main characteristics of priestly identity: he is someone specially consecrated, set apart to act in the person of Christ. He is the one who binds and looses in the name of Christ and his Church, to begin with.

In *Presbyterorum ordinis* no:2, the Second Vatican Council said: “Priests, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are marked with a special character and are so configured with Christ the Priest, that they can act in the person of Christ the Head”. This special grace, this

³ See for example, Joe Mathias “Human Formation as the Basis of Priestly Formation”, *Asian Journal for Priests*, 49:1 (January 2004), p.14.

special character of ordination, like other types of graces of God, is freely bestowed on the priest, but it is up to the priest to dispose himself to receive it; or else, it will not make any effective change in the person who is ordained. We, priests, need to believe, accept and live this great truth in our priesthood. If we priests lived this truth in our lives, people could say of us what a visitor once said of the Cure d' Ars [St. John Mary Vianney], "I have seen God in a man"!

While it is very true that a priest is holy, is set apart, for the service of God and His people, it does not mean that priesthood has to be mystified as a 'holy reality' fully cut off from this real world and its peoples. A Catholic priest while retaining his special call to be holy, is to maintain that holiness in the very act of serving God and His People in this real world. What Jacob Parappally says in this regard is true:

*"There is a dangerous tendency to mystify Christian priesthood. True, it is different from the priesthood in other religions. But there is no justification for its mystification. In fact, such a tendency has created a self-understanding among some priests that they are only cultic priests not much different from that of the priests of the cult of Mithras who were called 'fathers' or like the priests who serve any deity in a temple. Christian priesthood is different from a purely cultic priesthood. It is a ministry entrusted to serve the community of the people of God to make present Christ sacramentally so that the believers can encounter the living Christ of their faith and build up the Body of Christ, the community."*⁴

In other words, while it is true that a priest gets a special identity through his being 'set apart', it does not mean that priests are cut off and set above the People of God. Rather, the priests are at the service of the particular flocks entrusted to them. Although the pre-Vatican-II era spoke of a priest as someone fully cut off from the rest of the people, of an exclusive cultic priesthood, Vatican-II did change this concept. The Council replaced the cultic term *sacerdos* with a biblical, non-cultic term *presbyter* or 'elder'. This is in perfect harmony with Jesus of the gospels who was not born into a priestly family; nor did his contemporaries consider him to be a priest! As a matter of fact, Jesus did abolish the cultic priesthood of the Old Testament. But the early community recognized in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus the absolute fulfilment of all human priesthood.⁵ It was only after His supreme sacrifice on the Cross that His disciples definitively recognized Him as the Eternal High Priest, as we read in the Letter to the Hebrews. Thus, according to *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, building up and establishing the Christian community [as the sacrament of the Kingdom preached by Jesus] in union with Christ, the Head, is the very context of priestly spirituality.⁶ A priest's identity surely revolves around the Eucharist [Priesthood and the Eucharist were instituted by Christ within the same context!], understood in a broader sense. It is the Eucharist that builds the Church community, and the priest is the chief instrument of God in this building of the community. Therefore, a priest has to identify himself fully with his community in their joys and sorrows, in their successes and failures; he must be in solidarity with his flock. However, he should also be carefully prudent in

⁴ Jacob Parappally, "Trinitarian Dimensions of Christian Priesthood", *Asian Journal of Priests*. 56:6 (November 2005), p.3.

⁵ Jacob Parappally, "Challenges to Christian Priesthood Today – II", *Asian Journal for Priests*, 48:2 (March 2003), p.7.

⁶ Cfr., *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, *Ordinis*, No:12.

such identifying, not to lose his essential priestly identity. About this, Cardinal Simon Pimenta of Mumbai has this to say:

For this reason, too, the current movement on the part of some priests to make themselves at all times indistinguishable from the world around them seems strangely ill-advised. They wish to discard the distinctive priestly garb. They are obsessed with the “Call me Charlie syndrome”! They hope to gradually merge into the climate and environment of the world and the age in which they live. Priests, through the power of Ordination, are essentially different from those not ordained. We do a dis-service to Christ and his people when we try to blur that essential difference.⁷

Elsewhere he writes:

We, priests, are signs. And the power of the sign is not in conformation but in distinction. Light is different from darkness to be able to illumine the path of the one who walks in darkness. Salt is different from food to be able to give it taste. Christ calls us the light and salt of the earth. In a dissipated and confused world such as ours, the power of sign lies precisely in being different. The more apostolic action calls for greater insertion in the human mass, the more different it must be.⁸

In our societies, particularly in our Asian societies, there was a time when the roles of different persons in a given society were clearly defined. A doctor knew what his role was; a mid-wife knew what her role was; a farmer knew what his role was; a teacher knew what her role was, etc. The very functioning of that role of a person also gave that person his or her identity. However, today, while some of those roles are still intact in some parts of our Asian countries, the role of a Catholic priest definitely has entered a period of change [and even some crisis/confusion], particularly during the last few decades. To begin with, a priest today has assumed many functions as part of his priestly ministry, his priestly mission, and at times even to the extent of losing/neglecting the very essentials of his priesthood. Consequently, there is today a serious identity crisis with regard to priesthood. A question often asked today is: “who is a priest?” Is he a teacher, social worker, marriage counselor, administrator, etc. just what is he? But, as Cardinal Pimenta says, a man does not need to be ordained a priest to fight poverty, to counsel, or to direct boys’ groups. Lay people do that as well and often they do even better than ordained priests! But no lay person can perform the miracle of the Holy Eucharist or other sanctifying roles of a priest. No layman can forgive sins, and no layman can teach officially in the name of the Church. The priest is an extension of the bishop [who in turn, is a successor of the Apostles] and that is why the priest traditionally needs the faculties of the diocese to perform his priestly duties.⁹ And a bishop is a direct successor of the Apostles of Jesus. As such, a Catholic priest, acts in persona Christi. It is this acting in the person of Christ that gives a priest his first essential distinct identity.

In Pastores Dabo Vobis, Pope John Paul II says:

⁷ Cardinal Simon Pimenta. *Priest Forever: A Collection of Homilies on Priesthood* [Second Print], Mumbai: St. Paul’s, 2000, p.26.

⁸ Ibid., p.32.

⁹Pimenta, *ibid.*, p.25

*The priest finds the full truth of his identity in being a derivation, a specific participation in and continuation of Christ himself, the one high priest of the new and eternal covenant. The priest is a living and transparent image of Christ the Priest*¹⁰.

As Cardinal Pimenta says, Jesus identifies Himself with the priests in the exercise of His priestly powers which He confers on us, to such an extent that our personality disappears, in a way, before His, since it is He who acts in us priests [viz., *in persona Christi*]. It is Jesus who in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass changes the bread and wine into His body and blood. It is Jesus who, through us, forgives sins. It is He who speaks when a priest exercising His ministry in the name of and in the spirit of the Church, announces the Word of God..... And we could go on in enumerating the areas in which the priest acts in the person of Christ. Consequently, we need to notice here that the sacred dimension of the priesthood is completely ordained to the apostolic dimension, namely, to the mission, to the pastoral ministry.¹¹

1.2. Holiness/Sanctity of a Priest

All the baptized are called to holiness; but all are not called to priesthood. Pope John Paul-II speaks of this special vocation to holiness of priests in his *Pastores Dabo Vobis* when he writes:

*The Council's statement that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity [LG 40] applied in a special way to priests. They are called not only because they have been baptized, but also and specifically because they are priests, that is, under a new title and in new and different ways deriving from the sacrament of Holy Orders.*¹²

As already mentioned above, priests are holy by the very indelible mark or 'character' they receive at their ordination. They are holy also by being priests, by doing that which priests ought to do! Celebrating the Holy Eucharist, absolving sins, anointing the sick, preaching the Word of God, praying for their flocks, caring for the marginalized, being concerned about the poor, helping the helpless, being in solidarity with the oppressed.....etc. We know from experience that the very 'being' and 'doing' of human beings are intrinsically and inseparably connected. As the eminent American moral theologian, Richard M. Gula points out, if we talk too exclusively of actions or doings in isolation, we are in danger of regarding them as something outside ourselves and as having a reality of their own, independent of the acting person or agent. But actions are always the expressions of a person.¹³ While we are certainly called to do what is right as Christians, we are first of all called to be loving persons in the imitation of Jesus Christ.¹⁴ A priest is no exception in this regard. What we are is equally important as what we do; 'being' is as important as 'doing'. Elsewhere, Gula writes:

¹⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*,

¹¹ Pimenta, *ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

¹² Pope John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992), No:19.

¹³ Richard M. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality*, New York: Paulist Press, 1989. p.7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

As traditional Catholic moral theology would have it, agere sequitur esse: we act out of who we are. Everyday morality is largely the matter of living in a way that fits who we are. Most of the time we reach decisions almost without reflecting. We act the way we do largely because external conditions challenge us to reveal the habits we have formed, the beliefs we hold, the image we have of ourselves, the ideals we aspire to, and our perception of what is going on. In brief, we act the way we do more because of the character we have become than because of the principles we would apply.¹⁵

In other words, as priests whatever [pastoral activity included] we do, needs to [and in fact, do] spring forth from who we are, from our very spiritual being, and vice versa. It is only then, that one would do the right things for the right reasons, and it is only then, a priest's true identity, vision and meaning of life would come from what he does. Or else, priests will end up as 'doers' without any depth or meaning or identity for themselves, and we may have to repeat the words of the famous poet T.S.Eliot who said in another context: *And this is the treason, to do the right thing for the wrong reason!*

In our contemporary world, people give a wrong priority to 'doing' over 'being'. However, in his *Pastores dabo vobis*, Pope John Paul II reverses and corrects this wrong emphasis: The priests' being is more radical than his functioning. What he is, is more important than what he does. What he does should flow from what he is. That is why the Holy Father reminds us that a priest, above all, is a man sacramentally configured to Jesus Christ, Head and Servant, Shepherd and Spouse of the Church. That is his being. Because of this, the priest is empowered to pastoral charity – love in response to love, service in response to closeness to His Master.¹⁶

Sometime ago, a survey conducted among the young people in South Asian countries, had this poignant question: how do the young people see today's priests? While admiring the broad-mindedness and out-reach of today's priests [in contrast to the priests in the pre-Vatican-II era], they said they expected priests to be more holy! With our diverse experiences in our own Asian countries, we may safely conclude that this is surely the general consensus also of our Asian peoples. That, perhaps, is why Pope John Paul-II in his *Ecclesia in Asia* says that Asian people do not expect their priests to be administrators or builders, but to be holy people [esp. in keeping with the religious leaders of other great religions of Asia]:

People in Asia need to see the clergy not just as charity workers and institutional administrators, but as men whose minds and hearts are set on the deep things of the Spirit (cf. Rom 8:5). The reverence, which Asian people have for those in authority, needs to be matched by a clear moral uprightness on the part of those with ministerial responsibilities in the Church. By their life of prayer, zealous service and exemplary conduct, the clergy witness powerfully to the Gospel in the communities, which they shepherd in the name of Christ.¹⁷

As one author points out, with regard to priesthood in general, any renewal of the priesthood must acknowledge that priestly identity and priestly holiness are intertwined. Insofar

¹⁵ Richard M. Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*, New York: Paulist Press, 1996, p.33.

¹⁶ Cfr., Pope John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992), Nos:15,21,32.

¹⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999), No:43.

as priestly identity is in need of recovery, so too, is priestly holiness.¹⁸ But what does this ‘priestly holiness’ consist of? Below, I have identified three main essentials of priestly holiness: prayer, service and sacrifice.

1.3. Three Essentials of Priestly Holiness

1.3.1. Prayer: the first essential of Priestly Holiness

From the Old Testament times, the priest was supposed to be a mediator between God and man; the best example is Moses [also, Prophets]. In fact, our peoples in Asia recognize, appreciate and expect us to perform the duty of prayer, better than perhaps we ourselves do, for do they not everyday bring us a host of their problems: pastoral, personal, financial and what not? Do they not lay before us their innermost needs and desires? Do they not ever so often say: “Father, please pray for me, for my son who has lost his faith; for my father/mother who is sick; for my husband who has lost his job?” The litany is endless, each petition coming from the heart of our people and each one counting upon that special prayer of the priest.¹⁹

We, priests, need to have that spirit of active contemplation and contemplative action. Then, prayer life will not be separated from our daily lives. However, we need to have a concrete, minimum prayer life to begin with! First and foremost, we need to cultivate the official prayer life of the Church – in the celebration of the daily Eucharist and the Liturgy of Hours, which we solemnly promised to do at our Ordination. Besides, it is an act of prayerful solidarity with the universal priesthood of the Catholic Church – and second, personal prayer – like the daily Rosary, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, daily meditation on the Word of God in the scriptures, Way of the Cross, spiritual reading, etc., most of which were part of our personal spiritual life before we joined the seminary. Today, the real danger is the temptation to drop these ‘pious’ practices as ‘theologically out-dated’, and then, substitute them with nothing! We need to make a conscious effort to reserve time for regular periods of prayer and solitude, days of recollection, retreats, spiritual readings, all of which are privileged moments of a priest’s life wherein we priests spiritually energize ourselves.

1.3.2. Service: the second essential of Priestly Holiness

The Second Vatican Council was clear in saying that the realistic way of achieving priestly holiness is the priestly ministry itself: “Priests will attain sanctity in a manner proper to them if they exercise offices sincerely and tirelessly in the Spirit of Christ”.²⁰

Like every other human being, a priest is “a-man-in-relationship” with others. A person lost in himself, lost in a cocoon, is not a Catholic priest! Like Christ, a priest is someone who reaches out to others, especially to those most marginalized and abandoned in society. Moreover, by definition, a priest is ordained for people, or else, priesthood has no meaning. As such, to be people-oriented is a must for a priest. He is called to be an *alter Christus*, another Christ!

A priest is first and foremost a shepherd, a good shepherd who goes in search of the lost sheep. A best scriptural illustration of this is in Ez.34. In the New Testament, Jesus says that he

¹⁸ Michael F. Hull, “Priestly Identity and Priestly Holiness”, *The Priest*, July 2005, p.40

¹⁹ Pimenta, *ibid.*, p.68.

²⁰ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, No:13.

is the 'good shepherd'! At the Last Supper, the two principle actions of Jesus, breaking of bread and washing of feet, signify self-effacing service!

A priest cannot afford to have exclusive relationships without damaging gravely his very identity; he is by definition, an inclusivist. As such, he serves and reaches out to both the young and the old, men and women, rich and poor, saints and sinners, his admirers and non-admirers, etc. A priest cannot have an intimate relationship with one or a few to the exclusion of others. This is where his priestly celibacy enters in. Unfortunately, today, it is well known that some of our priests have serious lapses in this area of celibacy. What we are referring to here is not a question of an occasional lapse, but 'a way of life'! Some of us have learnt the art of living double-lives with regard to celibacy,²¹ thus damaging badly the very sanctity [and also the identity] of priesthood, and also causing terrible scandals among the people [eg., having mistresses/unofficial wives, using staff members or others with whom they work for their own pleasures, some even having children; there is also the abuse of young boys,.....etc.]. Surely, this is a human problem, and as such, they need to seek counseling and psychiatric treatment rather than continuing with their schizophrenic double-lives, for such behaviour surely damages the priest's identity! Those who have such problems need to first of all acknowledge that there is a problem and then, search for ways to grow out of them.

The well-known diocesan spirituality expert, Donald B.Cozzens says:

Authentic human intimacy is a hallmark of the mature and healthy adult. The capacity for mature and honest relationships is also critical for a sound and mature spiritual life. While the issue of intimacy is problematic for society as a whole, it appears to be especially troublesome for priests. The psychological and sociological studies of American priesthood commissioned by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and published in early 1970's found the priests were not as mature as their comparably educated male counterparts. "The ordinary men who are American priests are bright, able, and dedicated. A large number of them are underdeveloped as persons with a consequent lack of fully realized religious and human value. They could be far more effective personally and professionally if they were helped to achieve greater human and religious maturity".²²

Cozzens holds that a good number of priests today are of the puer aeternus archetype [the archetype of "the eternal boy", "the eternal youth"].²³ According to him, such priests are "boys pretending to be men"!²⁴ Their growth had got stunted somewhere and so; they remain eternal boys or eternal youths, and behave as if they are eternally boys or eternally youth!²⁵ Cozzens is of the opinion that the three 'I's of Identity, Intimacy and Integrity, are in a triad and they need to be well balanced if a priest is to be a mature person.²⁶

²¹ Cfr., Gerald Coleman, "Priests who Break our Trust", as reproduced in *The Colombo Archdiocesan Bulletin*, July 2001, p.89.

²² Donald B. Cozzens, "Tenders of the Word" in Donald B. Cozzens (Ed.), *The Spirituality of the Diocesan Priest*, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997, p.47.

²³ Cozzens, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood*, Op.cit., p.47

²⁴ Ibid.,p.72.

²⁵ Cfr., ibid., pp.75-80.

²⁶ Cfr., Cozzens, "Tenders of the Word", ibid., pp.43-50.

1.3.3. Sacrifice: the third essential of Priestly Holiness

In 2 Cor.12:15, Paul says: “I will most gladly spend myself and be spent for you”. This was just one indication of the sacrificial zeal with which Paul, the Apostle dedicated himself to the service of God and of others. We may also cite 2 Cor.11:23-28, where we notice his passionate zeal for the task entrusted to him, in spite of the many hardships and perils that came his way. If an ‘apostle’ means ‘to be sent’, to be sent to serve others, then, a priest as a direct successor of apostles, cannot avoid the sacrificial zeal which the apostles of Jesus evinced in their mission. This is precisely priestly [sacrificial] fidelity to the mission entrusted to them, and fidelity costs energy and time [even maybe a lifetime!]. Every firm ‘yes’ we say, requires many firm ‘no’s.²⁷

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen puts down the identity crisis of priests to what he calls ‘the great divorce’ of Priest and Victim. Accordingly, Christ is not only man, not only God, but he is the Priest-Victim. He is the Servant of God, or the Holy One who came to die for our sins.²⁸ As Cardinal Pimenta points out Christ died for others’ sake, and this is where He differs from all other priests – pagans and Jewish. They offered a victim distinct from themselves, but Christ offered himself as victim. “He offered Himself without blemish to God, a spiritual and eternal sacrifice” (Heb.9:14). He is both the offerer and the offered, both priest and victim! St. Augustine in his *Confessions* interprets it well: “Ideo Victor quia Victima” [Victor because Victim]. If in Christ, Priesthood and Victimhood are inseparable, should this not be so in us, the priests, the “other Christs”? We priests have to consider ourselves not only as the offerers but also as the offered; not only as preachers, but also as sin-bearers; not only as social workers, but also as redeemers.²⁹

In his letter to priests on Holy Thursday 2000, the late Pope JP-II said:

Priest and victim! This sacrificial aspect is a profound mark of the Eucharist; it is also an essential dimension of the priesthood of Christ, and therefore, of our own priesthood. In the light of this, let us read again the words we speak everyday at mass.....: ‘Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my Body which will be given up for you....Take this, all of you, and drink from it; this is the cup of my blood..... ‘

But do the priests really identify themselves as victims in real life which they are supposed to be at mass sacramentally, because they are in *persona Christi*? What is a priest’s attitude towards sacrifice and suffering in his own life? In his last letter to the priests on Holy Thursday of 2005, the same Holy Father had this to say in this regard:

In a certain sense, when he says the words: “take and eat”, the priest must learn to apply them also to himself, and to speak them with truth and generosity. If he is able to offer himself as a gift, placing himself at the disposal of the community and at the service of anyone in need, his life takes on its true meaning.

²⁷ Scott Russel Sanders, “The Meaning of Fidelity: It’s Carrying on with what We Believe In”, *The New Leader*, 16-31 August, 1999, p.11

²⁸ Pimenta, *ibid.*, p.14.

²⁹ Cfr., *ibid.*, pp.14-15.

Jesus of Nazareth was known for his compassion for the people. ‘Com-compassion’ means to ‘suffer with’. A priest through his own sufferings should be able to suffer with those who suffer. A priest who can do this would be more sensitive to the sufferings of others, instead of giving into self-pity over his own sufferings. In this way, a priest becomes what Henri J.M. Nouwen called “a wounded healer”, which is not only an extension of his healing ministry but also of his role as a victim offered for others.

1.4. A Priest is also a fragile human being!

Last but not least, let us not forget that a priest is also a fragile human being who seeks holiness for himself and endeavours in the name of Jesus and his Church to be an instrument in the sanctification of the world. In other words, he is not just a mere human being with all his fragility and weaknesses, but also ‘a man with a special mission’. Priests are the ones who bear “treasures in earthen vessels” [2 Cor.4:7]. In the words of Pope John Paul-II [in his letter to Priests on Holy Thursday, 2000]:

It is true that in the history of priesthood, no less than in the history of the whole People of God, the dark presence of sin is also found. Many times, the human frailty of priests has made it hard to see in them the face of Christ.

However, the same Pope goes on to tell us that we need not get surprised or amazed about this! Not only did Judas betray Jesus, but Peter also denied him three times, though both were named Apostles [‘first priests’?] by Jesus himself! In his letter to priests, the following year [2001] the Holy Father says that Christ was not afraid to choose his ministers from among sinners! In other words, in choosing 12 weak, fragile human beings, Christ had no illusions about what he was doing: it was upon this human weakness and fragility that he set the sacramental seal of his presence. In the same way, today it is in and through the ordination of weak, fragile human beings that Christ continues to set his sacramental seal on them for the sanctification of the world. It is in this sense that we should not forget the age-old Catholic dictum: Grace builds on nature! In fact, Pope John Paul II attributes great importance to human formation as underlying all other aspects of priestly formation.³⁰ In other words, the Pope shows with conviction the intrinsic link between grace and human nature. Consequently, the healthier the human nature, the greater is the possibility for grace to penetrate the human person and transform him from within.³¹ For after all, as mentioned above, a priest is not just an ordinary man, but ‘a man with a special mission’!

Just as Peter and Paul [for both of them had been fully unworthy; Peter denied him and Paul persecuted and encouraged the murder of early Christians!] so correctly felt, we are unworthy to be priests, to continue the redeeming ministry in the name of Christ. But we know that Christ chose sinners to do this work, and continues to choose weak, fragile sinners as His ministers. But we need to be grateful [a sense of an endless thanksgiving and wonder!], first of all, for having chosen us; then, we need also to allow the grace of our ordination to build itself on our weak human nature, for grace builds on nature. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to bring to

³⁰ Cfr., Pope John Paul, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Nos:43-44.

³¹ Mathias, *ibid.*, p.15.

completion the good work he has begun in us and through us; but for this to happen, grace needs our full cooperation on a human level. That is why the priest, in his sinful, fragile, human nature, needs to dispose himself for God's Spirit to do His part in him. A proper priestly identity plays an enormous role in this.

Archbishop Helder Camara once said: *“Being holy means getting up immediately every time you fall, with humility and joy. It doesn't mean never falling into sin. It means being able to say: ‘Yes, Lord, I have fallen a thousand times, but thanks to you I have got up again a thousand and one times!’”*

2. Vision of Catholic Priesthood in the Asian Context

Once we have a clear identity of who we are, the scope of our mission automatically falls into its perspective; in other words, a vision automatically ensues from an identity. As mentioned earlier in this paper, since both ‘being’ and ‘doing’ are intrinsically linked, whenever and wherever a person has a clear-cut idea of his/her ‘being’[identity], then, his/her ‘doing’ [vision] invariably follows.³² In the fore-going section, we saw that a priest [in general] is called to be holy at least in three main areas: prayer, service and sacrifice. In this section, let us see very briefly how in a culturally pluralistic and multi-religious Asia, a priest can realise or live such an identity of holiness in and through prayer, service and sacrifice.

In the context of this paper, there is an inalienable but distinct relationship between the terms ‘vision’ and ‘model’. If ‘vision’ is a dream or a plan of action yet to be realised, then, a ‘model’ is taken as a particular plan of action within a given time and space. A particular model is shaped according to the particular context. Felix Machado reminds us that down through the centuries, there had been different ‘models’ of Catholic priesthood, and he highlights five of them which emerged in different periods of Church history, depending, of course, on the model of the Church in vogue: the jurisdictional model, the cultic model, the prophetic model, the pastoral model and the servant model. He also points out that these are not clear-cut, compartmentalized models.³³ As a person coming from India, and also keeping in mind the traditional Indian respect for the ‘holy man’ or the ‘guru’, Machado wonders whether in some parts of India a priest should not appear as a ‘guru’; here, he is thinking of a kind of a monastic model of priesthood.³⁴ Since Asia is so vast and complex, perhaps, one needs to seriously think along the lines of Machado as to which model of priesthood would best suit the respective areas of Asia [i.e., a sort of an inculturation], of course, without altering any of the essentials of the above-mentioned priestly identity. Since the Asian Churches and almost all the aspects to do with ecclesiastical life in Asia are still looked at, with the suspicion of being ‘foreign’ [‘western’, to be precise], such a relevant priestly model based exclusively on an Asian sense of holiness and detachment, is a must for Asian priesthood. As the well-known Asian theologian Arevalo says, “Being Church in Asia” has been a very explicit FABC concern from the very beginning, and

³² Although I am fully aware that it is simplistic to equate ‘being’ with identity and ‘doing’ with vision, for the purpose of this Paper, I have adopted this sort of an equation!

³³ Felix Machado, “Spiritual Formation: A Direction of Future Priests”, in Vincent G. Cajilig (Ed.) *Hundred Fold Harvest... Enjoyed*, Manila: FABC Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy, 1995, pp.116-117.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.117

this interest and concern is ongoing.³⁵ A necessary sub-concern or sub-interest of the same preoccupation of “Being Church in Asia”, is the concern or interest to be “Priests in Asia”. A priestly model evolved for the needs of a certain epoch, in a certain non-Asian context, will always remain alien and strange in Asia. Any priestly model, if it is to be relevant in Asia, has to be not only inculturated but also has to be in solidarity with the struggles of Asian multitudes. Any priestly model that is not inserted into Asian contexts will remain a “bonsai” model in Asia!

There is a general Asian consensus that hunger for God and hunger for bread are the two-fold concerns of the Asian Church.³⁶ A priest who carries on the mission of the Church as its minister in Asia, therefore, cannot afford to ignore these two important vertical and horizontal concerns of the Asian Church. Since by definition, a Catholic priest is ‘a person-in-relationship-with-others’, one may also look at these two Asian concerns as vertical and horizontal relationships, relationships that serve God and fellow human beings.

Following the original impetus given by the Second Vatican Council, the Asian bishops made a radical paradigm shift in their ecclesiology when they spoke about the “new way of being Church in Asia” at the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the FABC in Bandung in 1990. In their Final Statement, the bishops said the Church in Asia in 1990’s has to be a “participatory Church”, a “Communion of Communities” [No:5.8]. From this understanding of ecclesiology would invariably follow that the priest in Asia is a man of communion. Cajilig points out that a priest as a man of communion would have a three-fold task, namely: 1) he is a man of the sacred; 2) he is a man of humble service; 3) he is a man of dialogue.³⁷ One needs to notice that all these three tasks are expressions of a priest’s relationships with God, fellow human beings and with Asian realities, respectively.

2.1. Relationship with God

A priest in Asia, as a religious person, first and foremost has to be a man of God, and so, any priestly vision cannot ignore this basic fact. A *sine qua non* for this is that he has to be a genuine believer in the very existence of God. For this, he needs to have first hand God-experiences, which in turn, he can share with [and also learn from the experiences of] his flock. His God-experience, however, must be seen in his actions, i.e., in his dealings, gestures, in his caring outlook, compassionate and understanding attitude and above all in his human touch when he faces the realities of life around him together with his people. In addition, as ‘a man of God-experiences’, he should be able to assist and guide his people to discern the same God acting in their own lived reality, everyday. In other words, a priest has to be a ‘specialist on God’, first and foremost, and in religious Asia, this is a must. Already, in their very First FABC Plenary Assembly, the Asian bishops said:

We are daily more convinced that the Spirit is leading us in our time, not to some dubious syncretism (which we all rightly reject), but to an integration – profound and organic in

³⁵ Catalino G. Arevalo, “Inculturation and Theological Reflections” in Mario Saturnino Dias (Ed.), *Rooting Faith in Asia: Source Book for Inculturation*, Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2005, p.311.

³⁶ Cfr., Vicente Cajilig, “Formation for Priesthood in Asia”, *FABC Papers*, No:92d (January 2000), p.2. See also Vicente Cajilig, “Continuing Formation for Priesthood in Asia”, *FABC Papers*, No:92e (January 2000), pp.3-4.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4.

character – of all that is best in our traditional ways of prayer and worship into the treasury of our Christian heritage. [No:35]

As Fox rightly interprets, the “our” in the above citation referred to their “Asian” religious and cultural heritages. Challenging their imagination, the bishops decided that they had to wed Eastern and Western spirituality and prayer. Thus, the process of inculturation, in the minds of the bishops, became a two-way process: it meant both “Christianizing” Asia and “Asianizing” Christianity . In many parts of Asia, thanks to this Episcopal impetus, local [relevant] ways of praying and contemplating have become part and parcel of many Asian local Churches. In his prayer life, an Asian priest, needless to say, has to be well acquainted with such local realities within which he feels comfortable and at home, and in turn, makes his flock comfortable and at home, too.

2.2. Relationship with Fellow-Human Beings

Catholic priesthood, by its essential definition, is a celibate priesthood. Celibacy is a special gift of God for the sake of the kingdom and its values, and in Catholic priesthood, it is viewed as a visible and effective expression of loving and serving God and His people with “an undivided heart”. In its horizontal aspect, celibacy is a way of loving God’s people, especially the destitute, the oppressed, the marginalized, the poor and the unloved, and in doing so, priests are to realize the vertical aspect, too. They are to see, love and serve God, mainly and especially in and through such ‘non-persons’ in our societies. For after all, Catholic priesthood is a ‘ministerial priesthood’ than a ‘cultic priesthood’; following the example of Jesus the eternal High Priest, a Catholic priest is a minister, a ‘servant’ of both God and His people. Here, what the Sri Lankan Jesuit theologian Aloysius Pieris says in general of Christian discipleship, is of great relevance and importance, for priesthood, in particular:

It is through the needy, through the vicars of Christ who disrupt my routine, that God exercises Her Sovereignty over me, by making me renounce my comfort, my wealth, my time, my energy on their behalf, thus inviting me to make myself poor for God’s kingdom and, by that means, to become a disciple of Jesus. To renounce Mammon for God (the first commandment) is to renounce Mammon for the sake of God’s vicars on earth (the second commandment). For God and the Poor are inseparably bound together as one covenanted and salvific reality. In practice there is only one Law of God: the love of [God in] *one’s neighbour* (Gal. 5:14). There is no dualism in this. To love is to serve (abad) which alone is authentic worship.³⁸

This intrinsic connection between Catholic priestly celibacy and priestly service [*diakonia*] are not only clear Asian characteristics of a person who is religious and holy, but it is a sure sign of his/her credibility. As such, any vision of Asian Catholic priesthood cannot afford to [and should not!] ignore them.³⁹ Moreover, an equally important intrinsic link exists between a priest’s relationship with wealth and his priestly service. In Asia, a holy person is also a person detached from material goods. Asian religiosity, thus, is in perfect harmony with Mt.6:24: no one

³⁸ Aloysius Pieris, *God’s Reign for God’s Poor: A Return to the Jesus Formula*, Second Revised Edition, Kelaniya (Sri Lanka): Tulana Research Center, 1998, p.43.

³⁹ What Pope John Paul II said in No.43 of *Ecclesia in Asia* is in place here; see above the citation referred to in Footnote No:17.

can serve the two masters, God and Mammon, at the same time. In a more and more globalized Asia, the priest is challenged today more and more to be prophetic in discerning the difference between 'being' and 'having', and also in living a life detached from material wealth. Moreover, in Asia ridden with multitudes of poor, a priest [following the example of Jesus] is also called to be in solidarity with them by leading a simple, detached life. Simplicity of life, too, is an Asian religious value, and it is surely another clear characteristic of credibility of a religious person. A priest thus is offered the option of choosing between material wealth and people [and through them God]. He simply cannot choose both, particularly in Asia, which is teeming with millions of poor and destitute persons in whose disfigured faces he is to recognize the Asian faces of Christ.

Last but not least, a priest needs to be available for his flock. Today, when time is considered by some as 'money' [thanks to globalization and its stress on materialism and success], and therefore, spending time with another socializing or in deep interpersonal relationships is considered as 'non-productive', a priest has to be prophetic by finding time to be with his flock, especially with those in need and those that are marginalized in society.

2.3. Relationship with Asian Realities

The Second Vatican Council exhorted priests to be in dialogue with the living realities that surround them when it said:

This most Holy Synod desires to achieve its pastoral goals of renewal within the Church, of the spread of the gospel throughout the World, and of dialogue with the modern world. Therefore, it fervently exhorts all priests to use, the appropriate means endorsed by the Church as they ever strive for that greater sanctity which will make them increasingly useful instruments in the service of all God's People.

From its very inception, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences [FABC] has held that the Church's mission in Asia has to be a triple-dialogue with the three major Asian living realities: great Asian religions, ancient Asian cultures and multitudes of Asian poor.⁴⁰ The Asian priest should not only be someone who can be in touch with these three main Asian living realities, but also someone who could appreciate them for what they really are and love them.

The hallmark of Asia is its pluralism in reality, be it in religions or in culture. Asia is a multi-cultural, multi-religious continent. Pope John Paul II himself recognizes the rich diversities of Asia, and expresses his amazement at the intricate mosaic of its many cultures, languages, beliefs and traditions.⁴¹ Often, each particular culture is essentially intertwined into a certain religious group or religion. Therefore, a priest to be contextual in Asia, has first and foremost to recognize and accept this pluralism as a living Asian reality. As the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent magisterial documents have so clearly taught us, a priest [with the rest of the Church] needs to sincerely recognize and accept that there are 'seeds of truth', 'rays of truth' in other religions, too. He needs to be convinced that God's activities cannot be confined only to

⁴⁰ Cfr., Gaudencio Rosales and C.G. Arevalo (Eds.) *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference Documents from 1970 to 1991*

⁴¹ Cfr., Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999), Nos:4-7.

the visible bounds of the institutional Catholic Church. As Pope John Paul II pointed out, there is no ecclesiological vacuum outside the visible institutional Catholic Church; gifts of the Spirit, signs of holiness, and even of martyrdom for Christ's name can be found outside the Catholic Church, too.⁴² Elsewhere, the same Pope says: "The Spirit manifests himself in a special way in the Church and in her members. Nevertheless, his presence and activity are universal, limited neither by space nor time".⁴³ An Asian Catholic priest needs to be well aware that neither he nor the Church can command the Spirit of God, but rather that both the Church and he himself are only the ministers, the instruments, the servants of the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit blows where He wills [Jn.3:8]. He needs to learn to live in harmonious dialogue with the other religions, and also to guide his flock to do the same, and to be surprised by the presence and activity of God's Spirit at places he least expects. For this, he needs to be a deeply spiritual person living a life in the Spirit.

Today, we are well aware how the trends of globalization of market economies are affecting the Asian peoples in a dramatic and drastic way. An Asian priest cannot be ignorant of the positive and negative effects of globalization on our peoples. He needs to know to guide his people how to protect themselves from the adverse, inhuman effects of globalization and also to recognize and acknowledge the positive effects of the same reality. By definition, a Catholic priest is also a promoter of life, and as such, he needs to be not only a defender of human life [with the ensuing duties and rights of the person], but he also needs to be well-versed at least in the basic teachings of the Church in the ever-evolving bio-medical issues. Consequently, he needs to have a keen sense of justice and respect for the basic human dignity of all fellow human beings. After all, he is called to be a minister of Jesus' mission whose central message was the kingdom of God and its values centered on the basic dignity of every human being.

The Church offers her service of fraternal love to the world through her cherished social teachings. As the late Cardinal Joseph Bernadin of Chicago used to say, the Social Doctrine of the Church has become one of "the best kept secrets in the Church". A priest, particularly a priest in Asia, cannot afford to keep this valuable Church doctrine "a secret" anymore. One of the most practical ways of acquainting oneself with the social doctrine of the Church is to read [at least a page a day!] the recently published *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. In his official introduction to the Compendium, Cardinal Martino says: "according to the request received from the Holy Father" the Compendium "has been drawn up in order to give a concise but complete overview of the Church's social teaching".⁴⁴ That the Compendium has very successfully done this can be seen by anyone who reads it. In his recent encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, the present Pope, Benedict XVI says that the Compendium has made a "comprehensive presentation"⁴⁵ of the entire social teaching of the Church and that it is the most authoritative teaching on the Church's social doctrine.

A priest, as a prophet-leader of the community, should be able to read the signs of the times and interpret them for his flock. For this, he needs to immerse himself well within the

⁴² Cfr., Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* (1996), Nos:12-13.

⁴³ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mission* (1990), No:28

⁴⁴ Cfr., Cardinal R. Martino, "Presentation" in *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Re-print), Vatican City: Libreria Editrice, Vaticana, 2005, p.XXV-XXVI.

⁴⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (2005), No:27.

context in which he is and be able to see well beyond the ordinarily visible reality using his own God-experience and the lenses of the Word of God:

A diocesan priest is called upon to be a prophet, prophet in the sense of one who sees beyond what others see. He must be able to transcend the vision constrained by our social limitations and to see through the eyes of Christ himself.⁴⁶

To do this, he definitely needs a sound spirituality and a solid theological up-dating, which in turn, implies that he needs to find time not only to pray but also to keep on up-dating himself, especially in and through his regular reading, at least one or two theological periodicals. As the President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Archbishop Foley says: *“The priest’s cultural life, of course, must be nourished no less assiduously than his spiritual life. It is nothing to be proud to say “I haven’t read a book since I’ve been ordained”.*⁴⁷

Obviously, first and foremost, he should have at least the basics of Catechism as so systematically and clearly given in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Thanks to the positive effects of globalization, Asian nations, too, are combating illiteracy and a good number of people in each of our Asian countries today are well educated. In such a set up, a priest just cannot be ignorant of at least the basic general knowledge, so that he could conduct a decent conversation with his flock whenever necessary. This is also essential for preaching the Word of God in a relevant manner, which according to the Second Vatican Council is ‘the most important duty’ of a priest.⁴⁸ In breaking God’s Word for His people through his preaching, the priest has to not only pray and learn but also observe and listen. He simply cannot afford to just say something/anything that comes to his mind in his homily! A priest, who cannot satisfy the hunger and thirst of our multitudes for the Word of God, is anything but a priest! That is why St. Paul could say: “Woe to me, if I do not preach the gospel!” [1 Cor.9:16]. Therefore, no priestly vision can ignore the essential role of the priest in breaking the Word in a relevant manner for his flock.

Finally, as elsewhere in the world, in Asia, too, today, we badly need a ‘priestly culture’.⁴⁹ It is only through such a specifically priestly culture that priests can attain not only their proper identity but also a vision of what they are to be doing in their mission. It was St. Francis of Assisi who said: “Sanctify yourselves and you will sanctify society”. How true is this with regard to Catholic priesthood today?!

⁴⁶ Vincent M. Concessao, “The Call of Diocesan Priest” as reproduced in *Uva News*, July 2005, p.10.

⁴⁷ John P. Foley, “What a bishop hopes for the Future of the Priesthood”, *The Priest*, September 2005, p.13.

⁴⁸ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, No:4.

⁴⁹ See my article, “Towards a Catholic Priestly Culture”, *Living Faith* 5:2 (December 2004), pp.49-60.

III. RELATIONAL ISSUES AND PROBLEMS OF PRIESTS AFFECTING PASTORAL MINISTRY AND PRIESTLY LIFE - *Bishop Vianney Fernando, Sri Lanka.*

Introduction

Many years ago, when I was Vicar General, my predecessor received a letter from a Religious Major Superior recommending a young scholastic of their Congregation to the Diocesan Priesthood. The Major Superior's letter stated that the scholastic was a talented young man but that they discovered that the young man was not a Community person, namely that he could not relate to any Religious Community where he was placed. But the Major Superior stated in his letter that he could be a good Diocesan Priest, as he does not have to live in a Community.

My predecessor, the good holy man that he was, could not see the fallacy of this argument, and so he accepted the scholastic into the Diocese and ordained him. My poor predecessor had to pay the price of his mistake. From the word "go" it was disaster as the young Priest could not relate to anyone for a sustained period of time and would "rub" everyone on the wrong side.

"The Priesthood is radically communitarian. Therefore, of special importance is the capacity of the Priest to relate to others. This is totally fundamental for a person who is called to be responsible for a community and to be a man of communion" (*PDV*: Pope John Paul II, 1992)

It is my experience of 24 years, as a Bishop, that a substantial amount of a Bishop's time and energies are expended in ironing out relational problems caused by his Priests – either with the Bishop or among themselves or with the people and not uncommonly with Religious working in the Parish.

I would like to begin my reflection by profiling a few cases of actual relational issues. For obvious reasons the names used are fictitious, none-the-less, the cases are real and true to life.

PROFILES

1. Fr. Cliff is an intelligent Priest who has been afforded all the opportunities to pursue his academic studies. He is well qualified and is very methodical in his work. He has radical ideas of his own. He believes that the Church must be of the poor, for the poor, and with the poor. He has strong views on social questions based on his perceptions. However there is a clear streak of intolerance of other viewpoints of the other members of the Presbyterium. While he works very hard in the Pastoral field, he tends to be judgemental on everyone else specially his brother-Priests. For him there is only "black" and "white" when it comes to his relationship with others. He forgets that the "other" is not altogether wrong nor altogether right. It does not impress upon him that human beings are a complex mixture of good and bad, lovable in some aspects but unacceptable in other ways.

Due to these attitudes and perceptions Fr. Cliff becomes intolerant of the majority of his fellow-Priests. Anyone who does not accept his stance especially on social and ecclesiastical issues is cut off from his life and relationships. Gradually, he becomes isolated. He is very unhappy in his situation of isolation and feels that he can no longer relate to the majority of his fellow priests. He is irritable and it affects his relationship with his flock. His sermons are well prepared but often tend to be critical of authority and people who do not agree with him. An intelligent, committed, methodical, dynamic Priest thus ends up being very unhappy due to his relationships being severely affected with his inflexible attitudes and perceptions.

(This seems to be an instance of someone who has developed well in his formative years intellectually and theologically. However a lack of balance between his emotions and his intellect leaves a deficiency in his human relationships. He lets his emotions dominate his attitudes and behaviour. He does not use his intellectual capacities in handling his life and ministry. It is clear that if his relationships improve he could be an asset to any community)

2. Fr. Jim appears to be a pleasant character. However, his relationship to his fellow-Priests is very superficial. He has his own agenda and is able to camouflage his real self by giving the impression of being affable. But no one seems to be able to fathom his real self. He is busy all the time but does not give priority to his pastoral responsibilities. He is on the move and not necessarily pastorally engaged in his extensive Parish. People find it difficult to meet him as he does not keep appointments. Even for the ordinary pastoral needs, the faithful have to make repeated efforts to reach him.

Fr. Jim is surprised when these defects are pointed out to him. He claims that he is very systematic in his work. He is very demanding when it comes to the faithful who are predominantly poor and marginalised though he does not apply to himself the stringent discipline he expects from his flock. He does not come through as a loving, caring person when it comes to his pastoral relationships. Upon complaints received, he becomes even more intolerant and tends to retaliate against those who have made the complaints. His reaction is one of being very harsh with them.

Despite repeated appeals and warnings, he goes on antagonising his flock in his pastoral responsibilities.

While this damaging lack of pastoral responsibility seems evident to others, he does not realise his own situation. The oft repeated complaint from the faithful that his sermons are mostly finding fault with them and often laced with hurtful innuendo seems justified. Fr. Jim could be the bane of any Parish community and the thorn on the side of any Bishop of a Diocese.

(Lack of self-reflection seems to be the root cause of Fr. Jim's relational problems. It can be noticed that there is a fairly serious deficiency in his pastoral motivation and commitment. These areas have not been dealt with in his formative years. There is nothing worse than having to deal with a priest who does not accept his limitations and as a result unwilling to change. Ultimately the ministry and the faithful suffer).

3. Fr. Young is a brilliant Priest, a walking encyclopaedia. His academic responsibilities are carried out with meticulous care. Fr. Young has a circle of friends in the Presbyterium who admire him for his scholarly achievements. However, he resents all authority beginning with the Bishop. It is not necessarily the person of the Bishop. He just cannot tolerate anyone in authority. His strong anti-authority stance hampers the effectiveness of his work. His negative attitude in this regard tends to have a damaging influence on younger members of the Presbyterium who admire him for his scholarly knowledge and contribution. Even in his specialised field he does not fully cooperate in any project in which his help is solicited if it originates from those in authority.

(Fr. Young seems to be a victim of circumstances of his growing years. His anti-authority attitude perhaps has its roots in his experience as a youth with a tyrannical father who has been very harsh with him. Thus he seems deeply wounded psychologically and even though he made giant strides in his intellectual growth his inner wounds have not been dealt with and his human formation has been deficient and has not helped him to overcome this emotional dimension. Thus the effectiveness of his very valuable ministry is gravely hampered by his inability to relate to his superiors in a mature, dispassionate manner).

4. Fr. Michael is a Priest of average intelligence. Overall he is a fairly good Pastor. He is not very imaginative when it comes to pastoral care of his flock. He is rather slow in venturing out into pastoral initiatives. He fits in well into the “cultic model” of the Priestly ministry. Fr. Michael is an introvert who does not have many friends in the Presbyterium. He tends to get discouraged easily in the face of failures or challenges. On such occasions he does not hesitate to ask for a change in assignment. But once the crisis passes he asks to defer the transfer, obviously creating problems for the Bishop.

He seems also to have a difficulty in relating to the community of women-Religious in his Parish. Even over a small misunderstanding with regard to a pastoral matter, he does not hesitate to sever all relationships with the Religious who are carrying out a very dedicated apostolate. When he goes to celebrate the Eucharist to the mission station where the Sisters reside, he refuses to share table-fellowship with them, even to the point of refusing to have a cup of tea in the Convent. He makes hasty decisions in forbidding the Sisters to carry out their normal pastoral ministry. Fr. Michael does not hesitate even to use the pulpit to point out the faults of the Religious. This serious breach of communion between Fr. Michael and the Religious has a very negative impact on the Parish community. The ordinary faithful are thoroughly scandalized. They lose the sense of confidence in their Pastor. His credibility as a preacher is eroded. It is very hard to repair this kind of damage, as the people could lose their respect for both the Priest and the Religious who are expected to set an example of “communion”.

This is a common phenomenon in many Priests who due to some misunderstanding with either the Superior or an individual member of a religious community do not hesitate to ostracize them and cause much scandal to the Parish.

(Once again Fr. Michael's problems are consistent with emotional immaturity, which is damaging relationships and consequently the ministry. Fr. Michael though quiet has his own mind when it comes to relationships and is unable to see the inconsistencies of his behaviour even when these matters are pointed out to him in a reasonable manner. Clearly there is much growth needed in the human dimension of his personality.)

5. Fr. Charles is a quiet worker who gives the impression of being a "lone ranger". He works hard and is capable of shouldering responsibility. His human relationships, however, leave much to be desired. First of all he has a "suspicious" frame of mind. He finds it hard to trust others. He begins by looking upon everyone who approaches him as someone with whom one has to be cautious.

This over cautious tendency immediately creates a barrier in the relationship. His attitude of mistrust extends even to his domestic workers and as a result they do not remain too long in his service. Even with his brother-Priests, it is a matter of "cautious" dealings in matters official. Thereby he creates a sense of alienation and unwittingly hurts his brother-Priests by his attitude of suspicion and lack of openness.

This attitude is carried over also to his relationship with those in authority. There can be a serious break-down of communication with such persons, as one does not know what exactly goes on in the person's mind. Generally a Priest with such a personality is not open even with the Bishop, while all the time there is evidence that all is not well in the way he relates.

(Once again some lack is seen in the "human growth" of this otherwise good priest. Despite repeated appeals by the bishop to improve his relationships with the priests and the people there seems to be little improvement. Everyone else can see the damage that is done by this "suspicious" mentality but the priest concerned does not seem to realise that he has to overcome this behavioural deficiency. As a result the Bishop has to spend much of his energies and valuable time in settling hurts caused by his immature behaviour.)

6. Fr. Philip is a young Priest who has many gifts. He is a good speaker and is blessed with a striking personality. However, in the evaluations of him in his formative years there was always a remark about his being "elusive" and not being open. Not many were able to fathom his real self. He seemed to have had his own personal agenda even in the Seminary. Although his spirituality was "charismatically inclined" there were allegations of undue familiarity with young girls which did not seem healthy. His Priestly Ordination was delayed in view of these allegations. Finally, he was ordained and before long Fr. Philip was in serious trouble, as he had entered into a sexual relationship with a young woman and this ended with grave consequences. On closer investigation it appeared that this relationship had begun when he was still a young seminarian. Despite long years of formation these issues had not been dealt with and the relationship was carried over until it resulted in disaster not long after ordination to the Priesthood. The incompatibility of such relationships with the commitment to celibacy had not dawned on Fr. Philip.

(When a candidate comes into the seminary, he brings along with himself a great deal of “baggage” of un-dealt emotional wounds that impede his growth and maturity. As most of these are buried deep beneath, human formation should enable the formators to “unearth” these emotional needs and deal with them. An authentic formative spirituality is not possible without proper affective development which includes self-awareness, self-knowledge and self-disclosure. As the Dominican Mystic, Meister Eckhart says: “To get to the core of God at His greatest, one must first get into the core of himself at his best”.)

Beyond the brief remarks I have made after each case I do not want to try to micro analyze these individual cases because I am not a psychologist. The intent of the cases and the remarks are for the purpose of elucidating my theme. The problems that individuals have can be attributed to multiple causes such as temperament, deficiencies of judgment, lack of self control, experiences in childhood. But all these handicaps could have been greatly reduced if more attention was paid to the emotional development of the person in the years of formation. A common line that runs through all these cases is emotional immaturity and lack of affective formation.

Priests are called upon to be leaders. In order to be effective as leaders, among the tools that are indispensable, are ‘people skills’. Such skills are developed only in a formational environment where due emphasis is given not only to intellectual development but also to emotional development and social development or otherwise called emotional intelligence and social intelligence. In the recent decades even in the corporate world there has been a radical change in requirements for leadership. Leadership is not domination. It has to do with the art of persuading people to work toward a common goal. The age of the manipulative or the “jungle-fighter boss” is past. The virtuoso in interpersonal skills is the corporate future.

In what follows, I will draw from both ecclesiastical and secular literature to illustrate the new dimensions that have emerged in the search for resolution of relational issues that characterized the problems that priests have in exercising their ministries, similar to those presented in the cases that I have cited above.

PRIESTHOOD INVOLVES RELATIONSHIPS

A person is marked by ordination, not for privilege but for a network of relationships. The ordained Priest stands within the community as a member of the Church. He has been initiated into the Church by baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist, as all the faithful have been. At the same time, through ordination, he stands in front of the community as minister of, to, and for the people. The Priest’s identity is deeply connected to the community. He is distinguished among the members of the community by how he is connected to them. His identity is about how he stands in the community not apart from it. It is about what he represents to the community in his unique role as the ordained (Markham & Repka, 1997).

It is not about being special or distinguished for privilege. Sacramental character is not a personal claim. It is a particular responsibility of the ordained minister's relationship to Christ and to the community.

Jesus is the central figure in this relationship. Jesus' life and ministry is about adjusting relationships. He is about re-ordaining life at every level – personal, social, economical, political and religious. Relationships are re-ordered in the light of his vision of the community as 'Communion'—kingdom of God. Through the Paschal Mystery, the spirit has been given to us to continue this reordering of relationships.

In the person of Christ (in persona Christi) the Priest, therefore, is uniquely involved in the ordering of right relationships. Like Christ, the priest performs this role in relationship to his vision of the community and the reign of God.

The Priest is on Mission; this is not a passive or private engagement in ministry but an active communal engagement with, and under God. The Priest's identity is about being chosen for service in the kingdom of God and of the world.

The Priest operates also at the same time in the person of the Church (in persona ecclesiae). To be in the midst of the community, as well as in front of it demands ongoing pastoral judgment. The Priest stands as a Prism to the community, reflecting back various aspects of their life and truth. He serves the people but not at their whim.

It is an interactive dynamic: He listens

- > Responds
- > Challenges
- > Supports

He and the community experience mutuality in growth, holiness, and significance. He is there not to please the people but to order the gifts in view of the mission. As a Priest, he is positioned and designated to do this—'This Is Part of the "Ordering" of the Sacrament of Ordination.'

RELATIONSHIP TO THE BISHOP

Fr. Roger A. Statnick referring to the Priest—Bishop Relationship has some very valid insights. The nature of the relationship of Bishop and Priest can be understood only in the light of the meaning of Ordination. It is based on a theological reality.

Bishops have different personalities, philosophies and theologies. Priests often tend to reduce the relationship with the Bishop to terms of liking or not liking the person. The Bishop's role is to oversee the communion, the people formed in and by the Spirit. Thus the relationship is rooted in the mystery of the Trinitarian Union. This is a profound relationship – the most profound possible in our faith.

The Diocesan Bishop shares the ordering of the charisms with the ordained. The identity of the Priest takes shape in the unique relationship he has with the Bishop of the local Church.

Today, we speak of the ‘ordination’ of a Bishop not his ‘consecration’. The change in this terminology reflects a major shift in the thinking of the Church. In the past the Bishop was believed to be a ‘Super-Priest’. The distinction between Priest and Bishop was drawn not so much on theological grounds as on formal institutional authority. The role of the Bishop was viewed primarily as one of jurisdiction and power. After Vatican II, we speak of the role of the Bishop as ‘ordained’. He is marked to order the charisms (from the word ‘ordinare’) in the local Church. He is ordained to be a member of a ‘College’ of other Bishops. He is to oversee the local Church or the Diocese. Like Christ, his task is to create right relationships.

He does this by calling forth the charisms (God-given gifts); He coordinates these charisms, whether they be of the laity, religious or the clergy, for the good of the Community and for the sake of the mission. He has to do this to build up unity among his clergy, in particular, not to create a spirit of competition, but rather one of collaboration. Today more than ever before pastoral leaders have to be imbued with this attitude and desire to see as one of their primary goals the empowering and maintaining the gifts and charisms of all under their leadership, otherwise they could be good doers but not animators.

Even in the matter of clergy assignments, Statnic (1999) correctly states, the Bishop has to keep this uppermost in his mind. Priests often experience assignments as power over them, and not as a way of ordering the charisms for the good of the whole Church. There is still the tendency for the priests to become threatened by assignments or transfers, and they can become individualistic, self-interested, self-absorbed when the time comes for changes.

What is needed is to create an atmosphere of collaborative ministry. Clergy changes can create opportunities for all parties involved to strengthen the communion they have with each other, to ask questions about the common mission, the charisms needed, and how everyone can work together. The Bishop through dialogue and discernment attempts to seek if the changes are for the betterment of the community as a whole. This he does as the one whose responsibility it is to ‘order’ the charisms of the local Churches.

In the context of the proper ordering of charisms, a word about clericalism and ambition may be useful. Clericalism can affect the Bishops as well as the priests. Alexander Schemen in his Journal says “Clericalism suffocates: it makes part of itself into the whole sacred character of the Church; it makes its power to control, to lead, to administer; a power to perform Sacraments, and in general, it mistakes any power a “power given to me”. Clericalism is always *Dysfunctional and Haughty*, crippling the spiritual and emotional maturity of the priest, Bishop or deacon in its web. The laity instinctively resists the patronizing and domineering tendencies in priests who have succumbed to clericalism. The authoritarian priest tends to be always angry and frustrated. Clericalism blocks honest human communication and ultimately leaves the cleric isolated.

A priest-psychologist made this remark: “*Ambition* is as much a fundamental human instinct as sexuality”. The institutional rewards, with their trappings and power are pursued in our present set-up. In the feudal, clerical culture in which many priests still live and move and work, the approving nod of the Bishop, his warm glance are much sought after. While the Bishop is duty bound to encourage, approve and commend the good work of a priest, if the priest is

yearning only for human approval for the sake of “upward mobility”, it could impede the growth of his real worth.

The Bishop is the first servant and builder of communion in the Diocese. In fact between the Bishop and his priests there exists a “*communio sacramentalis*”, which is based on the participation in the one Priesthood of Christ, though in a different degree, in virtue of the one ordained ministry and one apostolic mission.

A PRIEST’S RELATIONSHIP TO THE PRESBYTERIUM

When a man is ordained, he becomes a member of a group of priests serving the local Church. That group is called a Presbyterate or a Presbyterium. It is a theological reality. By virtue of ordination, these men share in the Bishop’s role to order the charisms in the local Church. They are not merely a ‘group of buddies’ or batch mates. They share ‘in ordination’ and as a group share in the Bishop’s concern for the whole local Church. They are committed to work together as well as with the Bishop. There is an inseparable link between the Bishop and his Clergy – its purpose takes shape from their relationship with the Bishop and with each other. If a priest separates himself from his Bishop – physically, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, he cuts off his very life-line to the Church and to Christ.

We all know of priests who due to some reason or other, real or imaginary, who alienate themselves from the Bishop and scandalize the faithful by refusing, even to mention the name of the local ordinary in the Eucharistic prayer!!!) Often the Bishop himself might have to bear part of the responsibility for such situations, for lack of dialogue or error in discerning the charisms.

The primary identity of the priest is to stand in *Persona Christi* and in *Persona Ecclesiae*. The identity of the priest takes shape in the unique relationship he has with the Bishop of the local Church. The linkage, in the Spirit, is through the Diocesan Bishop – not in the management model of the world in which the Bishop serves as (CEO) Chief Executive Officer. The priest ministers with and under the Bishop, in an atmosphere of consultation and collaboration.

The Presbyterium is not merely a ‘fraternity’ of priests. A fraternity exists to be of support to the members, whether socially, spiritually or by virtue of shared interests. This is important. But the Presbyterium exists primarily for another reason. Together, all the priests of a Diocese share in the responsibility for the local Church and its Mission – and they share in it with the Diocesan Bishop. Therefore, the members of the Presbyterium are obliged to foster a deeply fraternal relationship with each other with the common objective of advancing the mission of a local Church.

Care and support of each other, cooperation and collaboration, are needed to carry out their leadership role in the Church, with and under the Diocesan Bishop. It must be clear that the Presbyterium exists for the sake of the Church, and not for itself. Therefore, self-serving conduct such as destructive behaviour and speech, malicious gossip, ambitions, deceptions, financial mismanagement, paedophilia and other sexual transgressions sap the energy from the mission and consequently tear at the relationships created in service to that mission. This leaves a diocese demoralised and ineffective in its ministry.

PRIESTS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THOSE ENTRUSTED TO HIS CARE

This is another crucial area of '*communio*' which the priest is committed to serve and strengthen.

This is where the tire hits the road. He has to manage a network of relationships in all its complexity including his personal relationships. All other relationships will depend on how he trains himself to handle the personal ones.

Just as the identity of the Diocesan Priest cannot be isolated from a relationship with the Diocesan Bishop, his identity is also connected to the people of God in the local Church. The role of the priest, as we saw earlier, is to be a member of the Church, to stand in its midst, as well as to stand in front of it as its servant-leader under the Bishop. The priest and Bishop together are about ordering right relationship that will carry forward the mission and go beyond personality, management dynamics or other considerations.

Andrew Greeley makes a distinction between "an Instrumental Leader" or an "Expressive Leader": "*Instrumental Leader gets things done, organising, administering, fulfilling tasks. He is a doer, a planner, a decision maker*".

"Expressive Leader is more concerned with the overall picture and with the people he leads. He makes sure that the vision of the community is clear and that the morale of the members is high. He soothes hurt feelings, reassures the troubled, encourages the weary, makes peace between the angry and inspires the discouraged"

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS VIS-A-VIS FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

A priest, specially the newly ordained, can feel safe, protected and cared for within the functional relationships in an institutionalized model of community as he relates to the Bishop, the Vicar General, Procurator, Personnel Director and other Directors and supervisors of the various Apostolate. Most relate well in this manner within the institutionalized model. After all, we are trained in the Seminary to fit into this hierarchal structure. But the sense of connectedness we get from a predominantly institutionalized model can fade away, for some faster than for others. Thus, some priests can begin to feel insufficiently taken care of and protected. They are less sure of the roles they fill and can begin to feel no longer as much a part of the Diocese or even the Presbyterium.

With the passing of time, the priest can and does begin to yearn for a "more personalized" model of connectedness where safety and security comes from a sense of being appreciated and cared for. However, despite the yearning for this "personalized" connectedness many priests do not possess the skills needed to make the transition.

In this context Clark (1986) says, "I don't suspect that the Diocesan Priesthood can exist totally as an institutionalized entity. Nor do I look forward to the day when our whole sense of

connectedness is exclusively personalized”; he says that would take too much energy to sustain. However, he claims that “we need a balance, but today the balance needs to be tipped in favour of a more personal approach.”

It is here that we really begin to delve into the numerous relationship issues and problems that a priest has to face. From the womb of our mothers we carry with us the instinct to be connected and to establish relationships with others.

Fr. Clark in his book on ‘Being sexual and celibate’ gives some very valuable and profound insights. Fr. Clark says ‘my need and my awakened capacities for connecting with other human beings are meant to develop to the point of human maturity where intimacy with other human beings becomes possible. The urge, the drive, the need to connect with other human beings are all part of my being sexual. It allows me to connect with other human beings in relationships that are beyond the functional. But my urges, drives and the needs do not of themselves assure that I will attain the personal connectedness for which they are given. I need to learn and then choose behaviour, which will allow the connectedness to occur (Clark, 1986). Today’s literature on ‘Human development’ is rampant with the need for psycho-sexual development through capacity for intimacy in human friendships.

Intimacy is an important concept in relationship to human development. The moment ‘Intimacy’ is mentioned we tend to become very uneasy even though we are well aware that there are great mystics and Saints who were not afraid of such intimacy. E.g.: Saints Francis of Assisi and Clare, Saints Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross. Our uneasiness stems from the fact that the word “intimacy” is commonly taken to mean physical intimacy or sexual intimacy or even genital intimacy. Whereas the word used in our context is taken more in a psychological sense. Intimacy has to do with disclosure. Disclosure is the willingness and ability to reveal personal matters to another, giving the other to have knowledge of himself, more than the external you. This goes beyond the knowledge that you get from your role- playing.

Psychologists today emphasized the need for intimacy in the wholesome development of the person. Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon say ‘Intimacy is the hallmark of the Christian life... As Christians we are called to experience ourselves as the beloved of God and to embrace others just as we have ourselves been so intimately embraced by God. We meet and reveal God who is love only through one another’.

Erickson says ‘Intimacy involves a cluster of personal strength that supports our effort to draw close to one another, the capacity to commit oneself to particular individuals in relationships that last over time and to meet accompanying demands for change in a way that do not compromise one’s personal integrity’. We forget that a celibate person is a sexual person with real intimacy needs which must be met in an appropriate and fulfilling way. This can happen only when a person has developed, the affective and relational aspect of what it means to be a sexual being.

The same is affirmed in Papal and other Church documents. In the Apostolic Exhortation “Pastores Dabo Vobis” Pope John Paul of revered memory says that ‘the whole work of priestly formation would be deprived of its necessary foundation if it lacked a suitable human formation’.

Human formation is described as the ‘necessary formation’ upon which all other aspects of priestly formation depend. “This is truly fundamental for a person who is called to be responsible for a community and to be ‘a man of communion’.” (PDV, no: 44)

In official Church documents this issue is now being addressed under the title of Human development in priestly formation. It is the development of the affective and relational aspects of future priests. In other words human development is to work towards the physical and psychological development in the context of the spiritual development. We know that grace builds on nature.

Pastores Dabo Vobis (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of 1990) enumerates the qualities a priest should have:

- a. the capacity to relate to others so that the Priest becomes a man of communion.
- b. affective maturity which presupposes in the Priest’s awareness that love has a central role in human life, which in turn requires.(c)
- c. a clear and strong training in responsible freedom which is intimately connected with
- d. education of the moral conscience (PDV Nos: 44-43)

In the background of the serious sexual scandals in the West and not uncommonly surfacing in our own situations in Asia, this issue of training and formation in affective and emotional maturity has to be addressed by us with a sense of urgency.

The US Bishops in their Programme of Priestly Formation, (Fifth Edition-2006, No. 77) speak at great length on this vital dimension. (Quote: pg. 4, 77-80 inclusive, also 90-92).

“Human formation comes together in a particular way in the domain of human sexuality, and this is especially true for those who are preparing for a life of celibacy. The various dimensions of being a human person – the physical, the psychological, and the spiritual – converge in affective maturity, which includes human sexuality.

Since the charism of celibacy, even when it is genuine and has proved itself, leaves man’s affections and his instinctive impulses intact, candidates to the priesthood need an affective maturity which is prudent, able to renounce anything that is a threat to it, vigilant over both body and spirit, and capable of esteem and respect in interpersonal relationships between men and women” (PDV, no. 44).

“The means to live celibate chastity well, which include genuine friendships; priestly fraternity; a mentoring relationship, spiritual direction; priestly asceticism, which honestly reckons with the sacrifices that celibacy entails; and, especially, the Sacrament of Penance”.

In general, human formation happens in a three-fold process of self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and self-gift-and all of this in faith. As this process unfolds, the human person becomes more perfectly conformed to the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.”

Such growth may be demonstrated by sound prudential judgement; sense of responsibility and personal initiative; a capacity for courageous and decisive leadership; an ability to establish and maintain wholesome friendship; and an ability to work in a collaborative, professional manner with women and men, foregoing self-interests in favour of a cooperative effort for the common good.

Preparation for celibacy is one of the primary aims of the human formation programme of any seminary. The seminary must have a coordinated and multifaceted programme of instruction, prayerful discernment, dialogue, and encouragement that will aid seminarians to understand the nature and purpose of celibate chastity and to embrace it wholeheartedly in their lives. Sexuality finds its authentic meaning in relation to mature love. Seminarians should understand and manifest a mature love as preparation for a celibate life. In doing so, the insights of modern psychology can be of considerable help. The goal of psychosexual, social, and spiritual development should be to form seminarians into chaste, celibate men who are loving pastors of the people they serve.”(US Bishops: in Program of Priestly Formation, 5th Edition-2006, Nos: 77, 78, 90-92)

Human formation for celibacy should aim toward an affective maturity, which is the ability to live a true and responsible love. Signs of affective maturity in the candidate are prudence, vigilance over body and spirit, compassion and care for others, ability to express and acknowledge emotions, and a capacity to esteem and respect interpersonal relationships between men and women. Therefore, true friendship is an education in affective maturity.

Many of the personal problems of Priests such as loneliness, inability to cope with solitude, alcoholism, sexual abuse of minors, are related to a lack of affective maturity. The underlying problems point out to deficiencies in formation where repression was the path of escape. Repression, as psychologists tell us, is a very dangerous unconscious process whereby there is denial of obvious realities leading to fixation that retards growth. Consequently a host of problems arise in later life when those repressed feelings surface in unacceptable ways.

Therefore, it becomes clear that what is wrong is not celibacy but celibate people who have not been formed to face the challenges that confront them. Celibacy is a unique way of loving. Sexuality is a God-given gift to enable us to enter into wholesome and enriching relationships in our ministry. The biological sexual urges and bio-psychosexual drives must be understood in their true God-given meaning.

A sign that I am denying my sexual urges and drives (and perhaps neglecting my need for intimacy) is rationalizing romantic or genital behaviour which is incompatible with who I am and with what commitments I have made or I have not made (in the case of single people)” I need to direct those impulses with my insight and freedom if the relationships are going to be compatible with who I am or with who the others are.

THE NEED FOR INTIMACY AND FRIENDSHIP

More Importantly priests must acknowledge and own the need for intimacy and that they create strategies to have that need met within their celibate life-style” (Clark, 1986). Many

priests do not recognize and do not deal well with intimacy. This failure is responsible for so much of pain and frustration the Priest experiences in trying to live out his celibate commitment faithfully.

Some fear the very word 'intimacy', and belittle its use. Others believe they are above such issues and simply ignore or deny that they have any need for intimacy. Still others do not expect that their lives in the ordained ministry are a possible source of intimacy and neglect those ways of behaving which could allow intimacy to arise. Some deal well with their own intimacy. We have ourselves experienced genuine intimacy with specially couples who love and respect us and they even protect the Priests from dangerous relationships and thus help us to grow in holiness and fervour. Fr. Clark says 'Celibate people who do not acknowledge and own their need for intimacy will find sexuality a problem'.

However, it is not their celibate commitment which gives them the problem, it is their refusal to admit and deal with their need for intimacy which causes the difficulty. If they were to leave the priesthood (Clark, 1986) to engage in romantic and genital behaviour, 'without genuine intimacy', they would still experience the same frustration."

In other words just because we have chosen a celibate commitment which does not admit of genital or romantic behaviour we still have to deal with the issue of intimacy, which can be lived within our commitment. In the context of a study by Dean R. Hoge, on 'The first five years of Priesthood' it was discovered that while one of the characteristics of good ministry is that it is relational, many of the Priests described in the study do not generally appear to possess a capacity for relationships. They seemed incapable of dealing with loneliness, affection, constructive love and celibacy. (Dear R. Hoge, "The first five years of Priesthood")

- The study identifies certain characteristics that are the antithesis of successful relational ministers.
- They suffer from interpersonal problems
- They exhibit high anxiety about intimacy
- They frequently distance themselves emotionally
- They have fear of attachments
- They learn to anticipate mistrust in relationships
- They have a fear of making themselves vulnerable or being abandoned
- Although they desire love and intimacy, their experiences of the past block them from entering into meaningful relationships

Such priests will necessarily be poor collaborative leaders. Sofield makes the following point: "Priestly formation and on-going formation programmes for Priests need to address the issue of intimacy, loneliness, and sexual orientation in very direct ways".

Lack of proper balance can lead to another extreme. St. Thomas Aquinas reminds us that 'in medio stat virtus': For Aquinas 'insensitivitas' is just as sinful. Celibacy should not make us frigid and cold, but empower us to love all people as Christ Himself loved'.

To be affectively distant can also impoverish a celibate Priest. We often hear about the witness value of celibacy. Paul J. Bernier (1995) rightly says “celibacy does not witness to anything. Celibate people do. If they are cold and unapproachable they witness to the fact that God’s love has been insufficient in their lives and they have got shrivelled up like dried prunes. If they are warm and outgoing, they become shining examples of the power of God’s love which transforms all of life. Celibate love implies in a broad way a warmth in being present to one’s brothers and sisters, sensitive to their individuality and privacy, a concern for their welfare and growth, and ability to expose to them one’s own vulnerability, and an expression of one’s love in a fitting manner. On the contrary, it is a defect for the celibate to lack the ability to affective or effective in love for both men and women, it is defective to be drawn only towards one sex; it is a defect when one is drawn towards others in a purely physical way, it is also equally a defect to be affectively distant (323-324). The warning of Bernier (1995) is also to be noted. No wonder then that so many older priests, well-meaning and fervent in their own way, ended up as frigid old bachelors in the ministry”.

This does not mean that there is no need for caution. The dangerous relationships are those that come from our deficiency needs. We may be so lacking in our relationships, or feel so deprived that we seek out more exclusive relationships where we feel wanted and appreciated. Or those who want to cling on to us may themselves have been lacking in love and deep communication in their own lives. Such relationships are self-serving, and are almost narcissistic or self-pitying. And they lead us to use others to satisfy our needs.

We need to be aware of the need for intimacy specially, in the Presbyterium. Priestly community is a place where we feel at home, where we are accepted, despite our eccentricities, a place to which we can return and know that we belong. A sense of collegiality in the Presbyterium is a strong safeguard for the celibate Priest.

Schooling in intimacy and friendship in the formative years is essential as a means to developing healthy relationships. Celibacy requires development of the affective. Keith Clark, the Capuchin Formator has a beautiful passage. “People who choose a celibate life are sexual”. All of us achieve the meaning of our being sexual by living and loving in such a way that intimacy is possible, non-possessive, non-manipulative, nurturing of the ‘other’, which makes human fulfilment possible. To be truly intimate, our coming together must be accomplished in such a way that we do not damage ourselves or the other person, there must be a fusing and a counter pointing of personalities. This counter pointing can occur only if there is a deeply respectful love for oneself and the other person. (Clark, 1986).

Borrowing a term from Adrian Van Kaam, he calls it “Respectful distancing” which implies that even in the coming together of two persons in the deepest possible intimacy, there is a love which is not imposing and not-possessive. It implies equally a respectful love for oneself, which makes the person, who has made a commitment to celibacy, not to allow himself/herself to be manipulated or dominated or subjugated or in any other way damaged in an intimate relationship. An affectively mature Priest knows that there are boundaries that must never be crossed if they go counter to his commitment to celibacy.

CONCLUSION

The Church today is seen as “a community of love and grace marked by intimate personal relationship among the members themselves of whatever rank, those above and below and between all the members and God” The priest as leader is primarily responsible for developing these relationships, vertical and horizontal. Given this responsibility he himself has to show capacity for healthy and life giving relationships. It is not sufficient to depend on each one’s own goodness and humanity to accomplish this task. As indicated in the above quoted references it is imperative to consciously develop the human capacities in the service of this task. It has also been suggested above that one means of developing such capacities is through genuine friendships. Intimacy is a major dynamic not only in sexual disorders but in all relational problems. Deep friendships facilitate the reclaiming and integration of the shadow- the unwanted, rejected and undeveloped aspects of the self (Johnson, 1991; Zwiieg & Abrams, 1991). One of the goals in all priestly formation should be to achieve affective maturity. If this is achieved many of the underlying problems of the cases we began with and all the cases that we all know of, could be minimized for these priests so that they could present themselves as not only edifying priests but also as genuine, loving human beings.

Since this seminar is primarily for Bishops, permit me to add a “postscript” to this presentation.

Priests are our closest collaborators in shepherding our flock. If they are happy we would have no cause for anxiety. Our shepherding has to begin in a sense in the way we look after our Priests. Pope John Paul II, addressing a group of newly appointed Bishops (23rd September 2002) 4: L’Osservatore Romano says something beautiful. Let me quote the Pontiff’s own words. *“The action of the Bishop on the day of his Priestly Ordination, as the candidate professes to him ‘filial respect and obedience’, can at first sight seem a one-way gesture. In reality, the gesture commits them both: Priest and Bishop. The young presbyter chooses to entrust himself to the Bishop and the Bishop for his part obliges himself to look after those hands”*.

We must never forget that priests are human too, they are also wounded and these wounds may be carried over from childhood. “The Bishop has to relate to his Priests as a father and a brother who loves them, listens to them, welcomes them, corrects them, supports them, seeks their cooperation and, as much as possible, is concerned for their human spiritual ministerial and financial well-being”(Pope John Paul II *Pastores Gregis*, 2003, No. 47).

We, bishops, are ourselves “wounded-healers”. We need to do much “soul-searching” every day to find out if we, in some way, are also to some extent the cause of relational issues and prejudices, in our Priests. Our moods, our prejudices, our biased views on each of our Priests can cause much pain to some of our Clergy.

We can unwittingly be the cause of much pain and anxiety that make our Priests unhappy and wounded. In the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Bishops, Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Hope of the World, Pope John Paul II states the following:

“The title of Bishop is one of service, not of honour, and therefore, a Bishop should strive to benefit others rather than to lord it over them. Such is the precept of the master... Authority in the Church is meant for the building up of the people of God, not for their destruction (2 Cor. 10:8). The building up of the flock of Christ in truth and in holiness demands of the Bishop, certain characteristics which include, an exemplary life, the ability to enter into authentic and constructive relationships with others, an aptitude for encouraging and developing cooperation, an innate goodness and patience, an understanding of, and compassion for, those who suffer in body and spirit, a spirit of tolerance and forgiveness. What is needed is to emulate as well as possible the Supreme Model which is Jesus the Good Shepherd (Pastores Gregis, 2003, No. 43).

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IV: CARING FOR PRIESTS: ONGOING FORMATION & HELPING MEASURES ***- Archbishop Orlando B. Quevedo, O.M.I, Archbishop of Cotabato***

Introduction

Conventional wisdom in the past held the view that problems which our priests agonized through could be resolved by persevering prayer, a sincere, sorrowful comprehensive Confession and tough penance. A refreshing extended vacation far away from sources of temptation could also help. A transfer to another assignment was a common helping measure. Another solution was an extended spiritual, theological, pastoral updating course. In very serious cases, we would also recommend a holy and God-experienced thirty-day retreat. Solitude and prayer, we were convinced, could resolve the most serious problems.

Indeed, we can not underestimate the value of prayer and asceticism in resolving priestly problems. But in the light of all the talks that we have heard in the past few days, we have become more aware that many of the problems are not resolved simply by “prayer and fasting.” The causes of some priestly problems lie deep in personalities, upbringing, reinforced by environment. How mistakenly did we simply take the usual course of action, quite unaware of the deep-rooted and complex causes of sinful priestly behavior.

We now know more than ever that we have to discern very carefully the whole process related to vocation, attending closely to personality traits, family, upbringing, and environment. These greatly impact the recruitment and selection of candidates to the priestly and religious life, their initial formation and their own-going formation. Similar factors play a role in the kind of helping measures that would effectively benefit priests with special difficulties. Spirituality, Canon Law, guidance and counseling, psychology and other social sciences all combine to help us in this process of discerning, nurturing and helping vocation.

My task is to inquire into one part of this process, namely, the on-going formation of priests and the helping measures that relate to priests in especially difficult situations. These two issues are distinct but they are not unrelated.

The questions I shall treat are: what kind of ongoing formation do our priests need? What kind of helping measures do we provide priests when they are in crisis situation?

I shall speak from the experience of Philippine Bishops and simply share with you what they have done.

A. Ongoing Formation of Priests – the Need for Vision.

In the confusion and vocation crisis that followed Vatican II, the issue of ongoing formation became a constant preoccupation. Countless programs were designed and initiated. Much of these have been relegated to the bin of good intentions and wishful thinking. As in the pastoral priority of building Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC), the difficulties of implementation stood in the way.

Ongoing formation programs offered by updating institutes generally consist of a list of courses, like a cafeteria menu, that might attract individual tastes and interests. We find a plethora of courses such as quantum theology, gender sensitivity, feminist reading of Sacred Scripture, contextualized spirituality, eco-spirituality, inclusive liturgy, participatory leadership, and the like. In themselves such courses might have great validity.

But the real imperative, the *conditio sine qua non*, is the why and wherefore of updating and renewal courses. The context of ongoing formation is likewise imperative. There has to be a vision of ongoing formation within which individual courses and even processes become desirable, necessary, relevant, and useful for the priests in their particular situation.

But a vision of ongoing formation depends very much on the vision of priesthood that we need to have. From this perspective one realizes the central importance of the conference by Fr. Vimal Tirimanna, CSsR, on the first day of this Seminar: “Identity and Vision of Priesthood in the Asian Context.” A vision of priesthood of Asia has to consider its relationship to the realities of Asia. I do have to add that we also need to look at the identity and vision of priesthood in our own particular regional contexts. Some particular aspects of what priests should be in my own archdiocese that is poor and rural Cotabato (48% Catholic and 47% Muslim) would surely be different from what priests should be in urban, highly technological majority-Christian Manila.

By the same token, we need to have a vision of formation that would be quite particular to Asia, and even to different regions and dioceses in Asia. Obviously there are fundamental features of priestly ongoing formation common to the West and the East, to the North and South. But certain particularities are needed for ongoing priestly formation in the East and South, or in Thailand and Indonesia, or in Manila and in Christian-Islamic communities in Cotabato. It just makes no sense for me to send a priest to take up an updating course on “ministry to secularity” when our crying need is for priests who are able to minister in tradition-centered rural areas or can engage in inter-religious dialogue and peace.

It is in the perspective of this vision of Church and of priesthood that we can integrate our seemingly disparate activities in the on-going formation of the presbyterium, such as monthly spiritual recollections, monthly pastoral and business meetings, annual retreats, occasional theological and pastoral conferences, visits to priests, pastoral seminars, etc. All these are towards a particular vision of Church and priesthood – a holy Church with holy priests.

B. A Vision of Church and of Priesthood in the Philippines.

In 2005 Rome approved the Updated Philippine Program of Priestly Formation which had been in the making for a decade. This revised Program articulates a Philippine vision of the priesthood which considers:

- the pastoral context of the Philippines;
- the vision of Church that the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP-II, 1991) articulated in 1991;

- the pastoral priorities that the National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal (NPCCR) drew up in 2001.

PCP-II envisioned a renewed Church in the Philippines as a:
Community of Disciples of Christ (in the midst of social division and dichotomy between faith and life);

- a Church of the Poor (in view of the widespread neglect of the poor and the scandalous gap between rich and poor);
- a Church with a Mission of renewed integral evangelization (a mission of salvation and liberation).

In this vision, inculturation and contextualization are fundamental elements.

In the light of the pastoral situation and of the vision of Church, priests as *sacramental representatives of Christ, configured to him* by virtue of ordination, are to be truly leaders of the community but *leaders in servanthood*. They are to be animators and builders of the community of faith. They are to be poor in spirit, *in solidarity with the poor, prophetically* in dialogue with the poor in collaboration with peoples of other faiths. In sum, they are to build up the community of God's people so that it may reflect the vision of Church in the Philippines.

Their *spirituality as servant-leaders is to be rooted and centered in Jesus Christ*. It is ministerial, growing in union with God through a faithful performance of ministry. It is *collegial*, forging bonds of communion with the Bishop, the presbyterium, men and women of consecrated life and with the faithful. It is lived *in the spirit of the evangelical counsels*. *At the service of the local church*, priestly spirituality is at the same time *missionary*. It is finally Marian, Mary having a special place in the priestly heart.

Towards this vision of Church and of the Filipino priest, the formation of priests in all its stages and in all areas as described in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* is to be directed. The Updated Philippine Program of Priestly Formation emphasizes three basic features of formation: the holistic nature of priestly formation, the community context of formation, and the continuity of the stages of formation.

A program of on-going formation of priests in the Philippines has to incorporate all of the above. It is not a process that responds ad hoc to some problematic situation that has emerged. It is nothing more and nothing less than a fundamental part of the life-time formation of priests towards holiness and effective ministry.

We need to be more fully aware of this since various aspects of the human formation of priests come up again and again after seminary formation, such as:

- self esteem and self-giving;
- attitudes towards authority;
- celibate chastity and sexuality;
- detachment and a lifestyle of simplicity;

- motivational maturity;
- a sense of justice;
- a moral conscience.

For this reason the place of ongoing formation is crucial. Made more so by the complexity and busyness of an evolving pastoral ministry, the rapid advances of culture and technology in the midst of tradition resisting social change, the increasing role of priests in the formation of the laity, the challenges of building community, the needs of integral evangelization, and the inadequacy of traditional modes of on-going formation (e.g., recollections, retreats, updating conferences and courses).

In brief, what is needed today is a systematic program of ongoing priestly formation, with a full support system (resource persons, finances, etc.).

C. Ongoing Formation of Priests in General

And here may I present a Philippine effort toward a systematization of ongoing formation.

In 1993, following the inspiration of *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, the Archdiocese of Manila designed a prototype five-week program of ongoing priestly formation, entitled “Intensive Renewal Program for Priests.” Its objectives were:

1. To experience real and meaningful fellowship among priests;
2. To process pastoral and human experiences for greater integration of personal life and priestly ministry;
3. To be updated in theology and spiritual-pastoral areas of priestly life and ministry; and
4. To experience spiritual deepening through the integration of the whole renewal experience.

The content of the five-week program included:

First Week	Community Building, to make the participants aware of the need for community among themselves through human relations training on self-discovery, stress and conflict management, effective communication skills, problem solving techniques and teamwork.
Second Week	Human Formation, to focus on issues and concerns related to the priest’s personhood, in light of the humanity of Jesus. Topics include human development, affectivity, intimacy and sexuality.
Third Week	Christology, with particular emphasis on the priest’s configuration to Christ, Head and Shepherd.

Fourth Week	Ecclesiology, focusing on the priest's role as servant-leader within the Church from the perspective of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines.
Fifth Week	Integration, to synthesize and integrate the whole process by giving the participants the basic principles of pastoral leadership and management. This period includes a Holy Retreat spent in prayer and solitude. Planning and a re-entry process into active ministry conclude the program.

Following *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, the approach taken by the Program is the integration of the total formation of the clergy – human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral.

Spirituality is emphasized throughout the process by means of meaningful liturgies and prayer sessions. A daily Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament is an essential part of the program. The health and well being of the participants are also looked into through medical check-ups.

In 1994, the CBCP Commission on Clergy collaborated with the Archdiocese of Manila in institutionalizing the program for the whole country. Participation was limited since optimum individual interaction and priestly bonding were desired. In its first 10 years of operation, almost 300 priests selected from almost all the dioceses of the Philippines have undergone the 5 weeks of intensive renewal.

In the latter half of the 1990s, moved by the PCP-II call to renewal by and assisted by the Servants of the Paraclete (a U.S. based religious congregation that specializes in the renewal of priests), our CBCP Clergy Commission drew up some modules for the renewal of Filipino priests. Priests were classified for this purpose according to age brackets: Young Clergy (1-5 years in the ministry), Junior Clergy (6-10 years in the ministry), Middle Clergy (11-24 years in the ministry), Senior Clergy (25-and above in the ministry). Many dioceses followed these modules with adaptation to their own circumstances.

The program for the young clergy consisted of a residency program during their period of transition from seminary to parish ministry. A Spiritual Director would “accompany” the young priests. They were guided by a yearly theme which would be the topic of their regular Spiritual Direction. The second part of the program is on “Skills Training in Pastoral Ministry.” The program for the Junior Clergy recommended a process of value-clarification, since the first years of pastoral ministry are a period when values are gradually imbibed and begin to take root. They are challenged to test these values in light of gospel values and the gift of the priesthood. Group sharing and peer counseling would clarify the values and subject them to testing and affirmation if so desired. In the process a sense of accountability to and stewardship for each other is developed.

Some topics for value clarification are: Priestly Communion, Material Possessions, Intimacy, Mission, Prayer in the Ministry. A vicar for the clergy would help in facilitating the process.

For the Middle Clergy, the five-week intensive Renewal Program in Manila that has already been described above (see pp. 5 - 6) is offered. It is designed to be both a renewal and updating course, providing a holistic approach to the needs of the clergy.

The Senior Clergy are divided into two age groups: group 1 (25-33 years in the ministry and are still active), group 2 (36 – above in the ministry, who can still be active or available for ministry).

Group 1 members are invited to have a second look at their priesthood, the gifts they have received, the quality of the gift of priesthood and their gift of self in the ministry, the challenges that they experienced, what the priesthood has done to their person. They also look forward to prepare for the next phase of their ministry as members of the senior clergy: to embrace the Cross, to nourish one's life as a priest, to rekindle the commitment to be a servant-leader, to be an integrated person in light of sorrows and joys in the ministry.

This five-day module for the senior clergy is offered every other year with a pool of speakers and spiritual directors.

Group 2 members require a new kind of affirmation and a sense of relevance in light of the blessings they have found in their lives. They focus on the growth of the parish or diocese to which they have contributed. The “fullness of life” part of the module helps them tie loose ends and identify areas needing healing and strengthening. It also helps them identify areas where they could still be of help as they face retirement from active ministry. This is a three day module, where the dynamics is more on sharing and voicing out thoughts and feelings.

D. The ASSIST PROGRAM: Caring for Priests with Special Difficulties

A second intensive renewal program was introduced in the latter half of the 1990s, through the expertise of the Servants of the Paraclete. This is the Assisted Intensive Renewal Program (AIR Program), or simply ASSIST Program.

It is intended for priests and religious who have special human, emotional, spiritual and vocational needs and issues, having affective or feeling component such as depression, anxiety, anger, personality and vocational issues. These include psychosexual issues that might or might not involve abuse and boundary violation of others. For those involved in boundary violation of others, the program offers a qualified recovery program in accordance with generally accepted professional standards and authentic Catholic teachings on sexuality and celibacy.

The Assist program has three phases:

1. **Assessment Phase:** this lasts for three days, with the use of psychiatric, medical, psychological and spiritual evaluation. This helps the individual to make a decision regarding entry into the second phase of the program.
2. **Residential Phase:** this is a three-month intensive, residential program that helps participants to work on their issues in the atmosphere of caring, safe, faith-filled community. Participants go through three stages:
 - a) Initial awareness and acceptance of issues to be dealt with;
 - b) In-depth exploration of issue(s);
 - c) Implementation or working out of the plan for recovery.

Towards the end of the residential program, the Bishop or Religious superior or Vicar) participates in a planning conference. An accountability partner, chosen by the participant and approved by the Bishop or Religious Superior, also joins the planning conference.

The components of the Residential Phase include:

- 2.1. Individual Counseling: twice a week which usually runs from 45 to 60 minutes per session;
- 2.2. Goup Counseling: Thrice a week which usually runs from 2 to 2 ½ hours per session;
- 2.3. Individual Spiritual Direction: twice a week which usually runs from 45 to 60 minutes per session;
- 2.4. Group Spiritual Direction: twice a week which usually runs for 2 to 2 ½ hours per session;
- 2.5. Conferences, workshops and therapeutic readings;
- 2.6. Spiritual exercises and communal celebration of the Liturgy;
- 2.7. Medical Check Evaluation and other health care services.
- 2.8. Community Activities and bonding.

For those who need longer care, an Extended Care program is available.

3. **Continuing Care Phase:** this consists in implementing the plan decided on at the end of the Residential phase. Typical of the recommendations for continuing care are individual counseling and/or spiritual direction, the help of a support group, re-entry visit by an Assist Staff member, return workshops, continuing psychiatric

consultation. Other recommendations depend on the needs of the individual. The continuing care phase normally lasts for two years.

The success of the program depends very much on the openness and cooperation of the participant, the quality of community life and support group established, the renewed prayer life of the participant, the quality of counseling, psychiatric help, and spiritual direction, and the kind of continuing care monitored and facilitated by the accountability partner.

E. Support Programs

Two programs were also created to support the Program for General Ongoing Formation and the ASSIST Program.

The first was an intensive training program for a pool of personnel who could provide some initial assistance to priests with difficulties and could serve as accountability partners. Today we have trained priests in every region in the Philippines.

In 1998 our Episcopal Commission on the Clergy, assisted by the Servants of the Paraclete, gave a mini-ASSIST Seminar/Retreat to the Bishops of the Philippines. This was designed to familiarize the Bishops not only with the technical aspects of the program but also to solicit their positive support and personal interest in the renewal of priests, both in general and also in particular relation to priests with difficulties.

Among the topics developed during the seminar/retreat were:

- Deepening Sensitivity to the Victims of Failures in Consecrated Celibacy;
- Differing Patterns in the Effort for Consecrated Celibacy;
- Presenting a Viable and Authentic Model for Sexuality, Celibacy, and Intimacy for Priests;
- Human Development as a Foundation for Consecrated Celibacy;
- Human Development in the Priest with Homosexual Tendencies;
- Alcoholism
- Pastoral Intervention
- Civil Jurisprudence and Canon Law in relation to Priests with Difficulties;
- Boundaries in Ministerial Relationships;
- Child Abuse and Pedophilia
- Neurotic Personalities in Religious Settings.

Each day of the Seminar/Retreat had time for individual reflection, sharing, and an hour of Eucharistic Adoration.

F. Conclusion

In the years 2000-2002 the Church in the Philippines was rocked by sexual scandals involving a number of priests and some members in leadership position. The CBCP worked quickly to stop the damage to the Church and to introduce measures that would effectively address the issues.

The long-range remedial measure was to fast-track the work of updating the Philippine Program of Priestly Formation. The short-range remedial measure was to draft a protocol on priestly sexual misbehavior. The latter was particularly difficult since it had to consider factors particular to Philippine culture, as well as the attempts of many Episcopal conferences to draw up similar protocols in the wake of the scandal that continues to shake the Church in the United States. To date the Philippine protocol is unfinished, but some of the general lines and directives are now in place in many dioceses.

This whole presentation has been about efforts by bishops at the national level to address this need led by the Episcopal Commission of the Clergy. But we are more than aware that in many Philippine dioceses efforts towards effective “permanent” formation and helping measures for priests with difficulties are ongoing.

At the same time at the CBCP level, we have formed special Committee that handles Bishops’ Ongoing Formation. This has been quite helpful in organizing yearly symposia for bishops and the bishops’ annual retreat. From these activities we learn from one another and support one another.

References:

1. Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, *The Updated Philippine Program of Priestly Formation*, Episcopal Commission on Seminaries, 2006, 108 pp.
2. All other materials consulted are undated hand-outs and notes from the ASSIST Ministry.

V. FINAL STATEMENT

The FABC Office of Clergy organized an International Seminar for the Bishops of Asia from August 27th – 31st, 2007 at the Redemptorist Centre, Pattaya, Thailand, to discuss their responsibilities in caring for the clergy, especially those with special difficulties. Seventy-four participants, including a Cardinal, sixty-eight Archbishops and Bishops along with five resource persons took part in the seminar. It had three objectives: 1) helping Bishops to reflect on the identity and vision of the priesthood in the Asian context, 2) helping them to identify obstacles which priests face in their life and ministry, 3) helping them further to care for priests in their difficulties with regard to their relationships with their own self, with the faithful and other people, with their bishops, and with God Himself. The seminar was inaugurated by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Salvatore Pennacchio, who conveyed the Holy Father’s sentiments of

closeness to and solidarity with the participants as they deliberated on a very vital topic for the life of the Church.

The following is the final statement from the Bishop-participants:

We Bishops, being conscious of our shepherding role in the Church, affirmed our responsibility while caring for the whole diocese to show a special love for priests, our closest collaborators in the ministry. During the discussions we grew convinced of the urgent need of continuous ongoing formation of our priests so that they can grow in their vocation and commitment to their mission.

We expressed our deep appreciation for our priest-collaborators, many of whom are working in very difficult and stressful circumstances. In the present Asian context, the demands on the priests are many which can lead to exhaustion and burnout. We felt it was our duty to assist the priests to carry out their ministry joyfully and effectively after the model of the Good Shepherd.

1. The Situation

Priests in Asia are going through the same anxieties and tensions that our society itself is going through due to rapid cultural changes under the impact of secularizing forces and exposure to a hedonistic and consumerist vision of life. They have to face in addition, those challenges that arise from changing perceptions about their own identity and mission as priests in the modern world and growing complexities of the pastoral situation. Not a few lead a life of isolation in varied social contexts, often under pressure from excessive work, sometimes in situations of conflict, occasionally with a feeling that their contribution is not appreciated enough.

Reflecting on the problems of our priests, we gave special attention to those who labour under physical/psychological/spiritual strains and ailments, in some cases of more serious nature. These may have their origin in childhood or early-life experiences, which have not been healed during the years of formation, or in the memories of the hurts they received in the course of their ministry that still remain. Negative habits and addictions that one has allowed to take root in one's life, e.g. to alcoholism, drugs, TV, gadgets-gathering, or unhealthy relationships, can take a toll on one's spiritual energies and apostolic effectiveness. Such problems could also be due to the absence of cordial relationship between the priest and his bishop, no matter whose failure it is.

3. Our Convictions

However, there are very many opportunities for healing and clarifying one's identity and mission at every stage of one's growth as a priest. To begin with, if the selection of young recruits for the seminary has been judicious, there is good reason to believe that the new candidates are psychologically balanced and spiritually motivated to enter into a life of radical commitment in the service of the Lord and His people.

During the years of formation they mature in the right understanding of the priesthood, purifying their motives, growing daily in the spirit of faith and their relationship with Christ. They look to Him as their master and guide, and the sure source of inspiration and strength to confront the challenges of life. They will remember these words of the Letter to the Hebrews, “Our High Priest is not one who cannot feel sympathy for our weaknesses. On the contrary, we have a High Priest, who was tempted in every way that we are, but did not sin” (Heb 4:15). They make it their constant effort to grow more and more like Christ, who was the perfect man, until He becomes the centre of their lives.

Young seminarians allow themselves to be guided by their formators, being transparent with them and seeking earnestly to be educated into ecclesiastical discipline and the spiritual traditions of the Church. They develop intellectual interests and the habit of reading, which will stand them in good stead in later years, even in the midst of intense activity and zealous pastoral service to the faithful.

But, most of all, we recognize that Bishops and priests are men of communion. During the period of seminary formation itself, they are introduced into a communitarian manner of living and sharing, and helped to develop relational skills and the ability for dialogue. They take these skills to a later life of intimate relationships within the brotherhood of priests with whom they will have to live and work. For, warm relationships within the Presbyterium and between the priests and their Bishop always have a healing, motivating and energizing power. Within this family of the Presbyterium, priests will find encouragement and assistance, and the brotherly correction that they need in different contexts. But such an atmosphere has to be diligently built up and continuously fostered, and the temptation to fragmentation within that brotherhood and self-isolation consistently resisted.

Priestly ministry today includes intense involvement in a vast variety of the services, validity of each of which is to be judged by the local Church. But it should never be at the risk of distancing oneself from what is spiritual. Asian civilizations have always cherished the values of the spirit, emphasizing spiritual goals rather than the material, holding in high esteem renunciation and various forms of asceticism, fostering respect for elders and attachment to one’s community and its traditions. Young priests take care to avoid crossing the boundaries of human prudence and spiritual discipline, or of overlooking the need for guidance from experienced persons. In fact, they are accompanied during the early years of their ministry, the Bishop himself being close to them and assisting them to mature in their priestly generosity.

As the years pass by, they take greater responsibility for their own maturing in priestly qualities and evangelical witness, being serene, sociable, transparent, accountable and capable of relating with people of all categories with ease and communicating the Gospel message with convincing power. They are encouraged in their apostolic endeavours and helped to evaluate themselves and their activities, and assisted to learn even from negative experiences.

There are times when individual priests will need professional assistance to get over the hurts they have received in trying circumstances, and those that they have invited into their lives with an inadequate sense of responsibility. There is also the fact that certain allegations against the clergy in recent years have shocked the world. And therefore, it has become important to

adopt adequate measures to prevent such unhappy incidents from taking place and ensure on-going care for those disposed to similar failures. The insights that behavioural sciences provide are of immense value. However, we make sure that those we choose to be guided by are grounded on a Christian vision of the human person and in keeping with ecclesiastical teachings. We seek to profit also from the practical wisdom based on the vast experience of the Church and spiritual traditions of the Christian community.

4. Recommendations

Here are a few of the suggestions that came up in the course of the Seminar so that all priests, especially those in special difficulties, would be able to receive the encouragement and support they need and grow in a sense of responsibility for their own maturing and fruitfulness in their priestly ministry and life. Hence we, as Bishops, recommend that:

- 1. The Seminary being the heart of the diocese, the Bishop frequently visits the students, giving them an opportunity to meet him personally whenever he can, encouraging the staff and discussing with them matters of importance for the formation of the seminarians.*
- 2. Priests seek the spiritual strength they need in their prayer-life, especially in the Eucharist; that they be faithful to the Prayer of the Church, and other traditional practices of piety, like meditation, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, Marian devotions, whenever possible done in community. That there be moments of intense personal prayer even in the midst one's pastoral activities; that there be places and periods of silent prayer in the diocese so that priests can grow deeper in their relationship with God. That the laity be encouraged to pray for their priests.*
- 3. Recollections, spiritual gatherings, workshops and retreats be held periodically and adequately prepared animators invited to conduct these events profitably. That documents of the Church like Pastores Dabo Vobis, Pastores Gregis, The Directory for the Life and Ministry of Priests be diligently studied.*
- 4. A well planned course of on-going formation being absolutely necessary for the renewal of the priests in their spiritual life, that such a course be conducted in each diocese/region; and that refresher courses in theology and other disciplines be organized for different groups, based on age or experience or the nature of the ministry, so that the priests can update themselves, acquire additional competence and find new motivation in their ministry. That the Apostolic Union of the Clergy be established where it does not yet exist, and vitalized where it has lost its dynamism.*
- 5. There must be opportunity for the frequent reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and experienced confessors invited to help.*
- 6. Spiritual directors and trained Counsellors must be made available in the diocese/ group of dioceses, so that the priests can have easy access to spiritually mature and adequately prepared persons. That an effort be made to train personnel for various needs of the diocese, e.g. in managerial skills, inter-personal relationships, in clinical pastoral experience, or priests who can counsel priests.*
- 7. Pastoral Orientation programmes must be organized for newly ordained priests during the period of their transition to parish life.*

8. *Priests foster warm relationship among themselves, visiting neighbouring priests, collaborating and encouraging each other in their ministry, and, when necessary, advising and correcting each other; sharing joys and sorrows together in the various situations of life. That the Bishop keeps himself available to his priests, visiting them also from time to time at their posts, giving them the time they require.*
 9. *There must be some diocesan guidelines with regard to serious problems which priests go through in their life and ministry, such as sexual misconduct, mishandling of finances, dependency problems (alcohol, drugs, etc). That such priests must be offered assistance at a suitable place so that they can be rehabilitated.*
 10. *The FABC-OC organizes programmes for priests, for formators and for those who can help priests in their difficulties.*
- Resource persons included Archbishop Evarist Pinto from Pakistan, Archbishop Peter Fernando from India, Archbishops Ferdinando Capalla and Orlando Quevedo OMI from the Philippines, Bishop Vianney Fernando from Sri Lanka, and Fr. Vimal Tirimanna CsSR, Fr. Francis Jayapathy SJ, and Fr. Lawrence Pinto MSIJ, the executive secretary of the FABC Office of the Clergy.