

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

A Program for Enhancing Awareness among Seminarians in Nigeria about the
Implications of Sexual Abuse of Children and Young People

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of the
School of Theology and Religious Studies
Of The Catholic University of America
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

By
Raphael Iwuchukwu Asika

Washington, DC

2010

A Program for Enhancing Awareness among Seminarians in Nigeria about the
Implications of Sexual Abuse of Children and Young People

Raphael Asika, MSP, D.Min

Director: Donald J. Heet, O.S.F.S., D.Min.

Anxiety and apprehension are part of the emotional mix that missionaries go through when they are assigned to cultures alien to their own. Problems associated with culture shock and transitions into alien cultures by new missionaries are as a result of fear, ignorance of the local culture, and lack of preparation. Therefore orientations and sensitivity trainings are usually organized for immigrant missionaries going into new cultures. This is true of Missionaries of St Paul (MSP) working in the United States and other countries. In 2002, however, the pastoral ministry landscape in the United States changed dramatically because of the sex abuse scandal that rocked the Church. As a result, the Catholic bishops of the United States introduced the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* which contained radical measures that changed the way priests and other pastoral agents understood and carried out their ministry. The Charter has policies and measures that are meant to protect children and young people from sexual abuse by priests or pastoral agents. It has important implications for missionary priests from other cultures working in the United States.

This project was to raise awareness among MSP seminarians in Nigeria about the implications of the Charter. Nigeria has diverse cultures with diverse attitudes towards sex and sexuality. Proper understanding of sexuality and awareness of sexual differences among cultures is necessary for proper integration and appreciation of one's own sexuality.

This project was to prepare seminarians for a more effective pastoral ministry in the United States and elsewhere in the light of the new reality of ministry.

The project ran for five weeks, featuring lectures, group discussions and reflections, a video presentation, and feedbacks. There was a pre and post-questionnaire to measure the overall assessment of the project. There were twelve participants.

Within the past year, sexuality and celibacy course has been introduced as part of the curriculum of the National Missionary Seminary of St Paul, Nigeria, as a result of this project. In this regard, the project has achieved its major objective.

This dissertation by Raphael I. Asika, M.S.P., fulfills the dissertation requirements for the doctoral degree in Doctor of Ministry approved by Donald J. Heet, O.S.F.S., D. Min. as Director, John Ford, C.S.C., STD, and Raymond Studzinski, O.S.B., PhD, as readers.

Donald J. Heet, D.Min, Director

John Ford, STD., Reader

Raymond Studzinski, PhD, Reader

Dedication

I dedicate this project to my parents, Mr. & Mrs. Denis and Josephine Asika, who first gave me life through their fruitfulness.

TABE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	v
PART I. A DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION THAT PROMPTED THE PROJE	
Chapter 1. Sexuality in the Nigerian Culture	1
Chapter 2. Sexuality in America as Seen Through Nigerian Eyes	17
PART II. THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL FOUNDATION OF THE PROJECT	
Chapter 1. Sexuality in Catholic Tradition	25
Chapter 2. Practical Boundary Issues Involved in Ministry	29
Chapter 3. Pastoral Implications of the <i>Charter</i>	38
PART III. OVERALL THEORETICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT	
Chapter 1. Project Purpose, Design and Implementation	53
PART IV. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT AS IT ACTUALLY OCCURED	
(Group Discussions and Responses)	60
PART V. EVALUATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO MINISTRY	118
QUESTIONNAIRE / CHARTS	132
BIBLIOGRAPHY	137

PREFACE

“The whole work of priestly formation would be deprived of its necessary foundation if it lacked a suitable human formation”¹

The sexual scandal that exploded in the Catholic Church in the United States in 2002 sent shock waves across the world. Research shows the enormous damage done to victims of sexual abuse by clergy and Church personnel. There is also increased fear and apprehension within dioceses and religious communities because of the high rate of lawsuits resulting from these abuses. The Church has also suffered great damage to its moral and spiritual authority and credibility. The recent sexual abuse revelations in Ireland, Germany, Netherlands, and other European countries have further damaged the Church’s moral and spiritual force in the world. The scandal has raised the issue of how seminaries adequately prepare candidates for the priesthood for the new reality of the pastoral ministry. Having served in a leadership position of my religious community in the United States, and now, at the General Council level of the community, I have firsthand experience of the yearning of priests of the Missionary Society of St Paul (MSP) for a thorough orientation in sexual cultural sensitivity. They have to deal with fear and confusion concerning sexual issues and professional boundaries in cultures that are vastly different from their own, with different understandings of sexual mores and vastly more openness to discussions about sex and sexuality. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) is urging dioceses and religious communities in Nigeria to become

¹ John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (London: Catholic Truth Society Publications, 2006), no 43.

proactive in the face of new realities in ministry. The CBCN document, *Called to Love:*

Ethical Standards for Clergy and Seminarians in Nigeria, notes that:

the scandals of sexual abuse by some priests and bishops in Europe and America have forced us to examine more critically the reality of our own situation within the Church in Nigeria... We commit ourselves...to a more responsible, more proactive leadership in all matters concerning cases of alleged sexual abuse by the Church ministers.²

Becoming proactive involves educating seminarians about sex and sexual issues.

However, Nigerian Society is comprised of over 300 tribal and ethnic groups.

Consequently there is a rich diversity of tribal and ethnic cultural practices and behaviors.

These cultures and their socialization processes are highly patriarchal, secretive, and sensitive about sex and sexuality, and have widely divergent views about what constitutes normal sexual behaviors. The different belief systems conflict, if not contradict, one another. Seminarians come from these diverse tribal and ethnic cultural backgrounds.

Because of the sensitivity of Nigerians and the culture of silence regarding sex, seminary formation has done a poor job in sexuality training for seminarians. Celibacy is seen as one of the rules of the Church to be obeyed, not a theological truth to be taught and embraced.

This project in ministry is prompted by a desire to raise the level of awareness about sex and sexuality issues as an important component of seminary formation in Nigeria. The seminar that is the core of the project is designed to help seminarians in formation to engage this issue in an open and respectable manner. It will also help them to broaden their understanding about this issue so as to avoid sexual pitfalls. The seminar will help seminarians to begin to peel off some layers of cultural beliefs and behaviors inherent in

² Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, *Called to Love: Ethical Standards for Clergy and Seminarians in Nigeria*, (Abuja: Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, 2006), viii-ix

their cultural backgrounds and social upbringing which run contrary to morally acceptable behavior and to raise awareness about acceptable and unacceptable behaviors needed in our major missions where sexuality awareness is required. Like other seminarians in other parts of the world, candidates for the priesthood in the Missionary Society of St Paul of Nigeria need to be equipped with the knowledge they need to maintain appropriate boundaries when dealing with minors and others in pastoral relationship in their own culture as well as the cultures to which they may be sent.

Events that Highlighted the Urgent Need for This Project

While I was contemplating this project in late 2007, a series of sexual scandals hit the Missionary Society of St of Nigeria in quick succession. It was a year the Missionaries of St Paul would not forget in a hurry. One of our priests, a prison chaplain, was accused of sexual misconduct in a federal prison facility in the U.S. where he worked. A Nigerian News tabloid, *The Sun*, had picked up the story and splashed it on its front page, something the Nigerian public was not used to. The news was also widely circulated over the internet in the United States and around the world. The MSP priest was put on trial. Three months later, he was sentenced to four years imprisonment for the rape of two female prison inmates. While we were still dealing with the scandal involving this priest in the United States, another sex scandal broke out in Nigeria involving another priest of the community with a female friend. This too was a tabloid event. Within the same period, another was arrested in the United States for solicitation, although he was later acquitted. These incidents happened in quick succession, and caught the Missionary Society of Paul unprepared. The Nigerian Church was unnerved by these scandals.

Priests and seminarians of the Missionary Society of St Paul of Nigeria felt a range of emotions in the face of the sexual scandals involving three members of the community. It is important that MSP members become consciously aware of these feelings and emotions in themselves and assess what they heard or felt from the wider community of the Missionary Society of Paul priests and seminarians. The sad events touched a sore nerve within the community and have indeed highlighted the urgent need for this project.

Acknowledgement

I thank my religious community, the Missionaries of St Paul, for the bond of love that we share. I am deeply appreciative of the generous and prayerful support of the superior general, Fr Anselm Umoren, the vicar general, Fr. Paul Ofoha, and my fellow council members, Fr. Samson Igbafe and Fr. Anthony Ekanem.

Without the support, prayers, and the encouragement of family and friends, I might not have completed this study. I thank them for their belief in me. May the good Lord reward them with every good blessing!

I owe a debt of gratitude to my professors at the Catholic University of America (CUA), especially my Director, Fr Donald Heet, who showed uncommon knowledge and dedication, and to my readers, Fathers John Ford and Raymond Studzinski for their patience and advice in going through the manuscript.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

PART I: A DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION THAT PROMPTED THE PROJECT

Chapter 1: Understanding Sexuality in Nigerian Cultures

A properly understood sexual education leads to understanding and realizing the truth about human love. We need to be aware that there is a widespread social and cultural atmosphere which largely reduces human sexuality to the level of something commonplace, since it interprets and lives it in a reductive and impoverished way by linking it solely with the body and with selfish pleasure. Sometimes the very family situations in which priestly vocations arise will display not a few weaknesses and at times even serious failings. In such context, an education in sexuality becomes more difficult but also more urgent. It should be truly and fully personal and therefore should present chastity in a manner that shows appreciation and love for it as a virtue that develops in a person's authentic maturity and makes him or her capable of respecting and fostering the 'nuptial meaning' of the body.¹

Introduction

Formal sexuality education in Nigeria is still in its infancy. Those who have written about sex and sexuality education in Nigeria have written mostly from a cultural point of view. The writings are largely from the point of view of tribal practices, customs, and behaviors about sex and sexuality. They have also emphasized the interplay of power relations, the education of the young on the consequences of early sex, and the historical and generational changes in attitudes concerning sexuality. Consequently, sexuality education in Nigeria has yet to embrace the psycho-analytical study of psychosexual development which helps one to understand a fully integrated personality. Pope John Paul II said: "The whole work of priestly formation would be deprived of a necessary

¹ John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (London: Catholic Truth Society Publications, 2005), 44.

foundation if it lacked a suitable human formation.”² Proper instruction in sexuality is part of the necessary human formation needed in today’s priestly formation. There is a paucity of materials on sexuality published in Nigeria as well as scholarly studies in every aspect of sexuality. This is confirmed by a group of scholars who wrote articles about sexuality in Nigeria for *The Continuum Complete International Encyclopedia of Sexuality*.³ They confessed that, “there is no sexological organization or publication in Nigeria; nor is there any basic research unless it has practical health applications that address the major health issues facing our nation.”⁴ I think it will be correct to say that what we have in Nigeria is the sociological study of sex and sexuality, not the psychological study of sexuality. I have yet to come across any scholarly research that deals with psychosexual disorders and dysfunctions, sex addictions, and sex abuse of children as a societal problem, even though these cases are prevalent in the larger society. Although some situations of sexual attitudes and behaviors have seemed abnormal, they weren’t regarded as sexual abuse or exploitation of women and children because of lack of knowledge or awareness. Usually, when one encounters them or hears somebody share their story, one feels helpless, because the larger society hardly shows any concern. There are also no professionals making any appreciable impact in raising our collective awareness in this area in the larger culture. Worse still, in places where one finds such behaviors and practices like genital mutilations, arranged marriages for underage children, or even rape,

² John Paul II *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 43

³ Francoeur E Roberts and Raymond J. Noonan, eds., *The Continuum Complete International Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, vol. I-IV, (New York: Continuum Publishing Company 1997-2004), s.v. “Nigeria.” Hereafter, this source will be referred as *Encyclopedia of Sexuality*.

⁴Ibid.

such cases of sexual abuse or exploitation are usually not seen as such, and are never challenged. They are regarded as culturally acceptable. They are not seen as societal problems. Nigerian Catholics must come to accept the truth that not everything that they see as “our cultural practices” are morally right. The gospel must begin to liberate, refine, and redeem persons and cultures.

Demographic Perspective

In an article in *Re-Thinking Sexuality in Africa*, Jo Helle Valle, who worked for many years as social anthropologist in Botswana, asked whether “it [is] at all reasonable to speak of an African sexuality?” Valle answered the question:

My position is somewhere in-between; on the one hand there seem to be certain aspects of sexual practices and ideology that are widely shared among Africans...but on the other hand we also find such diversity that simple and conclusive statements...must by necessity be oversimplification and essentialisation.⁵

Valle is right. His statement holds equally true for the situation in Nigeria. To understand the sexual attitudes, customs and behaviors in Nigeria, one must be aware of the huge tribal, ethnic, and religious diversity that exists within its demographic entity. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with a population of 149 million people. There are over 250 distinct ethnic and tribal groups. However, there are four major tribes that dominate the political space. They are: Hausa-Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo (Ibo) 18%

⁵ Arnfred, Signe, ed. *Re-Thinking Sexualities in Africa* (Uppsala: Nordic African Institute Press, 2004), 195

and the Ijaw 10%.⁶ Nigeria has two major religions: Islam and Christianity. Moslems make up an estimated 50% and live mainly in the north, while Christians make up an estimated 40% and are concentrated mostly in the south. The other 10% is distributed among the indigenous religions and other faiths, and their numbers are evenly distributed across the country.⁷ The differences and peculiarities in sexuality of each of the Nigerian ethnic groups can be experienced within the different cultural and social contexts such as initiation rites, gender roles, marriage and naming ceremonies, but also in “dialect, greeting, history... poetry, and proverbs.”⁸ Despite the rich diversity of tribal, ethnic and religious differences which give rise to the multicultural practices and behaviors, there are certain cultural traits that are still common to all. These are as follows: the powerful role of religion and culture, the secretiveness with which sexuality is treated, the inestimable value of virginity and sexual purity, and sexual bias against women.

The role of religion and culture

Nigerians are deeply religious and a deeply traditional people. Religion and culture are interrelated, and both play very powerful roles in people’s lives. Some would even argue that religion has, in some cases, subsumed the local culture itself. One writer, Bilkisu Yusuf, makes the point when he wrote that, “Hausa culture today is predominantly Islamic,

⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, “Africa: Nigeria,” *The World Factbook* (June 2009).
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html> (accessed June 20, 2009).

⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, “Africa: Nigeria” *The Worldfactbook* (June 2009); available at:
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-factbook/geos/ni.html> (June 20, 2009).

⁸ Akeem, A. Akinwale, “Manifestation of Human Sexuality and its Relevance to Secondary Schools in Nigeria,” *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 1 (May 2009).

making it difficult to distinguish tribal Hausa cultural norms from Islamic injunction.”⁹ In the Christian south, however, religion can be said to have assumed some of the cultural traits as a result of the natural process of inculturation. There are no notable differences between the views of Catholics and Protestants on sexuality in the Christian south of Nigeria. This intermingling of religion and culture is going on all the time, and they ultimately shape peoples’ beliefs and practices on sexuality. There are examples to illustrate how this scenario plays out. Marriage is one such example. Marriage practices differ widely between the mostly Moslem north of Nigeria and the mostly Christian south of Nigeria. While polygamy is the norm in the Moslem north, and a source of pride; monogamy is the norm in the mostly Christian south and a source of pride too. Islam allows polygamy while Christianity disallows it. Arranged marriages and the marriage of minors present another good example of how culture and religion play a powerful role in shaping people’s beliefs and behaviors about sexuality. While arranged marriages and marriages of underage girls are quite prevalent in the Moslem north, it is rather rare in the Christian south. This is because Islam allows and promotes early marriage. The *Qur’an* allows the marriage of girls who have not started menstruation (*Qur’an Suratul Talaq*, verse 4). This injunction has been interpreted widely to include girls as young as 7, 8 or 9 years old.¹⁰ Dr. Yusuf goes on to say,

Arranged marriages were and are still common among the Hausa. In the past some marriages were even arranged through pledges made by the parents while their children were still toddlers. It is also common among the educated elite and royalty to arrange their children’s marriages.¹¹

⁹ *Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, s.v. “Nigeria.”

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Hausa Moslems believe that early marriage restrains adolescent sexuality. In other words, they believe that marrying off girls of these tender young ages will help check teenage promiscuity. The issue of informed consent does not even arise. Conversely, in the predominantly Christian Igbo (Ibo) of eastern Nigeria, there still exists a caste system whereby the *freeborn* discriminate against the so-called *Osu* (those who are said to be under the protection of the Osu god) and *Ume* (those who are said to be under the protection of the Ume goddess) on marriage issues.

Sexuality as Secretive

In Nigerian's many cultures, sexuality is synonymous with secrecy. Most parents are not comfortable with discussing matters of sexuality with their children and will resist any attempt by others to give sexuality information to their children. Most people are products of their own culture and religion. They themselves have not been exposed to sex education or sexuality issues because the culture promotes secrecy as a societal value. Parents and religious leaders also believe that discussing or exposing their children to sexual issues would encourage them to engage in sexual immorality. However, Umem Edimo Esiet points out quite correctly that: "While sexuality is not openly discussed in Nigerian life, it is an underlying activity that is commonly displayed at publicly celebrated festivals. In most tribal cultures, dance dramas convey sexual values and attitudes as well as other more general messages...folk tales and drama are used to depict specific tribal sexual values and

¹¹ *Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, s.v. Nigeria

expectations.”¹² The result of the initial questionnaire that I gave to the participants at the beginning of my project showed that 10 out of 12 participants responded that they had no sexual education of any kind growing up. One participant was not sure (see questionnaire, fig. 1). However, different ethnic and tribal groups have had traditional subliminal ways of educating children on sexuality. These include rite of passage ceremonies where the youth is tutored about manhood and womanhood as the community understands it. These rites and ceremonies are purely biological and culture specific.¹³ They have also served to perpetuate the political, economical, cultural, ideological, and social construct of the ethnic or tribal group.¹⁴ Adepoju also believes that the lack of communication has “remained a great constraint against effective implementation of sexuality education in Nigeria because free, open and relaxed communication about sexual topics between adults and the youth...have been left only to specific occasions such as traditional initiation ceremonies.”¹⁵

Different tribal and ethnic groups have developed different ways of avoiding public discourse on sexuality. Among the Yoruba, open discussion about sexuality is regarded as a taboo. The attitude towards sex is negative. Sexual knowledge is acquired through storytelling myths and from peers. In recent times though, television, films, romantic novels, magazines, and newspapers have become sources of information on sex and sexuality. Among the Hausa ethnic group, sexuality connotes negativity: “If a single girl

¹² *Encyclopedia of Sexuality: Nigeria*, s.v. “Nigeria.”

¹³ Adepoju Adunola, “Sexuality Education in Nigeria: Evolution, Challenges, and Prospects,” *Understanding Human Sexuality Series* 3, (March 2005): 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 12

starts menstruating in her father's house, she is quickly given off in marriage to any available man...Menstruation prior to marriage is regarded as bad omen"¹⁶...“Sexual coitus is also frowned on; sexual intercourse usually occurs in the dark. The man indicates his readiness to penetrate by clearing his voice. This tells the wife to position herself. The woman always remains clothed...At the end of intercourse both partners have a ritual bath.”¹⁷ Parents never discuss sexual issues with their children. These matters are left to the teachers in Qur’anic schools, who teach religious injunctions that do not go “beyond the rituals, purification baths, marriage, and divorce.”¹⁸ Part of group socialization is to keep girls and boys apart at all times, unless they are family members. In the Igbo (Ibo) ethnic group knowledge about sex is “accidentally picked up, mostly from peers.”¹⁹ There is no formal sexuality education. Open discussion of sex is regarded as vulgar and dirty. Sexuality talk is something reserved for adults. Igbo parents emphasize avoidance of discussions that border on sexual matters. The idea of a boy having a girlfriend is highly frowned upon. Again, in recent years, television, romance novels, films and magazines have become ready sources of information about sex. A nun of Igbo extraction told this writer that she found out about the birth process only when she came to the convent at twenty. At her first menstruation, her mother simply told her not to allow any man to “touch” her, otherwise she would become pregnant. She took it that a woman becomes pregnant from a mere “touch” by a man. On my own I almost passed out the first time I

¹⁶ *Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, s.v. “Nigeria.”

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

watched “Deliver me,” a program on Discovery Health channel. I was flabbergasted. This was a live birth delivery on TV. It was part of my cultural shock. I could not fathom how live delivery could be aired on TV. It was very difficult to look at. The feeling came from my background, that these things are sacred and never to be talked about, much less shown on television.

Among the small ethnic groups of the Tiv, Idoma and Isala, which are closely related and share the same geo-political space, sexuality information is learned from peers, storytelling and cultural practices. Open discussion about sex is discouraged but there is a tacit cultural approval for young people to learn by experimenting with intercourse.²⁰

Nigerians, in general regard the Tiv, Idoma and Isala tribes as quite liberal about sexual issues. Incidentally, the rate of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria is highest among these three ethnic groups. Among the Efik and Ibibio ethnic groups, children learn about sexuality by eavesdropping on adult conversation and through peers and some older adult family members.²¹ Open discussion of sex and sexuality is regarded as a taboo.

In recent years, the print media, television, films, and other printed materials have become sources of information on sexuality for the younger people. Generally, the educated class tends to be more open to issues of sexuality than the less educated. In contrast, religious leaders are more circumspect regarding open discussion about sexual issues. Where they teach, their teachings are limited to the religious injunctions. Urbanization, mobility, and the advent of internet is beginning to demystify sex and sexuality issues in today’s Nigeria. It is not unusual to hear boys talk about their girl

²⁰ *Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, s.v. “Nigeria.”

²¹ *Ibid.*

friends or girls talk about their boyfriends, something totally unheard of before.

Nigerians are also witnessing something new within the last several years. A tabloid newspaper, *The Sun*, was launched by a savvy and wealthy businessman/politician. It promised to serve a menu of human interest stories to its readers. It has not disappointed. Everyday, the tabloid is awash with all kinds of sex stories of actors and actresses in Nollywood (the Nigerian version of Hollywood), and other celebrity personalities and university students—just the stuff that goes on everyday with human relationships in the fabric of society. *The Sun* is widely read, and flies off the newsstand. It is bringing into the open issues that were hitherto in the closet. The tabloid phenomenon is helping to break down many age-old cultural barriers and inhibitions with regard to sex and sexuality. However, this is happening only within the urban areas. It is important to note that *The Sun* is simply an entertainment newspaper, stoking the dark and primordial sexual instincts of Nigerians. There is an observable increase in early sexual activity among secondary school and university students. Some studies have linked the increased behaviors to the “effect of the media that glamorize sex, and increasing weakness of traditional control of the family system in Nigeria.”²² The rural countryside still has those barriers and inhibitions firmly in place. However, it is important to note here that the popularity of increased sexual activity does not indicate a high level of awareness of human sexuality. The consequences of this situation can be noticed in the increased level of teenage pregnancy, the high rate of school drop out, the rise in gang related rapes, and, of course, the increased rate of sexually transmitted disease, including HIV/AIDS and teenage abortion deaths.

²² Ademola J. Ajuwon, “Benefits of Sexuality Education for Young People in Nigeria,” *Understanding Human Sexuality Series* 3, (March 2005): 7.

Virginity as a Requirement for Sexual Purity

The underlining factor behind the secretiveness surrounding sex and sexuality in Nigerian culture is the requirement for sexual purity especially among the female population of the society. The rite-of-passage ceremonies, initiation rites, clan and ethnic festivals are observed every year in many cultures to promote and inculcate the values of sexual purity into the younger generation. Some cultures carry out virginity tests after marriage. There are two broad reasons for the virginity requirement in traditional society. One is moral and the second is spiritual. On the moral level, the Nigerian traditional society is a highly value-oriented system. Traditional values are passed on from generation to generation. The value system is highly regulated too. In this system, sexual indiscretion is regarded as a sign of moral decay and debasement within the system. The primary targets of sexual purity are women. Women are regarded as the symbols and signposts of a community's level of health and purity – the bellwether, as it were. The obvious signs of a community's sexual impurity are first manifest among the women-folk: unplanned pregnancies, rape and abortions; of course, it is easier to detect a woman's *un*-virginity than that of a man. The family and the upbringing of children also lie within the domain of women, so they are regarded as the guardians of morality. Any unraveling of the sexual mores on the part of women may spell doom for the entire community, it is believed. The traditional cultures also believe that women, by their biology, “are more vulnerable to sexual related disease

than men.”²³ Most cultures therefore stipulate virginity for girls while boys are left to “try things out for themselves.” Secondly, sexual purity is hinged on its sacredness and the social and spiritual consequences one may suffer if it is not properly used. Of course, the proper use of sexuality lies within the confines of marriage. There is a widespread cultural and

traditional belief...that some who have sex with the ‘wrong woman’ may die spiritually for life. This explains why traditional magicians and medicine men always abstain from sex whenever they are preparing some specific magic or medicine of high spiritual potency. At the time they are undergoing some ritual and religious purification, they abstain totally from sex.²⁴

There are other consequences attached to sex when performed outside the prescribed norms. At the social and familial level, society has no way of handling the problem of illegitimate children, especially boys. When it comes to family inheritance and land ownership issues, only the *freeborn* male has right of inheritance. There are magical powers attached to sexual activity. Sex between blood relations is said to desecrate the “land.” The land has to be ritually cleansed; otherwise some calamity could befall the people. Dr Esiet points out that “virginity of the female at her marriage called for a family celebration with appropriate gifts from the in-laws.”²⁵

Different cultural and ethnic groups have different ways of regulating virginity. Some celebrate it. Others devise other means of checking the virginity of girls. In my Ibo culture, there was the “white sheet virginity test.” After the marriage ceremonies were completed,

²³ Dorcas A. Olu and J.K Ayantayo, “Sexuality and Spirituality: Possible Bedmates in the Religious Terrain of Contemporary Nigeria,” *Understanding Human Sexuality Seminar Series* 4, (June 2005): 3.

²⁴ *Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, s.v. “Nigeria.”

²⁵ Ibid.

the consummation of the marriage usually took place on a bed dressed and decorated with white sheets. If the girl was a virgin, it was believed that the white sheet would spot some fresh blood after the consummation exercise. If it didn't happen, the groom reserved the right to return the bride to her family and demand that his dowry be returned back. This cultural demand is now in the past. In Moslem dominated northern Nigeria, child marriages still go on. Islam allows female children to be given into marriage before the age of puberty. This means that female children as young as 9 years could marry. The reason, claimed some writers, was that "these practices ensure that the female child is a virgin at marriage."²⁶

In addition to culture, religion has become the new guardian, regulator, and enforcer of sexual purity. The two major religions, Christianity and Islam, both espouse fidelity and purity in sexuality matters. Traditional religion (which has become a minority religion) of some ethnic groups also espouses fidelity and purity in sexual matters. However, some people criticize religion for posing a problem of its own in the implementation of sexuality education: "Religion continues to pose a daunting challenge to the successful implementation of sexuality education in Nigeria. While Christianity is seen as less rigid and highly adaptable to societal change, Islam is very rigid and not receptive to any subject whose content is at variance with its ideals."²⁷ Dr. Adepoju Adunola acknowledged the good that religion has done by helping "children to cultivate religious attitudes towards life and orientate them towards self purification, self actualization and socialization."²⁸

²⁶ *Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, s.v. "Nigeria"

²⁷ Adunola, "Sexuality Education in Nigeria," 10

However, she still delivered a damning verdict on religion: “Both Christianity and Islam do not see the need for sexuality education in Nigeria.”²⁹ Dr. Adunola’s pronouncement is not entirely correct. The Catholic Church does see the need for sexuality education. What it disagrees with is the kind of sex education propagated by the Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria, which, like the PPF in other places, advocates liberality in abortion and contraception and free choice in sexual matters. The Church developed its own curriculum on sexuality education for use in homes and parishes,³⁰ though it has not pushed hard enough for its wide acceptance.

Sexuality is Gender Biased

Sexuality in Nigerian tribal and ethnic cultures is fundamentally patriarchal and gender biased. C. Izugbara points out that “people do not become men and women in the sterile environment of the womb; rather they do so in specific social and cultural context.”³¹ From early age, socialization and ethnic systems instill specific personalities and identities into males and females. Boys are made to know they are superior and preferred to the girls, and the girls know they are inferior to their male siblings. A multi-ethnic study found that 85% of Nigerian adolescents would prefer their first child to be male. When given the choice,

²⁸ Adunola, “Sexuality of Education in Nigeria,” 11

²⁹ *Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, s.v. “Nigeria.”

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ C.O Izugbara, “Patriarchal Ideology and Discourses of Sexuality in Nigeria,” *Understanding Human Sexuality Series 2* (December 2004): 7.

100% of all respondents preferred all male children to all female children.³² When it comes to education, parents prefer to send their male children rather than the female children to school. The place of the woman is primarily in the kitchen, concerned only with the home, children, and her husband. She is expected to be submissive, quiet, fearful, humble, faithful, patient, and careful, while the place of the man is out in the field. He is expected to be “gruff, strong, unfeeling and concerned with work and acquiring wealth.”³³ He is expected to be “domineering, ruthless and in control.”³⁴ Sexual purity is expected of the girls and women while the men ought to be out there “sowing their wild oats.” Izugbara found in his study that men see their sexual desires as natural, strong, and often uncontrollable.³⁵ Women are seen as having “small brain, deficient in logic, analytical abilities and critical thinking.”³⁶ In the sexual framework of ethnic cultures, three things stand out: the inferiority of the female, the unacceptability of the independent woman, and the supremacy of the male.

One implication of this cultural ideology is the emergence of the “big man syndrome” which confers certain entitlements including sexual privileges on men. The president of the country, a powerful government official, or a man who pulls financial weight and commands fame can have many women and engage in extra-marital affairs, and nobody

³² Izugbara, “Discourses of Sexuality in Nigeria” 7

³³ Adunola Adepoju, “Sexuality Education in Nigeria,” 14

³⁴ Izugbara,, “Discourses of Sexuality in Nigeria,” 10

³⁵ Ibid., 10

³⁶ *Complete International Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, s.v. “Nigeria.”

would blink an eye. It is assumed that he is entitled to it, and for a young woman to have a sexual tryst with a “powerful man” is considered “cool.”

Chapter 2: Sexuality in America as Seen Through the Eyes of a Nigerian

Demography

America is a very open society that cherishes individual rights and freedom. Its national anthem says that it is the land of the free and home of the brave. It has a population of over 307 millions³⁷ and prides itself as the super power of the world. It is a melting pot of many cultures. The racial and ethnic make up is heterogeneous. However, the largest population is white (though this is projected to change in the future), with Hispanics and blacks making up the largest minority blocks respectively. The percentage of Christians is 80%, while Jews make up 2%.³⁸ Consequently, the overwhelming attitude towards sex and sexuality is shaped by the Judeo-Christian Heritage.

Sexual Attitude

America is extremely open about sex and sexuality issues. The sexual revolutions of the sixties and seventies ushered into popular discourse a widely liberalized attitude toward sex. “The unique feature of sexuality in the United States is that we have far more information and data on American sexual attitudes, values and behaviors than is available

³⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, “North America: United States,” *World Factbook* (June 2009), available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html> (accessed June 22, 2009).

³⁸ Ibid.

for any other country.”³⁹ However, American sexual attitude is marked by what I regard as an *ambivalent fascination*. Other experts like David Weis would claim that it is marked with “a rather schizophrenic character.”⁴⁰ There are reasons why it is so: America is the biggest producer and consumer of pornographic materials in the world; the pornographic and erotica business is valued at billions a year.⁴¹ There is the media: magazines, books, TV series, and popular music filled with titillating sexual content. “America has the highest rate of premarital sex (90% by 1990), the most active and open gay-rights movement in the world; and a continuing public fascination with unusual sexual practices, extramarital sex, gender orientation issues, including most recently, bisexuality.”⁴² The U.S. has one of the highest abortion rates in the world. According to the Guttmacher Institute, abortion rate rose to a peak of 29.3 per 1000 women aged 15 – 44 in 1980 and 1981; although there has been a gradual decline since 2000.⁴³ “More than 80% of those who have abortions are unmarried.”⁴⁴ Between 1985 and 1995, “the number of unmarried cohabiting couples increased 700%.”⁴⁵ This is a huge increase in a very short time. The United States has the likes of Hugh Hefner, whose *Playboy* magazine, first published in 1953, still sells millions of copies, and Howard Stern, the inventor of “Shock Rock,”

³⁹ *Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, s.v. “United States of America.”

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Guttmacher Institute, “Annual Report 2008,” <http://www.guttmacher.org/about/2008AnnualReport.pdf> (accessed June 5, 2009)

⁴⁴ Guttmacher Institute, “Source Presentation: Trends in Abortion in the United States, 1973 – 2000,” <http://www.guttmacher.org/presentation/trends.pdf> (accessed June 5, 2009).

⁴⁵ *Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, s.v. “United States of America.”

whose movie, *Private Parts*, though roundly criticized, received huge audiences;⁴⁶ it hosts major sitcoms like *Sex and the City* and *The Sopranos* with its open portrayal of sex and violence. It is home to a great number of X-rated channels that cater to all kinds of sexual appetites. It is the United States that gave the world the *Viagra generation* with Pfizer Pharmaceutical's debut of the blue pill in early 1998.

On the other hand, the governments at the Federal, State and local levels have invested heavily in prosecuting organizations and businesses for obscenity, refused access to contraceptives for adolescents, and have allowed discriminatory practices based on sexual orientation.⁴⁷ The United States raised the world's awareness of the phenomenon it called *sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual abuse*. Laura Stein notes that sexual harassment as a term "was coined in the 1970s...It was in the 1970s that concerns began to grow that such behavior was both morally and legally wrong."⁴⁸ Today, the United States is the hotbed of sexual lawsuits. The U.S. is sensitive when its officials have an affair and is ready to reject philandering politicians at the polls. The likes of Hugh Hefner and Howard Stein are heavily criticized as the "bad guys" of the society, but their products are heavily consumed. Yet, there is also abundance of serious educational research materials. The U.S. has the highest repertoire of books, magazines and research materials on sex and sexuality. These two attitudes did not happen by accident. Experts like David L. Weis point to the time of branching out of ideas into what is known today as the "liberal sexual

⁴⁶ *Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, s.v. "United States of America."

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Laura W. Stein, *Sexual Harassment in America: A Documentary History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 1.

ideology,” and “conservative sexual ideology.” These two ideologies (which we shall talk about in the next segment) drive today’s *culture wars* in the United States.

Two Sexual Ideologies

At the end of the 19th century America experienced rapid changes that affected its sexual habits and behaviors. Right on the heels of industrial revolution and with victories in the first and second world wars, America began to experience a new sense of freedom, power, and wealth. Industrialization began to change peoples’ lives: suburbs emerged, families moved from producing units and were transformed into consumers; men and women began to enter the labor force; educational opportunities expanded for women and minorities; and technology brought other changes to American lifestyle.⁴⁹ With increased autonomy and mobility, came increased leisure time and opportunities for sexual encounters. The “Free love” movements of the late 1800s “which advocated sexual freedom for women and the separation of sex and reproduction, the intellectual equality of men and women, self-health and knowledge of one’s own body and its functions, and women’s right to vote, to enjoy sex and obtain a divorce,”⁵⁰ became influential, especially in university campuses and among young people. The Free Love movement’s key argument is what experts like S. Seidman have come to regard as the “sexualization of love.”⁵¹ Marriage became defined less and less as an institutional arrangement of

⁴⁹ *Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, s.v. “United States of America.”

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

reciprocal duties meant only for procreation; and more and more as a relationship between the spouses. With time “the desires and pleasures associated with sex became the sustaining force of love and marriage...Eventually, groups emerged which...value sex for its inherent pleasure and self-expression.”⁵² As America emerged into the 20th century, “the view that sexual gratification was a critical part of happiness for married persons became the dominant sexual ideology of 20th-century America...It was only a matter of time until some groups began to question how it could be restricted only to married persons.”⁵³ In no time books and magazines that shared this ideology began to be published. 1953 saw the first issue of *Playboy* magazine. Betty Friedman’s *Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, gave heft and boost to modern feminist movements, and the publication of *Human Sexual Response* by William Masters and Virginia Johnson in 1968 added zest and fuel to the raging fire. With birth control more readily available, the stage was set for something to happen.

In a complex combination of social and political events, the “free love” ideology exploded into the American consciousness in the sixties and seventies, in what is commonly known today as the “Sexual Revolution.” The liberal sexual ideology was born. With the sexual revolution emerged other pressure groups such as the gay-rights movements, and others that advocated transgender issues, as well as “continual public fascination with unusual sexual practices.”⁵⁴ This sexual ideology, in turn gave momentum

⁵¹ *Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, s.v. “United States of America”

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

to the rise of the “sex industry.” The legalization of abortion by the Supreme Court in 1973 drew the line between the so-called pro-choice movement (which shares the liberal sexual ideology), and the pro-life movement (which shares the conservative sexual ideology). David Weis asserts that reactions to the new sexual trends and “the continuing tension between two major (liberal and conservative) ideologies...lie at the very heart of the ongoing conflicts over sexual issues today.”⁵⁵ The two sexual ideologies—“one viewing sex as legitimate only in marriage, but as a necessary component of marital happiness, and the other viewing sex as a valid and important experience in its own right,”⁵⁶—have led to coalitions at the political, religious and social level of American Society. On the political level, the Republicans and the Democrats hold the pro-life platform and the pro-choice platform respectively. At the religious level; the pro-life group is made up of a coalition of the Roman Catholic Church and prominent conservative evangelical church leaders and their followers. The pro-choice movement is made up of liberal leaning churches like the Episcopal Church. The Episcopal Church even has an openly gay bishop; however some Episcopalians would argue that Gene Robinson was chosen for his qualities despite his sexual orientation. However, it is the only major Christian denomination to have ordained an active openly gay bishop. At the social level, the big mainstream media outlets like the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* are generally regarded to be sympathetic to pro-choice views, and therefore are platforms for pro-choice movements, while some other conservative media outlets and organizations are

⁵⁵ *Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, s.v. “United States of America”

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

seen to be on the side of pro-life movements. Meanwhile, as America was undergoing social, economic and political changes, northern Europe, which tended to be more liberal sexually than the U.S. for many years, was also undergoing its own more explicit liberation moments, albeit slowly. The Swedish filmmakers, Ingmar Bergman and Vilgot Sjoman, were making sexually themed films that challenged conservative international standards. Films like *The Summer with Monika*, *I am Curious, 491* and *One Summer of Happiness*, created uproar in their home country and in the United States, and around the world. But the films helped the cause of sexual liberals in Europe to ease Europe off its mores. Today explicit sex on screen, and acceptance of frontal nudity by men and women on stage, have become the norm in the United States and many European countries. All this is to bring to some awareness the ongoing debates, reactions, and controversies in the United States of America and Europe about sex and sexuality.

A Rich Legacy of Scientific Research

Despite these competing ideologies, the all important gift United States has given and continues to give to the world is the rich legacy of books and research materials on sexuality and human development. Psycho-analytical studies have grown in volume, depth and breath. Psycho-sexual developmental studies are helping map out, in predictive ways, patterns of behaviors that serve as tell-tale signs of personality disorders, psychosexual dysfunctions, and traits of abusive personalities. Because of the sexual scandal in the Church, more attention has come to bear on the psycho-sexual development debate as it

affects seminary formation. Institutions that treat all kinds of personality addictions, including sexual addictions, exist in various parts of the United States and Europe, something that is badly lacking in our own country and in other African countries. Unlike in Africa, study and research has gone beyond the study of cultural norms (though quite important in itself) to the study of personal and interpersonal behaviors, relationships, and attitudes.

PART II: THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL FOUNDATION OF THE PROJECT

Chapter 1: Sexuality in the Catholic Tradition

Introduction

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that: “Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others.”⁵⁷ The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education elaborates further on human sexuality by declaring that: “Sexuality is a fundamental component of personality, one of its modes of being, of manifestation, of communicating with others, of feeling, of expressing and of living human love. Therefore it is an integral part of the development of the personality and of its educative process.”⁵⁸ The Church’s declaration on human sexuality is based on the scriptural premise that human beings were made in the “image and likeness of God... Male and female he created them.” (Gen. 1: 26- 27). Consequently, the dignity and integrity of the human person and the sacredness of life is

⁵⁷ United States Catholic Conference, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2332.

⁵⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational Guidance in Human Love*, 4 (November 1, 1983), available at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregation/ccatheduc/documents/rc.con_ccatheduc_doc_19831101_sexual-education_en.html (accessed June 1, 2009)

not something devised by human legislation, but freely and directly bestowed on all by the Creator.

Theology of the Body

Based on the biblical principle, the Church affirms that “man and woman constitute two modes of realizing, on the part of human creature, a determined participation in the Divine Being.”⁵⁹ Man and woman therefore share equal dignity as persons who can fully discover themselves “in sincere gift”⁶⁰ to each other. Their union in marriage is a “way of imitating in the flesh the Creator’s generosity and fecundity.”⁶¹ On the other hand, celibacy “for the sake of the kingdom” is a way one “can realize himself differently... by becoming a sincere gift for others.”⁶² It demands actively cultivating “the ever-growing love of Christ...who has expressed his love for me with infinite generosity and patience;”⁶³ just as

⁵⁹ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational Guidance in Human Love*, no 26, available at: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregation/ccatheduc/document/rc.com_ccatheduc_doc_19831101_se_xual-education_en.html (accessed June 1, 2009).

⁶⁰ Vatican II Conciliar Documents, *Gaudium et Spes*, no 24, available at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii-con-19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (accessed June 1, 2009).

⁶¹ United States Catholic Conference, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, English ed. (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994), 2335.

⁶² John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: Theology of the Body*, Trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 427.

⁶³ Bernard Häring, *Priesthood Imperiled: A Critical Examination of Ministry in the Catholic Church*, (Liguori, Missouri: Triumph Books, 1996), 99.

“marriage involves participation in the paschal mystery, not just once in making marriage commitment, but everyday.”⁶⁴

Because of her “profound respect for the dignity and irreplaceability of the human person,”⁶⁵ the Church regards as grave any attitude or behavior “that damages virtue and integrity.”⁶⁶

Lust, masturbation, fornication, pornography, prostitution and rape⁶⁷ are behaviors that offend chastity and violate human dignity and integrity. This violation takes a more virulent dimension if it involves a child. Accordingly, priestly formation calls for a “successful integration of sexuality”⁶⁸ by the candidates for the priesthood. This integration cannot come about without “the aid which the disciplines of pedagogy, psychology, and sociology can provide.”⁶⁹ John Paul II spoke about “a properly understood sexual education [which] leads to understanding and realizing this truth about human love.”⁷⁰ John Paul II goes on to say that:

We need to be aware that there is a widespread social and cultural atmosphere which largely reduces human sexuality to the level of something commonplace, since it interprets and lives it in a reductive and impoverished way by linking it solely with the body and with

⁶⁴ Lisa Sowle Cahill, John Garvey, and T. Frank Kenney, S.J., *Sexuality in the US Church: Crisis and Renewal* (New York: Herder & Herder Book, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), 30.

⁶⁵ United States Catholic Conference, *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*. (Washington, D.C.: USCC Publications 1991), 31

⁶⁶ United States Catholic Conference, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, English ed., 2284.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 2351 - 2356.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 2337

⁶⁹ Vatican II Conciliar document, “Decree on Priestly Training” (*Optatam Totius*), 20, available at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/document/vat-ii_decree_19651028_optatam-totius_en.html (accessed June 1, 2009)

⁷⁰ John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 44.

selfish pleasure. Sometimes the very family situation in which priestly vocations arise will display not a few weaknesses and at times even serious failings. In such context, an *education for sexuality* becomes more difficult but also more urgent.⁷¹

In this light, the Pope recommends strong pastoral care in formation so as not to leave young people “at the mercy of their psychological frailty.”⁷²

⁷¹ John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 44

⁷² Ibid., 8

Chapter 2: Practical Boundary Issues Involved in Pastoral Ministry

Sexual Misconduct in the United States

As recently as 1994, a Jesuit priest, John Loftus, a counselor and psychologist by training, wrote a handbook for ministers titled *Understanding Sexual Misconduct by Clergy*. He remarked about the increasing rate of accusations of sexual misconduct against clergy and the prevailing confusion concerning the issue:

[There are no]: definitive conclusions...While it may seem that there have been many cases from which to extrapolate more generalized answers, in fact there is very little scientifically reliable data on which to base secure answers. We have just begun to study the men (and women) involved in this kind of misconduct. Treatment centers for clergy and religious are just beginning to collect and analyze the information they have...As a result, I am afraid, what we do get from so-called experts are mostly generalizations and their own impressions...So beware of experts in analyzing clergy sexual misconduct.⁷³

This is to underline the fact that even though sexual abuse or sexual misconduct (especially of clergy) has a long history, the publicity and the serious discussion around it has been a relatively recent phenomenon in the United States and the Church in general. With the explosive revelations in February and March of 2002 concerning priests who abused minors, the bishops' seeming attempts to cover-up the abuses, and their failure to remove those priests from ministry, any confusion was taken away. It was no longer business as

⁷³ John Allan Loftus, *Understanding Sexual Misconduct by Clergy: A Handbook for Ministers* (Washington DC: The Pastoral Press, 1994), 37-38. Father Loftus was a Professor of Psychology at St Jerome's College of the University of Waterloo. He also spent many years counseling many priests, religious brothers and sisters accused of professional sexual misconduct. I wish he had a follow-up. The book is a general advice handbook which I find valuable. After the scandal of 2002, more light is shed on some of the confusion. However, John Loftus was talking generally about the nature of the misconduct and the person of the perpetrator. We know a little better today. What a difference seven years make!

usual. The press bored down on the Church in a flurry of revelations that the Roman Jesuit journal *La Civiltà Cattolica* described as “objective, grave, and dramatic facts of the abuse and the legitimate and rightful reactions to such phenomenon.”⁷⁴ The pope summoned the United States Cardinals to Rome, while the bishops went into a crisis mode, trying to salvage the situation. The priesthood was facing crisis of confidence never witnessed before. One elderly priest cried out: “Personally, I find myself battling depression when I see all the continuing negative news about priests.”⁷⁵ His outcry was one indication of negative feelings many priests felt in the face of the scandalous revelations. Some priests confessed to the shame of wearing the roman collar or facing their parishioners Sunday after Sunday. The revelations of 2002 radically changed the Church’s understanding of sexual misconduct and the way she now handles the report of such cases.

The American Catholic bishops expressed the deep pain felt by the Church at the revelations of the sexual abuse scandal in 2002:

The sexual abuse of children and young people by some deacons, priests, and some bishops, and the way in which these crimes and sins were addressed, have caused enormous pain, anger, and confusion. As bishops, we have acknowledged our mistakes and our roles in that suffering.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Cited by David E. DeCross, “Freedom of the Press and Catholic Social Thought: Reflection on the Sexual Abuse Scandal in the Catholic Church in the United States,” *Theological Studies* 68, 4 (December 2007): 867.

⁷⁵ Dean R. Hoge, and Jacqueline E. Wenger, *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood: Changes from Vatican II to the Turn of the New Century* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), 147.

⁷⁶ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. (Washington, D.C.: USCCB Publications, 2005): 3.

The bishops acknowledged “the loss of trust that is often the consequence of such abuse (which) “becomes even tragic when it leads to a loss of faith that we have a sacred duty to foster.”⁷⁷ In his address to the Cardinals of the U.S.C.C.B. Officers on April 23, 2002, Pope John Paul II was even more vehement in his condemnation of sexual abuse of young people. Such abuse is “by every standard wrong and rightly considered a crime by society; it is also an appalling sin in the eyes of God.”⁷⁸ The pain, pressure and disgust felt by the laity and clergy alike following these devastating disclosures led the bishops to enact a series of policy initiatives for the protection of children and young people in June, 2002. The most prominent of such policy initiatives is the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (which will be treated later). Suffice it to say that the Charter radically changed the pastoral landscape of ministry in the American Church.

Defining the Terms

Sexual misconduct is the umbrella term for all sexual offences. It is defined as the sexual actions which are deemed immoral or illegal; that breach professional or personal relationship boundaries. Sexual misconduct can take the form of sexual harassment, boundary violations and other forms of sexual abuse. There are also sexual disorders associated with sexual misconduct. The most prominent of such sexual disorders that have been associated with clergy sex abuse are pedophilia and ephebophilia. An explanation of these terms follows.

⁷⁷ USCCB, *Charter for the Protection Children and Young People*, 3 – 4.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Sexual Harassment

The Feminist movement was full blown by the early seventies. One of the leading personalities of the movement was Lin Farley, a 29 year old feminist activist. She was teaching an experimental course on women and work at Cornell University. During one of the consciousness-raising sessions, students talked about “disturbing behaviors they had been subjected to during their summer job.”⁷⁹ They talked about harassing sexual behaviors that had forced them to leave their jobs. Thus the term, sexual harassment was born.⁸⁰ In 1986, the Supreme Court of the United States held that sexual harassment could be an illegal form of sex discrimination. In these earlier days sexual harassment was narrowly defined as

unsolicited nonreciprocal male behavior that asserts a woman’s sex role over her function as a worker. It can be any or all of the following: staring at, commenting upon, or touching a woman’s body; requests for acquiescence in sexual behavior; repeated non reciprocated propositions for dates; demand for sexual intercourse; and rape.⁸¹

Len Sperry has a broader definition which reflects a modern understanding that sexual harassment is a behavior of either sex towards a member of either sex. He defined sexual harassment as “the use of emotional, financial, social or organizational power or influence to gain sexual access to or dominance over a person who is vulnerable to that influence.”⁸² He adds: “It can involve, whether it be intended or not, the creation of a hostile environment in which words, actions, artwork, or humor causes such discomfort for

⁷⁹ Laura W. Stein, *Sexual Harassment in America: A Documentary History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 1.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² Len Sperry, *Sex, Priestly Ministry, and the Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), 11.

individuals that they cannot function effectively within that environment.”⁸³ Before the dam burst on child sexual abuse in 2002, the bulk of sexual misconduct cases within the Church and corporate America were mostly about sexual harassment and sexual infidelity among adults. The famous and well publicized cases of the nineties of the late Archbishop Marino of Atlanta, and Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas, and later Paula Jones and Bill Clinton are some well known examples. However, a typical average Nigerian male would scoff at a perceived American over-sensitivity concerning such sexual matters. An average Nigerian male believes that sexual humor directed at a woman by her male counterpart is supposed to make her feel “wanted.” It is supposed to be seen as a compliment to the woman, and ought to enhance her worth. Sexual harassment, (understood in its broad spectrum) is routine within the Nigerian society, and it is not viewed with any legal seriousness. It is regarded as normal human behavior that should not go beyond the two persons involved.

Boundary Violations

Boundaries are defined “as norms, rules, or codes of conduct that characterize an individual’s personal space or environment and his or her sense of security and safety.”⁸⁴ Healthy boundaries provide an environment of healthy sexual, emotional, social, and spiritual development, while unhealthy boundaries make the opposite possible. Boundaries can “be too rigid, loose or inconsistent.”⁸⁵ The pastoral nature of ministry makes it a challenge for the Church to understand what a “professional boundary” is. A priest is

⁸³ Sperry, *Sex, Priestly Ministry, and the Church*, 11

⁸⁴ Ibid., 10

⁸⁵ Ibid., 10

involved in multiple ways with his parishioners: counseling, confessions, leading pastoral committee meetings, raising funds for charity, marriage preparations, and settling family quarrels and conflicts— and all with the same parishioners. Where does he draw a “professional” line with these parishioners? Some of the roles enumerated above are likely to be unethical for a psychotherapist or even a physician. Boundary issues, therefore, become a challenge. However, boundary issues have gained currency in the Church because of the sad involvement of clergy and Church personnel in sexual abuse cases, and the spiritual and emotional harm these actions have caused the victims and their families and the fear of lawsuits as well. The “safe environment” training programs in most dioceses in the U.S. and Europe have emphasized boundary issues quite strongly in regard to dealing with minors, young people, and women. The minister or priest is to assume the full responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in pastoral-related relationships.

This boundary issue is new and tends to sound strange to the ears of family-oriented Nigerian cultures. In Nigeria, parish pastoral life is modeled on family life. The pastoral minister is in constant demand. People want him to visit and be involved in their lives, though not in a sexual way. However, if in the process some sexual things happen, the priest does not get the blame. The woman gets the blame for “tempting the priest.” Part of the purpose of this project is to raise awareness against this kind of twisted mindset that produces inappropriate behavior on the part of clergy. Of course, the molesting of children is viewed with utmost outrage by society. However, the fear of “keeping or maintaining boundaries” does not arise at all. The recent scandals will eventually become a catalyst for

the needed movement towards reform in attitude and character formation in the Nigerian Catholic seminaries.

Pedophilia and Ephebophilia

The most prominent terms that have emerged to describe the sexual difficulties afflicting clergy sex offenders with minors since the crisis are *pedophilia* and *ephebophilia*. “Pedophilia refers to the sexual activity by adults with prepubescent child, age thirteen or younger.”⁸⁶ “Ephebophilia refers to the sexual attraction and arousal of adults to post pubescent or adolescent minors arbitrarily designated between the ages of fourteen through seventeen.”⁸⁷ An adult with a prepubescent minor as his primary target of sexual activity is said to be a *pedophile*, while an adult with a post-pubescent child as his primary source of sexual activity is said to be an *ephebophile*. Len Sperry reports that though pedophilia is currently considered as “a grave moral failing” and “a legal offense,” it is also classified as “a sexual psychiatric disorder called psychosexual disorder or paraphilia”⁸⁸ by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). Curiously, though, the American Psychiatric Association, considers ephebophilia as a “grave moral failing and a legal offense, but not a... psychiatric disorder.”⁸⁹ The age of consent according to Church law is sixteen for man and fourteen for a woman (Can 1083, par 1). Canon Law commentators have noted that there had been calls to raise the minimum age during consultations for the revision of the Code. However, they assert that the calls were rejected

⁸⁶ Sperry, *Sex, Priestly Ministry, and the Catholic Church*, 12

⁸⁷ Ibid., 13

⁸⁸ Ibid., 12

⁸⁹ Ibid., 14

“because it was felt incorrect to restrict the natural right to marry, because of the difficulties that would arise in different cultures and local circumstances throughout the Church... the present canon concerns only physical maturity...personal and psychological maturity is dealt with elsewhere in the law.”⁹⁰ Research also categorizes offenders as “consisting of fixated offenders and regressed offenders.”⁹¹ “A fixated offender is characterized as having a persistent, continual, and compulsive attraction to children. In contrast, regressed offenders are individuals who are primarily attracted to adults, but who are perceived to engage in sexual activity with children in response to particular stressors.”⁹²

Examples of Sexual Abuse

According to statistics provided by the John Jay report on *The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States 1950—2002*, the most common forms of alleged acts of sexual abuse were “touching over victims’ clothes” (52.6%), and “touching under victims’ clothes” (44.9%).⁹³ Other common forms involved a cleric performing oral sex (26.0%) or disrobing the victim (25.17%).⁹⁴ A pedophile or ephebophile may also engage in sexual activity that can involve “exposing one’s genitals, masturbating in the presence of a child...fondling, or penetrating a child

⁹⁰ Rt. Rev. Mgr Gerard Sheehy et al., *The Canon Law: Letter & Spirit; A Practical Guide to the Code of Canon Law* (London: Canon Law Society Trust, Geoffrey Chapman Press, 1995), 598.

⁹¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Nature and Scope of the Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States 1950 – 2002: A Research Conducted by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, University of New York* (Washington, D.C.: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, February 2004), 36.

⁹² USCCB, *The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse*, 36

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 55

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

with penis, finger or other objects.”⁹⁵ Other examples “involve the offender placing his penis between the child’s thighs...child pornography or child prostitution.”⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Sperry, *Sex, Priestly Ministry, and the Catholic Church*, 12

⁹⁶ The Irish Bishops’ Conference, The Conference of Religious of Ireland, and The Irish Missionary Union, *Our Children, Our Church* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005), 96 – 97.

Chapter 3: Pastoral Implications of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*

Introduction

The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* was issued in June 2002 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The *Charter* was a response to mounting pressure from the media, lay faithful, and the legal profession following the disclosures of sexual abuse of minors by some clergy. It was also a response to the pressure from the Vatican for the bishops to take credible action to respond to the crimes of abuse which the pope described as “an appalling sin in the eyes of God,”⁹⁷ and restore credibility to the Church. Through this “pastoral outreach to victims and their families,” the bishops were “to share the profound sense of solidarity and concern expressed by His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, in his Address to the Cardinals of the United States and Conference Officers.”⁹⁸ The bishops outlined four goals in the *Charter*: to promote healing and reconciliation with victims and survivors of sexual abuse of minors; to guarantee effective response to allegations of sexual abuse of minors; to ensure the accountability of the procedures; and to protect the faithful in the future. The *Charter* was radical and sweeping in its content and procedures. It forever changed the dynamics of

⁹⁷ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal: Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, rev. (Washington DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 4.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 9

pastoral relationship between the bishop and his priests, and the priest and his parishioners. It redefined the way priests understood their ministry.

Code of Conduct for Clergy

Article 6 of the *Charter* which is the most important in radicalizing the relationship between the bishop and his priests and the priest and his parishioners states: “There are to be clear and well-publicized diocesan/eparchial standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for clergy...”⁹⁹ In other words, this article mandates all dioceses and eparchies to establish codes of pastoral conduct for its clergy. A code of conduct had been required of other helping professionals like physicians and psychotherapists. It had never been part of pastoral ministry.

Primary priestly formation usually focuses on theology, scripture, canon law and pastoral ministry. This basic training forms the priest in his self-understanding of his ministerial priesthood, his role in the Church, and provides guidance in his pastoral ministry. In pastoral settings, the priest is accountable to his parishioners, working through the organs of pastoral committees. However, the priest was ultimately accountable to the bishop in his pastoral duties and ordination vows. In the administration of his parish, the priest is guided by diocesan rules and regulations. If he is accused of misconduct, the bishop is the ultimate arbiter. He didn’t have to report to any civil authority in the exercise of his pastoral duties. This is informed by the Church’s self-understanding of itself as a

⁹⁹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Promise to Protect, A Pledge to Heal: Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, rev. (Washington DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 12.

family and the body of Christ. However, the priest's pastoral duties are now complicated by the introduction of a "code of conduct" by the U.S. Catholic bishops.

Priesthood Professionalized

The key part of the *Model Code of Pastoral Conduct* of the National Catholic Risk Retention Group, approved by the US bishops as a model for dioceses counsels against dual relationship with parishioners. It warns members of the clergy to "carefully consider the possible consequences before entering into a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship (section 1.2)." Sections 7.2.2 and 7.2.2 make categorical prohibition:

"Pastoral counselors should not provide counseling services to anyone with whom they have business, professional, or social relationship. When this is unavoidable, the client must be protected. The counselor must establish and maintain clear, appropriate boundaries. When pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services are provided to two [presumably husband and wife] or more people who have a relationship with each other, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director must...obtain from all parties written consent to continue services."

In other words, a dual relationship occurs when a cleric maintains more than one type of relationship with the same person. The code also redefined pastoral ministry as having a professional platform. Using non theological and non pastoral language like, "clients", "providing services," "maintaining professional standards," is not something the Catholic clergy is used to, and it tended to create confusion in their minds. Loftus makes the point that there is "the realization that some ministers recoil at the very use of the word

“professional”...This is not how they see their roles with their community; they are facilitators, or animators, or anything but “professional” in their pastoral concern.”¹⁰⁰ Now the priest is regarded as one whose “profession” is to “provide services” to his “clients,” the parishioners. This change, some think, has implications for the priest and his relationship with his parishioners, as well as his bishop.

One of the implications is a perceived dual ministerial accountability. With the code of conduct, a new layer of accountability is added to the ministry of the priest. Parishioners or “service-seekers” could seek civil remedies for perceived acts of negligence on the part to the priest, instead of going through ecclesial procedures.

Sperry thinks that “boundary issues for priests are complex and may create boundary challenges and strain that may differ from other helping professionals such as physicians or psychotherapists.”¹⁰¹ Stephen Rossetti agrees: “It is impossible to set up a clear boundary between our lives and our public ministry. Setting typical professional boundaries is not only impossible, but also it would be contrary to our charism.”¹⁰² A dual relationship occurs when clergy maintain more than one type of relationship with the same person. However, parish life is like family. In family relationship, there are no professional lines drawn. For his ministry to be effective, the priest is expected, and in fact encouraged to be part of his parishioner’s life, as they make their spiritual journey. His title as “father” is not an empty one. It portrays the kind of relationship that ought to exist between the priest and

¹⁰⁰ John Allan Loftus, S.J., *Understanding Sexual Misconduct by Clergy: A Handbook for Ministers* (Washington DC: Pastoral Press, 1994), 43.

¹⁰¹ Sperry, “*Sex, Priestly Ministry, and the Church*,” 10

¹⁰² Stephen J. Rossetti, *The Joy of Priesthood* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2005), 139.

his parishioners. Rossetti says it so well: “The priest is a welcome friend to the people. For many Catholics, he is treated as a member of their extended family. He is a symbol of our caring, compassionate God and many people want him in their lives.”¹⁰³ Stressing how “awesome (the) grace and responsibility” this is, he goes on to say: “Unless he betrays their trust, he is given a key to their homes and their hearts that no one else is given. They tell him their most intimate secrets, their hopes and their fears, their joys and their sins.”¹⁰⁴ The priest who prepares a couple for marriage may also work with them in the pastoral or finance council of the parish. The priest, who counseled Mr. and Mrs. Jones through their grieving process for the death of their son, may also work with the same couple to organize the parish bazaar or a local fund raising in the community. These are dual relationships in the professional sense. Sperry argues that: “This multiplicity of roles would likely be unethical for a psychotherapist based on the principle of dual relationship.”¹⁰⁵ With this kind of evolution in ministry, the theological and pastoral understanding of priestly ministry seems to be set on its head.

The code of conduct may have also changed the pastoral relationship between the priests and their bishop without intending to do so. The sexual misconduct guidelines of the Archdiocese of St Paul and Minneapolis, *Restoring Trust: With God All Things are Possible*, states:

At some point in their investigation, Archdiocesan officials will interview the priest or deacon, to inform him of the allegation made against him, and ask for his response. Before the priest or deacon begins his response, he will be informed that we can give no assurance of confidentiality and that any information he offers may be used in future civil or

¹⁰³ Rossetti, *Joy of Priesthood*, 25

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 33

¹⁰⁵ Sperry, *Sex, Priestly Ministry and the Church*, 10

canonical processes. During this intervention interview the priest or deacon will be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel.¹⁰⁶

Without probably intending it or meaning to do so, this guideline carries an adversarial tone that could scare a priest away from his bishop. Again, this presents a challenge to the theological and pastoral understanding of the relationship which ought to exist between the bishop and his priests. The *Catechism* counsels the bishop to regard priests as “his co-workers, his sons, his brothers and his friends, and they in turn owe him love and obedience.”¹⁰⁷ *Presbyterorum Ordinis* asserts that:

On account of the common sharing in the same priesthood and ministry, bishops are to regard their priests as brothers and friends and are to take the greatest possible interest in their welfare both temporal and spiritual. For on their shoulders especially falls the burden of sanctifying their priests.¹⁰⁸

In light of the Charter, priests have become less trusting and more critical of their bishops. Writing in *Theological Studies*, James Keenan cited a study by sociologist Sister Katarina Schuth which found that “priests are deeply and negatively affected by the sexual abuse scandal...64 percent of priests disapprove of the way bishops handled allegations of child abuse, and when reflecting on the Dallas Charter, only 34 percent thought it was fair, while 45 percent did not.”¹⁰⁹ For many priests, the Dallas Charter of the bishops was:

[An] attempt to deflect criticism from themselves and unto individual priests...Priests who now stand uneasily under a sword of Damocles, with their every action scrutinized,

¹⁰⁶ Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, *Restoring Trust: With God all Things are Possible*, (Clergy Bulletin, March 15, 2007), 195 – 196.

¹⁰⁷ United States Catholic Conference, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, English ed., 1568.

¹⁰⁸ Vatican II Council, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 7.

¹⁰⁹ James F. Keenan, “Notes on Moral Theology: Ethics and Crisis in the Church,” *Theological Studies* (March 2005): 117.

understandably may ask why the bishops do not face such consequences if they fail to abide by the Charter. This distinction has deteriorated the relationship between priests and bishop.¹¹⁰

But priests were not the only ones critical of the leadership of bishops in this matter. The laity too, was critical of the bishops. George Weigel writing as a layman asserts that “the deepest anger of Catholics...have been reserved for bishops”¹¹¹ as a result of what he called “Episcopal misgovernance,” which came in many forms: “bishops who took a cavalier attitude towards sexual abuse; bishops who knowingly transferred sexual abusers from parish to parish and then denied having done so;...bishops who saw the crisis of sexual abuse in primarily legal and financial terms.”¹¹² My interviews with MSP priests, African missionaries and extern priests working in the United States and some parts of Europe confirm that they would refuse, or at best, be hesitant to work in programs that involve young people. This refusal or hesitancy on the part of African priests might not be as a result of the *Charter*, but because of the increased rate and general apprehension about lawsuits and the fear of compromising the future of their pastoral ministry.

Despite these implications and apprehensions on the part of a segment of the clergy and laity, the code of pastoral conduct is absolutely necessary for this time in the life of the Church.

One expert who believes in the necessity for pastoral code of conduct for clergy is Richard Gula. Gula brings a theological and pastoral perceptive to support his argument

¹¹⁰ Keenan, “Notes on Moral Theology: Ethics and Crisis in the Church,” 117

¹¹¹ George Weigel, *The Courage to be Catholic: Crisis, Reform, and the Future of the Church*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 29.

¹¹² Weigel, *Courage to be Catholic*, 91

for a code of pastoral conduct in ministry. He believes that a pastoral code of conduct is necessary because it “enhance(s) the dignity of the pastoral ministry and gives the public greater confidence that we are committed to the standards of excellence and to a high quality of personal service.”¹¹³ For Gula, pastoral ministry is both a vocation and a profession:

As a vocation it is a free response to God’s call...to commit ourselves in love to serve others. As a profession, (it) is a commitment to be of good moral character and acquire special competence pertaining to matters of our religious tradition so as to serve the religious needs of the community.¹¹⁴

Gula asserts that pastoral ministry is not a mere contract but one rooted in our covenantal relationship with God, and “based on freedom, motivated by love, respectful of the dignity of persons, and held together by trust.”¹¹⁵ He counsels that pastoral ministers should strive to anchor their lives on the virtues of holiness, love, trustworthiness, altruism, and prudence.¹¹⁶ On dual relationships, however, Gula seems a little anxious for the pastoral minister. He advises that pastoral ministers should:

strive to avoid, to the extent possible, those dual relationships (e.g., with employees, students, friends, business relationships) which could impair our professional judgment; create conflict of interest, or lead to exploiting the relationship for our own gain. When dual relationships are inevitable, we must lessen their potential for conflicts of interest.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Richard M. Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 143.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 144

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 146

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 148

Gula is sufficiently theological and pastoral in his advice. James Keenan writing in the *Theological Studies* also supported the proposal “to train bishops, clergy, and lay ministers in courses and programs designed to set standards for appropriate professional ethical conduct in the service of the Church and the world.”¹¹⁸ He believes this to be necessary because “bishops, clergy, lay ministers, and religious educators learn a lot about how to govern others, but not about what pertains to themselves.”¹¹⁹ He asserts that “canonists and moralists claim that the crisis in the Church results not only from abusive priests..., but also from lack of critical course work that addresses the canonical and professional ethical formation of Church ministers.”¹²⁰

Background Checks and Suitability Testimonials

In addition to the boundary issues outlined above, the *Charter* also requires mandatory background check of any diocesan employee, including priests. There is a mandatory confidential Testimonial of Suitability for Ministry which the sending bishop or religious superior must give to the receiving ordinary on behalf of the priest being assigned to a diocese. The Testimonial of Suitability gives the priest a clean bill of health as regards his ministry. This is a way to keep bishops and religious superiors honest and accountable regarding the clergy directly under their authority and so prevent the shuffling of abusive priests from parish to parish.

¹¹⁸ Keenan, “Note on Moral Theology: Ethics and the Crisis in the Church,” 117.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 136

¹²⁰ Ibid.

In spite of the real and perceived negative implications of the code of conduct, I believe that its imposition is imperative at this time in the life of the Church. St Gregory the Great once said “it is better that scandals arise, than the truth be suppressed.”¹²¹ The actions of a few have emasculated and denigrated the good and long suffering dedication of majority of priests and bishops in the Church. The sex abuse victims have also suffered long in silence and the revelation of their painful suffering brought its own pain, confusion and shame for the Church. It was an unusual time for Catholic Bishops, priests and laity alike. An unusual illness requires unusual remedy. The pastoral code of conduct happens to be the necessary remedy for the unprecedented scandal of our time. The *Charter* was the surgical procedure that was needed to excise the cancer ravaging the body of Christ and so begin the “healing and reconciliation” that the bishops seek to achieve. With the spread of the scandal to Europe and Latin America, episcopal conferences around the world who do not already have sexual abuse policies in place might be compelled to adopt the American style Charter. The Church might also see a universal Charter in place. During his recent visit to Malta on April 18, 2010, the pope, while meeting victims of priest sexual abuse, also promised to “implement effective measures designed to safeguard young people in the future.”¹²²

The bishops indeed have achieved some measure of success in restoring trust and confidence among Catholics in their leadership. According to *CARA Report*, Catholic

¹²¹ Quoted by Pieter Vree, “The Editor Replies,” *New Oxford Review* vol. LXXIV, no 3 (March 2007), <http://www.newoxfordreview.org/letters.jsp?Print=1&did=0307-letters> (accessed December 26, 2009).

¹²² Carol Glatz. “Pope Meets Abuse Victims, expresses Shame, Sorrow for their Suffering,” *Catholic News Service*, April 18, 2010, under “Vatican,” <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/001627.htm> (accessed May 5, 2010).

satisfaction in Church leadership declined from a high of 79 percent in January 2001 (before the scandal) to a low of 55 percent in May 2002 (during the scandal). After the measures on pastoral conduct were adopted in June 2002, the satisfaction level among Catholics on the Church leadership rebounded steadily to 77 percent by October 2005.¹²³ However, the same report noted that “only about six in ten express at least “some” confidence that the bishops as a whole are addressing the problem of sexual abuse.”¹²⁴ It is significant to note too that priests’ morale remained high. Stephen Rossetti reported a study by the National Federation of Priests Councils (NFPC) in 2001 (before the scandal) which found that 94 percent of priests said “they were currently either very or pretty happy.”¹²⁵ In his own survey between 2003—2005 (after the introduction of the code),

“92.1 endorsed the statement, ‘Overall, I feel fulfilled ministering as a priest.’ When given the statement, ‘I am committed to the ministry of the Catholic Church,’ the response was almost unanimous: 95.9 percent said yes.”¹²⁶

This rate of satisfaction is far higher than that of the American general public on job satisfaction. “In a 2003 CNN poll of five-thousand Americans only 62.9 percent said they were ‘happy with their current job’.”¹²⁷ The initial misgivings toward the code and its pastoral and legal implications are, I believe, part of the pain of the healing process that must take place.

¹²³ *CARA Report*, “Reactions to the News of Sexual Abuse Cases Involving Catholic Clergy,” no 8 (April 2006), 17.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 18

¹²⁵ Rossetti, *Joy of Priesthood*, 24.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 26

¹²⁷ Rossetti, *Joy of Priesthood*, 26

Other Pastoral Implications

Apart from the perceived difficulties introduced into pastoral ministry by the code of conduct, African missionaries especially Nigerians, have other issues that may further complicate their pastoral lives—their cultures. I heard a prominent American nun complain about how “these African priests come to the United States and they bring all Africa with them, and they want to make everybody African.” Bishop Gerald Barnes of San Bernardino, reflecting on the priesthood in the American Church that has become more culturally diverse and complex due to the influx of immigrant clergy and religious, declared; “We no longer have just a language barrier to overcome, but a meaning barrier as well.”¹²⁸ Many others have complained of the treatment of women by Nigerian missionaries. Indeed African missionaries will bring “all Africa with them” because they are Africans wherever they are. And there will always be a “meaning barrier” between the missionary and the receiving culture. The question then arises; how does a Nigerian missionary or extern priest interpret and understand the code of pastoral conduct? What does he make of the treatment of women and boundary issues? Recently I met a Nigerian priest who spent a sabbatical in a parish in Queens, New York. He had returned to Nigeria about two days earlier. He regaled us with stories about the “strangeness of American culture;” how the law was such an “unbendable absolute;” how children could easily call a cop on their parents; how he avoided altar servers and children like the plague for fear of

¹²⁸ Gerald R. Barnes “Priesthood in the Midst of Cultural Diversity,” in *Priests for a New Millennium*, ed. Secretariat for Priestly Life and Ministry (Washington D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 170.

being “accused of misconduct and harassment or something else in their law;” how he became afraid of shaking hands with women (he had his hands always in his pockets); how people behaved as they wished in Church without any challenge from the pastor, and on and on. He said he found life in the United States so “superficial, paralyzing, and strange.” His story is typical of first time visitors to the United States. It has to do with a mixture of culture shock and a struggle to overcome the “meaning barrier” which Bishop Barnes talks about. At the beginning of this project I discovered that ten out of twelve participants have never heard the terms “pedophilia” or “ephebophilia.” It is significant to note that these are third year theology students almost on the verge of ordination to the missionary priesthood. In my own case, the first time I heard about “homosexuality” mentioned was my second year of theology in the seminary. It happened that one of our teachers, an American Jesuit, walked into class one day and began to express some surprise at how common the holding of hands were among seminarians and the larger Nigerian society. The students sought to know why he was surprised. He explained that in the United States, when two males hold hands, it would imply that they are homosexuals. Again not knowing what he meant by the term “homosexuals,” the students asked him to explain. He said that homosexuals are males who make sexual love with each other. The students were stunned and amused at the same time. We were indeed very naïve. But we were stunned because this was the worst kind of insinuation to be associated with a very common and innocent act among young people and amused because we thought this must be the craziest joke we’ve ever heard. It was when I came to the United States that I discovered how true his statement was. It was

another “meaning barrier” I had to overcome about cultural sexual behaviors and innuendos.

For a priest raised and trained in a culture where fatherhood is overarching, where parish life is modeled on family systems, and boundary issues have never been part of the lexicon, making a transition into a much more regimented American pastoral environment will demand huge mental, intellectual and values system adjustments. Part of the culture shocks are questions of dealing with the separateness or individualism of American culture and of exercising a pastoral role limited by the constraints of the code of conduct in a litigious pastoral environment.

A priest who hails from one of the many Nigerian cultures where under-age marriages are a part of the culture and marriage at 12 is regarded as a cherished value, making a transition into the American culture where a 17 year old is regarded as a minor would surely pose a challenge to the priest’s thought process.

To overcome more effectively the “meaning barrier” regarding the code of pastoral conduct for missionaries and extern priests, orientation for international priests should be organized and strengthened at diocesan levels. The one thing lacking in the code of pastoral conduct is the requirement for sensitivity training for missionary priests and the receiving diocese.

Conclusion

The *Charter* changed the dynamics of pastoral ministry in the American Church by imposing new conditions for ministry. It is a drastic, radical and necessary measure by the bishops. It was a pledge by the bishops to promote healing and reconciliation, guarantee an effective response to allegations of sexual abuse of minors, ensure accountability of procedures, and protect the faithful in the future following the damage done to the Church by the sexual scandal of 2002. Effectiveness in ministry will require heightened awareness of the issues involved, and a concerted effort on the part of new immigrant clergy or missionaries to become culturally sensitive to their new pastoral environment. Participants are now aware that certain actions qualify as sexual misconduct in the United States and other western countries. Candidates for the priesthood in Nigeria ought to be aware that their individual cultural beliefs and practices may not hold up as a universally acceptable principle. Consequently pastoral effectiveness and avoidance of pastoral or professional pitfalls would require abandonment of certain cultural habits and the acquiring of new ones.

**PART III: OVERALL THEORETICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AND
ADDRESSING THE SITUATION IN THE LIGHT OF THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL
FOUNDATION**

Chapter 1: Statement of Purpose, Project Design and Implementation

The Purpose of the Project

Six years before the devastating revelations of sex scandal of 2002, Richard Gula made a telling, almost a prophetic statement: “If a pastoral minister goes wrong on sex, the harm caused is devastating. Because of the symbolic representation of pastoral minister, to be sexually victimized by a pastoral minister can be taken as being exploited...even by God.”¹²⁹ The “Church experienced a trauma of unprecedented proportions”¹³⁰ in 2002, beyond the scale of what happened much earlier in Canada and the United States in the 80s, because some pastoral ministers in the Catholic Church were guilty of sexual offences. The anger of the laity, the deep wounds of the victims, and the moral and spiritual toll the scandal exerted on the Church was deep and lasting. As a result of the scandal the U.S. bishops and other episcopal conferences around the world tried to restore trust and credibility. They made concerted effort to strengthen pastoral ministry, sanction

¹²⁹ Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*, 92.

¹³⁰ Lisa Sowle Cahill, John Garvey, and T. Frank Kennedy, S.J., eds. *Sexuality and the U.S. Catholic Church: Crisis and Renewal* (New York: Herder & Herder Books, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), 1.

offending clergy, reach out in compassion to victims of sex abuse, enhance priestly formation, and, through education and prevention programs, enlighten the laity and clergy on the evils of sexual abuse, especially the abuse of a minor. When a priest or deacon engages in sexual misconduct, different individuals are harmed: the victims, who, research shows, often suffer deep psychological and spiritual wounds and sometimes physical pain and loss of faith; the families of the victims who bear the direct impact of the victim's suffering as they struggle to care for their loved ones; and the parish community who feel betrayed by such misconduct since they expect an ordained clergy to emulate the integrity and charity of their master, Jesus Christ.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria have called on dioceses and religious communities in Nigeria to become proactive in the effort to make the Catholic Churches safe for minors and other vulnerable adults. This effort at renewal within the Church begins with the agents of formation—the pastoral minister—at the seminary and houses of formation. The purpose of this project is to raise awareness among seminarians of the Missionary Society of St Paul of Nigeria about the sexual issues involved in pastoral ministry in the United States as well as in Nigeria and other places where they may find themselves in pastoral ministry. Sex and sexuality issues are a taboo topic in Nigeria. It is hoped therefore that this seminar will help candidates for the priesthood to reflect and gain an appropriate perspective on their own sexuality and that of other cultures where they may exercise their pastoral ministry.

Nigeria is a nation of diverse cultures and sexual mores. Seminarians to the Missionaries of St Paul are drawn from all over Nigeria, from diverse cultural background

and upbringing. Since every human person is a product of his or her culture, seminarians enter the seminary with varying degrees of cultural baggage, some of which may conflict with acceptable sexual norms. This project is aimed at raising awareness of their own cultural baggage so as to be able to ready themselves for any mental, intellectual, and cultural adjustments they have to make in any culture or environment they may find themselves pastorally. Finally, I hope this project will help seminarians to appreciate in a deep way their own sexuality and the gift of celibacy to which they are called to embrace. Sexual abuse is always damaging to the victims, the Church, and the individual abuser. It is hoped that this seminar will enhance this awareness in seminarians as they undergo the formation to embrace the priesthood.

Design of the Project

The project was designed for the theology students of the National Missionary Seminary of St Paul, Abuja, Nigeria. Sexuality holds a pervasive presence in every culture, but in Nigeria, it is rarely talked about. It is a sexuality of silence. It is taboo to talk openly about sex especially in a seminary because it is regarded as sacred. Those who talk openly about sex are regarded as “spoilt” or naughty. It is only adults who are permitted to talk about sex. When they do, it is usually away from children and young adults. An environment of open sharing was fostered where the participants were able to reflect on their own sexuality and that of their culture and to appreciate and express themselves in a non-threatening atmosphere. They were also able to learn about how sexuality was

understood in other cultures, especially in the United States, and the Church's traditional understanding of both the spirituality and corporeality of sex and sexual morality. The project was designed to run for five weeks. Each session ran for two hours. There were didactic and group discussion components to each session. The venue of the seminar was at the National Missionary Seminary of St Paul, Abuja, Nigeria.

A pre-session

A pre-session was held with the participants ahead of the substantive sessions. The purpose of the meeting was to get to know the participants, and give some initial explanation regarding the seminar. There were also some house-keeping duties to take care of before the seminar began the following morning. It was also an opportunity for the participants to get to know the facilitator. This initial meeting was designed to strike a rapport between the participants and this writer. There were twelve participants in all. The pre-session lasted for thirty minutes.

Five substantive didactic session, and five group discussion sessions were planned.

First Session

The first session consisted of two parts: a brief analysis of "Sexuality in the Nigerian culture" and a group discussion and reflection dubbed: "Growing in Awareness by Assessing our Feelings." This was the first group reflection to help participants process and assess their feelings in the midst of the sex scandals that hit the Missionary Society of St Paul.

Since this was the first meeting of the participants and the first session, the room and sitting arrangement was reorganized in order to promote an intimate sharing environment

and easy discussion. Ground rules were also given. At the beginning of the seminar, a warm up exercise titled *Blind Trust Walk* was performed by the participants. The blind trust walk was to promote attitude of trust and openness among participants. The topic of the seminar was a very sensitive one. Participants needed to trust each other and remain open to each other in discussion sessions. In addition, the participants were reminded that the seminar discussion would remain confidential. The participants took a few minutes to respond to the pre-questionnaire. The pre-questionnaire was the initial assessment to gauge the level of understanding of the participants at the beginning of the seminar. During discussion sessions, participants were divided into three groups of four. They returned to the larger group for feedback.

Second session

The second session consisted of two parts: a brief analysis of sexuality in U.S., and a discussion and reflection session. The session started with a “values assessment exercise.” The exercise was meant to lighten the mood and gauge the participants’ level of priority of values. It consisted of a list of seven human values from which the participants were required to choose the most important values in order of priority. The group discussion was the first case study: a missionary tale about an elderly missionary and a younger missionary of the same congregation. The elderly missionary had committed sexual abuse within a mission territory some twenty five ago, which was covered up. The younger priest arrived at the same mission territory, got wind of the story and opened up a can of worms in the process. The group was to reflect on the story and give their feedback. To help them in their discussion, a set of questions was given to guide the process of reflection on

missionary life. Participants divided into groups of four. They return to the larger group for a feedback.

Third Session

The third session consisted of two parts: a brief synopsis of the traditional Catholic understanding of sexuality and the theology of the body. The discussion and reflection session was about another case study about the dilemma of a Nigerian Priest who was accused, charged and convicted of sexual abuse of a minor in the United States in 1999. This case drives home the legal seriousness these kinds of actions attract in the United States and elsewhere, even though such may not be the case now in Nigeria. Participants received a set of questions to guide the discussion and reflection process. They were to discuss in groups of four and then return to the larger group to give their feedback.

Fourth Session

The first part of session four was comprised of a lecture on the practical boundary issues involved in ministry, and a thirty five minutes video program presentation titled “*Understanding the Sexual Boundaries in the Pastoral Relationship.*” The group discussion and reflection were based on the video presentation. There were no questions prepared for the group discussion. Participants were, however, encouraged to jot down their questions, impressions, concerns and need for clarification during the video presentation. These formed the body of the discussion and reflection. In the previous three group discussion sessions, participants were divided into groups of four for their discussion. At the end of each discussion and reflection, they all returned to the larger

group to give their feedback. In this session, all the participants discussed and reflected on the video presentation together.

Fifth Session

Session five consisted of two parts. The first was the didactic session on the implications of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. The second part of session five was devoted to the evaluation of the project. Participants responded to the same questionnaire they were given at the beginning of the seminar. At the close of the sessions, the participants prayed together by holding hands as a sign of their new found knowledge, trust, friendship, and awareness, pledging themselves to be good ambassadors for the Missionary Society of St Paul and the Nigerian Church.

PART IV: DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND RESPONSES: ONE – FOUR

Initial Setting and Background

Earlier in the year, I approached the Rector of the National Missionary Seminary of St Paul, Rev. Victor Onwukeme, and the Dean of Studies, Rev. Livinus Onyebuchi, about the project and its purpose. I explained that the project was to raise awareness among seminarians about sexual issues involved in pastoral ministry in the United States and other places where the Missionaries of St. Paul carries out pastoral ministry. I explained that since sexuality was a sensitive and secretive issue in Nigeria and other African cultures, sensitivity awareness was very important for our future priests. I also gave examples of the fact that our religious community has had its own share of pain and embarrassment in the past year because of the involvement of three of MSP priests in sex scandals, both in Nigeria and in the United States. The three incidents, I said, were all media events. The incidents not only brought embarrassment to our community but to the Nigerian Church as well. There were negative comments expressed by many priests, religious, and lay people regarding the embarrassment, pain, and hurt they felt. The Missionaries of St Paul is the missionary arm of the Nigerian Church and serves as the “ambassador” of Nigeria and the Nigerian Church in other countries. So people’s pain and embarrassment were understandable. The Rector and the Dean were very much in agreement that such a seminar was badly needed. The Rector also noted that in the light of recent sexual scandals, the seminary had already incorporated sexuality as part of the seminary curriculum, but that there was nobody to teach or conduct

scandals, the seminary had already incorporated sexuality as part of the seminary curriculum, but that there was nobody to teach or conduct the seminar. I was happy that what I discerned as a gap in my religious community's formation program was already an expressed and heartfelt need within the seminary community.

The original plan had been to conduct the seminar for the fourth year theology students. However, the schedule did not permit it. Having been ordained deacons a few months earlier, they were under other pressing schedules that would not accommodate a five weeks seminar. The Rector and Dean then advised me to give the seminar to the third year theology students.

Pre-Session: April 7, 2009

I held a brief pre-session with all the participants on the evening of April 7, 2009. The purpose of the meeting was to meet the participants first hand, and to get to know them for the first time. The meeting was also to offer an initial explanation regarding the seminar that would be held the following morning. The seminar was held in the lecture hall of the Theology Faculty building of the National Missionary Seminary of St Paul. The participants gathered in the seminar hall at 4:00 pm. I reminded them about the seminar that would start the following morning. I told them the project was in partial fulfillment of my Doctor of Ministry program at the Catholic University of America. I said I was sure they had been properly briefed by the Dean of Studies regarding the seminar. They all nodded in the affirmative. I briefly described what the seminar was all about. I mentioned

the audio and the writing materials that I would need for the seminar. They pointed to their “Class Representative,” as the right person to make the necessary arrangement. Then the participants were given a handout from two Church documents to read and reflect upon for the following morning. After exchanging other pleasantries the participants were dismissed. The meeting lasted thirty minutes.

Session One: April 8, 2009

Topic: Sexuality in Nigerian Culture

Room Setting

Opening Prayer and Introduction.....5 minutes

Setting Ground Rules.....10 minutes

Warm up Game.....15 minutes

Pre-Questionnaire.....10 minutes

The Day’s didactic Topic.....20 minutes

Group Discussion and Reflection

Theme: Growing in Awareness by Assessing Our Feeling

Discussion:30 minutes

Feedback.....20 minutes

Concluding Remarks...10 minutes

Room Setting

To promote an intimate environment of sharing and easy discussion, I asked the participants to rearrange the sitting arrangement in the hall. The seats were then arranged in a circle. I reminded the participants that we had come to share, to learn, to listen and to be listened to. I admonished them to be open to one another and to listen to one another with respect, and without becoming judgmental. I reminded them that our discussions, especially the shared personal experiences of individual participants were to remain confidential, unless such participants wanted to share the fruits and benefits of their participation with other seminarians.

The seminarians needed no introduction. They were familiar with each other. I had earlier asked the “Class Representative” to make name tags for each participant, using their last name for purposes of confidentiality. I asked them to put on their name tags for easy recognition by me since I was not quite familiar with them. One of the participants remarked that the sitting arrangement reminded him of “Group Life,” without the name tags. “Group Life” was one of the activities for “group dynamics” during the Spiritual Year formation program in our religious community whose goal was to promote and inculcate healthy skills for friendly dialogue and resolving conflicts. It was also used for training in proper listening skills.

I introduced myself and announced the purpose of the seminar. I said the seminar was in partial fulfillment of my Doctor of Ministry program at the Catholic University of America (CUA) in Washington DC, but that what I was going to deal with was a truly felt need within the MSP community and indeed within the Nigerian seminaries. I asked that they give full attention to the topic for the period of the five weeks we would be meeting. I

also promised them that I would provide refreshment of soda and crackers for the sessions. Their face lighted up at the mention of light refreshment. Apparently, this was the first time they were being treated with such honor during seminars like this. One of the participants jokingly added that I should extend the seminar to some eight weeks. There was general laughter, as others nodded in agreement.

Opening Prayer and Introduction

I led the opening prayer. I asked the Lord to keep us open-minded about the topic at hand. I asked that he may lead us to a greater appreciation of our sexuality as his precious gift to humanity and to be able to express our sexuality in holy and wholesome ways that will give glory to his name. I asked that he may lead us away from fear and bring us into the joy of the *mystery* that we are. The psalmist says “we are fearfully and wonderfully made”, I prayed that we may see in each other, the finger of God and his love for each one of his children.

Ground Rules

To ensure effective participation and the overall effectiveness of the program, I laid down the ground rules. I told the participants that the aim of the ground rules was to facilitate a good atmosphere of learning. They would promote a working environment that would engender conducive and proper interaction among seminar participants. They would

also build trust and respect for each other. I reminded them that since the project's aim or objective was to increase awareness in sexuality, it was absolutely important and necessary that we consciously create a non-threatening atmosphere for learning and listening. On that note we were to observe the following rules. Students were:

1. To make a commitment to participate fully in the program
2. To be punctual
3. To respect each other's views
4. To maintain trust and confidentiality
5. To be non-judgmental
6. To obey times allotted to each section of the session
7. To feel free to ask questions. All questions were worth asking.
8. To laugh and make fun when appropriate.
9. And most of all, to relax

Warm up Game and Pre-questionnaire

Knowing full well that sex and sexuality are taboo issues in Nigerian cultures, I knew that broaching such a topic would require extra sensitivity even though the participants were familiar with one another and were within a familiar environment. When such a topic is being discussed so openly among seminarians, one has to be extra careful not to create a sense of scandal. You don't solve a problem by creating another one. A sense of assurance was needed here. The warm up game was a way of creating a more relaxed atmosphere, but also to build trust in one another as we broached the topic at hand. The warm up game is the blind trust walk. There are two stages of the blind trust walk. In the first stage, a volunteer is totally blind-folded. He is led outside the seminar hall and asked to walk back

into the room and find his seat. The participants were to watch in total silence. In the second stage, the volunteer is again totally blind-folded and led outside the seminar hall. He is asked to walk back into the hall and find his seat. However, this time, the participants watch and guide him with encouraging words, as he makes his way through the door, and into the hall and round the room, looking for his seat. Once he finds his seat, he is applauded and affirmed by the participants.

The warm up game indeed warmed up the group. They had fun doing it. There was much laughter and camaraderie. The lesson was, however, not lost on the participants: our life is dependent on others, and to succeed in life, we must learn and trust one another. I told them that, by extension, a priest's life is about helping people of faith navigate through life's spiritual questions and difficulties, including sexual issues. I reminded the participants that what we were about to embark upon was a journey of trust. I told them that we were there to learn from each other and to draw support and guidance from one another. I encouraged them not to have any inhibitions about sharing their experiences, no matter what it was. I assured them that everything we said or shared with the group would be confidential. The first questionnaire was then given out to the participants. This pre-questionnaire¹³¹ was meant to assess the level of understanding of the participants on the subject matter at the beginning of the seminar. They took about ten minutes to answer the questions.

Didactic – Sexuality in Nigerian Culture

¹³¹ The pre-questionnaire can be found in Appendix of this paper.

The content of this didactic reflected the material that I have described in Chapter I of this paper. The chapter not only describes the diverse cultural and religious understanding and attitudes of sexuality in Nigeria, but also the underdeveloped nature of sexuality education. It explains that sexuality is largely explained in its social, cultural and religious context. The deep psycho-analytical understanding of sex and sexuality and the role it plays in the formation of priests and religious is yet to begin. It pointed out some of the cultural and religious obstacles in the way of sexuality education in Nigeria. After the didactic session, the participants went to group discussion and reflection.

Group Discussion and Reflection

The theme of the group discussion was “*Growing in Awareness by Assessing Our Feelings.*” The topic was the sexual scandals involving three MSP priests in Nigeria and the United States. The three cases were well publicized in the media in Nigeria and the United States. MSP priests and seminarians were shamed and embarrassed. However, there was never a forum for the community to come together and openly share their sense of shame and frustration.

I began by describing my very first experience of going through the embarrassment of a sexual misconduct case in the United State Church. Having arrived in the United in late 1995, I had heard rumors of priests having affairs and molesting children, but I was yet to encounter any true story. Then, in 1997 a Dallas diocesan priest, Rudolph “Rudy” Kos, was accused and charged for assaulting and molesting altar boys. It was a big media event.

The priest was jailed and the diocese paid over \$23 million in settlements, not including legal fees. I said I was giving the example of this incident because the recent sex scandals that hit the MSP community brought back those memories of shame and embarrassment. Priests and seminarians of the Missionary Society of St Paul have experienced emotional turmoil because of the involvement of three MSP priests in sexual scandal. I told the participants that I wanted the group to share openly and discuss the sex scandal that hit the MSP community in their groups as a way of being consciously aware of their feelings and emotions, and assess what they heard or felt from the wider community of the MSP priests and seminarians. I reminded the participants that I was using these cases for our discussions because they were already in the public domain.

The participants were divided into three groups of four. Each group was assigned a spot for their discussion. To avoid any distractions, there was sufficient space between the groups.

The group was asked to discuss three questions:

1. Discuss and assess the feelings and emotions that came up, or continue to come up for you in the face of these scandals?
2. Articulate how these feelings and emotions affected and shaped your perception of the priesthood and the Church?
3. Articulate how these feelings have affected your view of “going on mission,” especially to our Euro-American missions?

The discussion was scheduled for thirty minutes and then they all were to return to the larger group for feedback.

Feedback

Each group appointed a secretary who reported on behalf of the group.

Before the report, one of the participants thanked me for bringing these cases up. He said the exercise had enabled him to voice out his pain and deep feelings about the cases involving MSP priest members. He said that sometimes when something as painful as this happens to a community, it always feels like losing somebody. He said he expected the Society leadership to have organized a forum where priests and seminarians could come together and talk about it so as to let out their feelings and hurts; “since this felt like losing somebody for the first time in your family.” Another said he was in total agreement with the first speaker. He said part of the reason for the secrecy was probably because of the embarrassing nature of the cases. Yet another wondered why such cases, though embarrassing, could be handled with such secrecy within the MSP community, when, indeed, the news was all over the national newspapers and on the internet. Nonetheless, they were in agreement that the seminar provided them an opportunity to begin to process their own inner feelings for the first time.

Responses: Question One

The first question sought to assess and know the feelings and emotions that individual members experienced in the face of the scandal.

A Feeling of a Big Let Down

All the three groups said the scandal brought a feeling of a big “let down” by the community and the Church. The let down was even more palpable in the context of the competitive religious nature of Nigeria. Many admitted that the reaction of other religious groups and communities to the sexual scandal bothered them very much.

A feeling of Pity

Many in the groups said they felt pity for the affected brothers. They said they wondered how they would react if they ever found themselves in such situations.

Embarrassment

All the participants admitted having an overwhelming feeling of embarrassment. The sense of embarrassment was on two levels. The groups reported that they were all personally embarrassed by the incidents. They said they were embarrassed about not wanting to be associated with priests who had shamed the MSP community and the Church. For them, this was not the best time to be a member of the MSP family. There was a second level of embarrassment: They were embarrassed for the Church. How could the Catholic Church in Nigeria be so publicly shamed, they wondered?

A feeling of disappointment and betrayal

All the three groups reported a feeling of disappointment and betrayal. They felt hurt that some of our own could so betray the community in such public way.

Anger

The groups reported that anger was one of the initial feelings experienced by many in the community. There was anger against these priests of MSP religious community for their “foolish” conduct. People were angry that the good image of the community, as well

as the good image of the Church, was being trashed in this way. They wondered how they could ever stand before their Moslem friends or other Christians to defend their faith. There was anger against the press for outing and splashing such matters in public in Nigeria. They were particularly angry towards the tabloid newspaper, *The Sun* for reporting in Nigeria what happened in the United States of America and then targeting another priest here in Nigeria. There was also some subdued anger towards God for allowing something like this to happen to the MSP and His Church.

Shame and Disgust

Many participants said they felt shamed personally. With shame, came a feeling of disgust for the action of these priests. One of the participants said he was also surprised that this kind of scandal could be associated with priests. Sexual scandal was not only bad but particularly loathsome when it involves a priest, he said. Another mentioned how a diocesan priest made a derogatory statement to him about the Missionaries of St Paul. He said he was very shamed and crushed by what this priest said about our religious community. Yet another mentioned how he was not allowed to assist at Mass in a particular parish by another diocesan priest because he, the priest, didn't want to be burdened or, rather, be embarrassed before his congregation by introducing him as an MSP seminarian. He said he had yet to overcome the shock of the rejection. He said this was the first time he was able to share the story.

Fear and Anxiety

Many said they feared for the Society. They said they became worried about the image of the Society in eyes of the Nigerian Church and in the United States. They feared that

these incidents could also provide strong incentive for discouragement in the eyes of our friends and supporters. They also feared that the Society was going to be financially vulnerable. Since the bulk of our finances come from the United States Mission, many feared the incident would discourage the United States bishops from accepting our priests into their dioceses. If that happens, they said, our finances could dry up. So there was fear about finances. Again, they said they have heard stories of how the dioceses in the United States were being sued and the huge amounts they were paying out for settlements and legal fees; because of this they feared that the Society could be sued and could go bankrupt as a result. They feared that the future of our community could be at stake.¹³²

Yet another Kind of Fear

The participants admitted to me that there was another kind of fear that was engendered among the seminarians because of these incidents: the fear of women. It was like a dark cloud of fear suddenly came over the entire seminary. They said a good rapport existed between seminarians and the male and female visitors to the seminary; now seminarians deliberately avoided female visitors. They acknowledged that this kind of fear was an insidious one, but said by talking about it now, they would know how to handle it. All the participants were of the view that the three incidents affected every seminarian in one way or the other. My questions did not anticipate this aspect of their feelings. I was glad it came up, and I was able to reassure them that fear was not necessary but prayer and a recommitment to our vocation.

¹³² I want to report here that the participants' fear and anxiety were not misplaced. Indeed, our religious community, the Missionaries of St Paul, was sued earlier this year by the two prison inmates. The civil trial is yet to begin.

Question Two

The second question was for the discussion groups to articulate how the feelings and emotions had affected the participants' perception of the priesthood and the Church. The responses were strong and varied. The emotion this generated was quite visible in the room. Responses ranged from hopeful voices to disappointment and those that were defensive towards the Church. Some saw the scandals as an opportunity for renewal. I shall group the responses accordingly.

Voices of Despair

Many in the groups said they were disappointed that priests who were supposed to inspire the people were the ones scandalizing them through their actions. They bemoaned the fact that the wrong actions of few persons ended up affecting the whole Community and the Church. Some feared that the level of exposure of the sex scandal in the United States could hit Nigeria. Some said that in this era of instant news, the scandal must have been heard in every corner of the world. They feared that the Church could lose its moral authority and credibility as a result of the negative publicity.

Voices of Hope

Some in the groups said they were not unduly discouraged by the incidents and, if anything, they regarded the scandal as an opportunity for our community to strengthen its formation programs. They said the incidents proved true the dictum that "the Church is a communion of saints and sinners." They said they hoped this would present an opportunity for the priests of our religious community to renew and embrace more

faithfully their commitment to the Evangelical Counsels. They said they realized this was a burden for the Society right now, but that if it was properly handled, that God could turn it into a blessing.

Voices of Defense

Others, while agreeing with some of the sentiments expressed above, also believed the Catholic Church was being unfairly targeted and persecuted for the action of a few misguided individuals. There was anger at the press who were reporting all these accusations. They accused the press, especially the western press, of shaking people's confidence in the Church. They argued that the Church had done a lot more good in the world and that the present scandal could not just overshadow all the good the Church had done. People could not simply reduce the enormous good the Church had done, and continues to do, to nothing just because of the actions of a few bad eggs, they argued.

Voices of Caution

There were yet other voices of caution within the groups. They cautioned that priests of our community and by extension of the Church should always see themselves as lambs in the midst of wolves. They said a priest is a human being and he must always remain aware of his frailty and human flaws. He must always remain alert. They said that as members of the Missionary Society of St Paul, we must always see ourselves as one body; because what affects one person affect all, they cautioned.

I think it would be fair to say that all the participants shared to some degree all the sentiments expressed above. It just happened that some emphasized certain concerns more than the others.

Question Three

The third question sought to know how the scandals within our religious community had affected the participants' view about "going on mission" to other countries, especially the United States and Europe. This question is very important because the MSP is a missionary institute. Our training and ordination prepares us "to proceed without delay" wherever the Superior General may send us. Our mission is to work in places where the Church most needs us. It is important, therefore, to gauge how the sex scandal has affected the candidates who are hoping to be ordained to the priesthood.

Once again there were varied responses from the groups concerning this issue of "going on mission." The reaction and responses were mixed on this particular question.

The groups were all in agreement that the sexual scandal in the United States and the involvement of MSP priests brings to the fore the need for adequate training and orientation of MSP priests before they embark on any missionary assignment in another culture that is alien to their own. They emphasized that since every culture is different and unique, the MSP must not assume that the seminary formation would be adequate enough for pastoral ministry in every mission.

Reservation

Many expressed the view that they had always expressed some preference for the United States mission, but with what had happened, they had begun to have some reservation about ever "going on mission" to the United States or even Europe. Some

participants were of the view that the MSP should be more selective about the kind of places the Society chooses to go on mission. They even suggested that the Society leadership should reconsider our mission in the United States. There was a general lowering of morale regarding the Euro-American missions. However, others counseled that every mission has its challenges. They said, whether you are in America or Europe or Africa, every mission would pose its own challenges and prospects. “It was important that people get adequate orientation and training before they embark on any mission,” one participant emphasized. However, it is also important that every religious community stand ready to learn from its mistakes and the mistakes of its members.

Fear of Embracing the Priesthood

Some in the group expressed the view that they were already getting some jitters and were already dispirited about their vocation to the priesthood. They were afraid of the future. Could they end up embarrassing the Church too, they wondered. One participant said he was seriously considering withdrawing from the seminary, but he expressed confidence that the seminar was already helping him to understand the situation better. He said he was regaining confidence in himself and in the Society.

The importance of Community

The MSP priest who was involved in the sex scandal in the United States had had problems with the Society. He was living on his own. This fact was not lost on the group. They were unanimous in their agreement that a “disconnection” from the community was always a sign of danger waiting to happen. For priests living and working in alien cultures,

community support is very vital, they asserted. To live your vows successfully, prayer was also important, they said.

Strong Sentiment

One participant probably summarized the sentiments of the other participants. He was particularly vehement in his opinion about the American culture and its litigious nature. He said he thought America is “too legalistic and artificial in their approach to God.” He wondered why Americans exposed the Church and her priests to such public hatred and ridicule.

Conclusion

The group discussion was a therapy of sorts for the seminarians. They were able to air their views and ventilate bottled up emotions and feelings. It provided some answers and the reassurance they had been seeking. I was personally impressed by the openness and straight-forwardness of the seminarians. They did not shy away from dealing head-on with the sensitive issues involved. Of course, they had been assured of the confidentiality of the discussions and their personal contribution to the discussion. A seminary is a very sensitive institution; matters of sex and sex scandals need to be handled with care and subtlety. In conclusion, I reminded the participants about some of the themes touched on during the didactic session. I emphasized again to the group, our responsibility to the Church, to each other, and to God that we professed in our public vows and commitments. I said that our success in living out the commitments lies not only in our attitude to daily prayer,

community life, and making use of other traditional aides to a holy life, but also in cultivating proper awareness and understanding of our sexuality as something good and beautiful which also demands our honor and respect and sacrificial generosity.

The session closed with a prayer offered by one of the participants.

Session Two: April 15, 2009

Opening Prayer.....05 minutes

Warm up Exercise.....15 minutes

The Day's Didactic Topic.....35 minutes

Group Discussion and Reflection: Case Study – A Mission Complicated by Sexual Abuse

Discussion: 30 minutes

Feedback 20 minutes

Concluding Remarks and Prayer 10 minutes

Opening Prayer

The participants were in their seats early enough. The atmosphere was much more relaxed and it seemed everybody was looking forward to this seminar. I asked one of the participants to say the opening prayer. He thanked the Lord for the gift of another day and the gifts of each other. He asked for openness of heart and a docile spirit to continue to learn something about our sexuality and our vocation.

Warm up Exercise

We took some time to engage in a brief value assessment exercise. The exercise was meant to create a lighter mood at the beginning of the session and to gauge the participants' level of priority of values. Seven human "values" were listed on the board.

1. Satisfying Family Life
2. Having fun and Adventure
3. Personal Growth
4. Success in Seminary Formation
5. Being Good
6. Good Health
7. Being Financially Okay.

The participant were given a few minutes to choose what they thought were the most important values in order of priority. After some back and forth hesitations and small discussions, the participants made their choice as follows:

1. Being financially okay
2. Good health
3. Being good.

Even though the exercise was a mere warm up exercise, it surprised some of us that the topmost priority for the participants was "being financially okay." I remarked that even though there was nothing wrong in "being financially okay," but that in missionary life, being financially okay might not necessarily be the first priority. After some pleasantries and big laughs, we moved on to the next stage of the session which was about understanding sexuality in American culture.

Didactic – Sexuality in American Culture

The content of this didactic reflected the material described in Chapter II of this project. It explained briefly American sexual attitudes, and traced a brief history that finally coalesced into two major sexual ideologies that are predominant in the United States today. It also pointed out the rich legacy of research the United States has given to the world.

Group Discussion and Reflection: A Mission complicated by Sexual Abuse

This is the first of the case studies we would be considering. I told the participants that I wanted them to begin to think of missionary legacies and how past actions have a way of returning to haunt us. It also mirrors how our cultural baggage can affect how we carry out our mission assignments or even complicate it.

Participants were divided into three groups of four each. Again, we made sure that all the three groups were at safe distances from each other in order to avoid distractions and people talking across one another.

A Missionary Tale – A Case Study

This is the story of a priest in his late seventies and a much younger priest. In his first missionary assignment as a young man, the older priest was sent to a foreign land. Filled with zeal and enthusiasm, he found himself getting “caught” sampling the local culture a bit too thoroughly. He got involved with one of the young women in the area and they

spent one night together. This was the only time they were together. Apparently, she was the only one with whom he ever got involved sexually. The priest realized quickly the violations involved here: violation of the young woman, of his own public commitment as a priest, and of his mission. He went to his superior and “confessed” his transgression. Both he and the superior spoke to the young woman and offered apologies as well as assistance.

All parties seemingly felt comfortable that this was the end of the story. Nothing was heard or said of the matter for decades. Until quite recently!

The younger priest was recently missioned to this same territory by the congregation. He came to his mission armed with a much more contemporary background in social science, and with the images of recent sexual misconduct scandals throughout North America fresh in his mind. He was talking about the sexual “scene” in America with one of the older women of the parish, when she rather calmly said it certainly did not occur only in America. In fact, she herself had been a victim of such sexual misconduct many years ago right here in her town. As fate would have it, this young priest had found himself in conversation with the woman who had been sexually abused by the older missionary priest some twenty five years earlier.

The young priest was aghast that such incident had not been publicly dealt with by his superiors. He said he was taking it upon himself to find out if there were other instances of sexual misconduct by his older colleague in mission. This, he proceeded to do, with little

discretion and prudence. The net result has been turmoil within the community that has almost torn it apart.¹³³

Reflection Questions

1. What is your reaction about this story?
2. How does this story affect or complicate your sense of mission?
3. What lesson ought to be learned from the experience of this Congregation?

Feedback

This case study generated a lot of excited debates. Some participants blamed the young priest for being over zealous. Others defended him. Some questioned the sincerity of the older priest, others thought he was naïve.

Responses to Question One

Question one sought to know the reaction of the participants to the story.

A Sense of Pity

There was an obvious sense of pity for the older priest on the part of most participants. Something he thought was in his past had come back to haunt him. He probably felt safe because the “one night stand” did not result in pregnancy for the woman. Since it happened so many years ago, he no longer would have worried about such issue. Many therefore felt

¹³³ Loftus, *Understanding Sexual Misconduct by Clergy: A Handbook for Ministers*, 24 -25. This is one of the real life stories told by John Loftus to illustrate the many aspects of sexual misconducts.

pity for his having been caught in a web of history's irony. Many participants were also very appreciative of the older priest's sense of sincerity and openness. They said that for the fact that he had gone and reported himself to his superior meant that he had a good sense of his priesthood and sense of mission.

Some Blame to go round

Other participants blamed the older priest for being too naïve. He was too involved with the local people, they said. He should have been more careful and not gotten himself entangled with the young lady of his parish. They said he must have felt lonely, but he should have known that he was dealing with a young person. And they wondered how he would have handled the issue if there was pregnancy involved, knowing this was a young child. Would he have allowed abortion, since everybody in the village would have known about it? They blamed him for acting before thinking. There was plenty of blame for the younger priest also. Some participants felt he exhibited self-righteousness. He was not involved in the real mission. He should have focused more on his assignment instead of turning himself into a "legal advocate." They blamed him for lacking respect and prudence for his elder brother priest, his congregation and his mission. He was also blamed for overstepping his boundaries: he left his primary assignment to pursue other matters. His mission was not to delve into past issues, but to do mission work. He was overzealous and fanatical, and his effort was counter-productive because the whole incident created turmoil for his community and the mission. He may have been well intentioned, but the way he handled the matter became counter-productive. He was not his brother's keeper, they charged. Having discovered his brother's fault, he went ahead to expose him, creating

turmoil in a calm situation. For them, the younger priest was a betrayer. He did not act like a brother. He was accused of washing the congregation's dirty linen in public. In context, this group likened the situation to what some seminarians do. When they go on apostolic work, they try to dig out the bad past of their brothers who went there before them. The younger priest was also blamed for looking for cheap popularity. He was probably trying to make himself liked by the people in his new mission. Some even wondered whether he sought the permission of this lady before outing her case and embarking on his fishing expedition. The younger priest also received some blame for going out to dig out other cases. This group felt he should have only dealt with the matter he had at hand: i.e. finding out whether the girl was rehabilitated, etc. Some said "awareness is sometimes dangerous because knowledge is power." The younger priest used his knowledge of the matter to cause trouble, even though the matter had long been settled between the lady and the older priest at the time the incident occurred. Some participants felt that the younger priest had manipulated the lady into cooperating with him in his mission of vengeance against the older priest.

One person praised the young priest for taking a bold step, but in the wrong direction. He argued that the priest was trying to build by destroying the foundation. He said it was wrong of the younger priest to have used one situation and context to judge another situation and context. He blamed the young priest for using the situation in the United States and Europe to judge his present mission, thereby creating turmoil in the process. But I reminded this speaker that even though his premise was correct, there are human beings everywhere. There are certain things we share in common, no matter where you live or the

circumstances in which you find yourself. One of the participants said he thought the sex was consensual. He said that at twelve years of age, a girl was mature enough to say yes or no to a sexual advance. By agreeing with the priest, it was a consensual affair, and the younger priest should have not have become overzealous in trying to expose the tryst. However, the other participants disagreed with him. They said that a child of twelve was still a child in their own cultures. They said a child of twelve could never be mature either physically or emotionally to handle sexual issues especially a sexual act committed outside acceptable cultural norms by one who was looked upon as a role model.

Exoneration from blame

Another two participants rose up and stoutly defended the younger priest for his action. These participants said that the younger priest's action was well-intentioned because this was the only way to save his congregation and the Church from some future embarrassment: They said the action was proper in other to make sure there were no other abuses perpetrated by the older priest. They cited recent cases in the United States and Europe where bishops and cardinals knew about such abuse cases and covered them up. In some cases, those cases were settled with money behind closed doors. Now, they said, the cases have come into the open and the entire Church is suffering huge embarrassment, pain and shame. They said the Church had paid dearly in these countries by losing their moral and spiritual authority to speak out on social and spiritual matters, and of course, the loss in huge legal fees and financial settlements. These two participants felt very strongly that we could not simply cover up crimes in the name of being a "brother's keeper." One of them asked rhetorically; "I wonder who was the brother's keeper in this case; was the

woman not ‘a child of Abraham as well’?” However, the defenders of the younger priest disagreed with him for blaming the Superior for not dealing with the matter publicly. They didn’t think that dealing with the case publicly would have been the best way of resolving the problem. They said the superior handled the matter the best way he could at the time. I said that the victim should never be blamed, especially if the victim happens to be a child. In every case involving injury and pain, pastoral out-reach must be made.

Praise for the Superior

The superior received praise from some participants, for being so fatherly. He handled the matter calmly and maturely. He was concerned for the little girl and had time to calm her fears. They thought he handled the matter in the best way possible at the time. I said nobody could tell the cultural context within which the abuse took place, but the initial first steps taken by the superior to meet with the priest and his victim was a good pastoral outreach to reassure the young lady.

Responses to Question Two

This question sought to know how this story affected or complicated the participants’ sense of mission.

Missionaries are in the business of helping people with their problems

Many participants agreed that the missionary’s primary task was the pastoral care of the people, helping them with their problems, especially their spiritual problems, rather than looking for whom to blame. The young priest’s action, according to the judgment of

many, was not in consonance with a good pastoral model. Some said that this incident would ever remind them that some choices we make in the missions remain. They said just as some of our good actions would eventually bear good fruits, some others could result in pain and anguish for people. Others said, the case study has taught them not to go on a “fishing expedition” against their fellow missionaries. Yet some other participants said, when on mission, it was important to know the missionary context and situation before taking action on anything. Yet others said that having heard the stories of the past deeds of missionaries; it would make them more cautious in their mission assignment.

Be connected to the congregation

Many participants also felt that the action of the young priest was discouraging to them. They said they would hate to see whatever mistakes they made when on mission exposed to the entire world twenty-five years after. Nobody likes his backside to be exposed, they said. They would rather have pastoral agents become more courteous in their missionary assignment. For this to happen, missionaries ought to have a sense of connection to their congregation, knowing that when the congregation hurts, every member hurts also.

Be sexually balanced and sincere

When the older priest violated his vows, he went and confessed to his superiors. They presumed he must have availed himself of the sacrament of reconciliation as well. This was an indication that the priest had a good sense of who he was sexually, and he was ready to make amends when mistakes occurred. For this group, the elder priest exhibited a sense of remorse, compunction, and humility. This attitude was praised by the group. They said it should be a model for every missionary and every priest as well. This group said it

was important to have a good understanding about celibacy and never think it is simply a deprivation, but a joyful offering of oneself to God for the sake of the kingdom. When mistakes occur, as they are bound to happen, priests should have the courage to own up to their mistakes and seek to recommit themselves anew to their vows. They said the older priest displayed signs of a well integrated person who was aware of his commitment to God and to his community.

Responses to Question Three

Question three asked the participants to draw some lessons from the case study.

Proper information about the mission

All the groups said that there should be proper information about a mission whenever a missionary is to be sent there. The superiors are to make concerted effort to brief a missionary about his new mission, and if possible alert him about any possible danger/s or situations that could compromise the mission and the individual missionaries. Once there, missionaries should face their primary assignment. Unearthing the ugly past of another missionary is counter-productive, some said.

Cultural sensitivity is a gradual process

All the participants said that learning about another culture was a gradual process. It involves learning the language, acquiring cultural cues which may involve gestures, facial expressions, signs, customs and norms which are particular and peculiar to that society or ethnic group. It even takes getting used to the kinds of food natural to the people. Many

also said it was important that a missionary should first understand the culture of the people before delving into issues, no matter how important they regard that issue to be. One said that for the first time he was even beginning to appreciate the differences in our Nigerian cultures. He said that the cultural sensitivity training would help him to appreciate the culture of his new mission wherever that may be. He also warned that since cultures are different, one should not transpose one's own culture on others. I reminded the participants that there had been cases where even the sound of the name of the missioner became a source of confusion for the local people because the sound of the name meant or conveyed something different (often something vulgar or a taboo) within the local language and culture.

Prudence required

The groups agreed that prudence was necessary in pastoral ministry. Therefore, a missionary should exercise prudence in reacting to any new cases that could confront him in the mission, especially when such cases involve the reputation of others. Many also said the reputation and interest of the congregation should be at the heart of whatever missionaries do. Hurting the congregation is not good for anybody. This group sounded a warning: "Don't begin your mission by condemning your predecessor." We should be our brothers' keeper. Self righteousness is dangerous, many participants said. They also warned that missionaries ought to be careful when on mission because later generations would judge them too. The reputation of the Congregation and our own reputations are always at stake. I asked the participants to bear in mind also that the cases of cover-up of sexual abuse cases in the United States and Europe was prompted by the fact that the

bishops were overly concerned for the reputation of the Church. If they also cared for the welfare the abused children, could they have acted differently?

Sexuality training imperative

To forestall future occurrences of sexual abuse cases, a sexuality workshop should be organized for the missionaries. There was a strong sense that there are no two ways about it. A sexuality seminar, they said, is very imperative, almost compulsory now, for future missionaries. One discussion group warned that women are quite unpredictable and priests should be careful when dealing with them. I reminded the group that the suggestion had a hint of sexist attitude to it. I said it was good to be careful with women, but more than that, priests are to see women not as objects of pleasure but as fellow human beings who are deserving of our respect and honor.

Where sexual abuse occurs, rehabilitation should be encouraged

A few more participants became convinced by the action of the young priest and praised him for doing the right thing. The fact that the lady could still call attention to the incident, after twenty five years, meant that she must have felt scared and hurt by the sexual encounter, they said. This group felt that the lady must have suffered for too long because of the guilt she had carried these many years. She probably blamed herself for the encounter, and for leading a priest into sin. Meeting the young priest must have given her an opportunity to voice her pain. One participant pointed out that it was the young priest's contemporary social background that helped him to appreciate the pain and suffering of the victim over the years, and probably, the pain and suffering of her family too. In this situation, a missionary has an obligation to help in the rehabilitation of a wounded and

hurting person. One of the participants warned that the world was changing and people were beginning to be aware of their rights. He said he was a recipient of such confidential information in one of his apostolic works. He talked about how a young girl had confided in him concerning a sexual assault she suffered at the hands of the parochial vicar of her parish. He said he himself was angry that a young priest could do such a thing to a young and innocent girl. He said he felt helpless to do anything because he didn't want to cause any trouble in the parish.

Some in the group said that a missionary should take care not to create a mess in his mission, and not to leave a mess behind for others to clean up. They added that acknowledging one's mistakes in a mission was essential.

Role of Superiors

The role of the superior was seen as very important. Superiors are to handle sexual cases with maturity and care. When cases are not handled properly and with transparency, it could come to haunt the congregation many years after, as we see in the United States today.

Conclusion

This case study generated a lot of excited debates and exchanges. As can be seen, something was said about every aspect of this case study. At the end I reminded the participants to keep reflecting on how their own social and cultural background could have influenced the way they approached the matter. I referred them again to the points I made

in my didactic presentation. Our cultural baggage, our level of awareness can affect us in very deep ways on how we deal with issues in mission. I reminded them about what some in the group already said: that knowledge is power. Our cultural orientation can also exert a powerful pull on us on how we deal with pastoral matters. With that, I concluded the session with a prayer.

Session Three: April 22, 2009

Didactic – Catholic Understanding of Sexuality; Theology of the Body

Group Discussion and Reflection: The Dilemma of a Nigerian Priest

Date: April 22, 2009

Time: 9:45 am to 10:45 am

Discussion: 30 minutes

Feedback 20 minutes

Concluding Remark and prayer- 10 minutes

Didactic – Catholic Understanding of Sexuality; Theology of the Body

The content of this didactic reflected the material that I have described in the Chapter 1, Part II of this project. It is essentially a summary of the understanding of sexuality in the Catholic Tradition. It states the biblical principle that man and woman are made in the image and likeness of God and therefore are endowed with a profound and irreplaceable dignity which cannot be violated.

Group Discussion and Reflection: The dilemma of a Nigerian Priest—Case Study

I began by telling the participants that the case study was used here because it was already a public record. The twelve participants were divided into three groups of four. To avoid distraction and people talking over one another, each group was allocated a space away from the others. They were handed the case study. This particular case study had to do with one of the practical examples of boundary violations. The highest number of sexual abuse cases with clergy in the United States have to do with “touching the genital organs” either over or under the clothes of the victim. I mentioned that they were not limited to the two questions though. They were free to express any other views or opinions. The case was chosen because it was one of the earliest cases of sexual misconduct involving a Nigerian Catholic priest in the United States, one who had already spent six years in the United States before the incident. I told them the context of the story so they would have a better understanding of the case. I reminded them that the story broke right on the heels of the notorious Dallas priest, Rudy Kos, whom I had mentioned earlier. The case was never reported in Nigeria because at that time we didn’t have the tabloid newspaper, *The Sun* and the Nigerian media had yet to develop an appetite for this kind of story. Participants had thirty minutes of group discussion and then returned to the larger group for a feedback.

The Dilemma of a Nigerian Priest – Case Study

He was an exemplary priest in his native Nigerian diocese or so it seemed. He showed much promise. He used to be fondly called “the bishop’s boy” by those who envied his closeness to his bishop. So it was not a surprise to many when he was tapped for a pastoral assignment in the United States. Father was very happy with his assignment. He celebrated his departure with friends and family. The year was 1993.

On August 7, 1999, *Dallas Morning News* carried a news story, “Priest pleads guilty to fondling girl, 12.” On September 4, 1999, the same paper reported, “Priest gets 5 years for molestation.” The subheading read “he will automatically be deported to his native Nigeria after serving time.” Father Nwoga’s happy sojourn in the United States had come to a sad end.

In May 1999, a mother and parishioner of St Anthony Parish, where Father Nwoga was pastor, had gone to Father’s house with her adopted daughter to clean it. The girl was said to have had a history of sexual abuse. At some point, the priest took the girl to a room to watch a movie. There, the girl claimed, she was “touched.” The mother claimed the priest had “confessed” to her, when she confronted him. But what does “touching” mean? Is it an intimate hug; a slight brush across the breast; a cuddling (as may ordinarily happen in Nigeria) or a deliberate “touch” of the private parts; no one was sure. On the claim of mother and daughter, he was promptly arrested and put on trial. The priest had many parishioners who supported him and believed he did nothing wrong. During the trial, the prosecutor sought the maximum punishment for an offense she described as “egregious,” “because of the priest’s position in the Church and his level of trust with the family.”

Afterwards, he was sentenced to 5 years in prison, the prosecutor declared; “Now he’ll get the sentence he deserves here, and in five years he’ll be Nigeria’s concern, and hopefully he will get the treatment he needs.”

However, during the course of the trial, Father Nwoga had confided in friends that he had been confounded and shattered by the whole episode. He said he had been naïve and admitted that nothing and nobody had prepared him for this ordeal.

Reflection Questions

1. What does this story tell you about culture?
2. What issues does this case raise for you in the light of all we have said so far?

Feedback

Going from group to group I witnessed animated discussions. Everybody was involved. You could see the emotions and passion with which each participant made his argument within the group. This case study has raised, for some of them, issues they had never before thought about. The initial reactions were shock and surprise that merely spending time with a twelve year old, even if inappropriate touching occurred, could earn somebody five years in jail. One of the participants said that the case study had given him a new perception about those who work in foreign cultures, especially in the United States. He said he had thought it was all easy and a good life. Another compared the scenarios as “walking on egg shells.” Then he asked rhetorically: “What time do they have for pastoral

work if they have to spend most of their time negotiating these landmines?” Another quipped; “That is why you have to be fully equipped.” “America is not your village,” he added. Yet some others expressed very strong reactions against the judicial system. Then, again, there were those who blamed the priest for his action. They said he should have known better, having been in the country for six years.

Responses: Question One.

This question sought to know what the case study tells us about cultures.

No two Cultures are the same

All the groups agreed on the fact that there are no two cultures that are the same. The language people speak, the way they express themselves in words and gestures, norms and customs and the socialization processes differ from place to place, they said. They said, even in Nigeria, cultures are so different from one ethnic group to the other. They say they know this reality well because of their various experiences during the six weeks apostolic work which they undertake every year. They said if Nigeria could be so different culturally and there was always an element of disorientation when you go from one culture to another, then it was easier to imagine that the American culture would be much more different culturally. What is morally acceptable in one culture may not be acceptable in another. They said that it is morally acceptable for an adult to be alone with a young person and even cuddle him or her without anybody frowning at that. They said, children freely go and out of “fathers’ houses” (rectories) everyday, and nobody takes any offense.

Our lives reflect our Cultures

All in the groups agreed that our lives are a reflection of our cultural upbringing and socialization processes. We are children of our cultures as much as we are products of our history and our environments. In the Nigerian environment, for example, cultural socialization is very strong and deep rooted. It is reinforced through ancestral and cultural festivals and events. We are born free of cultures (*tabula rasa*), they said. However, cultural socialization makes us who we are as individuals. The priest in question was a child of his own culture, and must have misconstrued how Americans treat their children. What he did, they asserted, was something very common in our cultures. The priest, probably thought for a moment, that he was still in Nigeria and was acting based on that, they said.

Need for cultural orientation

Since cultures differ in many different forms, those who are expected to carry out pastoral work in cultures different from their own ought to be given a good cultural orientation. Many said if the priest was well prepared culturally or given proper cultural orientation when he arrived, maybe he would not have done what he did.

The law is blind to an individual's culture

Some in the groups pointed out the fact that when an immigrant breaks the law, the judicial process does not seem to make attempt to consider the cultural background of the immigrant involved. Because of this cultural blindness, it becomes even more compelling that a thorough objective orientation is given before a priest embarks on a missionary apostolate. One person pointed out that the prosecutor had said: "Now he'll get the sentence he deserves here, and in five years he'll be Nigeria's concern, and hopefully he

will get the treatment he needs.” The participant said, he didn’t think that the priest deserved even a rebuke, much less being a concern to Nigeria. He said, he thought the prosecutor was over zealous and very harsh on the priest, making him out as a monster. But then again, he said it was the United States of America.

Response to Question Two

The question sought to know the issues this case study raised for the participant.

Nobody is beyond making mistakes

Some in the groups were sympathetic towards the priest. They said, given the fact that he was considered an exemplary priest in his native diocese, and had no issues with the law for the number of years he was in the United States this one issue should never have marred his reputation. These participants were of the opinion that the law went too far in prosecuting him because he was not a serial or repeat offender. The judgment made him look like a serial offender or a hopeless incorrigible. They insisted that he was harshly treated, and that the judicial system could have tempered justice with mercy, considering his exemplary life as a priest.

Sexual misconduct differs from culture to culture

All the participants agreed that from what they have heard so far, this case study was an illustration of the fact that sexual crime is defined differently by different people. They said, in some parts of Nigeria, a girl of twelve is considered old enough for marriage. In essence this could never be considered a crime in Nigeria. It becomes a crime, they said, if force and violence was used and if a sexual act took place without the girl’s consent. In this

case it was, presumably, a touch in a private area. I reminded the participants that if touching the private part of a twelve year old girl was not considered an offence in some Nigerian cultures, it was a grave offence in western cultures. I said there were grave moral issues involved as well because touching could lead to doing. I told them that if any of them came from a Nigerian culture where this behavior was acceptable, the participant must begin to get some re-education and also be able to help re-educate his people. One of the participants told a story he heard from a returning missionary priest of the MSP community. He said the returning missionary was assigned to a parish with a vast number of out-stations (missions). He made his pastoral rounds from one station to the other. In one of his first visits to an out-station, the station leaders offered the priest a young girl as a sign of their hospitality and appreciation for “Father’s pastoral visit.” The priest was aghast at this kind of show of appreciation, and of course, rejected the so-called hospitality. However, by his rejection of the offer, the people took it to mean that the priest had rejected them. It became a teaching moment for the missionary priest and his people. The participants were amused by the story but thought it was twisted thinking on the part of the villagers. Many attributed the behavior to ignorance. I reminded the participants that this was a classic case where a culture would need to be liberated by the gospel. I said the purpose of our missionary enterprise was exactly that; to seek to liberate people and cultures with the truth of the gospel through proper education, teaching of proper values, and the recognition of the dignity of every human person.

Need for urgent introduction of sexuality education into seminary formation

Many in the groups asserted that the case study and the lessons learned so far, has underlined for them the need for multi-cultural sexuality education in the seminary formation. They said that ignorance of the law does not exempt anyone from the law. In the same way; ignorance of the culture does not make you immune from the consequences of the culture. In actual fact, they said, ignorance of a particular culture puts you on a dangerous collision with that culture. They said missiology courses should include multi-cultural studies in sexuality

Understanding of Sexuality is much more advanced in the United States and Europe

There were some among the participants who said that what passes off as cultural norms and practices in some of our African cultures were simply practices based on myths and ignorance. This group admits that the western world had done more scientific research and study to know the effects and consequences of certain sexual practices. However, they also say that the United States, in their judgment, was overly sensitive and almost paranoid about sex and sexual issues.

Other reactions

There was anger against the prosecutor for saying “this is what he deserved.” How could one be sentenced to five years in jail for merely “touching a twelve year old,” some queried? Many felt that the priest was not even given any benefit of doubt. They thought the law was too harsh and even if they felt he committed the crime, nobody thought of rehabilitation for the priest. Some felt that there was enormous emotional and psychological damage done to the priest and his family. Two participants blamed the priest for his naïveté. They said having been in America for close to six years, he should have

known enough of the culture to be alone in a room with one considered a minor. They said he should have known that he was not in his village. There was the suspicion too, that it could have been a set-up between mother and daughter to extort money from the Church.

Conclusion

I concluded by thanking the group for their sincere deliberations and reflections. I said this case study aroused all kinds of emotions within the parish, just as it had done here. I concluded by quoting John Loftus. He said: "If a comment or gesture is considered to be sexually inappropriate by someone, it is usually said to be so by the police and courts these days."¹³⁴ And I said there is no straight forward answer to all the questions raised. I then advised that cultural awareness and sensitivity was the key to succeeding in any culture. I reminded them that even though I agreed with Loftus' statement, I would like to qualify it though, by saying that what one culture may consider an inappropriate touch may not be judged as such by another culture. A certain touch may be considered playful in one culture while the same kind of touch could be considered an offence and a crime in another culture. This is not to say that Fr Nwoga was guilty as charged or innocent of the crime he was charged with. In most Nigerian cultures, touching the genitals of a young person would earn a frown and stern rebuke from the larger society. Such behavior is considered to be dirty. However, throwing somebody in jail because of the behavior would be

¹³⁴ Loftus, *Understanding Sexual Misconduct by Clergy: A Handbook for Ministers*, 10. While John Loftus's comment is understandable at the time it was made because the Church was still trying to understand the phenomenon of clergy sexual abuse and how to reach out to the victims with compassion. The Church's understanding is clearer now. The American experience has become a lesson for many other episcopal conferences around the world.

considered very harsh or even extreme by most Nigerians. For the average Nigerian, prison is for rapists, armed robbers, murderers, and people who have committed really heinous crimes.

I told them that it was important to remember, though, that as priest of the Catholic Church, we are called to live out our public commitment to the Church and to God. A priest is held in trust to a higher standard. He is called to live according to the gospel ideals. He is called to live above and beyond any sexual behaviors that society consider criminal or regard as merely dirty. Sexual acting out, whether just “dirty” or actually criminal, is sinful behavior for a priest, I also told them that it was not only an obligation for a priest to live above board in all sexual matters, but also a responsibility to teach people, no matter their culture, what constitute virtuous acts or behaviors.

Session Four: April 29, 2009

Didactic – Boundary Issues

Lecture	20 minutes
---------	------------

Video Presentation	35 minutes
--------------------	------------

Group Discussion and Reflection on Video

Discussion	30 minutes
------------	------------

Feedback	20 minutes
----------	------------

Concluding Remarks and closing prayer	10 minutes
---------------------------------------	------------

Boundary Issues -- Lecture

The content of this didactic reflected the materials described in Chapter 2 of Part II of this paper and the video program: “*Understanding the Sexual boundaries in the Pastoral Relationship*” It is a model video program distributed by the Archdiocese of St Paul and Minneapolis. It is one of the earliest video training programs created in 1992 in the United States for the training and education of Church employees and volunteers on boundary issues in pastoral relationship. The content includes the opinion of counselors, psychologists, and theologians on the effects of sexual abuse and the collateral damage it brings. It also had brief dramatization of how sexual harassment and abuse occur in the work place, the testimony of those who were abused as children by the clergy, and what the Church was doing to help them heal and recover and also prevent future occurrences.

Discussion and Reflection on Video

After the thirty five minute Video Presentation, the participants were divided into three groups of four each. I reminded them that there were no prepared questions for reflection for the group discussions. I said it was deliberate on my part because I wanted the questions and feelings to naturally awaken within them as they watched the video program. I encouraged them to give full expression of those feelings and questions during their group discussion and reflections. I told them to listen respectfully to each other’s opinions and contribution, and remain non-judgmental.

Feedback

Appreciation for the Church

The groups thought that the video gave flesh and practical dimension to the theory that they had been learning over the previous weeks. The groups also said they appreciated the work and the measures the Church has taken in giving protection to her young and vulnerable members. They also appreciated the measures the Church had taken to deal with victims of sexual abuse in the Church. They said that in the video, there are licensed psychologists, counselors, and even a canon lawyer working together to heal the wounds of the victims and to find ways of protecting them. They were appreciative of these efforts taken by the Church. However, one group said they were ashamed that the clergy and church personnel could engage in such shameful behaviors with children. This group suggested that before a person is employed in Church work, the Church, as a rule, should endeavor to find out the person's sexual history as part of the interview process. They thought this was important because they believed, as the video had indicated, that those who were sexually abused as children had a high propensity of becoming sexually abusive themselves. They said they would hate to see the Church bear the brunt or suffer the consequences of somebody's sexual burden.

Others in the groups said the video was, in their words, "interesting, educative, and insightful." One participant wondered if the video said all there was to be said about sexual misconduct; if not, he desired to know more. This participant was thankful for the individual experts in the video who were able to interpret, analyze and clarify certain misconduct or boundary issues, and went further to proffer some solutions to some of the problems. He said he hadn't heard of the terms "pedophile or ephebophile" or even

psychosexual disorder before the seminar. Many of the other participants were in agreement with him about the new terms. They acknowledged they knew about sexual misconduct but hadn't come across words like "pedophiles", "ephebophiles" or "psychosexual disorders." They said the treatment of sexuality in the larger Nigerian society has been based on fear and avoidance: don't do this and don't do that. Sexual indiscretion has never been talked about in terms of sickness or disorder.

Sympathy for the Abused

All the participants said they were so touched by the sordid stories of the abused children. They said they sympathized especially with those children who were threatened of being killed by their uncles, nephews, and adult family members if the children were to reveal their actions. They said they appreciated the pain and confusion they had to endure growing up. Some said it was as if their childhood and innocence had been stolen from them. A participant shared the story of a girl he knew quite well, who was raped at age fourteen. Now that she had become an adult, she has nothing to do with men. She has become a hater of men. He added that, with the video, he could now appreciate the trauma and the predicament of that young girl. "The damage can be great," he said. Others noted how abused children were afflicted with guilt, how they blamed themselves, and how they began to think that what happened to them was their own fault. I shared an experience I once had in the United States. It was about a four year old who was taken away from his parents. He was kept in a foster home. Unsuspecting visitors had often been embarrassed by the child's habit of pulling on people's genital area. It was said that he picked up the habit from his parents who were drug addicts. The behavioral problem was a sign or an

indication that some inappropriate sexual activity occurred with the child prior to his being taken away by Child Protection Services.

Spiritual Damage

Many of the participants said they agreed with the comment of one of the psychologists in the video. He said that people trust the Church and the Church is a place where people came to seek succor when they are in spiritual need; they see the Church as a sacred and holy place, a place where they lay down their guard, a place of refuge. However, if the same “sacred place” becomes the ground where they are violated and exploited sexually or suffer abuse in the hands of a Church representative, the trauma could become even deeper and all-consuming. Consequently, there could be an explosion of anger especially when the most innocent and vulnerable members of the Church – children – suffer sexual abuse in the hands of the clergy or anybody who represents the Church. The psychologist also said that “the Church is to be a trusting and saving Church, not an abusing and exploiting Church.” I told the participants that I very much agree with the psychologist. I said that much of that anger he was talking about had translated into lawsuits against the Church in the United States and Ireland. I said the financial damage had been enormous for the Church. The latest estimate, I said, puts the financial cost to over one billion in settlements and legal fees.

Other reaction

One of the participants pointed out that the video was one-sided. He said the video talked about men as the only perpetrators. So he asked, “what about the women?” I answered that I agreed with his observation. I also said that most of the sexual abuse cases

that have come to light have men as the perpetrators. Women share to a greater degree in emotional, physical and verbal abuse, but men were the major perpetrators of sexual abuse. I mentioned too, that major studies of sexual misconduct in the Catholic Church had focused on priests and deacons. For example, the John Jay report commissioned by the USCCB was only about priests and deacons, not women religious or women Church employees.

Depression as vulnerability factor for priests

One participant cited the fact that one of the counselors in the video had mentioned depression as a vulnerability factor in sexual exploitation. He said he agreed with the man because a priest friend had shared an experience with him which confirmed what the counselor was saying. I agreed that, having lived in the United States, I could relate to the problems of vulnerability due to loneliness and general isolation of the priest. Another vulnerability factor, I said, was emotional burn-out. A priest may be running two or three cluster parishes, and if he doesn't get some rest, he runs the risk of emotional burn-out that could land him into depression and to misdirected conduct, I said. One of the participants expressed the fear that if the sexual abuse cases now happening in America or Europe were to happen here in Nigeria, we would all be in big trouble. He said from what he had seen and heard and judging from the facts of the video, we were sitting on a dangerous tinderbox. And should it explode, it would be disastrous for everybody. He said he didn't think it was going to be a matter of the clergy preying on young boys, but the clergy preying on underage girls who attend different Church activities and are asked to fetch water and firewood for "Father" or to run other errands around the Church. He said he was

not implying that the errands constituted abuse, but that he had heard stories where these girls were sexually exploited by the parish priest or the curate.

Conclusion

The video presentation had a somber effect on the participants. As many of them expressed during the feedback, the participants heard the stories of children speak for themselves about their wounds and trauma. There were adults, too, in a constant sexually harassing environment; they, like the children, were retelling their stories. I told the participants that I agreed with the last speaker who made mention about these things happening in Nigeria. I told them that the same stories heard in the video clips, could be heard anywhere in Nigeria if the conditions and opportunities were there for people to tell their stories. I said that sexual abuse or exploitation of women and children by the clergy could cause physical, emotional and spiritual damage. I mentioned that research had uncovered other emotional damages, especially with children, as was mentioned in *Our Children, Our Church* issued by the Irish Bishops' Conference, the Conference of Religious of Ireland, and the Irish Missionary Union. They include noticeable and uncharacteristic changes in behavior, sexually aggressive behaviors with others, mood swings, acting out, being too fearful and withdrawn, lack of concentration and poor academic performance, truancy, psychosomatic complaints, skin disorders, nightmares, anxiety, and loss of appetite. Children could also harbor guilt feelings as they may tend to blame themselves for the indiscretions of the clergy perpetrator. In older children and adult life, sexual abuse had

resulted in depression, failure to integrate socially with peers, suicidal attempts, drug and alcohol addictions or other substance abuse, and eating disorders. I said this was just too much damage to a person's life. It is, I said, a damage which could make people lose faith and trust in God and in the Church.

The session came to conclusion with a closing prayer offered by one of the participants.

Session Five: May 6, 2009

Didactic – Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

The content of this didactic reflects the materials described in Chapter 3 of Part II of this paper. It states some of the pastoral implications of the *Charter* and some of the perceived apprehension towards the code of pastoral conduct. It maintains that the mind of the bishops was to achieve healing and reconciliation for victims of sexual abuse, to raise awareness in the Church, and to put in place safeguards for protection of children from predatory Church employees. In the presentation, I maintained that the pastoral code of conduct was necessary at this time in the life of the Church.

Evaluation of the Program

After the didactic session on the *Charter*, participants had a ten minute break after which they returned back to the seminar hall for the second segment of the session.

I thanked the participants for keeping faith with me for five weeks. I said it was time to evaluate the seminar, and afterwards there would be some refreshment. I said that the evaluation would be in two parts. First, they were to respond to the same questionnaire they answered at the beginning of the seminar. This would be brief, I said. Secondly, there would be an oral feedback. I said that I would like to hear the opinion of each person. I said they should feel perfectly free to make any comments. The participants had about ten minutes to respond to the post questionnaire. After they had finished responding to the questionnaire, the participants remained as a group to give their oral assessment of the seminar.

Oral Assessment: Feedback

There was an overwhelming feeling that the seminar had been worthwhile.

Environment

Since the subject of this seminar was a highly sensitive one, trust was necessary. John Lawyer and Neil Katz define trust as

The instinctive, unquestioning belief in and reliance upon yourself, another, or a group...when you trust yourself, you are able to fully enter into the process of discovering who you are and can be. When you trust another, he or she can more fully enter this learning process, living and being...The trainer/facilitator's task is to structure the environment and activities so that the groups as a whole can move into a high trust place where openness to learning is maximized, where everyone is in a resourceful state and energy is made available for the learning task.¹³⁵

Did we achieve that? The participants thought we did.

¹³⁵ John W. Lawyer, Neil H. Katz, *Communication Skills For Ministry*, (Dubuque, Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1985), 10.

A sense of rapport

The participant thought there was a high level of trust among the participants. The participants knew each other very well. That created a level of comfort for shared understanding, listening and reflection. Also being seminarians in formation, the shared goal engendered common interest in the subject matter, though not without a certain amount of curiosity thrown in. The seating arrangement removed any physical barriers to intimate and undisturbed conversation. Participants were able to see one another's faces, gestures and body movements for fuller impact.

Many said they had felt a certain apprehension at the beginning because I was an authority figure and an elder brother among them. The socialization process in Nigeria tends to build a wall of separation between the so-called elders in society and the young on sexual matters. The initial apprehension on the part of the participants was, therefore, understandable. However, they said they progressively felt at ease as the seminar moved along. They said the respectful and non-judgmental way I had handled the matter and the assurances of confidentiality, helped them to relax and open up to the discussions. Some said the icebreakers helped, but they were helped most by the first group discussion on assessment of feelings and emotions concerning the MSP members who had been involved of sexual misconduct. They said the seminar helped them to unload their bottled up emotions. Some suggested that a similar forum could be organized for the wider community of seminarians and priests to un-bottle their emotions.

Level of Participation

There was maximum agreement that every participant was highly involved in the seminar. The small group discussions made it possible for each participant to share their own feelings and ideas. In the larger group, every participant was also an active participant; asking questions, challenging each other's ideas and expressing their own. Sometimes, the excitement was almost feverish. The familiar environment also made it conducive for easy movement and interactions. The refreshment time provided lighter moments for laughter, jokes and banter.

The Process

We used real life stories as case studies. The stories touched the feelings and emotions of the participants at one level or the other. Many said the stories helped them to appreciate what missionaries had to go through when on mission—the mistakes they make, the conflicts in culture, the challenges of new frontiers, but also the possibility of new life, new knowledge and the expansion of one's own horizon.

Participants also gave their personal impressions of the seminar.¹³⁶

1. A participant said, the seminar had taught him lots and lots of things. As someone who was preparing for the missionary priesthood, he said, he kept hearing of sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual exploitation, but had not heard it taught and elaborately explained in detail. He said he never thought sexual harassment or abuse was that complicated. He said so many concerns expressed in the video and in the course of the seminar were things ordinarily taken for granted in Nigeria. He said that people express romantic words openly in Nigeria and do not worry about it. However with the seminar, he had realized that those same actions could land him in jail. He said that the seminar

¹³⁶ At this point, two participants were called out by the rector to attend to an emergency in the seminary.

expanded his horizon. He said he has learnt so much and that he was very grateful for the opportunity to be part of the program. He thanked the facilitator for helping him.

2. Another said the seminar was an eye opener. For him, the seminar was very insightful and very enlightening. He said the seminar had made him feel comfortable with sexuality and even to talk about it. He said, in the Spiritual Year formation, there was a one-day class on the issue. But then, he said, he was still young both in mind and body then to grasp much. He said most of the things said were not clear, and he didn't know what to make of the experiences being shared and the emotions and reactions expressed. He said, having gone this far in the formation program and dealing with this issue at such a deeper level, he could now appreciate his own sexuality and assess himself as more emotionally balanced. He suggested that there be a forum where MSP seminarians and women religious could have this seminar together so as to hear what the women have to say from their point of view and experience. He said that would help one's growth process.

3. Another said that the entire seminar had created a sense of awareness in him. He said he has heard much about the sexual abuses and scandals in the United States and Europe. However, he had thought the abuses were rapes and violent sexual attacks on women and children. He said, he had never ever thought that even innocent sexual jokes, touching somebody, or other sexual innuendos could be aspects of sexual harassment or abuse. He said these things are taken for granted here in Nigeria. He said the seminar had created a comfort level for him to know what to expect if ever he finds himself in such environment.

4. Another participant said that he had grown in awareness of the fact that every human being deserved the utmost respect and needs some space to develop freely. He said we all

grew up in the villages or even urban cities where so many things happened; we did things to people and people did things to us. Some of the traumas of the past follow us through life, but there was nobody to share those burdens with. For him, the seminar was an opportunity to ventilate his own burdens.

5. Another said he could not fully explain what was going on within him. Then he said he could only cry out like the disciples, “God who can be saved?” He said the seminar was making him to refocus on prayer because he could not succeed with his own power. He said he was fearful of the future and fearful of the apostolate before him because of these sensitive issues. To succeed with his fears, he could only rely on God. He said the seminar had created some fears and anxieties but also has created awareness for him and the others to realize that they were only human beings who are aspiring to do the work of angels. I commended him, but also reminded him that the seminar was never intended to create fear for anybody, but rather to raise awareness that we are all sexual beings and to make people become even more comfortable with their own sexuality.

6. Another participant reported that this was his ninth year of seminary formation. He said he had heard so much about sexual abuse and sexual misconduct in the news, but that he had never had it explained to him. The seminar he said, had given him that opportunity to listen and to learn from somebody who knew something about it. He said he had learnt a lot in these few weeks. He hoped that if he ever found himself in the United States or Europe, he would be able to make use of what he learned from this seminar. He said he was confident that he would be able to cope with any culture he may find himself.

- 7.** Another participant said that in the first two weeks of the seminar, he had a negative disposition towards “going on mission” to the western world. He said he preferred to be in Nigeria or Africa where he would “be himself.” But having gone through the whole seminar, he had now shifted from that negative disposition. He said, with the awareness and knowledge he now has, he would be able to handle the challenges.
- 8.** Another participant said that for the first time, he could now appreciate the cultural vulnerability of our missionary priests in the United States and Europe. He said he could now see in new light those priests of MSP community who fell victim to these “cultural landmines,” and wondered about how much orientation they had gotten in this area. He expressed joy that he has had the opportunity to go through the seminar. He said the seminar had not only helped him to be comfortable and appreciative of his own sexuality; but also to be respectful and appreciative of other people’s sexuality. He prayed God to help us all in our endeavor.
- 9.** Another participant thought that the non-threatening atmosphere of the seminar helped him to open up more, and to learn more about his own sexual emotions. He said he had thought certain things could never be discussed so openly, and that he surprised himself by how much he opened up in the group discussions, adding that he had learned a whole lot more about sexuality in a few weeks than he previously had in a whole lifetime.
- 10.** Another said the seminar had made him aware of the fact that certain sexual behaviors do not happen simply because of sinful volitions but as a result of psychosexual disorders or dysfunctions. He said he was grateful for the new understanding and that he was beginning to see peoples’ behaviors from a new perspective.

Conclusion

I thanked the participants for their whole hearted participation in the program. I said I was happy with their comments and that I felt an overwhelming satisfaction that I had been able to accomplish my goal of raising awareness on this issue. I said I hoped this would help them in the future. I said I was happy at the level of their involvement and participation, and was happy with the contributions they made. I said I was particularly impressed by their level of maturity and openness to discussions and their willingness to tackle the delicate issue of sexuality. I reminded them that I too, had learned a lot from them and that I appreciated the insight they brought to bear on some of the issues raised. I expressed confidence that we would begin now to have a new generation of priests who would have a broad outlook on life, and who would be well prepared to tackle the challenges of the new day. I reminded them about the wish of the seminary authority to incorporate this seminar as a formal course in seminary formation, and that I thought that was an important decision by the seminary authority. I expressed the hope that that being the case, it wouldn't be out of place to hope of meeting them again in some future classes.

Closing Prayer Ritual

The participants stood in a circle and held hands as a sign of their new knowledge, trust, solidarity, and awareness gained in these past weeks. The concluding prayer was offered

by one of the participants. He thanked God for the opportunity we had to go through the seminar. He prayed that the knowledge that has been learned would remain with them and that it would become handy in their future ministries wherever that might be. He thanked God for the gift of our sexualities and the openness and thoughtfulness that characterized the group discussions as well as the sharing of their experiences and thoughts. He thanked God for the moderator who wisely guided the process with respect and diligence. He prayed that God would continue to increase his knowledge. After the prayer, I gave the closing blessing. With an embrace the participants shared a sign of peace with one another. The seminar came to an end.

Because of the secretiveness inherent in Nigeria ethnic cultures about sex and sexual issues, sensitivity was needed in sexual seminars of this kind. I believe this project was creating the proper platform for non-threatening and respectful environment and atmosphere for discussions in sexuality that honors the individual and broadens the understanding of the issue beyond dos and don'ts. But again, with the awareness gained from this seminar, seminarians can now realize that silence is a negative influence when dealing with society's sexual issues. The seminar was also liberating for the participants. For the first time, they were able to honestly share their feelings and talk about sexual matters in a respectful and thoughtful environment, and without paralyzing inhibitions or fear.

**PART V. Chapter 1: Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Project and the
Contribution it makes to Ministry**

Contributions to Ministry: Evaluating the Project through the questionnaire

There were twenty questions contained in the questionnaire. The questions were grouped under two subheadings: “Early life and culture” which explored the level of sexual education received in the early life of the participants, and “Life, Catholic Church and Nigerian Culture” which explored the different sexual issues involved in life, Church administration and Nigerian cultures. I will analyze the more pertinent pre and post responses to the questions.

Early Life and Culture

Question one: *Growing up, I received adequate sexuality education in my adolescent and teenage years.*

In the pre-questionnaire, nine of the twelve participants disagreed with the statement that they received adequate sexuality education during their early life. One person was not sure. Only two agreed that they received adequate education on sex and sexuality. The ratio was the same for post response. One person was still not sure. I would judge the pre and post responses as representative of the cultural situation in Nigeria. Children or teenagers are hardly brought into conversations about sexuality. Most of what they hear border mostly on dos and don'ts and the bits and pieces they pick up from peers and tabloids. There had been federal government attempts to introduce sex and sexuality education in schools, but

those attempts have never had much success because of cultural and religious inhibitions and bias towards sex. For the two participants who responded positively to the questions, I hope that they truly understood the question. I think one of the weaknesses of the questionnaire was not being able to investigate the nature of what they understood by sexuality education.

Question two and three: *My Ethnic culture is too secretive about sex and sexuality, and in my culture, parents and other adults find it embarrassing to talk openly about sex and sexuality to young people.*

All the participants (100%) agreed, eight very strongly, that their ethnic cultures were too secretive about sex. All the participants (100%) agreed that parents and other adults in their ethnic cultures find it embarrassing to talk about sex and sexuality to young people. The data for the above three questions suggested therefore, that these seminarians in their twenties, and soon to be ordained to the Catholic priesthood, have not had any meaningful discussion about sex and sexuality. It also underscores the need for an open and respectful discussion about sex and sexuality with candidates aspiring to the priesthood. I am afraid that what they already knew were mostly misconceptions.

Life, Catholic Church and Nigerian Culture

Question four: *Any sexual contact with a minor (a child below the age of 18) should be considered a criminal offence.*

Ten agreed with the statement, six very strongly. One participant was unsure and one disagreed in the pre-response. The post responses remained statistically the same. One participant still remained unsure, however, there was no disagreement this time. The result

was quite impressive. It seemed to me that here the participants do instinctively grasp the truth that sexual exploitation of the emotionally and biologically immature is not, and should not be acceptable in any society.

Question five: *In my culture, touching the buttocks of a fully clothed nine year old will be considered inappropriate and therefore sexual abuse.*

Seven of the twelve participants in the pre-response did not think so, while an even greater number in the post-response did not think so. The responses clearly demonstrated cultural bias. While in the United States, this act could be considered sexual abuse; in Nigeria most people would not see it as a big deal. They may consider it as dirty or naughty behavior, but not sexual abuse. That was why some participants considered it an extreme and harsh measure to have jailed a priest for five years for inappropriate touch in our case study.

Question six: *In some Nigerian ethnic groups, girls twelve years of age are usually married off to older men. This is just normal and cannot be considered as a sexual abuse of a minor or a violation of the right of a child.*

It is interesting to note that the participants view about underage marriage held steady in both the pre responses and the post-responses in question six. A majority of eight agreed that it was normal while four disagreed. In the post-questionnaire, seven agreed that it was normal, while five disagreed. This was an indication that this practice is so entrenched in some cultures that it would take time to change people's mind on this. The word "marriage" could be the moderating influence here. As long as it is a marriage issue, it was always normal for some people. The whole idea that a girl would need to have physical,

psychological and emotional maturity before marriage could take place has yet to sink into the consciousness of some Nigerian cultures and socio-religious groups.

My own observation regarding my own Igbo culture is that in the earlier days, underage marriage was frowned upon and discouraged, but not culturally prohibited. Because of the need and high quest for education among the Igbo people in the present time, and of course, the influence of Christianity, underage marriage is now either non-existent or extremely rare. This observation would also apply to most cultures of the predominantly Christian southern and middle belt of Nigeria. Underage marriage is more common in the less educated and more impoverished Moslem dominated northern Nigeria. However one would still argue that the participants are not Moslems or uneducated, yet some share such view.

Question seven: *It is necessary that sexuality education should form part of the formation program in seminaries*

When sex is talked about in seminary formation, it was always from the point of view of sexual concupiscence formulated in dos and don'ts. This point was also made by Fran Fender and John Heagle in an article titled "Tender Fires: The Spiritual Promise of Sexuality." They argue that: "Reading the moral manuals that were used for seminary formation in the 1940s and 1950s, one gets the distinct impression that the...church was focused (unduly) with the biological dimensions of human sexual response."¹³⁷ The participants seemed to get that impression too. In this regard, eleven of the twelve participants agreed, nine very strongly, that sexuality education should form part of

¹³⁷ Kieran Scott and Harold Horell, ed. *Human Sexuality in the Catholic Tradition* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2007). 20.

seminary formation program. Somehow the impression has been given that sex or sexuality education does not belong to the seminary

Question eight: *It should be made mandatory for every seminarian to undergo psychological or psychosexual testing during the course of his formation.*

Participants were evenly divided on this question. In the pre questionnaire, four agreed, two were unsure, and six disagreed. In the post questionnaire, five agreed, two were unsure and five disagreed. The responses reflected the general attitude of fear and negativity seminarians have towards psychological testing. The general thinking has always been like, “if you are sent for psychological testing, you must have psychological problems.” Therefore seminarians dreaded any mention of psychological testing. This project is meant to disabuse this kind of thinking and fear in the mind of students.

Church Life

Questions nine and fourteen: These two statements are interrelated. Question nine says: As seminarians of the Missionary Society of St Paul, would they feel obliged to report a sexual misbehavior of a fellow seminarian in the light of the sexual scandals of the present time. Question fourteen asked whether a priest was under obligation to report another priest who he knows was having sexual contact with a minor, to religious authorities. The responses to both questions in the pre and post responses were an overwhelming agreement, with the majority in the “strongly agree” column. The participants realized that sexual abuse was a very serious issue that could not be allowed to continue. They had seen the Church’s pain and shame, and they had experienced the same pain and shame in the face of recent scandals within the MSP community; they had listened to the injured and

wounded victims during the video presentation, and they felt this was not something to be condoned in any way, shape or form.

Questions ten to thirteen: Questions ten to thirteen are interrelated: whether a cleric who is confirmed guilty of sexual abuse should be removed from ministry (question ten), be transferred to another parish or ministry (question eleven), be suspended from ministry and be made to get treatment (question twelve), or be left alone to continue in his parish or ministry (question thirteen)? The participants remained almost equally divided on whether a priest or deacon should be removed permanently from ministry if he abused a minor. In the pre-response, four agreed with the statement and seven disagreed. In the post-response, five agreed and another five disagreed. Two were unsure. I would attribute this ambivalence to the Nigerian situation. Since the larger society as a whole does not regard sexual infringements, even against a minor, as a serious crime (except in cases of rape), many participants probably had difficulty accepting any rationale for defrocking a priest. Secondly, it has yet to enter the consciousness of Nigerian Catholics that a priest could be removed from the priesthood. Yes, they do understand that he could be suspended from ministry, but never defrocked. Those who have had the courage to leave the priesthood on their own carry with them a stigma of shame. For the few that have left, they always left when they were overseas in Europe or United States where there is little or no stigma attached. And when they leave, they usually marry and remain mostly overseas. However, the participants disagreed—eight in pre-response, and ten in post-response—that a priest who had abused a minor be transferred to another parish or ministry. The same number, ten to two, in the pre and post-responses disagreed that he should be left alone to continue his

ministry. This was an indication that they now understand the severity of this problem and would not want an abusive cleric to be moved from parish to parish or be left alone to continue his ministry. By a ratio of nine to three in the pre-response, and ten to zero (two were unsure) in the post-response, the participants agreed that a priest or deacon who abused a minor should be suspended from parish or ministry and be made to get treatment (the practice currently in place in the United States is that a priest or deacon is permanently removed from ministry). This shows that the participants, despite their ambivalence, are really “getting there.” This data also suggests that these young seminarians want a robust enforcement of sexual ethics by the bishops when it comes to clergy sex abusers. This project was reinforcing this view.

Question fifteen: *Do you agree that the Church has moral and pastoral obligation towards the victims of sexual abuse and their families?*

The participants were in complete agreement with the statement. By a ratio of twelve to zero in both pre and post-responses, the participants agreed that the Church has moral and pastoral obligation towards victims of sexual abuse and their families. This project has raised the awareness of the participants that certain sexual behavior by the clergy were simply unacceptable and that the Church has responsibility to those who are violated.

Question sixteen: *I believe that the Church has not been open enough to sexuality education in the past.*

By almost unanimous responses in both pre and post-questionnaire (ten against one in the pre-response and eleven against zero in the post-response) the participants agreed with question sixteen that the Church had not been open enough to sexuality education in the

past. This would be the view of many experts and lay people in the Church today. The sex scandal bears testimony to that.

Question eighteen and Seventeen: *Because of the sexual scandals in the Church, I am fearful of my vocation.*

Fortunately, as the response to question eighteen would show, the vocation of the participants had not been shaken because of the scandals. Only one participant “strongly agree” that he was fearful of his vocation. However, not many would be eager to rush to the United States for their pastoral ministry as responses to question seventeen shows. In the pre-questionnaire, only three agreed that working in the United States would be a fearful experience for them. In the post questionnaire, that number climbed to five. Six said they were not fearful. One was unsure in the post-response. Why the reluctance in going to the United States for pastoral ministry? My guess is that, even though the participants appreciated the law and the code of conduct that is in place in the United States, they would rather prefer not to be caught up in it.

Question nineteen: *I believe every Conference of Catholic Bishops must have a Charter for Protection of Children and Young People.*

The participants were in total (100%) agreement that episcopal conferences of bishops must have a charter for the protection of children and young people (question nineteen). This view remained unchanged both in the pre and post-questionnaire responses.

Question twenty: On whether sexual abuse is only a Euro-American phenomenon, eleven out of the twelve participants disagreed that it was only a Euro-American problem in the pre-questionnaire. One respondent agreed that it was so. In the post questionnaire,

eleven participants still disagreed that it was only a Euro-American phenomenon, only this time the lone person who agreed that it was the case in the pre-questionnaire had now moved over to the “not sure” column.

An average Nigerian believes that inappropriate sexual behaviors go on all the time within society. The problem is that it isn't being talked about because of the culture of silence in society as a whole. This fact is corroborated by a report in the *Sunday Sun* of January 3, 2010: “An average of 10 cases of child sexual abuse are reported daily at the Office of the Public Defender (OPD) in Lagos State, (Nigeria).” The director of OPD, Omotola Rotimi said, “though shocking, the figure represents just a fraction of child abuse incidents because people often don't report fresh cases. They say it is a family matter, and the police would usually encourage the suspects to settle.” She noted that “the culture of silence and settlement encourages the malaise to fester.” The sexual violation of a child cannot simply be treated as a “family matter.” It is a society problem too and must be treated as such. One can also safely say that because of the culture of silence and the fact that society regards such cases as “family matter” that most of the abuse cases are unreported even in the Nigerian media. Candidates for the priesthood are being prepared to know how to recognize and challenge or at least raise awareness in this area during their priestly life.

Post-script:

Eight months after the seminar, I had another opportunity to interview eight of the participants about where they were on these issues now. Two participants said they noticed that there was a gradual and tentative opening up by parents concerning sexual matters

regarding their children because of sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV/AIDS. This was in form of urgings and solicitations of parents to their children not to engage in risky relationships, and warnings not to get sexually transmitted disease. Could this mean that their own cultures were changing, they wondered. However, one participant reported an experience that he had while on vacation. He said it was about a woman, a mother who had four daughters. She was so pious and so intense in her adverse discipline towards sexuality issues that she never even allowed her daughters to as much as *talk* to any man. Among the four daughters, she loved one more than the others because of her athletic abilities. Sports activities took her favorite daughter away from home a few times. In the course of time, the athletic daughter became pregnant. The mother was so devastated by this incident that she refused to eat for many days. She blamed herself for her daughter's failure, thinking that she probably was not strict enough on her. This participant said the incident provided him the opportunity to put into use what he learned during the seminar. He said he was able to counsel the mother on the need to permit her daughters to have healthy and respectful knowledge about sexual matters and to have good interaction with the opposite sex. Many of the participants said the seminar changed their view about sex. They had thought that keeping good continence meant keeping away, and absolutely avoiding the opposite sex. The seminar, they said, helped them to have a healthy respect for the opposite sex instead of avoiding them. One participant said that for the first time he was able to respond without fear when somebody said "I love you" to him. He said he responded with "I love you too," without feeling shame or anxiety about it, because he was aware that "I love you" didn't mean; "I want to have sex with you." Others said the

seminar helped them to appreciate their sexuality at a very personal level. Just as it helped them to have a healthy appreciation of their own sexuality, it consequently helped them to begin to see others and the opposite sex in different light. One person said it helped him to “be at home” with his sexual urge, “claiming it and accepting it and knowing it can be tamed.” Another said he had grown more aware of his sexual weaknesses, but that he was more confident of himself now. He said he used to think there was something wrong with him because of his sexual urges.

Seminary Formation

As I mentioned earlier, the sexual scandals of the past few years has awakened institutions of formation to a new reality of pastoral ministry. The National Missionary Seminary of St Paul, Nigeria, was grateful that I was developing such a course for the seminary, a truly felt need at this point in time, and a desire strongly expressed by the participants themselves. I can now confirm that I teach a course on sexuality and celibacy at the National Missionary Seminary of St Paul, Nigeria. Sexuality has become part of the formation curriculum. It has taken a permanent feature in the seminary formation program. This, for me, is the major contribution to ministry by this project.

General Seminar and Facilitator evaluation

The result of the oral evaluation and feedback indicated that the project was quite successful. However, I will evaluate the various aspects of the program to see what worked and what didn't work well.

Methodology: The methods I used in the seminar included didactic presentations, case studies, group discussion and reflection, feedback and video presentation. There was didactic presentation and group discussion and reflection in all the sessions. Video presentation was used in the fourth session.

All twelve participants were actively involved in all the sessions of the seminar and participated fully and made active contributions during discussions. The didactic presentations explored the theoretical aspects of the subject matter while the case studies presented real life situations of the subject matter. The small group discussion provided the participants the time to reflect and interact among themselves regarding the case studies and presentations. The video presentation was helpful because it provided virtual reality of the subject matter to the participants. As one participant said; “it made real the theory.” The seminar explored the social, cultural and legal challenges that Missionaries of St Paul could face in their mission territories in America and Europe. The responses to the questionnaire also indicated that the participants were fully engaged in the process. They responded to the best of their knowledge and awareness. As the facilitator I was fascinated by the zeal, focus and enthusiasm of the participants.

What would I change if I did it again? The venue of the seminar had some drawbacks for the participants and the facilitator. As a seminary, it has a regimented schedule. And the participants being students of the seminary also had to keep to the rules and schedule of the seminary. Some of the participants held various functions in the seminary, and on a few occasions some had to excuse themselves briefly to quickly attend to an emergency situation arising from their area of function or responsibility. Those distractions would not

have happened if the seminar were to be held in a more neutral venue other than the seminary. I also had an awkward moment with one of the participants during the pre-session. I had informed the participants that the pre-session was not going to last more than twenty minutes. But it lasted for thirty minutes, cutting into another seminary schedule. The class representative firmly reminded me that I had exceeded the time agreed upon for the session. He said it would do them a lot of good if I kept to time. The intervention, which I thought was abrasive, jolted me. But then I realized that I was in a highly regimented environment. From then on, I became conscious of keeping to time.

Regarding the content of the material, I dwelt much on boundaries, legal issues and cultural differences, even though the project was on the need for greater awareness about sexuality. I did not present any information on sexuality per se. I also noticed that cultural differences dominated my thesis. If I were to do it again, I think it would be important to reflect more on the underlying moral issues involved in sexuality. More than that, discussion about sexuality involves what Robert and Mary Joyce described as “an ecological balance...that will require a deep appreciation of all the elements within the human environment.”¹³⁸

I would also increase the time allotted for the sessions. The thirty minutes allotted for group discussion and reflection was not sufficient enough. The participants commented that they did not have enough time to discuss exhaustively some of the reflection questions. They also said that there was not enough time for interactive questions and

¹³⁸ Kevin Thomas McMahon, *Sexuality: Theological Voices* (Braintree, MA: The Pope John XXIII Medical-Moral Research and Education Center, 1987), 40.

clarifications after discussion feedbacks. On hindsight, I think two and half hours would have been adequate enough for each session.

What I learned: I learned that even though sexuality is a highly sensitive and taboo issue in Nigeria, it was still possible to talk about it in an environment of trust and respect. It was also true that seminarians were naïve, fearful, and had wrong ideas about sex and sexuality issues, but they were still eager to learn and incorporate their knowledge into their private life.

Appendix

PROJECT'S PRE AND POST-QUESTIONNAIRE/CHARTS

INSTRUCTIONS

The pre-questionnaire is the first of two questionnaires for this Doctor of Ministry (D.Min) project. You will be asked to respond to a similar questionnaire at the end of the sessions. Information obtained from this questionnaire is confidential and will be used only for the purpose of this project. For purposes of confidentiality, please do not write your names on the questionnaire.

The survey is on a scale of **A** to **E**. Circle the number that corresponds to your answer. Circle the number (**A**) if you STRONGLY AGREE; (**B**) if you AGREE; (**C**) if you are NOT SURE; (**D**) if you DISAGREE; (**E**) if you STRONGLY DISAGREE. Please this is not an exam paper. There is no right or wrong answer to each statement. What is important is that you respond according to your gut feelings or instinct.

Early Life and Culture

1. Growing up, I received adequate sexuality education in my adolescent and teenage years. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree
2. My Ethnic culture is too secretive about sex and sexuality. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.
3. In my culture, parents and other adults find it embarrassing to talk openly about sex and sexuality to young people. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.

Life, Catholic Church and Nigeria Culture

4. Any sexual contact with a minor (a child below the age of 18) must be considered a criminal offence. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.

5. In my culture, touching the buttocks of a fully clothed nine year old will be considered inappropriate and therefore sexual abuse. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.
6. In some Nigerian ethnic groups, girls twelve years of age are usually married off to older men. This is just normal and cannot be considered as a sexual abuse of a minor or a violation of the right of a child. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.
7. It is necessary that sexuality education should form part of the formation program in seminaries. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.
8. It should be made mandatory for every seminarian to undergo psychological or psychosexual test during the course of his formation. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.
9. In the light of recent experiences of sexual scandal, seminarians of the Missionary Society of St Paul of Nigeria are obligated to report any sexual misbehavior to the authorities. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.
10. A priest or deacon confirmed to have abused a minor must be removed from ministry. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.
11. A priest or deacon confirmed to have abused a minor should be transferred to another parish or ministry. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.
12. A priest or deacon confirmed to have abused a minor must be suspended from ministry and he must be made to get treatment. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.
13. A priest or deacon confirmed to have abused a minor should be left alone to continue in his parish or ministry; **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.
14. A priest who has knowledge that another priest is having sexual contact with a minor must be required to report such incident to the religious authorities. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.
15. Do you agree that the Church has moral and pastoral obligation towards the victims of sexual abuse and their families. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.

16. I believe that the Church has not been open enough to sexuality education in the past. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.
17. The sexual scandal in the United States and elsewhere will make it a fearful experience for me to exercise my pastoral ministry within the American Church. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.
18. Because of the sexual scandals in the Church, I am fearful for my vocation. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.
19. I believe every Conference of Catholic Bishops must have a Charter for Protection of Children and Young People. **A.** Strongly Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.
20. Sexual abuse of children is only a Euro-American phenomenon. **A.** Agree; **B.** Agree; **C.** Not Sure; **D.** Disagree; **E.** Strongly Disagree.

Figure 1 Participants' Responses to Questionnaire before Seminar

Question #	A Strongly Agree	B Agree	C Not Sure	D Disagree	E Strgly Disagree
1	0	2	1	7	2
2	8	4	0	0	0
3	8	4	0	0	0
4	6	4	1	1	0
5	1	3	1	6	1
6	3	5	0	2	2
7	9	2	1	0	0
8	1	3	2	4	2
9	5	3	3	1	0
10	1	3	1	6	1
11	0	3	1	5	3
12	6	3	1	2	0
13	0	1	1	3	7
14	5	4	2	1	0
15	8	4	0	0	0
16	5	5	1	1	0
17	1	2	2	4	3
18	1	0	1	8	2
19	8	4	0	0	0
20	0	1	0	1	10

Figure 2 Participants' Responses to Questionnaire after Seminar

Question #	A Strongly Agree	B Agree	C Not Sure	D Disagree	E Strgly Disagree
1	0	2	1	6	3
2	7	5	0	0	0
3	4	8	0	0	0
4	8	3	1	0	0
5	2	2	0	6	2
6	2	5	0	3	2
7	6	6	0	0	0
8	0	5	2	5	0
9	6	2	4	0	0
10	1	4	2	5	0
11	0	2	0	5	5
12	6	4	2	0	0
13	0	2	0	3	7
14	6	5	0	1	0
15	9	3	0	0	0
16	5	6	1	0	0
17	2	3	1	6	0
18	1	0	0	8	3
19	10	2	0	0	0
20	0	0	1	3	8

Participants' Responses to Sexuality-Related Questions

Figure 1. Responses to Questionnaire before the Seminar

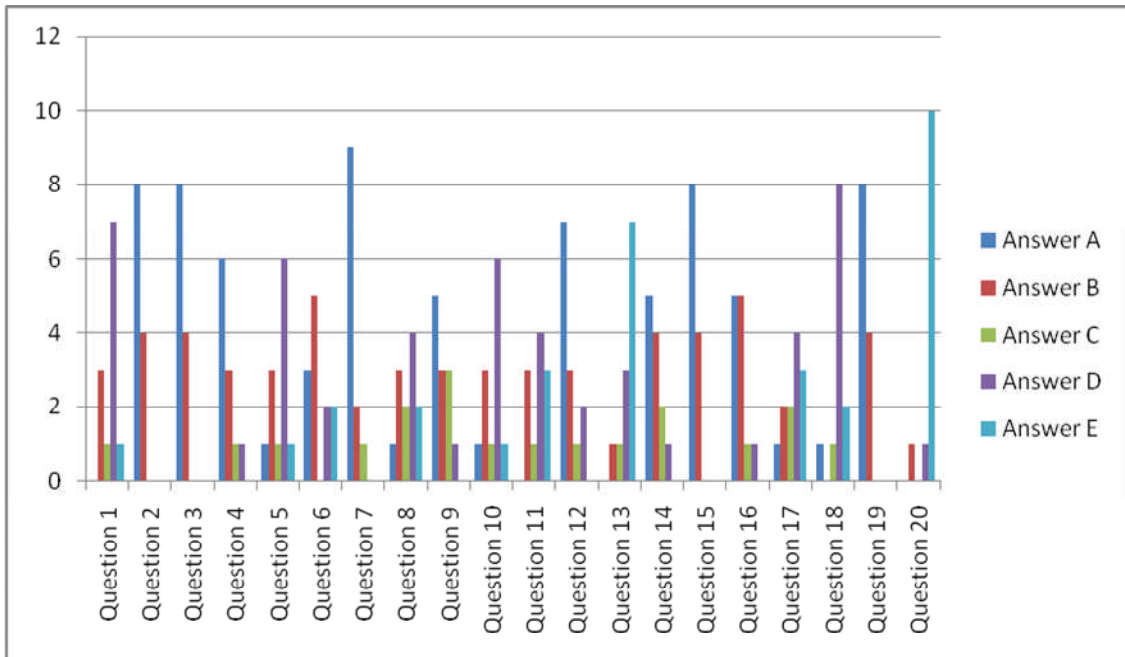
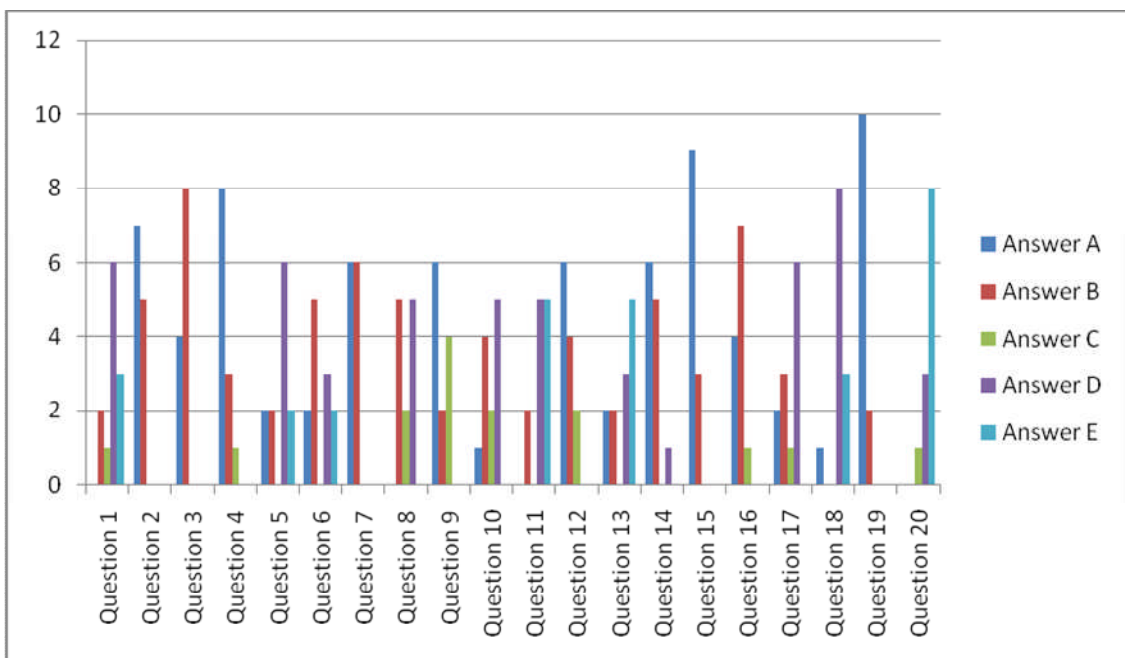


Figure 2. Responses to Questionnaire after the Seminar



Bibliography

- Adepoju, Adunola "Sexuality Education in Nigeria: Evolution, Challenges and Prospects," *Understanding Human Sexuality Seminar Series* no. 3, "African Regional Sexuality Resource Center," Lagos, Nigeria (March, 2005): 1-19.
- Ajuwon, Ademola J. "Benefit of Sexuality Education for Young People in Nigeria," *Understanding Human Sexuality Series*, no. 3, "African Regional Sexuality Resource Center," Lagos, Nigeria (March 2005): 1-12.
- Anugwom, Adlyne E. "Between the Ideal and the Reality: Doing Sexuality Research in the Context of Public Policy in Nigeria," *Understanding Human Sexuality Seminar Series* no. 6, "African Regional Sexuality Resource Center," Lagos, Nigeria (November 2008): 1-21.
- Arnfred, Signe, ed. *Re-Thinking Sexualities in Africa*. Uppsala: Nordic African Institute, 2004. Book on-line, Available from Questia, <http://www.questia.com> (accessed June 20, 2009).
- Carnes, Patrick. *Out of the Shadows: Understanding Sexual Addiction*. Center City, MN: Hazelden Publishers. 2001.
- Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria. *Called to Love: Ethical Standards for Clergy and Seminarians in Nigeria*. Abuja: CSN Publishing. 2006.
- Congregation for Catholic Education. *Educational Guidance in Human Love*. Vatican: November 1, 1983
- DeCosse, David E. "Freedom of the Press and Catholic Social Thoughts: Reflections on the Sexual Abuse Scandal in the US Catholic Church." *Theological Studies*, Vol. 68, no. 4. December 2007.
- Doyle, Thomas P, A.W.R. Sipe, Patrick J. Wall. *Sex, Priests, and Secret Codes*. Los Angeles: Volt Press. 2006.
- Francoeur, Robert E., Raymond J. Noonan, Editors. *The International Encyclopedia of Sexuality: Volume I-IV*. NY. Continuum Publishing Company. 1997-2004
- Fullam, Lisa. "Thou Shalt: Sex Beyond the list of Don'ts." *Commonweal*. Vol. CXXXVI, April 24, 2009, 14-17.
- Gula, Richard M. *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*. New York: Paulist Press. 1996
- Häring, Bernard. *Priesthood Imperiled: A Critical Examination of Ministry in the*

- Catholic Church*. Liguori, MO: Triumph Books. 1996.
- Hogan, Richard M. *The Theology of the Body in John Paul II: What It Means, Why It Matters*. Ijamsville, MD: The Word Among Us Press. 2006.
- Hoge, Dean R., Jacqueline E. Wenger. *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press. 2003.
- Hoge, Dean R., and Okure, Aniedi. *International Priests in America*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press. 2006.
- Hornsby, Teresa J. *Sex Texts from the Bible: Selections Annotated & Explained*. Woodstock VT: Skylight Paths Publishing. 2007.
- John Paul II. *Pastores Dabo Vobis: On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day*. London: Catholic Truth Society. 1992.
- _____. *The Theology of the Body*. Boston: St Paul Book and Media. 1997.
- Keenan, James F. "Notes on Moral Theology: Ethics and Crisis in the Church," *Theological Studies*, 66, no 1, March 2005.
- Lawyer, John W., and Neil K. Katz. *Communication Skills for Ministry*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co. 1985.
- Lisa Sowle Cahill, John Garvey, and T. Frank Kennedy, S.J., Editors. *Sexuality and the U.S. Church: Crisis and Renewal*. NY. Herder and Herder Books: The Crossroad Publishing Co. 2006.
- Loftus, John A. *Understanding Sexual Misconduct by Clergy*. Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press. 1994.
- McMahon, Kevin Thomas. *Sexuality: Theological Voices*. Braintree, MA: The Pope John Center. 1987.
- Otutubike, Izugbara C. "Patriarchal Ideology and Discourse of Sexuality in Nigeria," *Understanding Human Sexuality Seminar Series* no. 2, "African Regional Sexuality Resource Center," Lagos, Nigeria (Dec. 2004): 1-34
- Rossetti, Stephen J. *The Joy of Priesthood*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2005.
- Scott, Kieran., and Harold G. Horell, ed. *Human Sexuality in the Catholic Tradition*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2004.
- Sperry, Len. *Sex, Priestly Ministry, and the Church*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press,

2003

Stein, Laura W. *Sexual Harassment in America: A Documentary History*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 1999.

The Irish Bishops' Conference, The Conference of Religious of Ireland and The Irish Missionary Union. *Our Children, Our Church: Child Protection Policies and Procedures for the Catholic Church in Ireland*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005.

United States Catholic Conference. *Human Sexuality: Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*. Washington, DC: USCC Publishing. 1991.

_____. *Priests for a Millennium: A Series of Essays on the Ministerial Priesthood by the Catholic Bishops of the United States*. Washington, DC: USCC Publishing. 2000.

_____. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. 2000.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors By Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States 1950-2002*. Washington, DC: USCCB. February 2004.

Watson, Julia M.G. "When the Fruit Bearer Does not Bear Fruit," *Understanding Human Sexuality Series* no. 4, "African Regional Sexuality Resource Center," Lagos, Nigeria (September 2006): 1-12

Weigel, George. *The Courage to be Catholic: Crisis, Reform, and the Future of the Catholic Church*. New York, NY: Basic Books. 2002.

West, Christopher. *Good News about Sex and Marriage*. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press. 2004.