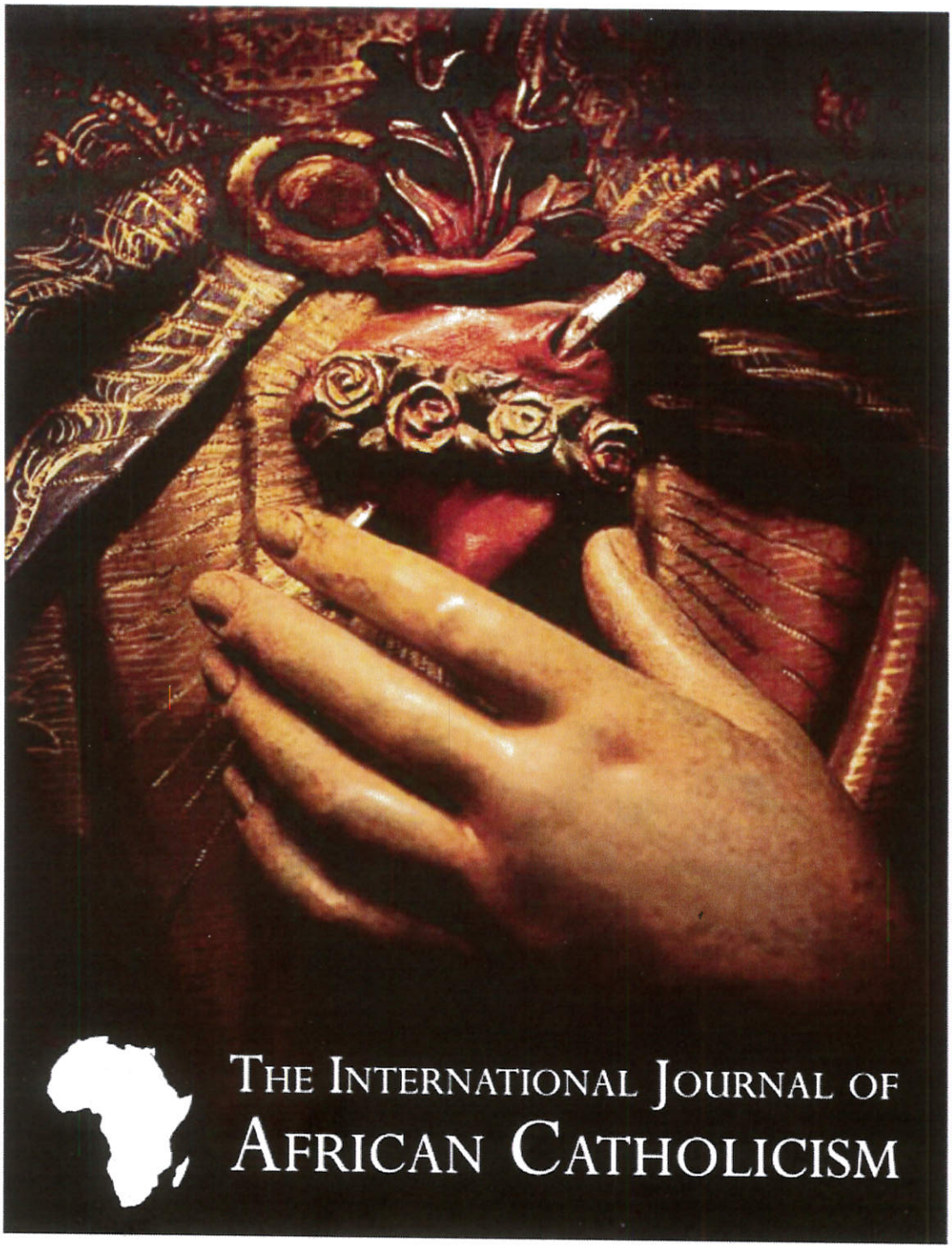

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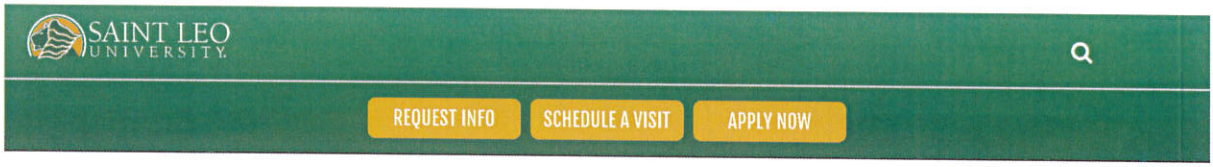
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SPIRITUALITY OF MARTYRDOM IN ROMAN CATHOLICISM AND CONTEMPORARY ISLAM: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

Patrick U. Nwosu

ABSTRACT

Roman Catholicism and Islam are missionary religions in Nigeria. And the histories of both religions place martyrdom as the supreme form of witnessing to the religious hope of the adherents. In Roman Catholicism, the prospect of martyrdom as a way of imitating the passion of Christ is accepted as noble. This moved Ignatius of Antioch to connect fidelity unto death with a proper understanding of Christ as both divine and human. Similarly, martyrdom is fundamental to the Islamic faith. The initiation into Islam requires the declaration to bear witness to the oneness of God whose messenger is Muhammad. The Qur'an expresses, therefore, that those who are slain while witnessing in God's way are not dead; they are alive and rejoice in the bliss provided by God (Q. 3:169-172). Thus, in both religions, martyrdom is regarded as the execution of adherents condemned to death by the authorities or witnessing unto death because of one's faith. However, how to contextualize the doctrine of martyrdom in both religions and apply it in the daily human interactions in Nigerian society remains very challenging. Given to the numerous cases of faith-inspired violence in northern parts of Nigeria, the power of religious conviction like martyrdom calls for serious academic re-evaluation. The critical questions would be: are those who fall victims of *Boko Haram* bombings in Nigeria martyrs? What are the religious status of the suicide bombers and many others who perish in churches and mosques while engaged in active religious rituals? Could they be regarded as martyrs? Applying historical, comparative and analytical methods, this paper examines the spirituality of martyrdom in the light of Roman Catholicism and Islam in Nigeria. The focus on Nigerian society is informed by the experiences of bombings and agitation for total Islamic system in the Northern parts of the country which has reached a threatening height. The paper concludes with salient suggestions to make the spirituality of martyrdom positively enriching.

Introduction

Religiously motivated bomb blasts in Nigeria, among other things, express in a nutshell the impacts some doctrines being taught by religious organizations make on human minds. Most times the official religious doctrine is misinterpreted by some adherents of the religion to achieve a set goal. The religious organizations in focus are Roman Catholic Church and Islam; and the doctrine at the front burner is martyrdom. Islam and Roman Catholic Church trace their faith back to the Patriarch Abraham. Thus, they belong to the family of Abrahamic religions. Both traditions are monotheistic and they have a long history of doctrinal interaction. For example, Muslims honour Jesus as a sinless prophet, born of a virgin, and is expected again at the last day. The traditions cited by Zahniser (2008) confirm this doctrinal belief. In his effort to resolve the ambiguity of what Islamic scholars call the affirmation and denial verses on the 'descent-of-Jesus traditions' (*nuzul 'Isa*), he submits, 'in general, they have Jesus returning to earth from heaven in the future, living a family life, performing certain tasks, dying a natural death, and rising again for the last judgment' (2008:46). Islam calls upon its adherents to live morally and be disposed to a spirituality of martyrdom or witnessing when the need arises (cf. Q. 3:83-84). The religion looks forward to the judgment day. All these are as well echoed in Christianity, particularly in Roman Catholicism that has special places for martyrs.

The history of religiously motivated violence and bombings in Nigeria at present revolves around the dreadful sect '*Boko Haram*'. This sect is unleashing terror and mayhem in the North especially in the northeastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa.

The country is regaled with tales of mounting violence and insecurity on regular basis depicting a society under siege of fundamentalist extremism.

Boko Haram started as a movement to enforce the Islamic law known as *Sharia* in the Northern part of the country. It metamorphosed afterwards into a bloody terrorist group with its own professed mission to overthrow the Nigerian state and replace it with Islamic state. In pursuance of this cause, it is unleashing mayhem all over the North with the battle cry to kill all Christians and liberal Muslims who are dismissed as unbelievers and traitors (Jimoh 2014:80). No classes of people are spared in their religious campaign-children, women, men, soldiers, police, distinguished personalities and all. They destroy properties, burn churches, mosques and markets and create shadows of towns and villages in their trail.

Boko Haram in Hausa language means "western education is sinful" (Jimoh 2014:80). Originally this group referred to themselves in Arabic as "*Jama-atu Ahis Sunna Lidda-awati Wal jihad*" which means "the sunni organization for the prophet's teaching and jihad'. The paper would emphasize more on *Boko Haram* in Nigeria later. But it suffices to note here that the group is opposed to western education and is ready to attack the very core of its foundation in the North. They see themselves as martyrs and their violent activities as the norm for afterlife belief in Islam.

Since the fear of *Boko Haram* and cases of their bombings with religious undertones has literally become a routine in some parts of the country, the intent of this paper is precisely to examine the spirituality of martyrdom in religions and see how to isolate it from the recent violent killings and deaths in Nigeria. Martyrdom is an authentic component of the many doctrines in Islam and Roman Catholicism. Martyrdom is related

to the Muslim affirmation of faith. It means 'witness', as the paper would clarify later; and the concept appears to be a direct appropriation of the Syrian Christian martyr (Segal 2004:658). However, the concept has been misconstrued, misinterpreted and wrongly applied in the present day Nigerian society. For instance, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the young Nigerian convicted by the United States of America (U.S.A) for attempting to blow up a U.S. jet in December, 2009 justified his actions as part of the contents of martyrdom in Islam. According to him, 'the Koran obliges every able Muslim to participate in jihad and fight in the way of Allah.' (Abdulmutallab 2011:4). He further submitted that, 'participation in jihad is... considered among the most virtuous of deeds in Islam and is highly encouraged in the Koran' (Abdulmutallab 2011:4). Could Islam that is a religion of peace at the same time teach that violence is a virtue? Again, during the last general elections in Nigeria, many people, especially youths on National Service Program (NYSC), were killed and the president of the country, Goodluck Jonathan hailed them as martyrs. In the light of the above, is the martyr the witness or does God witness the sacrifice?

Applying historical and analytical methods, the paper makes an overview of the spirituality of martyrdom in Roman Catholic Church and contemporary Islam with focus on Nigeria that is currently facing security challenges and suicide bombings in many parts of the country. It examines the similarities and differences of the concept in both traditions. The study concludes with suggestions as to how the spirituality of martyrdom could be lived out among Muslims and Christians in Nigeria to enhance integral human development rather than the present situation that reflects suicide missions and blatant waste of lives and properties in the country.

The Term "Martyrdom"

Since the history of religions, martyrdom has been regarded as the supreme form of witnessing to a particular religious hope. "Martyrdom is the execution of a believer or believers condemned to death by the authorities because of the faith" (Bria 1987:292). The word 'martyrdom' comes from the Greek, '*martyrion – martyria,*' meaning supreme and triumphant test endured for a greater value and witnessing to the truth of faith (Vigil 2000:136). Thus, the martyr is the witness of value or set of values in any religion. From the Christian perspective, the martyr is the witness to the sufferings of Jesus Christ.One of the earliest instances of martyrdom in Christianity is recorded in the Acts of Apostles 7: 54 – 60 where the deacon Stephen, the first martyr of Christian religion, was stoned and killed for his belief in Jesus Christ.

Given this perspective of martyrdom, the martyr is not merely someone who is killed or who dies for a cause, but one who gives up life, conscious of losing it in order to gain it. In this regard, "the martyrs of the first three centuries of Christianity surrendered their lives by challenging the intolerance of the Roman Empires, which confined them to a hidden existence in the catacombs" (Vigil 2000:136). Since then, men and women have died as a result of various other actions against expressions of religions.

In Islam, '*martyrion – martyria*' is translated as '*shahid*' and its plural form is '*shuhada*'. *Shahid – shuhada* corresponds to the Greek *martyrion-martyria*, meaning to witness. In the Qur'an, one encounters cases that clearly refer to martyrs as witness. For instance, Q.4:69 reports that, 'All who obey Allah and the messenger are in the company

of those on whom is the Grace of Allah – of the prophets, the sincere, the martyrs, and the righteous.' The Islamic Sacred Scripture presents the sequence of witness. That is, *'nabiyyin'*, *'Siddiqin'*, and *'shuhada'*. '*Nabiyyin*' is the plural of the Arabic word *'nabiy'* and it means prophets. '*Siddiqin*' is likewise the plural of '*sidiq*' and it means the truthful, righteous and morally upright. '*Shuhada*' is the plural of '*shahiid*' which means the martyr, those who died in the course of advancing Islam. At the level of the discourse of this paper, the question then is: how can one explain or understand the spirituality of martyrdom that has come to have a place of importance in Roman Catholic Church and Islam particularly in Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework

The keywords in this paper are 'spirituality' and 'martyrdom'. Earlier, the paper had x-rayed 'martyrdom' from the etymological perspective. Consequently, it becomes necessary to highlight the meaning and historical development of spirituality.

In Christian understanding, spirituality is related to "how people subjectively appropriate traditional beliefs about God, the human person, creation, and their interrelationship, and then express them in worship, basic values and lifestyle" (Sheldrake 1998:34-35). In other words, spirituality, in Christian view, is the whole human efforts to live in the light of conscious relationship with God, in Jesus through the Holy Spirit and within a faith community. Christian Spirituality involves living out what Jesus most valued. Thus, it is about discipleship and living out the values of the kingdom of God, "and generating a community transformed by the love of God and others" (Groody 2007:241).

The scholars that contributed significantly to the development of Christian spirituality are Augustine of Hippo (354 - 430), Gregory the Great (540 - 604), and Bernard of Clairvux (1090 - 1153). For want of space the paper highlights only the contributions of Augustine and Gregory to the development of Christian spirituality.

For Augustine of Hippo, the knowledge of divine things was not separated from the love of God deepened in prayer. He notes that God is known not by objectification and analysis; but by experience of love and desire. In his famous work titled: *Confession*, he writes, "late have I loved you.... And behold, you were within me and I was outside...., you were with me, and I was not with you" (Augustine 1967:40). Augustine was making reference to the grace of God in the hearts of persons and the insufficiency of human nature. Thus, his greatest contribution to Christian spirituality is in the area of grace.

Gregory the Great (540 - 604) made effort to synthesize ethics, spirituality, and doctrine. According to him, theology itself is inseparable from contemplation and it is mystical in the sense that its overall aim is to portray the divine mystery (Lossky 1973:82-83). Hence, Gregory opines that true theologians are those who experience the contents of their theology. In other words, Christian spirituality is related to witnessing in the context of creed spoken publicly like an oath.

The Islamic perspective of spirituality hangs on *Sharia*. Put another way, spirituality in Islam reflects "the movement to Islamization..., a shift away from the secular... to the acceptance of the Islamic law as the social norm" (Armour 2004:172). Thus, many Muslims express their spirituality by accepting and making *sharia* their system of law. For instance, Abu Qaqa, the spokesman of Islamic sect, *Boko Haram*

noted that "*sharia* is a complete way of life (Oyebade 2011:21). Even though it is always difficult to use the vocabulary of one religion to describe the characteristics of another, Armour (2004) notes that Islamic spirituality increasingly brings about "renewed commitment… and certitude of Islamic values and truth" (2004:173). A clear instance of this expression of Islamic spirituality is seen in several Northern states of Nigeria where some people want the reestablishment of Islamic society they had before colonialism. The effort to achieve this has resulted to occasional violence punctuated by long standing ethnic conflicts. In this regard, Esposito (1996) summarized Islamic spirituality as the overarching value system. According to him, "In Islamic spirituality, rights are given by God that is granted through the Qur'an and traditional Islamic law. The supreme authority is God, and humans are his agents, even his vice-regents, but they cannot be sovereign" (Esposito 1966:6). In the light of the foregoing, Islam teaches that spirituality that ended in martyrdom attracts a specially prepared pleasure-garden. Cf. Q. 56:1-26. Among other things, this implies that there is a special heavenly place reserved for martyrs while they await the Day of Judgment (Segal 2004:659).

The Role of Martyrs in Roman Catholicism

Martyrdom is one of the most efficacious instruments in the propagation of a faith leading to a new religious and social order. The term "martyr" as used in Roman Catholic Church means "witness". A martyr, in the Catholic Tradition, is a witness not to an idea but to an event, to the faith in the crucified and risen Christ. In this regard, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* states, "Martyrdom is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united in charity. He bears witness to the truth of

the faith and of Christian doctrine' (CCC 2473). The forgoing follows what the author of I John writes, "that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands… we proclaim also to you…" (1 Jn. 1:1).

In apostolic and post apostolic Catholicism, martyrdom was considered to be an individual work of piety and resistance to evil and struggle for justice. The Roman Catholic Church as an institution aids in this understanding of martyrdom through the spiritual formation of the clergy and the laity. The cases of the woman and her seven sons in 4th Maccabees 8:3ff and the three young men in Daniel chapter 3 are powerful liturgical symbols in Catholic theology of martyrdom. The aim of martyrdom in Roman Catholicism is essentially to perfect the victim and edify the Christian community; and this is carried out within an eschatological framework. The elements of witnessing to one's faith and fortitude in the face of persecution dominate the thinking of the Roman Catholic Church in the issue of martyrdom. Thus, we read in the account of *Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador* that, "the spirit breathes in many ways, and supreme among them is the disposition to give one's life for others, whether by tireless daily commitment or by the sacrifice of a violent death" (Sobrino, Ellacuria, et al, 1990:63).

In the kerygma of the martyrdom of Polycarp of Smyrna, written about 155 C.E., witnessing in faith to the humanity and suffering of the son of God was highlighted as a concept (Richardson, et al, 1953:120). In the Leonine letters of about 170 C.E: the term martyr, in the Catholic Church, signified persecution leading to the shedding of blood for Christ. The example of Stephen was used as a proof case. In *The Shepherd of Hermas*, this imitation of Christ through martyrdom earns the martyr's salvation and a share in the

glory of Christ. In other words, "those who suffered for the name of the son of God are glorious. All their sins have been taken away" (Staniforth 1976:78).

An elaborate cultus evolved out of the religious regard for martyrdom and the veneration accorded martyrs. From the early time, martyrs of the Catholic faith who were put in prison were asked to pray for the health, well – being and salvation of church members. It was a natural development that such requests for prayers came to be renewed after the martyr's death. This pious disposition led to controversial tension between worship of the dead and the veneration of martyrs. The cult of martyrs, with its relics and shrines, attracted the criticism of the players of the Protestant Reformation. As a result, the Roman Catholic Church constantly defines her theology of martyrdom, insisting that they are witnesses to the event of the incarnation, life, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, in 1984 John Paul II spoke of the Korean Christian Church in the light of the number of martyrs they had. He said, "This fledgling Church, so young and yet so strong in faith, withstood wave after wave of fierce persecution. Thus, in less than a century, it could already boast of some ten thousand martyrs… all gladly died for the sake of Christ" (John Paul 2008). Buttressing the above point, Morrison (2005) reported a clear principled martyrdom of Bonhoeffer as that fraught with unanswered questions and contradictions. He notes, "the Christian is not called to a life apart from, or over against, the world, even though the call is in the name of holiness and principle. The danger of this call is the Christian ghetto. Yet neither is the Christian called to condone and bless godlessness in the name of grace. The danger of this call is accommodation. The calling of the Christian is to plunge himself into the life of a godless world, without attempting to gloss over its ungodliness with veneer of religion" (2005:265). That is to say that a

Christian whose spirituality ends in martyrdom lived a 'worldly' life and so participated in the suffering of Christ. Catholic Tradition, therefore, enjoins adherents to live a truly worldly life with all its duties, challenges, success and failures without fear of martyrdom, which is losing one's life for what one believes.

Martyrs in Islam

In Islam the cult of martyrs remain limited to *Shi'i* tradition and it has a meaning that relates to justice for oppressed souls. In this regards, Enayat (2006) says that, "In *Shi'i* history, the drama of the martyrdom of Husayn ... ranks next only to the prophet's investiture of 'Ali as his successor at the Ghadir of Khumm. The legend of Husayan gives rise to an essentially political aspiration of justice..." (Enayat 2006:265-266). The popularization of cult of martyrs by *Shi'i* dynasty has resulted to the existence of Passion play in Islam called "*ta 'Ziyah*" and the recitation of the sufferings of holy martyrs, "*rawdah Khani*."

The *Shi'ite* element within Islam captures a basic rupture in the body of the religion. It began as a political struggle over the leadership of Islam but later took on theological colouration. Muhammad left no clear message regarding who succeeds him. Based on this, three of his close aids laid claim to the caliphate. However, some Muslims believed that Muhammad named Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, as his successor (Hopfe & Woodward 1998:378). Ali was finally named Caliph in 656 but gradually lost control of the Muslim world. He was killed in 661 and the *Umayyad* dynasty took over the Caliphate. Ali's youngest son, Husayn, challenged the *Umayyad* Caliphs in 680 but was silenced at the battle of Karbala in Iraq. Husayn with some of his family members was killed in the battle. They are considered martyrs by the *Shi'ites*.

The *Shi'ites* differs from the other groups in Islam in the following ways:

- while revelation ended with Muhammad and the glorious Qur'an, in later generation there were divinely inspired figures called imams in *Shi'ite* tradition;
- they believe in the existence of a messiah figure who would one day appear on earth and lead the world into an era of justice;
- because of the importance of the martyrdom of Husayn, *Shi'ites* tend to esteem martyrdom; and the traditional *Sunni* reading and interpretation of the Qur'an is mistrusted by *Shi'ites*. They tend to favour those they think have not compromised their faith to accept the secular order (Hopfe & Woodward 1998:379).

However, some scholars, particularly Omar, a professor of Islamic Studies at Marquette University, disapprove the cult of martyrs on account of its dogma. The main purpose of the cult of martyrs in Islam is to perform the lamentation in a way to cause greatest amount of weeping. Several prophetic sayings recommend weeping during prayer and within this context *Shi'i* Islam introduced the virtue of weeping in memory of the imams, particularly Husayn, who is known as the Lord of the martyrs (Enayat 2006:267). In this regard, each year, on the tenth of the month of *Muharram*, the passion of Husayn is reenacted. The site of his martyrdom and other locations that were important in his life time are, today, places of special pilgrimages for the *Shi'ite* Muslims. But Omar (2007) argues that "the imam's role is far greater than simply that of martyr" (2007:83).

A martyr, in Islam, is classified among those who have found favour with God. It is one who witnessed to 'the oneness of God, the apostleship of Muhammad, and the truth of the faith' (Mcternna 2003:67). Omar (2007), quoting Ibn Ali as commenting on

Q.57:19 notes, "One may fight for one of five reasons: booty; a show of bravery; or a show before others; in defense of wealth, family or land and out of anger. Any one of these could in itself be praiseworthy or the opposite. So long as the main purpose remains that the word of God be uppermost (defending the cause of Islam) it matters not what other reasons may exist as secondary causes" (Omar 2007:83).

The history of Islam reveals that the term 'martyr' was not limited to the person who is killed in the way of God in the battlefield. Martyrdom is simply an act of striving in the way of God. As Omar (2007) notes, more basic is the striving against evil in one's soul and in society. It is this inner purity resulting from the jihad of the soul that creates the right intention of serving the cause of truth in whatever way possible.

In all, the true martyr in Islam is the one who is slain in the way of God; or in the cause of defending Islam. In other words, a martyr in Islam is the victim of aggression and not the aggressor. However, it is the prerogative of the Islamic jurist to determine "the principle according to which a man or woman may be considered to be a martyr" (Omar 2007:84). Islam recognizes martyrs of this world, martyrs of this world and the world to come, and martyrs only of the other world.

The martyrs of this world are those who died for worldly causes other than of faith. Martyrs of this world and the next world are those slain for no other reasons than that the word of God to be uppermost. In the light of the foregoing, Islam teaches that in the end, God will reward them according to their acts and intentions. Omar (2007), in strong terms, notes that Muslims are encouraged to be peace loving. But that if any group transgresses against another, that such group must be fought until it returns to the right path (Q.49:9). This encouragement leads to the spirituality of martyrdom which has

continued till date, even though it is now abused both internationally and locally. This gross abuse of religious doctrine raises the question of the case of *Boko Haram* menace in Nigeria. Is this sect propelled by the doctrine of the spirituality of martyrdom? This question begs for answers from Islamic jurists especially when the activists of *Boko Haram* claim that they do not have any personal demand but to protect Islam and make the word of God uppermost. According to Abu Qaqa (2011:21), "*Boko Haram*" clamour "is fundamentally on how to safeguard religion and that is why we resolved to sacrifice all what we have including our lives for the sake of protecting Islam."

Boko Haram in Nigeria

The root word *Boko* still remains suspect in Nigeria. Some people say that *Boko* is a corruption of *Boka*, which means "witchcraft" (Kukah 2010:1). According to this school of thought, the word was used to convey the notion that western education or system was as derogatory as witchcraft and was therefore to be avoided. Since its player was the 'foe', it was naturally considered with suspicion as a means of destroying Islam in the way the colonial masters had destroyed the Islamic polity in the North. Another school of thought says that *Boko* had always been used to refer to a counterfeit.

Thus, *Boko Haram* in Nigeria is an Islamic fundamentalist who follow a program aimed at destroying the political and social structures in the Northern part of the country and replacing these with an Islamic state, as noted earlier (Jimoh 2014:80). Their targets are government agencies and Christian institutions. They operate in all the states in the North. *Boko Haram* could be described as the products of the irony of a modern economy which had not fully developed to accommodate these youths that studied in various *Koranic* schools. The education they received in the *Koranic* schools in the Northern

parts of Nigeria seem to be for a world that had already vanished and the new world of globalization seems to have no place for them.

Consequently, sensing their inability to access the tools of modernization and nervous about the future of their religion in the 21st century Nigeria, members of *Boko Haram* now embrace the spirituality of martyrdom which they seems to consider as a source of greater strength than looking outwards by means of acquiring western education and other instruments of secularism. Kukah (2010) describes the situation thus:

> Today, ordinary Muslims feel overwhelmed by the tornado of changes around them. Unable to access the tools of modernization, they have remained largely outside the loop of power. Even in the inner recesses of their own major cities in the entire region, almost all forms of businesses are conducted by people they consider foreigners. These are almost all Southern traders and they are almost all Christians too. Their habits of alcohol intake, partying and the adoption of a lifestyle that they have come to consider as being dysfunctional has made ordinary Muslims nervous about the future of their families and faith (2010:3).

Yusuf, the former leader of *Boko Haram*, who was killed by the men of Nigerian Police Force, cashed in on this social situation in the Northern part of Nigeria by arguing that turning inward to embrace the spirituality of physical martyrdom was a greater source of strength than acquiring western education and other tools of secularism. Yusuf's argument made a lot of sense for graduates of the Islamic education system that could not fit into secular society.

Be that as it may, martyrdom, in Roman Catholicism and Islam is essentially operational at the spiritual realm. At that level adherents are challenged to live out their spirituality in accordance with the will of God and the values of his kingdom. Therefore, the association of martyrdom with the use of the sword, engaging in suicide bombing,

and violence, as the case may be in Nigeria, is undeniably more socio-political than religious.

Similarities and Differences in the Doctrine of Martyrdom

There is no doubt that the political situation in Nigeria has changed since the advent of democracy in 1999. For the first time since 1999, the presidency has been in the hands of Christian South except for the brief period of Musa Yar'dua who later died in office. Based on this political changes, many Muslims particularly in the North, feel marginalized on all sides; politically, economically, socially, and religiously. This situation has led a large part of the Muslim youth to develop a spirituality of martyrdom predicated on voluntary fight to death of "the foe." Thus, a mysticism of militancy in the name of Islam has developed in Nigeria in order to defend the Northern states from being over-run by Christian influence and secularism. This situation arose out of the understanding that, in Islam, there is no separation between the political, social, economic and religious spheres of life. Islam is a way of being that is all embracing. Kung (1986) describes it as an "all-embracing view of life, an all-involving attitude towards life, an all-determining way of life" (1986:22). Hence, the country's president from Christian extraction triggered *Boko Haram* insurgency for which some prominent political figures like Olusegun Obasanjo, former Nigerian president, think that the way to solve Nigerian security problem is to return power to the North. It is important therefore, to outline the similarities and differences observable in Islam and Roman Catholic Church concerning martyrdom.

In Roman Catholic Church, the first martyr was Stephen. He imitated the gesture of Christ (Act. 7). His death did not involve any act of violence against anybody.

Specifically, Stephen accepted the violence of other people and he took it upon himself in order to destroy violence, hatred, and sin. This follows what Christ says that whoever uses the sword, will die by the sword (Mt. 26:52). So, within the context of nonviolence and love of God, the blood of martyrs is seen as the root or foundation of the Church.

As in Roman Catholicism, the blood of the martyr in Islam washes away sins. Islam views heaven as the dwelling place of God. Roman Catholicism and Islam agree that only those who lived according to divine will can gain entry into the presence of God (Ring, Nash, MacDonald & Glennon, (eds) 2012:195). Hence, the basis of spirituality of martyrdom in Islam hangs on Q. 3:169-172. The passage gives a description of a martyr's life after death as immediate entry to the Garden of Eden where they will recline on couches savouring meats, fruits and other things. There they would remain until the resurrection day. Even though women are excused from actual fighting for various reasons, the first martyr in Islam was a woman named Sumayya. She was tortured to death with her husband by the Makkan Arabs before the conquest of the city. The instruction to let the blood of the martyrs be their purification is said to have been given by the Prophet concerning those slain in the battle of Uhud (Zahniser 2008:49). In this regard, Q.3:169 states that, "those who are slain in the way of God are not to be reckoned as dead; rather, they are alive with their Lord sustained."

Again, the Catholic eschatology is as well echoed in that of Islam that has always been expressed in the language and the social framework of this materials life. That is to say that no one can experience paradise without first passing through the present life. Hence, in Catholic and Islamic traditions, martyrs are depicted as having great pleasure in heaven after bearing witness while in material life (Kathir 1970:153-160). Malik Ibn

Anas related that the Prophet said: "No one who enters paradise would wish to return to this world, even if he were to possess all that is in it, except the martyr. He would desire to return to the world to be killed ten times because of the great honour which he sees in this act." In a similar way, the Book of Revelation mentions the souls of all the people who had been killed on account of the word of God, for witnessing to it as having received the crown of glory (Rev.6:9). The passage could be seen as that which inspired the four U.S. martyrs, Kazel, Donovan, Ford and Clarke. In testimony before death, they note, "we know that death is not the last word. We treasure it in our hearts. And, to the extent that we try to follow the example set before us a decade ago, we honour the Christ who comes to us in many forms (Morrison 2005:265).

Just as some Muslims have made the spirituality of martyrdom and suffering a basic principle of their faith and piety, so in Roman Catholic Church, we have monks and nuns that follow Jesus Christ in the experience of passion and death. Thus, the Catholic Church teaches that "the martyr is always in a state of prayer and intercession for all, for the whole world. And because it is Christ who suffers in the martyrs and with them, they try not only to save themselves but to save all people and all Churches (Bria 1987:294).

In the light of the above, the spirituality of martyrdom in Islam and Roman Catholicism stands for two visions which are very different kinds of love for God. It is a vision in which a Christian bears witness to this love by forgoing all violence in order to cast out hatred and conquer sin in the manner of Christ. On the other hand, a Muslim bears witness to the love of God by fighting as far as the self sacrifice is for the name of Allah. As it stands, the doctrine has become a matter of choice, noting that the word "martyrdom," in Islam and Roman Catholicism is essentially spiritual in meaning. Its

association with the use of the sword, engagement in suicide bombings, and violence is undoubtedly political and social. Hence, Prophet Muhammad talked about "the minor *jihad* (war) and the major jihad (self–control and betterment)" (Hathout 1996:108-109).

Conclusion

Today, in Roman Catholicism, the original meaning of martyrdom at a point was distorted so much so that the ideal was not the impetus unlike in the early church. This is because martyrdom was a glorious experience until the time of Constantine, whose rule lasted from A.D. 312 to 337. When martyrdom turned to be a banner under which political wars were waged, the spirituality became subject to question and doubt.

In Islam, the ideal martyr is someone who strives in the way of righteousness with his/her whole self. Religious justification for fighting given in the Sacred Book is rooted in the historical injustice that was done to Muhammad and his followers when they were in Mecca. Thus, Mcternan (2003) argues that, 'in principle Muslims were only to fight to right an injustice, to defend and to protect religion from destructive forces (2003:70).

Since the spirituality of martyrdom is considered to be broader than military violence both in Roman Catholicism and Islam, emphasis, in the 21st century, should be given to the martyrdom of the heart, the effort to sanctify oneself and to be obedient to the will of God in addition to authentic teachings of one's religion. For example, the Book of Micah 6:8 enjoins people, "to do what is right, love loyalty and to walk humbly with God." This represents the individual struggle with evil, commitment to promote what is right, and to correct what is wrong. No religion would object to this noble social value. Following this path in Nigeria would result to limited violence and avoidance of acting out of anger or revenge.

Furthermore, Islam advocates a regulated struggle for the good and resistance against evil. As war was a collective responsibility, it was to be declared only by the caliph. No war was to be started.... before the enemy was invited to enter into a peace agreement, the use of poisoned weapons, the killing of non – combatants, ethnic cleansing ... were outlawed (Zawati 2001:41-45). This injunction should renew the Islamic and Catholic acknowledgements of the essential unity of humanity and therefore, highlight the peace that was God's original intent for all human beings. The obligation to promote peace is universal. And this makes forgiveness more desirable than revenge.

In contemporary Nigeria, poverty and political awareness are now most important phenomenon. This situation challenges religious minded people to network and care for the sick, feed the hungry, and defend the wronged in prison. These acts dispose people to inherit the kingdom of God. Finally, stereotyping of religions or faith traditions, particularly in Nigeria should be avoided. It is not in the interest of human society for some people to engage in activities designed to discredit one religion or the other. Discrimination in any form should be eschewed. In addition, outright lawlessness and criminality which are daily mistaken in Nigeria as religious conflicts need to be balanced with good governance. This would, in turn, isolate lust for violence and loot from any genuine sense of religious idealism.

Patrick Uchenna Nwosu is a lecturer in African and Comparative Religion, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. A Roman Catholic priest, he holds a Ph.D. degree in Comparative Religious Studies from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria (2010) and a Master's in Christian Studies from the same University (2006) specializing in Inter-religious Dialogue. He also has the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), University of Ado-Ekiti (2009) now Ekiti State University, Ekiti; Bachelors of Theology and Philosophy from Urban University Rome (2000&1994). His primary areas of research are interdisciplinary approaches to the religions of the World, African Cultures

and Ancestral Societies in Africa with focus on Okonko and Ogboni Societies in Igbo and Yorubalands. He is the author of "***Introducing the Study of Comparative Religion***" and "***Theory and Practice of Secrecy: Focus on Okonko and Ogboni Societies in Africa***", both published by Lambert Academic Publishing, Germany, 2012.
fatherpat2003@yahoo.com

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Biblical Reflections on the Identity of the Catholic Priesthood Today: Essay in Honor of an African Bishop

Fr. Michael Ufok Udoekpo
Sacred Heart School of Theology

Introduction

There is a need in the Church today for a renewal and deeper understanding of the gift of the Holy Priesthood. What follows is an edited and abridged Essay sent to the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene, Nigeria, in honor of Bishop Camillus Etokudoh (BE).[1] Who a Catholic Priest is or should be (his origin, function, duty, image, character, quality, and expectation) is a delightful, but complex subject of decades of ecclesiastical studies, and theological reflections.[2]

The focus of this present work is limited in scope to the margin of biblical origins, ideals and antecedents that inform and nourish the Catholic Priesthood today. Today priesthood continues to be challenging in terms of management of time, false sense of entitlement, loneliness, sexuality, relationship, priestly fraternity, pastoral availability to the people, ascetic response to human, cultural and material needs as well as the invitation to fully imitate Christ. As an embodiment of the fullness of this priesthood, the honoree, in his writings, preaching and Episcopal Ministry, as a Good Pastor, Leader and an Administrator, has planted his legacy of theological and pastoral views on the identity of the Catholic Priesthood, modeled after Christ, which this reflection seeks to progressively explore, on four levels, for priestly ministry today:

I. Old Testament (henceforth OT) Foundation of Priestly Identity
II. New Testament (henceforth NT) Foundation of Priestly Identity
III. The "Priestly Prayer of Jesus"(John17)": Etokudoh's 1992 Lenten Pastoral/Ministry as a Case Study

IV. Evaluation/Conclusion for the Priesthood Today

Old Testament Foundation for Priestly Identity

The Catholic priesthood and its identity are rooted in the Bible. When we seek to have a biblical reflection on such a subject, the best place to begin is the Old Testament.[3] In the OT, the Hebrew word for priest is *kōhēn* (Greek *hiereus)*, and occurs about 750 times in the Hebrew Bible.[4] This same word is used for both Israelite priests, and for priests of foreign gods. For instance, in Egypt, Pharaoh gave Asenath, the daughter of Portiphera, priest of Heliapolis "*kōhēn `ôn*" to Joseph, in marriage (Gen 41: 45 cf. 47:22).

We have also heard of the priests of Dagon (*kōhănē dāgôn*), who were humiliated in Philistia by the Ark of God (1 Sam 5:5; 6:2). The word, *kōhēn* has the same form in both Hebrew and Phoenician, and is frequently found in Nabatean as well.[5] Its Semitic root, especially the consonant *kaf* (k), is also close to the Annang, Efik and Ibibio word for priest (*Oku*).[6] Despite the ubiquitous occurrences of this word in various languages and contexts, its origin is still not fully known. If taken to be related to the Akkadian verb, *kanu* which means, "to bow down," "to do homage," as some have suggested, a *kōhēn* then would be a man who is upright and stands before God (Deut 10:8), who adores and worships the divine.[7] The first person to whom the Bible attributes the title *kōhēn* is Melchizedek, the king-priest of Salem, a town in Palestine during the time of Abraham (Gen 14:17-20; cf. Ps 110:4). [8]

After Melchizedek comes the priests of Median, whose son-in-law Moses became (Exod 2:16; 3:1). Moses and his subjects also received this priestly attribute (Exod 19:4-6). Arriving at the foot of Mount Sinai/Horeb for a covenant ritual, God says to Moses,

"you have seen how I treated the Egyptians…you will be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, that is what you must tell the Israelites."[9] This suggests, prior to the specialized Levitical priesthood, during the patriarchal age, Israelites could serve in a cultic capacity (cf. Exod 24:3-8).[10] It was only after the exodus that the biblical narrative introduces us to the reality of priesthood in Israel, in a more specialized fashion, in the concept of *kōhēn* (cf. Lev 13).[11] As social and religious development progressed in Israel, including permanent cultic institutions, the needs for permanent and trained personnel arose.[12] Aaron's sons were consecrated for these needs (Lev 8–10).

In other words, together with the Torah a devoted priesthood emerged, traceable to the tribe of Levi.[13] Like Aaron's sons, the Levites were further selected and consecrated priests and set apart for the Lord from other Israelites (Num 8).[14] They were also subordinate to the Aaronide priests and sons, during services, particularly at the tent of meeting.[15] Their eligibility for service was made possible by the circumstances of their birth, being born into the priestly family, from which they were selected to serve.

Echoes of this narrative is heard in the Letter to the Hebrews where it says that, "every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God; to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins…no one takes this honor upon himself, but only when called by God just as Aaron was" (Heb 5:1-4). Even though the Catholic priestly vocation today is not viewed from the point of view of birth, the lesson to be drawn here is that, in priestly calling, there is a needed response and voluntary acceptance, to go through the rigorous long training and formation. This may include post ordination training from schools as well as pastoral apprenticeship from experienced and senior pastors, just as the priestly lore was taught to the members of the tribe of Levi.[16]

Levitical priests, because they were chosen, set apart and were also expected to be ritually pure. For example any *Kōhēn* with leprosy was not allowed to serve at the altar (Lev 21:17-23). Serving at the altar demanded holiness in order to be worthy of the holy things of God. These "holy men" could not own or hold a day job, just as it is stated, "They shall not have any heritage in their land nor hold any portion among them; I will be your portion and your heritage among the Israelites," (Num 18:20; cf. Deut 12:12; 14:29; 18:17). A priest could not own real estate for farming except in restricted areas (Num 35:2-7; Josh 21:3).[17] Priests instead received tithes from the community for their religious services performed.[18] They were sanctified by their services, just as their entire nation was commanded to be holy (Exod 19:6).

During the time of the Judges, the emerging specialized priesthood was connected with the Levitical hereditary priesthood. Both Levites and priests were under the overall authority of the high priest. Cultic prophets were also co-opted into the priesthood, who in earlier times had been quite distinct from priests.[19]

During the age of the Monarchy, groups of priest of a different line from the tribe of Judah, also served in sanctuaries such as in Shiloh (1 Sam 1–3), and Nob (1 Sam 21–22). They exclusively attended the Ark in the Sanctuaries at Shiloh and Kiriath-jearim (1 Sam 7:11), as well as in Jerusalem.[20] Kings David and Solomon in particular, were involved in priestly activities of the king-priest variety.[21] Deuteronomistic History, of course, is against priests who were involved in the Monarchic Power game. Saul is on record to have exterminated priests (*kōhănîm)*, who supported David. Abiathar survived the onslaught (1 Sam 22:18). He came from the house of Eli, the priest of Shiloh, and would later have problems with Solomon, who suspected he was supporting someone

who was a threat to his succession. Solomon therefore replaced Abiarthar with another priest, Zadok (1 Kings 2:26-35). Later texts praised the priestly house of Zadok (Sir 50:12), suggesting that priests were not just from the line of Aaron, but also from the line of Zadok.[22]

During the reforms of Josiah (640-609 BC), life became difficult for Levites, particularly those who lived outside Jerusalem, as sacrifices were forbidden abroad. Many Levites in Jerusalem were also demoted. These demotees wandered out in search of greener pastures (Judg 17–20).[23] Ezekiel, the prophet of exile, testifies to this as follows:

> As for the Levites who went far from me when Israel strayed from me after idols, they will bear the consequences of their sins. They will serve in my sanctuary only as gatekeepers and temple servants; they will slaughter burnt offerings and sacrifices for the people. They will stand before the people to serve them. Because they used to serve them before their idols, thus becoming a stumbling block to the house of Israel, therefore I have sworn an oath against them, says the Lord God, and they will bear the consequences of their sins. They shall no longer come near to serve as my priests, nor shall they touch any of my sacred things or my most sacred offerings, for they must bear their shame, the abominations they committed. Instead I will make them responsible for the service of the temple and all its work, for everything that must be done in it (Ezek 44:10-14).

During the Second Temple Era, there was a cultic conflict between priests and Levites and perhaps issues of historical redaction or textual ambivalence (cf. Num 16–18). Just as there is another indication that the Levites in their roles, "were more careful than the priests to sanctify themselves" (2 Chro 29:34).[24]

In other words, after the exile, priests took over the government and put institutional structures in place. They also enhanced the role of the Temple and served

with both prophets and civil leaders, like Zerubbabel (Neh 12:10-11 ca. 400 BC).[25] The laws were interpreted by legal scholars and scribes. From now on there was a pause for over 150 years before Josephus and 1–2 Maccebees picked up the thread of priesthood, which continued until the time of John the Baptist and Christ, down to AD 70.[26]

Significantly, this sketch of the complex historical and biblical development of the priesthood serves not just to satisfy our intellectual curiosity but rather to note the image and character of OT priests. It also underlines their functions, which is of tremendous assistance to us as we strive to deepen our appreciation of the Catholic Priesthood. This is not to endorse a position that we must strictly pick from the pages of the OT an ideal of the priestly ministry to be realized in the Church today. Truly, the priesthood of the NT as we shall discover "is not a functional concept, as was that of the Old Testament, but is rather an ontological concept."[27] Galot's observation is also appropriate that, "we cannot overlook the distance between Jewish hope and Christian fulfillment…the priesthood of the Old Testament should be regarded as a starting point…it can help us perceive distinctly what is new in the Christian priesthood."[28]

Underlining the Functions of OT Priests (Kōhănîm)

From what precedes, a *kōhēn* may be seen as a man of the sanctuary close to the sacred objects, in God's presence. He offers sacrifices, utters divine oracles, dispenses blessings, ascetic, teach with examples and makes decisions. Which of these is the most vital function or ideal of a priest has been debated.[29] As mentioned in the introductory section of this essay, today we are faced with similar challenges and crisis of identity of

different forms. Questions of why there is a shortage of priests in some areas are constantly being discussed today? Another quandary is the question of priestly celibacy[30]as well as the ordination of women and the priesthood?[31] Is a priest a man of prayer, teacher or prophet? Is he a healer or presider at Mass? Is he an apostle or a disciple? Is he a missionary or a visionary, a servant of love or a dispenser of divine mercy?[32] Some of these questions define the identity of a priest, already extensively discussed in Thomas J. McGovern's *Priestly Identity: A Study in the Theology of Priesthood.*[33]

However, Cody, from the Pontifical Biblical Institute, rightly insists that the earliest priests among the Israelites were essentially sanctuary attendants. They were not soothsayers, diviners nor primarily those who carried out sacrifice. Although oracular consultation was their principal activity nothing prevented them from offering sacrifices like other family men.[34] Specifics and key functions of ancient Israelites priests can also be gleaned from the following Deuteronomic Text (Deut 33:8-10):

> Of Levi he said, give to Levi your Thummim, your Urim to your faithful one;
>
> Him you tested at Massah, contended against him at the waters of Meribah. He said of his father and mother, "I have no regard for them," His brothers he would not acknowledge, and his own children he did not recognize. For they kept your words, and your covenant they upheld. They teach your ordinances to Jacob, your law to Israel. They bring incense to your nostrils, and burnt offerings to your altar.

Central to this passage are the oracular, pedagogical, and sacrificial functions of priesthood, on which I would like to briefly comment.

Oracular Function of the Priest

Priests in the OT were always intermediaries between Israelites and God. When men went to the temple to consult YHWH, priests mediated through the Urim and the Thummim, speculated to be some kind of disc that could be rolled around so as to get a positive or negative response to a puzzle. [35] They were sacred lots cast on behalf of the people in order to determine the will of God in a given situation (Deut 33:8). For instance, when Saul found himself in desperate situation of war with the Philistines and with Jonathan involved, he consulted YHWH (1 Sam 14:41-42), through this medium. David did similar consultations through the priest Abiathar when tracked down by Saul, and when he was confronted by the Amelekites (1 Sam 23:9; 30:7).[36]

This oracular priestly function underwent changes during the period of the monarchy, as the prophet took over the role of mediating between Israel and God. During the post-exilic era, the time of the Second Temple, this particular role of the priest was in total decline, as the governor directed people not to partake of any holy food until there was a "priest to consult the Urim and Thummim"(Ezra 2:63). Today, it might be easy to conclude as "superstitious," this particular function of Israelite priests, unless we are cognizance of the time and context in question. In ancient context, the primary purpose of this ritual was to discern God's will through the priests, which is still practiced today in different forms in the Christian context.[37] A typical and exemplary way of leading the people to discern the will of God is through prayer.

Today, it is noticed that contemporary secularism prefers action to contemplative prayer and working to meditation. If priests today do not fully embrace prayer, and guard against such extreme secularism, leading the people to spiritually discern the will of God

might have been more challenging.[38] Another way is through spiritual guidance. Priests and priests-to-be are reminded in the *Pastores Dabo vobis* of John Paul II that union with God is necessary. And this has its root in the baptism and is nourished with the Eucharist. And "only if future priests, through a suitable spiritual formation, have become deeply aware and have increasingly experienced this "mystery" will they be able communicate this amazing and blessed message to others (cf 1 Jn 1:1-4)."[39] In other, words since another key way of leading the people to discern the will of God is to proclaim the word of God to others, or to evangelize the people, priests themselves must first be evangelized and be spiritually prepared. Commenting on the place of this function in today's priesthood, Brown concludes that, "incorporation of that function into Christian priesthood was, therefore, not simply a matter of grafting onto priesthood an element that was foreign to it."[40] In other words, today's urgent need for priests to identify their activities and life styles with that of Christ, through rigorous evangelization and mediation between the community and God has always been there.

Pedagogical/Teaching Function of the Priest

Apart from discerning God's will, priests were also entrusted with the duty of teaching Israel those instructions (*tôrôth*) which come from God (Deut 33:10). De Vaux unequivocally notes that "The *Tôrah* belongs to the priest, as the virtue of judgment belongs to the king, or wisdom to the wise man, or vision and message to the prophet."[41] That teaching the *Tôrah* is the duty of a priest is confirmed in several pre-exilic and post-exilic prophetic texts (Mic 3:11; Jer 18:18 and Ezek 7:26).[42] Prophet Malachi particularly accounts that, "a priest's lips preserve knowledge, and instruction is to be sought from his mouth, because he is the messenger of Lord of hosts" (Mal 2:7).

Onoriodẹ Bọlọjẹ offers reasons why the priests in Malachi are criticized. They have neglected their responsibility of teaching the Torah (Mal 2:8). Neglecting such priestly duties usually leads God's people astray as a sheep without a shepherd (Ezek 34).[43] Bọlọjẹ's perspective offers contemporary ministerial priests and Christians of all faith communities a vital glimpse into the demands and functions of the priesthood. Priestly office requires men of high moral character and integrity, who are prepared to teach and preach the word of God.[44] It also requires some level of education and formation as spelt out in various ecclesiastical documents for priestly formation.[45]

Even today, Judaism has not lost the significance of the teaching role of a "Rabbi," meaning "Teacher," (John 1:38). Brown also weighs-in on this teaching role of the priests. He observes that, with partial justification, some will suggests a distinction between Catholic priests teaching other subjects in secular institution with rather strictly religious subjects in Catechism Class Sessions, Seminaries, Catholic Schools and Universities. The Hebrew people, according to Brown, did not draw such a strict distinction within the wisdom given by God to the community (1 Kings 4:29-34).[46]

Today, this teaching role of a priest is somehow in crisis. Therefore, it is not by accident that *Presbyterorum ordinis* of 1965 continuously draws priest's attention to their functions (teaching of the world of God, ministering the sacraments and ruling the people).[47] The document specifically states that:

> The people of God are formed into one in the first place by the word of the living God, which is quite rightly expected from the mouth of a priest. For since nobody can be saved who has not first believed, it is the first task of priests as co-workers of the bishops to preach the Gospel of God to all. Priests…whether by their example behavior they lead people to glorify God; or by their preaching proclaim the mystery of Christ to unbeliever; or teach the Christian message or explain the

> church's doctrine; or endeavor to treat contemporary problems in the light of Christ's teaching.[48]

In this way priests will teach with conviction about the mercy and the enduring love of God.

Sacrificial Function of the Priest

In the above list of the Deuteronomic priestly functions (Deut 33:8-10), clearly, the ones associated with worship are mentioned last. Priest brings incense to God's nostrils and burnt offerings to his altar (v.10). Of course we should not be surprised that this function is attributable to priestly office.[49] Offering sacrifices prior to the monarchic period was not exclusively assigned to priests. Cain and Abel (Gen 4:3ff), Noah (Gen 8:20), Abraham (22:13), and Jacob (Gen 31:54; 46:1) offered sacrifices without being priests, in a strict sense of the word.[50]

During the age of the Judges, Gideon (Judges 6:19-32), Manoah (Judges 13:16-24), and Elkanah (1 Sam 1:1-8, 21; 2:18-21), all offered sacrifices. David and Solomon also offered sacrifices (2 Sam 6:13; 24:25; 1 Kings 3:4, 15; 8:5; 9:25). Cody notices that Philo, writing at a time when sacrifice was the hallmark of the Jerusalem priesthood regarded all Jewish family heads as playing the role of priests.[51] Offering sacrifices was preserved for consecrated priests. When the Temple was gone, Torah-Religion replaced the rituals of the Temple, while priests replaced rabbis.[52]

Obviously, there are moments when today's priests may not be available for Eucharistic sacrifices in the parish. This is contrary to the insistent of the *Presbyterorum ordinis*, that priests are ministers of the sacraments, which is "frequently exercised in the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation.[53] As a Eucharistic,

person, "the priest's life among the people achieves its summit in the celebration of the Eucharist…The priest's greatest chrism is to stand among the community around the Lord's table and to give thanks to God."[54]

Besides conveying oracles, teaching the Torah and offering sacrifices, ritual purity and blessings were also specific duties of the priests. The common denominator underlining all these priestly roles and ideals is the fact that priests were mediators; intermediaries between God and the people of God. These essential features continued as it were, to re-echo in a renewed and challenging forms in the Christian priesthood of Christ, today, as presented in the NT, particularly in the Letter to the Hebrews.

In the Letter to the Hebrews, Christ is the perfect high priest, a mediator between man and God (Heb 5:1). As human, Christ represents humanity by offering himself as a perfect sacrifice on the cross (Heb5:2-3). He is holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, higher than the heavens (Heb 7:26). Christ's sacrifice is not only perfect; it is once and for all. Christ is also both the victim offered, and the priest who offers the sacrifice (Heb 7:27-28). These are the valuable roles, roots, and anchor upon which the Catholic priesthood renewably holds. As we reflect further, I would reiterate that we do not have to infer completely and strictly from the priesthood of the OT what the NT priesthood should be.[55] It is in Jesus himself that we must today try to discern the identity and the nature of the Catholic priesthood.

The New Testament Foundation for Priestly Identity

Before we turn to the Letter to the Hebrews, the only writing that speaks explicitly of Christ as priest (*hiereus*), there are various priestly actions and ideals in the

Gospels that inform today's Catholic Priesthood.[56] Zechariah is seen functioning as a priest (Luke 1:5-9). This account shows not only the OT tradition of priestly function in the early Christian days, but the privilege of the priests with specific basic function to offer sacrifices in the sanctuary. The Fourth Gospel speaks of Jews from Jerusalem sending "priests and Levites (to him) to ask him, "who are you?'(John 1:19). Jesus himself speaks of a priest after healing the leper, "see that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed, that will be proof for them"(Mark 1:44; Luke 17:11-19). Priest (*hiereus),* appears about 11 times in the Gospels (Matt 3; Mark 2; Luke 5 and John 1), while the "high priest" (*archiereus*) appears about 83 times (Matt 25; Mark 22; Luke 15 and John 21). Most of these appearances are in the context of the passion of Christ, and involving persons traced back to Judaism, or to the priestly tribe, of which Jesus was not a member.[57] Arguments have been proffered why there has been silence about Christian priests (*hiereis*), in the NT. Firstly, that the apostles who presided over the Eucharist were priests in everything but name, since name was too closely associated with the Jewish priests in the Temple whose functions were to offer sacrifices has been presented as an argument.[58]

Secondly, that, a priest (*kōhēn/hiereus*) was associated more or less with the Jewish priests in the Temple. However, Brown, disagrees with this, and suggests that, the early Christians acknowledged the Jewish priesthood as valid and therefore never thought of priesthood of their own. They also saw themselves as renewed Israel as expressed in the Letter to the Hebrews, where Christ has become a high priest of a new kind.[59] The third, argument hinges on the important concept of the "Priestly People" or "Christian Priesthood," which I would like to comment on.

The Priestly People/ the Christian Priesthood

In First Peter, it is to the entire community of the faithful, the Christian people that the priesthood is ascribed. Here it says, "rid yourselves of malice and all deceit, insincerity, envy and all slander.... and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.... you are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises' of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light"(1 Pet 2:1-10).

Contentions had characterized the exegesis and past hermeneutical endeavors on this text. Martin Luther, for example, is known to have used this text to argue for the silence of the NT about Christian priests. According to Luther, all Christians have equal claims to be priests and that all have the same powers with respect to the Word of God and the Sacraments, as such the priests and the bishop do not possess any particular power or authority, except that which the faithful grant them.[60] The scriptural basis for this argument is from the Pentateuchal Text, "you will be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation that is what you must tell the Israelites (Exod 19:6)." Echoes of this text are loudly heard in the NT (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).[61]

Studying the Greek word and syntax of "*hierateuma*" (priesthood) in the LXX version of (Exod 19:6; 1 Peter 2:5, 9), J. H. Elliot, rejects Luther's arguments.[62] For Elliot, it is semantically inadmissible for one to attempt a reduction of "royal priesthood," and "kingdom of priests" (*basileon hierateuma*), to an individual-distributive classification.[63] Peter, he notes, is speaking of a "new society," holy and chosen by God.

The predicates for this new chosen community are collective and corporate not to individuals.[64] Elliot rightly maintains that these predicates are to be understood of Christians much in the same way "holy nation," was understood of Israel (Exod 19:6). The "kingdom of priests," is a people bound to God by a special covenant relationship and it is to be special holy people and holy priests. The idea of royal priesthood of the people of Israel in the OT did not prevent the emergence of the cultic Jewish Levitical priesthood. Therefore, one cannot use these texts (1 Pet 2:5, 9) to argue against the ministerial priesthood. [65]

Focusing more on this text, Galot also notes that "speaking of the offering of spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet 2:5), the author of the Epistles adopts a viewpoint that is more properly priestly. He singles out the one priestly activity that is considered to be the most essential, the offering of sacrifices."[66] Galot's nuanced insights are very refreshing. Priestly functions, does not consist only on personal holiness. Rather, it consists in the consecration of the entire Christian community which has been the recipient of God's blessings. In other words, priestly people are the people of the saved, a renewed Israel, and are invited to share universally, the effects and the fruits of their salvation with other members of the spiritual house, which has been built.[67]

The "spiritual sacrifices" of the universal priesthood can also be interpreted as a voluntary imitation of Christ, the "Suffering Servant of Yhwh", by Christians. Truly, the communal character of the universal priesthood precludes the confusion between the priestly people and the ministerial priesthood, who preside at the Eucharistic Celebration."[68] In spite of this preclusion and less explicit mention of the term "priest" in the Gospels with reference to Christ and Christians, there are examples of many NT

ministries of Christ's priestly services that stand to inform and deepen our understanding today's priesthood.

The Royal/Ministerial Priesthood

The gospel narratives present Christ as the "son of David" (Matt: 22:42; Mark 12:35; Luke 20:41). By implication, he is a member of the royal family or house of Judah, from which the Messiah was anticipated. Christ is not from the priestly tribe of Levi. Therefore, the royal priesthood he claims was not like the Levitical priesthood. In the *Lumen Gentium*, every Christian participates in this royal priesthood of Jesus through the sacraments of baptism and confirmation:

> The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, that through all their Christian activities they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the marvels of him who has call them out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Pet 2:4-10).... Though they differ essentially and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are none the less interrelated; each in its own way shares in the one priesthood of Christ.[69]

The role of the priest is of tripartite dimension, namely, a participation in the mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet, and King. This triple dimension does not imply three different functions, but of different and interwoven aspects of the very same mission of Christ Jesus. In other words, Vatican II's documents expand on the concept of the ministerial priesthood taught by the Council of Trent. This counter-Reformation Council defines the priesthood of the New Testament as the power of consecrating and offering the true body and blood of Christ, and the power of forgiving or retaining sins.[70] Furthermore, according *to Lumen Gentium*, Christ, whom the Father sanctified and sent into this world,

has, through his apostles, made their successors sharers in his consecrated mission of the Holy Orders.[71] In the *Pastores Dabo Vobis* this sharing is confirmed as being done in a holy, specific and authoritative manner of spreading and preaching the good news to the poor, in the name of the person of Christ himself.[72]

This is in line with the gospels where Christ is generally seen as a holy and consecrated person, a man of the sacred (Luke 1:35; 4:18; Mark 1:24; John 10:36; 17:19). He is a minister and a good shepherd (John 10:10-11; cf. Jer 23; Ezek 34), sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt 15:26). He lays down his life for the sheep. In the last judgment the Son of Man will separate the sheep from the goats as a shepherd does (Matt 25:32). Actually, he came to serve (Mark 10:45; Matt 20:28), as well as prophetically (Mark 6:34; Luke 4:18-19) lead humanity on a life- giving mission (John 6:53; 10:10).

The priesthood, one can argue, therefore developed as a result of combination of these various ministries, individual and communitarian, and in witnessing to the very life of Christ Jesus, in the NT Church.[73] Four of such antecedent ministries are: discipleship, apostleship, presbyter-bishop and president at the Eucharistic celebration, which I would like to briefly discuss.

Antecedent NT Ministries that Inform the Priesthood Today

The concept of discipleship has come to shape today's priestly spirituality. Truly all Christians are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ. But those who engage in special Christian ministry, are bound and challenged in a special way by the demands of Christian discipleship, as witnessed in the Gospels (cf. Matt 5: 14-16; 6:24; 7:17; 10:37-39; 16:24-25 28:18-20; Mark 1:16-22 Luke 9:57-62; 14:26-27; John 8:31-50; 13:34-35;

15:1-17).[74] Central to these Gospel's ideals is the need for priests today, to closely follow Jesus as their model, master and Good Shepherd.

The other concept is apostleship. Obviously the word "apostle" is from the Greek noun *apostolos,* which means a person who is sent. In the beginning of his ministry Jesus went up the mountain and from there he summoned those, the twelve (whom he also named Apostles) and they came to him (Mark 3:13-15). It is the role of these apostles that has shaped today's priesthood, since they were called to represent him to others. This is mission is evident in the Gospel Mark 6:7-13:

> He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick, no food, no sack, no money in their belt. There were however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic. He said to them 'wherever you enter a house, stay there until leave from there. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave here and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them.' So they went off and preached repentance. They drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Commenting on this text during one of his audiences, Pope Benedict XVI (Emeritus) said:

> In choosing the Twelve, introducing them into the communion of life with himself and involving them in his mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God in words and works (Mk 6:7-13; Mt 10:5-8; Lk 9:1-6; 6:13), Jesus wants to say that the definitive time has arrived in which to constitute the new people of God, the people of the twelve tribes, which now becomes a universal people, his Church.[75]

There are scholars who wonder how much of the mission in Galilee in this text, reflect a retrojection of the post-resurrection apostolic mission, since there are other texts where persecution by synagogues, governors and kings, are mentioned (Matt 10:17-18). Yet the definitive sending forth that constitutes the very idea of apostleship is post-resurrectional

(cf. Matt 28:19; Luke 24:47-48 and John 20:21).[76] Clearly, studies on Pauline and Lukan materials, particularly the Acts of the Apostles evidence the fact that the paradigm for the apostle is a figure who was not a disciple of Jesus during the ministry, but has come to embrace and accept Christ. For example, Saint Paul is often called "The Apostle" (cf. Gal, 1 and 2 Cor, Col and Eph) and a "Servant" (cf. Rom and Phil) of Jesus Christ in the beginning of his Letters.[77] It is this apostolic light that Pope Benedict XVI intends to shed, when he insists that "an apostle is one who is sent, but even before that, he is an 'expert' on Jesus."[78]

Apostolic ministry is the ministry of the Word. It is a proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. It is a ministry of the spirit. It is prophetic. It is that of service and sharing (2 Cor 3:8).[79] No wonder Paul sees himself as a servant and a minister of Jesus Christ. He serves others in prayers (2 Cor 9:11-12), at liturgy (Rom 15:16), in his sufferings (2 Cor 7:5), works (2 Cor 12:13-14, corrections (Gal 4:20). Christ Jesus is always the beginning and the end of his services. In fact, there are other services performed by the Apostles, particularly Paul, not listed here, that would inform contemporary priestly ministry. Paul's selfless concern for the Church is well summed up in his words, "I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent for your sakes" (2 Cor 12:15).[80]

Furthermore, the image of the presbyter-bishop that informs priestly identity today goes beyond the NT account to the time and writings of Ignatius of Antioch, and other Church Fathers.[81] Some NT texts, particularly the Pastoral Letters seem to build-on from where the Apostles left off: caring and serving the Church, selflessly. These expected virtues in the presbyter- bishops are listed in 1 Tim 3:1-7:

> A bishop must be irreproachable, married only once, temperate, self-control, decent, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not aggressive, but gentle, not contentious, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children under control with perfect dignity; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of the church of God? He should not be a recent convert, so that he may not become conceited and thus incur the devil's punishment. He must also have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, the devil's trap (cf. 1 Titus 1:7-9

Although the scope of this essay would not permit detail comments on each of this traits, the above text evidence a true example of the Church setting up its own stipulations, for its special ministry. The Church today could learn from some of these elements: prudence, less quarrelsome, gentleness, temperance, hospitality, leadership, modesty, dignity, patient and exemplary life style in priestly ministry, especially on the altar of the Holy Eucharist.

Finally, we have the image of a ministerial priest as the one who preside at the Eucharistic sacrifice. We have seen already in the preceding reflections that in the OT priesthood, sacrifice was one of the functions of the Levitical priests who go into the earthly sanctuary (Exod 25–26), to offer sacrifices, especially on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). The essence of that atoning ritual was the high priest's sprinkling of animal blood inside the Holy of Holies for purification of sins of the community and that of the priest himself. For the author of the Letter to the Hebrew, Christ unlike the OT priests is both the perfect sacrifice and the perfect high priest and a model for priests today.

In the Catholic Church, celebrating the Holy Eucharist is associated with the ministerial priesthood. This is not unconnected to the Eucharistic words of Jesus in Last Supper (Mark 14:18-26; Luke22:19-22; 1 Cor 11:23-25), commanding his disciples "do

this in memory of me," (Luke 22:19), the priest of a new kind, extensively discussed by the author of the Letter to the Hebrews.[82]

Christ: A Priest of a New Kind, in the Letter to the Hebrews[83]

The Letter to the Hebrews affirms consistently that we, Christians, have a priest, "a great high priest," (Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14; 10:21). Though a late text, it reviews the identity of the priesthood, both in Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. And in fact, in our reflection thus far it is here, in the Letter to the Hebrews that we find a NT text witnessing explicitly of Christ as priest (*hiereus*).[84] Hebrews stands out in the NT for its rhetorical, literal and theological brilliance, making some scholars characterize it as the greatest Christian sermon ever preached or written. It is written in quality Greek. For these reasons it deserves to be introduced as a sermon in a written form, of uncertain origin, intended to encourage perseverance in Christian faith.[85] It resembles the "The Priestly Prayer" of John Chapter 17, hence the title, "Preaching on the Priesthood of Christ," or more, briefly, "The Priestly Sermon."[86] Galot opines in affirmation that, "The Epistle contains a comprehensive doctrine on the priesthood and sacrifice of the Son God, cast within the cultic framework of the Old Testament, which is itself construed as a prefiguration whose whole reality is to be found in Jesus proclaimed forever a priest of the order of Melchizedek."[87]

Written to encourage the second generation of Jewish Christians facing persecution, its triple- part establishes the superiority of Jesus as the Son of God over the angels (Heb1:1–4:13). It demonstrates the high and perfect priesthood of Christ (Heb 4:14–

10:18), as well as the need to cultivate endurance and perseverance in the face of Christian sufferings.[88]

The author identifies Jesus as not only superior to Moses, but he is "the apostle and high priest of our confession" (Heb 3:1-6). Interestingly, no one else in the NT ever calls Jesus an Apostle (one who is sent forth). In this context the author is quite deliberative because he sees Jesus as God's ambassador who came to do the will of his Father. He is high priest (cf. Heb 2:17) a title he consistently reserves for Christ throughout his sermon. Christ, for him, deserves this title since he is a new priest of a new kind who mediates between humanity and God, heaven and earth. He communicates to humans about God and to God on behalf of humanity. As a Son of God, he gives us access to God's house, where Moses had functioned as a servant (Heb 3:2-6).

The author's goal is to show us how the Son of God, Christ, is the high priest. Christ of course, passes through the heavens (Heb 4:14), quite unlike the Levitical high priest limited to the earthly Holy of Holies, on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). The Levitical high priest also has the need for personal atonement, unlike the sinless Christ, even though he humbly experienced human physical challenges (Mark 1:12-13; Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). Being fully human, Christ is fully compassionate. He sympathizes with our weaknesses (Heb 4:15-16), virtues also expected in today's priestly ministry.[89]

The following passage is often quoted on souvenirs of priestly ordinations (Heb 5:1-6):

> Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal patiently with ignorant and erring, for he himself is beset by weaknesses and so for this reason,

> must make sins offerings for himself as well as for the people. No one takes this honor upon himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. In the same way it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high priest, but rather the one who said to himself "you are my son; this day I have begotten you", just as he says in another place, "you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek".

Here, the author comparatively and repetitively, summarizes the criteria for the high priesthood of Jesus Christ. Usually, the high priest is a mediator between God and human beings. Being human himself he represents other human beings before God in his ministry of offering sacrifices (Heb5:1).

In addition, he shows solidarity with other humans for he shares their weaknesses and brokenness (Heb 5:2-3). Ordinarily he can show compassion to the erring and he is called by God (Heb5: 4) as Aaron was (Exod 28:1), through providential birth. But Christ is a high priest, of higher standard.[90] His priesthood remains vocational as would the Catholic priesthood today. He was not from Aaronic priestly tribe, yet his obedience suffering and solidarity with human through the cross perfects him, and surpasses that of any other priests. He wins the declaration of a high priest by God his Father, according to the other of Melchizedek and remains the conduit of eternal salvation, for all who obey him (Heb 5:7-10).

In Chapter 7 of the Letter to the Hebrews, the author returns to elaborate the priesthood of Jesus Christ according to the order of Melchizedek. First of all he got his idea from two main OT passages, where Melchizedek appears (Ps 110:4; Gen 14:17-20).[91] In the Evening Prayer II of Week III, we pray this Psalm:

> The Lord's revelation to my master: Sit on my right: Your foes I will put beneath your feet." The Lord will wield from Zion your scepter of power: Rule in the

> midst of your foes. A prince from the day of your birth on the holy mountains; from the womb before the dawn I begot you. The Lord has sworn an oath he will not change." You are a priest forever, a priest like Melchizedek of old [in the manner of Melchizedek (NAB)]." The Master standing at your right hand will shatter kings in the day of his great wrath. He shall drink the stream by wayside and therefore he shall lift up his head (Ps 110:1-5, 7).[92]

On the other hand, in the text of Genesis, we hear the story of the original Melchizedek. As Abraham returned victorious from war the King of Sodom went out to meet Abraham in the Valley of Shaveh (i.e., the King's Valley). Melchizedek, the King of Salem then brought out bread and wine. He was a priest of God Most High. As he blessed him saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth; and blessed be God the Most High, who has delivered your foes into your hands." Abraham gave him a tenth of everything.

The author skillfully uses two biblical texts to support his argument for the eternal character of the high priesthood of Jesus Christ. His main focus in reinterpreting Genesis 14:17-20 is on the establishment of the superiority Christ's priestly ministry to that of the Jewish Levitical priesthood (Heb 7:1-10).[93] The author introduces Melchizedek as "king of Salem and priest of God Most High," then underlines how Melchizedek blessed Abraham as he returned from war and Abraham gave to Melchizedek a "tenth (i.e., tithe) of everything." Apart from his skills, the author is very sensitive to the very Hebrew origin of the name "Melchizedek" (*Malkkî-tsedēkh*), which means "king of righteousness," or "righteous king." Moreover, "King of Salem," (*Melekh shelēm*) means, "king of peace," which implies that as a righteous king and king of peace, Melchizedek was a type of Christ.[94] He argues from silence that, unlike the Aaronic line of priesthood, Melchizedek had no genealogy; no father, mother nor any ancestral data. Even nothing is

said about his birth and death (Heb 7:1-3). In other words, just like Melchizedek, Christ's priesthood embodies righteousness and peace. It is royal, personal, not inherited, but eternal. Melchizedek tithed Abraham (Gen 14:17-20), underscoring the superiority of Christ's priesthood to that of Aaron (Heb 7:4-10 cf. Num 18:21-24).[95]

Also reinterpreting Psalm 110:4, the author consistently shows where the eternal and superiority of Christ's priesthood lay (Heb 7:11-28). He reinforces the specific quotation, "you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb7:17). And observes that if the Jewish Levitical priesthood was perfect or adequate, God would not have promised a new priesthood (Heb 7:11). A change of priesthood thus implies a change of law (Heb 7:12). Jesus by the virtue of his identity as a King and Messiah obtained his priesthood not according to legal credentials regarding his physical descent, but through the process of the paschal mysteries (suffering, death, life and resurrection), and by the power of life that cannot be destroyed (Heb 7:13-16).[96]

Finally, the eternal priesthood of Christ "is granted by an oath ensuring its permanency (Heb 7:20-22), and attesting to the reality that it is the "ontological" priesthood of the monarch, which in itself is qualitatively different from the "functional" priesthood of the Levites, including the high priest."[97] The priests of the tribe of Levites died (Heb 7:23), but the risen Christ lives on. Christ's priesthood is eternal. Christ intercedes for all of us who approach God through him (Heb 7:24-25). As a victim and priest, his sacrifice is once and for all, since he is holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and higher than the heavens (Heb 7:26-28). The author wants to illustrate the saving works of Christ, his place in heavenly sanctuary, the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34), the efficacy of his sacrificial blood, and the effectiveness of his priestly ministry

(Heb 8–10).[98] Christ for him is a priest of a new kind. He is an inspiration and model for priesthood today, convictions central in theological and pastoral views of our honoree, Bishop Camillus Etokudoh (BE).

Identity of the Catholic Priesthood: BE's Theologico-Pastoral Views (John 17)

In his preaching, writing, leadership and Episcopal pastoral ministry, Bishop Etokudoh has planted his theological imprint on the identity of the priesthood. For him a priest is called to be a man of prayer and a promoter of enduring unity. A priest (ministerial or universal) should model his or her life style after that of Christ, in obedience and patience missionary services. BE articulates his views of the unity aspect of priestly identity in the very choice of his Episcopal Motto of May 14th, 1988, when he was consecrated a Bishop. He embraces "UT OMNES UNUM SINT (THAT ALL MAY BE ONE)," as his Episcopal Motto (John 17). Few years after, BE expanded his views on the same subject, in his 1992 Lenten Pastoral. [99]

He did this because as soon as he took over the pastoral responsibility of the local Church of the Diocese of Ikot Ekpene in 1990, he recognized the challenges of overcoming barriers of disunity in the one priestly family of God's people.[100] BE successfully and ecumenically interprets the "Priestly Prayer" of Jesus in John 17. This text and its appellation "Jesus Priestly Prayer" or "High-priestly Prayer," has a long nourishing history of development, and varied valid forms of interpretation, which this reflection wishes to return to at some point.

In his writings, BE defines the Priestly Prayer of Jesus as that "solemn prayer which Jesus Himself prayed His Father for the unity of all believers before He suffered

and died to save us."[101] BE quotes the prayer in full as follows: "I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me" (John 17:20-23).[102] In this prayer, Jesus, the high priest stresses unity, faith, love and peace. The basis of all these is of course Jesus himself. Causes of disunity are jealousy and envy, commercialization of religion and doctrinal differences.[103]

Remedies include: inter-denominational prayer, change of attitude, dialogue, cooperation and ecumenical activities, within the Catholic Church, which have been threatened so far, by inter-community and inter-personal conflicts. Our desired unity has also been threatened by ethnicism and tribalism in the Church, and by abuse of charisma.[104] In conclusion, BE invokes the priestly identity of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, who wishes that there would be one flock and one shepherd (Jer 23; Ezek 34; John 10:10-16).

This text is, of course, a delight of many exegetes and commentators. Teresa Okure affirms this "Priestly Prayer" as the last and important testament of Jesus. It is so priestly that it is selected for the liturgical context of Chrism Mass, when ordained ministers renew their priestly vows on Holy Thursday, when the Sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist was instituted.[105]

The appellation "High-Priestly Prayer" itself has a long history, the point to which I had promised to return. It is traceable to the Reformation theologian David Chytraeus, who lived from 1531 to 1600. He originally called this passage the *praecatio summi*

sacerdotis.[106] The Patristic Fathers of course see in this text the role of Christ expiating sins and interceding for humanity. Rudolf Butlmann prefers to call the passage "farewell prayer" of Jesus.[107]

An evangelical exegete, Craig S. Keener in his effort to downplay the priestly elements in this text, suggests that prophets and priests can be viewed as intercessors, just as patriarchs would have prayed for their descendants in their reflective speeches and prayers (Gen 49; Deut 32–33). Therefore, the prayer rather reflects the "experience of the Johannine community and says little, if anything about the priestly role of Jesus."[108]

Brown in his classic commentary argues otherwise that the priestly role here is not necessarily in the sense of offering sacrifices, but of the high priest, and one who stand before God's throne interceding for us (Rom 7:34; Heb 5–10).[109] Others who have joined BE, to significantly and substantially comment on the "Priestly Prayer" of Jesus (John 17) include, André Feuillet, Albert Vanhoye, Pope John Paul II, John Paul Heil, Pope Benedict XVI, as well as Gerald O'Collins and Michael Keenan Jones.[110]

Since the scope of this reflection is limited, I reserve extended comments on each of these texts and authors for a future separate reflection. But in the words of Attridge, "scholars who have found priestly allusions in this text are not simply fantasizing" and I would add, including the unity and ecumenical pastoral approach of BE.[111]

Christ made this prayer to God on behalf of his disciples. With respect to God, the prayer is intercessory, and with respect to the disciples, it is hortatory.[112] Christ's disciples, priests (ministerial and universal) must live out the content of this prayer: faith,

peace, love and unity, and obedience service, as stressed by BE in his 1992 *Lenten Pastoral*.

Additionally, anyone who has read BE's "Foreword," in the *Lineamenta* for the First Synod of the Diocese of Ikot Ekpene, would have gathered further insights into his pastoral endeavors, in the shepherding, and shaping of priestly identity today, especially as it pertains to the Church in Africa.[113] His investment in training of priests affirms his beliefs in the pedagogical and teaching role of a priest, since a priest's lips preserve knowledge, and instruction must be sought from his mouth, as God's messenger (Mal 2:7).

For him, Christ should be a model of every priest (ministerial and priestly people), preaching the truth. Christ consecrated himself for us, so that we might also be consecrated in truth (John 17:19). BE intensifies this on December 5th, 2009 during his homily at the Rumuokoro Deneary worship in Port Harcourt Diocese. Commenting on the readings of that day (Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Matt 9:35-10: 1, 6, 8), BE encourages everyone to live a "Christ-like (life) full of love, justice and compassion."[114]

At the installation ceremony of His Grace, Most Rev. Joseph Ekuwem of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Calabar, on June 5, 2013, BE reminds everyone that the title of Bishop or Archbishop is mostly for service and leadership. Bishops must preach the Gospel both in season and out of season. They must correct error but with great patience and teaching/instruction. Priest must also love and obey their Bishops. All are called to love one another including the poor, sick and the needy. The office of the Archbishop

symbolizes the unity between the Local Church and the mystery of the Universal Church, founded by Christ.[115]

Conclusion

The foregoing biblical reflection on the identity of the Catholic priesthood today was not intended to be complete, but an attempt to highlight those scriptural ideals and spiritual antecedents that could inform and nourish the Catholic Priesthood today. Being such a complex subject matter, the Church for decades continues to reflect on it (cf. endnote 2). And its biblical theology has also been confirmed and deepened by the official Magisterium of the Church. It became evidence in the preceding reflection that today's age is that of a supersonic secularism and diminishing sense of the sacred. Under these circumstances priesthood continues to be challenging in terms of its identity, management of time, false sense of entitlement, loneliness, sexuality, priestly fraternity, pastoral availability to those they are called to serve. Challenging to priests today are also ascetic response to human and materialism of this age. Suggested insistently in this essay is the fact that, perhaps, part of today's identity crisis among the contemporary priesthood reflects the signs of the time and the diversified expectations, theological views, definitions, roles, images, discussed functions, duties, extensive and antecedent historical development. Behind this history is the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible and its organized functions of the priesthood. Among these functions are the oracular, teaching/pedagogical and sacrificial. Others so far discussed are ritual purity and blessings of the people. However, the common denominator to all these priestly roles which inform priesthood today, is the fact that priests were mediators; intermediaries between God and believers. The sketch of this OT history serves not just to satisfy our intellectual curiosity, but rather

to note the image and character of the Hebrew priesthood. The underlined functions are also of tremendous assistance to contemporary believers as they strive to deepen and appreciate the Christian priesthood. In other words, although the Christian priesthood is ontological, we cannot completely overlook the distance between the Jewish hope and the Christian fulfilment.

Therefore, the OT historical priestly duties and features re-echo in a renewed and challenging form in the pages of the NT, particularly in First Peter, the Gospels and in the Letter to the Hebrews. In First Peter, it is the entire community of the faithful, the priestly people and the Christian people that the priesthood is ascribed (1 Pet 2:1-10). On the other hand, the gospel narratives present Christ as the "son of David" (Matt 22:42; Mark 12:35 and Luke 20:41). Such presentation confirms the priesthood of Christ as royal, traceable to the house of Judah and not of the Levi. Vatican II, especially through *Lumen Gentium,* elaborates on the teachings of the Council of Trent that every Christian participates in this royal priesthood of Christ. Every Christian shares in Christ's mission as priest, prophet and king, through their baptism and confirmation. But Christ, whom the Father sanctified and sent into this world, has, through his apostles, made their successors sharers in his consecrated mission of the Holy Orders or the ministerial priesthood. These ministerial priests are more than ever called to humbly and selflessly preach the good news in a specific, and authoritative manner to all, especially to the poor of every culture, race and nation, in the name of Christ.

This is consistent with the gospels where Christ is a model of holiness (Luke 1:35; 4:18; Mark 1:24; John 10:36; 17:19), minister and good shepherd (John 10:10-11), sent to the lost house Israel (Matt 15:26), as a servant (Mark 10:45; Matt 20:28). In what

precedes, priesthood developed due to a combination of different ministries: individual and communitarian. Yet, all bear witness to the very life of Christ, in the NT Church. Some of those ministries that have come to shape today's priestly spirituality include the roles and demands of discipleship, apostleship, presbyter-bishop and the Eucharistic presider.

In the Letter to the Hebrews, Christ is the perfect, sympathetic, compassionate and sacrificial high priest (Heb 4:15-16). He loves to mediate between God and the people (Heb 5:1ff). He is holy, innocent, undefiled and higher than the angels and the heavens (Heb 7:26). The priesthood of Christ is of the order of Melchizedek. It embodies righteousness and peace (Heb 7:1-10). As a priest Christ is humble, prayerful, available and approachable. He gives everyone access to God's house (Heb 3:2-6), and fosters unity (John 17). As a victim, he does not complain in his suffering (Heb 7–10). He remains an inspiration and model for priesthood today, convictions central in the theological and pastoral views of BE, our African Bishop.

Finally, the advantages and payoff of this reflection, particularly the discussed pastoral visions of our honoree, Bishop Etokudoh, cannot be overemphasized. I am hopeful that, this modest contribution would further assist priests, and those currently studying for the priesthood to focus on Christ as their model, despite the legitimacy of pluralism, and crises of identity in contemporary priestly services. With this reflection, priests would be able to handle today's challenges, obstacles, frustrations and disappointments that sometime come when life does not seem to be going their way or suit their expectation. It would also help them re-think their roles, character, roles in relations to their bishops, superiors, brother-priests, religious, and families and with the

entire priestly people they were called to serve. Above all it is a reminder to all contemporary priests that it is Jesus Christ to whom they are bearing witness.[116]

Rev. Dr. Michael Ufok Udoekpo (Priest of the Diocese of Ikot Ekpene), is currently an Assistant Professor of Sacred Scripture at Sacred Heart School of Theology, Milwaukee, Wisconsin in the United States of America. Author of several books, including, *Re-thinking the Day of Ylnvh and Restoration of Fortunes in the Prophet Zephaniah: An Exegetical Theological Study of 1:14-18; 3:14-20*. Das Alte Testament im Dialog, An Outline of an Old Testament Dialogue; Bern: Peter Lang, 2010. He writes the blog, "Sharing the Word of God." And his most recent works and reviews have appeared in *Theological Book Review* 24/1 (2012), *TBR*, 25/1(2013), *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 75/1(2013), 75/3(2013); *International Journal of African Catholicism* 4/1(2013), *IJAC* 4/2 (2013). Udoekpo is member of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), Catholic Biblical Association (CBA), College Theology Society (CTS) and Society of Biblical Scholars (SBS). He has served in various administrative and pastoral capacities, both in Ikot Ekpene and in the United States. mudoekpo@shst.edu

[1]Most Rev. Bishop Camillus Etokudoh is a trained diplomat and a graduate of the Papal Academy, Rome. Presently he is the Local Ordinary of Port Harcourt Diocese. He served as the Auxiliary Bishop of Ikot Ekpene from May 14, 1988 till September 1, 1990. Appointed the Successor to His Eminence Dominic Cardinal Ekadem and installed as the Second Bishop of Ikot Ekpene on February 3, 1990. He was transferred to the Diocese of Port Harcourt, in Calabar Ecclesiastical Province of Nigeria, on May 4, 2009. I count myself blessed among the priests of the Diocese of Ikot Ekpene, who worked in various pastoral and administrative capacities, under our honoree, particularly as once his personal secretary.

[2] Some of these studies include: Ernrico dal Cavola, "Summary: Priests like Our Fathers; The Fathers of the Church Teachers of Priestly Formation,"(http://www.annussacerdotalis.org/pls/clerusv3-_s2ew_consultazione.mostra_pagina?id_pa..., accessed 9/22/2013); Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964), no. 28; *Decree on the Ministry and Life Priests Presbyterorum Ordines* (December 7, 1965); *Decree on the Training of Priests Optatam Totius* (October 28, 1965); Decree *on the Up-To-Date Renewal of Religious Life Perfectae Caritatis* (October 28, 1965);

Paul VI, *The Encyclical Letter on the Celibacy of the Priests Sacerdotalis Coelibatus* (June 24, 1967, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_24061967_sacerdotalis_en.html, accessed 9/23/2013); John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Pastores Davo Vobis*(Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice, March 25, 1992); Congregation For The Clergy, *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Vaticano,1994); *idem*, *The Priests and the Third Millennium: Teacher of the Word; Minister of the Sacraments, and Leader of the Community* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1999). Others are; Timothy M. Dolan, *Priests for the Third Millennium* (Huntington; Indiana; Sunday Visitor, 2000); Stephen J. Rossetti, *The Joy of Priesthood* (Foreword; Timothy Dolan, Notre Dame; Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2004); MaryAnne Confoy, *Rediscovering Vatican II: Religious Life and Priesthood; Perfectae Caritatis, Optatam Totius, Presbyterorum Ordinis*(New York: Paulist Press, 2008); David Bohr, *The Diocesan Priest: Consecrated and Sent* (Forward by Timothy M. Dolan, Collegeville; Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2009); Benedict XVI, "Letter of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI Proclaiming A Year For Priests on the 150th Anniversary of the Dies Natalis of the Cure of Ars,"(Rome: Libreria Editrice Vatican, June 16, 2009) ; *idem*., "Homily for Opening of the Year For Priests on the 150th Anniversary of the Death of Saint John Mary Vianney," (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, June 19, 2009); John Cihak, "The Priest As Man, Husband and Father," (http:/www.clerus.org/clerus.dati.2009-10/26-13/The_priest_as.html. Access 9/22/2013); Patricia Mitchell, ed., *Priest's Life: The Calling, The Cost, The Joy* (Prefaced by Edwin F. O"Brien, Ijamville; Maryland: The Word Among Us Press, 2010); Benedict XVI, "Dialogue with Priests: Conclusion of the Year For Priests,"(Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, June 10, 2010); *idem*., "Homily Conclusion of the Year for Priests," (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, June 11, 2010);Congregation For The Clergy, *The Missionary Identity of the Priest in the Church, Circular Letter* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011); *idem*., *The Priests, Minister of Divine Mercy: An Aid for Confessors and Spiritual Directors* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011).

[3] See Jean Galot, *Theology of the Priesthood* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 18-21 for priestly information in the history of other religions other than Judaism and Christianity.

[4] See K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (eds., Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, 1977) and Gary D. Pratico and Milles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew* (Second Edition, Grand Rapids; MI: Zondervan, 2007), 36.

[5] There are several resources that offer extensive information on OT Priesthood but I strongly recommend, Aelred Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood* (Analecta Biblica 35; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1969); Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Life and Its Institutions* (translated by McHugh, Grand Rapids; Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997), 345-357 and John J. Castelot, "Religious Institutions of Israel," in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (eds. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy; New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), 703-735. Though his views are sometimes overstretched, I would also add Theophile James Meek, *Hebrew Origins: The Origins of the Hebrew People, Law, God, Priesthood, Prophecy and Monotheism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 119-147.

[6] In fact this word *Oku* may have occurred in Efik Bible, *Edisana Nwed Abasi Ibom* (Apapa; Nigeria: The Bible Society, 1985) as many times as it occurs in the MT. Efik Bible (*Edisana Nwed Abasi Ibom*) is used by millions of Christians including Bishop Camillus A. Etokudoh, in South Eastern Nigeria of the present day Cross River and Akwa Ibom States.

[7] De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 346 and Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Testament Priest*, 19.

[8] Regarding this texts, the preacher in the Letter Hebrews (Heb 7:1–10) obviously Jewish-Christian, is doing what a Jewish Rabbi might do in the Jewish biblical interpretation through the Middle Ages. In this era, Jewish interpreters always engaged in a close study of biblical texts in its original contexts, in terms of languages and philological traditions. Four methods were also often used (1) *Peshat*, a contextual or literal reading of the text;(2) *Remez*, meaning "hint" or a kind of suggested reading or a type

of non-literal or allegorical analysis of the text; (3) *Darash*, the homiletic or *midrashic* interpretation, and (4) *Sod*, a "secret," mystical analysis of the text. Its counterpart is the Catholic Church's Fathers (eg. Origin, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine) four senses of scripture (literal, allegorical, tropological and anagogical). For more detailed but handy information on this, see The Pontifical Biblical Commission *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Città Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vatican, 1993), 81-104; Stephen J. Binz, *Introduction to the Bible: A Catholic Guide to Studying Scripture* (Collegeville; MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 54-60; Benedict XVI, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010); James Chuckwuma Okoye, *Scripture In the Church: The Synod on the Word of God* (Collegeville; MN: Liturgical Press, 2011) and Marc Zvi Brettler, Peter Enns and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Bible and the Believer: How to Read the Bible Critically and Religiously* (eds., Oxford: University Press, 2012), 7-15.

[9] Every biblical quotation in this study is from The *New American Bible (NAB)* unless otherwise stated.

[10] See Amy-Jill Levine, "The Cultus" in *The Meaning of the Bible: What the Jewish Scripture and Christian Old Testament Can Teach Us* (eds., Douglas A. Knight and Amy Jill Levine; New York: Harper Collins, 2011), 165-66 for full meaning of "*cultus*." From the Latin *cultus* means "adoration" or "care" as one would care for a shrine. It indicates formal forms of worship, namely (a) sacred space such as temples an shrines; (b)rituals such as sacrifices, dietary restrictions, ablutions and (c) religious professionals such as priests and temple singers. See also de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 271. Cult and/or worship "are those acts by which communities or individuals give outward expression to their religious life, by which they seek and achieve contacts with God."

[11] Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest*, 19.

[12] Levine, "Cultus," 176.

[13] Brown, *Priests and Bishop*, 6.

[14] Levine, "Cultus," 176.

[15] John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 143-144.

[16] Brown, *Priests and Bishop*, 7.

[17] Levine, "Cultus," 177.

[18] Ibid.,

[19] Cody, *Priesthood*, 186.

[20] Bohr, *Diocesan Priesthood*, 15. See detail study of this in Cody, *Priesthood*, 108-124.

[21] Galot, *Priesthood*, 21.

[22] Levine "Cultus," 179.

[23] See Cody, *Priesthood*, 134-145, for detailed discussion on the effect of Josiah's reform on the Clergy.

[24] Ibid. See also Castelot, "Religious Institutions of Israel,"707-708.

[25] See Cody, *Priesthood*, 175-190 for a detailed history of the clergy in the actually restored Jewish communality in Palestine after 538BC. Here Cody masterfully discusses the duties and characteristics of the priests and the Levites, the Jewish Priests at the Elephantine Island in Upper Egypt where I had the privilege to visit in the summer of 2006, with colleagues from the Catholic University of America, under the supervision of Professor Michael Weigl, presently of the Institut für Alttestamentliche Bibel Wissenschaft, Catholic Faculty of Theology of the University of Vienna. Cody also discusses the cultic prophets among the Levites, the Levitical Teachers and Preachers and the theological implications of their function which his holiness since the Lord our God is Holy (Exod 19:6).

[26] See Ibid., 709-710 for details of this later history of the priesthood till AD 70

[27] Alfons Maria Cardinal Stickler, *The Case for Clerical Celibacy: Its Historical Development &Theological Foundations* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 106.

[28] Galot, *Priesthood*, 23.

[29] Vanyoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Testament Priest*, 20.

[30] This issue requires a separate reflection, but for a condensed theological response, see Brown, *Priest and Bishop*, 25; Stickler, *Case of Clerical Celibacy*, 228-250.

[31] For resources on this topic, see Sara Butler, *The Catholic Priesthood and Women: A Guide to the Teaching of the Church* (Chicago/Mundelein, IL: Hillenbrand Books, 2007); Galot, *Priesthood*, 251-267.

[32] See Gisbert Greshake, *The Meaning of Christian Priesthood* (Dublin: Four Court Press; Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1988), 1-30 for further insight on "priesthood in crisis."

[33] See Thomas J. McGovern, *Priestly Identity: A Study in the Theology Priesthood* (Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts, 2010) where the Post-Vatican II crisis in the Catholic Priesthood is extensively discussed including its influences: theological, cultural and secularization, and of course the response during the Papacy of Blessed John Paul II; Rossetti, *Joy of the Priesthood*, 13–21.

[34] Cody, *Priesthood*, 29.

[35] These were of course regarded as cultic instrument kept in the sanctuary or close to the Ark (1 Sam 2:18; 2 Sam 6:14).

[36] See Vanyohe, *Old Testament Priests and the New Testament Priest*, 21.

[37] See de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 349-353; Brown, *Priest and Bishop*, 10.

[38] Rossetti, *Joy of the Priesthood*, 35–47.

[39] John Paul II, *PDV*, no. 46; McGovern, *Priestly Identity*, 23–24.

[40] Brown, *Priest and Bishop*, 10.

[41] de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 353.

[42] These laws could be sum up as the "Covenant Code," (Exod 20:22–23:33), the "Deuteronomic Code" (Deut 12:1–26:15), and the "Holiness Code" (Leviticus 17–26). Of course in ancient Israel laws were constantly updated and innovated. For details see, Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford Press, 1997); Jean-Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 40-52.

[43] See the implication of this shepherd motif in Ignatius M. C. Obinwa, *"I shall Feed Them with Good Pasture: (Ezek 34:14): The Shepherd Motif in Ezekiel 34: Its Theological Import and Socio-political Implications* (Forschung zur bible/25; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2012), reviewed by Udoekpo, in *CBQ* 75/3(2013), 561-63.

[44] B. Onoriodẹ Bọlọjẹ, "On Priestly Pedagogical Responsibility in Malachi: Malachi 2:4-9 in the Context of Malachi 1:6–2:9," in *BOTSA Electronic Forum* (2013-09-09, http://www.mhs.no/?93 accessed 9/29/2013).

[45] For example, The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Program of Priestly Formation* (Fifth Edition; Washington DC: 2006).

[46] Brown, *Priests and Bishop*, 12.

[47] Vatican II, *PO*, nos 4-6.

[48] Ibid, n. 4; McGovern, *Priestly Identity*, 53.

[49] Cody, *Priesthood*, 12, Brown, *Priests and Bishops*, 12-13 and de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 355-356.

[50] Cody, *Priesthood*, 12.

[51] Ibid.

[52] de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 356.

[53] Vatican II, *PO*, n.12; McGovern, *Priestly Identity*, 56.

[54] Rossetti, *Joy of the Priesthood*, 148.

[55] Galot, *Priesthood*, 23.

[56] See Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Testament Priest*, 3. However these antecedent's roles will soon be developed in the course of this essay.

[57] See Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Testament Priest*, 8-18 and 63-64 where the following terminologies broadly occur, but denote priests, priesthood and their functions in the NT: Priest, *hiereus* is used in Matthew (3x), Mark (2x), Luke (5x), John (1 x), Acts of the Apostles (3x), Pauline Epistles (none), Heb (14x) 1 Pet (none), Rev (3x); high priests, *archiereus* in Matt (25x), Mark (22 x), Luke(15 x), John (21 x) Acts (22 x), Pauline Epistles (none), Heb (17x), 1 Pet (none), Rev (3x); high-priestly, *archeratikos* in the Synoptic (none), Acts (1 x), Heb (none)' Priesthood, *hierosyne* in the Synoptic, Acts and Pauline Epistles (none), Heb (3 x), 1 Pet and Rev (none); Priesthood (priestly service), *hierateia* in Matt and Mark (none), Luke (1x), John, Acts and Paul (none), Heb (1x) and none in 1 Pet and Rev. And *hierateuma* (priesthood) in the Synoptic, John, Acts, Paul and Heb(none), 1 Pet (2x) and Rev (none). The infinitive *hierateuein* (to exercise priesthood) in Matt and Mark (none), Luke (1x) and none in Acts, Paul, Heb, 1 Pet and Rev. And to perform sacred action, *hierougein*, in the synoptic, John and Acts (none), Pauline Epistles (1x) and none in Heb, 1 Pet and Rev. In all these it is only about 7 x in Heb are the terms priest, *hiereus* applied to Christ or to Christians, 3x in Rev; high priests *archierus* 10x in Heb, *hierosyne* (priesthood) 1x in Heb, *hierateuma* (priesthood) 2 x in 1 Pet and *hierourgein* (to perform a sacred action) 1 x in Pauline Epistles. See also Bohr, *Diocesan Priest*, 17.

[58] For Brown this may of course be an oversimplification, see *Priests and Bishop*, 16.

[59] Ibid., 17.

[60] See Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priests*, 261 where Luther's works are also extensively cited.

[61] For the scope of this essay I will comment only 1 Peter 2:5, 9. For brilliant comments on other NT texts (Revelation, 1 Corinthians, Romans, Philippians etc) on the Universal priesthood see, Jean Galot, *The Theology of the Priesthood* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 105, 109-127.

[62] J. H. Elliot, *The Elect and the Holy* (Supplement to Novum Testamentum XII; Leiden: Brill, 1966). See also Brown, *Priest and Bishop*, 14.

[63] See Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests, and the New Priest*, 261.

[64] Ibid., 261

[65] Brown, *Priests and Bishop*, 14-15.

[66] Galot, *Priesthood,* 106.

[67] Ibid., 107.

[68] Ibid.,108.

[69] Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, n.10.

[70] Cf. Council of Trent, 23rd Session the Sacrament or Order, Chapter 1(DS 1764) See also Galot, *Priesthood*, 129-135 where the functions of the priesthood are listed as: sacrificial, proclamation and leadership.

[71] Vatican II, *LG*, n.28.

[72] John Paul II, *PDV*, n.18

[73] For futher detailed studies and resources on the "priestly people," or "priesthood of the faithful," see Collin Bulley, *The Priesthood of Some Believers: Developments from General to Special Priesthood in the Christian Literature of the First Three Centuries* (Foreword., David F. Wright; UK: Paternoster Press, 200); Paul J. Philibert, *The Priesthood of the Faithful: Key to a Living Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005). Cf. Galot, *Priesthood*, 105-128.

[74] Ibid., 21-26. See also K. H. Schelke, *Discipleship and Priesthood* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965).

[75] Benedict XVI, General Audience, March 15, 2006, in *The Apostles: The Origins of the Church and Their Co-Workers* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 2007), 11-12. See also Bohr, *Diocesan Priests*, 23.

[76] See Brown, *Priests and Bishop*, 27.

[77] Ibid., 27

[78] Benedict XVI, General Audience, March 15, 2005, in *The Apostles: The Origins of the Church*, 14.

[79] Greshake, *Meaning of Christian Priesthood,* 45. See also Bohr, *Diocesan Priest*, 25.

[80] Brown, *Priests and Bishop*, 34.

[81] In fact for a reasonable history of the development of priestly ministry see Bohr, *Diocesan Priest*, 33-66; Brown, *Priests and Bishop*, 38-40.

[82] In addition to extant extensive teachings of the Church and the role of the priests in Eucharistic celebration, especially with the new translation of the Roman Rite, see Michael Ufok Udoekpo, "Liturgy as the Primary Role of the Priest" in *Reconciliation and Renewal of Services in the Church, Lineamenta For the First synod of the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene* (Uyo, Nigeria: Trinity Press, 2002), 83-94.

[83] See this other title too, from Albert Vanhoye, *A Different Priest: The Epistle to the Hebrews* (translated by Leo Arnold; Series Rhetorica Semitica, Miami: Convivum Press, 2011).

[84] Bohr, *Diocesan Priest*, 17; Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Testament Priest*, 67.

[85] Daniel Harrington, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (New Collegeville Bible Commentary; Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2006), 5.

[86] Vanhoye, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (subsidia biblica 12; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989), 5.

[87] Galot, *Priesthood,* 31.

[88] Harrington, *Hebrews*, 6.

[89] Ibid.,25.

[90] Ibid., 26.

[91] Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest*, 151.

[92] Cf. *Christian Prayer: The Liturgy of the Hours* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1976), 862.

[93] Harrington, *Hebrews*, 32; Bohr, *Diocesan Priesthood*, 18.

[94] Harrington, *Hebrews,* 32.

[95] See D. W. Rooke, "Jesus as Royal Priest: Reflections on the Interpretation of the Melchizedek Tradition in Heb 7," *Biblica* 81 (2000), 81-82.

[96]See Harrington, *Hebrews*, 35-36; Bohr, *Diocesan Priesthood*, 19; Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest*, 160-162.

[97] Bohr, *Diocesan Priesthood*, 19.

[98] For additional insight into sacrifice in the NT particularly Christ sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews see Camillus Umoh, "Sacrifice and Reconciliation in the New Testament and Christian History: Impulses for Interreligious Dialogue": A Paper Presented at AECAWA Interreligious Dialogue Commission, 12–15 November, 2007, Abuja (http://www.recowa.rg/inter-religious-com/Aecawa-2007b.htm. accessed 10/6/2013).

[99] Camillus A. Etokudoh, *Jesus Priestly Prayer: That They May Be One* (Ikot Ekpene, Nigeria: 1992), 6.

[100] Ibid., 6.

[101] Ibid.,7.

[102] Ibid.,8.

[103] Ibid.,14.

[104] Ibid., 24.

[105] Teresa Okure, "John" in *The International Bible Commentary* (ed. William R. Farmer; Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 198), 1492.

[106] Harold W. Attridge, "How Priestly is the "High Priestly Prayer" of John 17?" *CBQ* 75 (2013), 1.

[107] Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray; Philadelphia: Westminster; Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 486-89.

[108] Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2003) 2:1051.

[109] Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (2 vols; AB 29, 29A; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966/70)2:742; Attridge, "Priestly Prayer," 2.

[110] André Feuillet, *The Priesthood of Christ and His Ministers* (Trans., Matthew J. O'Connell; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1975); Vanhoye, Prêtres anciens, prêtre nouveau selon le Nouveau Testament (Parole de Deiu; Paris : Seuil, 1980); Galot, *Priesthood*, 39-40;Pope John Paul II, Pope John Paul II, *The Encyclical Letter, Ut Unum Sint : That All May be One* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995); John Paul Heil, "Jesus as the Unique High Priest in John," *CBQ* 57 (1995), 729-45; Walter Kasper, *That they May all be One* (New York: Burns &Oates, Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (New York: Doubleday, 2007, 138.144, 209; Gerald O'Collins and Michael Keenan Jones, *Jesus Our Priests : A Christian Approach to the Priesthood of Christ* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2010). See also Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth, Part Two, Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011).

[111] Attridge, "Priestly Prayer," 11.

[112] Okure, "John," 1493.

[113] Etokudoh, "Foreword," in *Reconciliation and Renewal of Services in the Church, Lineamenta for the First Synod Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene* (Uyo, Nigeria: Trinity Press, 2002), iii-v.

[114]See National News, "Rumuokoro Deanery Hosts Bishop Etokudoh," (http://www.ahiaradiocese.org/naionews73.htm, accessed 9/21/2013).

[115] See Newsonline, "Love, Patience, and Obedience; Essential for Mission of the Church- Bishop Etokudoh" (http://www.cnsng.org/viewnews.php?tabnews=797, accessed 9/21/2013).

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