



# Priesthood: A family Pastoral Care Vocation in a local Catholic Church in South Africa

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## Abstract

The article begins by considering priesthood as a family pastoral care vocation in the local Catholic Church, South Africa. For most priests the priesthood is the superlative gift, a particular calling to participate in the mystery of Christ, a calling which confers on priests the inspiring possibility of speaking and acting in God's holy name. Pope John Paul II stated that the church prays continuously for new priestly callings and celebrates at the increase in such vocations. Priest make promises relating to the sacrament of the priesthood and these all have great implications. What is essentially in the balance is the word priests ultimately give to Jesus Christ himself. Loyalty to the vocation builds up the holy church, and when there is an act of unfaithfulness this indeed a painful wound to the mystical body of Our Lord. This work deliberates upon the vocation of the priesthood as a career, and it briefly examines and assesses the challenges encountered in promoting the priestly vocation. This includes the manageable number of young people who decide to become priests. Various causes are linked, such as for example the departure from the spiritual life, the disappointment of the missionaries, the induction of young men, the need for participation and commitment. It's an issue that requires important internal and external collaboration. A critical analysis of the social milieu of local South African Catholic Church serves as a methodology.

**Keywords:** priesthood, vocation, pastoral, religious, Roman Catholic-Church.

## Introduction

A vocation is fundamentally a profession. From a Christian religious context, a vocation infers someone has had a divine call to live a religious life and to serve others. Through the Sacrament of Baptism, all Christians have a calling in their lives, i.e. to live a life of holiness. People have distinct vocations and thus, a calling. A priest is expected to live in holiness, thus seeking to constantly live in the presence of God and have a living relationship with God. The vocation of priesthood is thus a supreme sacred calling. God calls priests to serve in diverse ways. The self-respect and spirit of the priesthood is not just in what a priest may do, but in who he is. He is called to be *An Alter Christus* (Another Christ in the World). Generally, one seeking to be in a priestly vocation attends Mass regularly, prays regularly, receives the sacrament of Confession regularly, and tries as best as one can to serves others. Above all, he strives to grow spiritually. The article discusses the vocation of the priesthood as a career. It is a ministry of pastoral care for Christian families. The Society of Sant Pius X states on its website:

The priesthood is also a vocation, but one infinitely superior to all other vocations because it is supernatural. God wants to shower humanity with



abundant blessings and graces, and He has chosen the priest to be the special instrument for this task. Without the priest and the sacraments, many souls will spiritually starve and will find it hard to get to Heaven. This is why discerning true priestly vocations is of the utmost importance. (<https://sspx.org/en/priesthood/vocation>)

The local South Africa Catholic Church (hereafter known as the church) has a duty to support and advance the vocations. The report investigates and assesses the challenges of promoting the career path of Catholic priests in South Africa. The most noteworthy fact is that most young people in South Africa today are not drawn to the priestly vocation in dioceses. Many people are unable to determine what occurred to make them negative, where this occurred, or even when it occurred. While the number of ordinations to the diocesan priesthood are increasing in some parts of the world, they are sadly falling rapidly in some traditionally Catholic countries. In South Africa, numbers are declining. From 1970 onwards, the Vatican compiles an yearly handbook of Church statistics which tracks ordinations to the diocesan priesthood. It is interesting to note that:

The highest number of ordinations to the diocesan priesthood in the global Church since 1970 came in the decade between 2000 and 2010, when the Church ordained around 6,800 men annually as diocesan priests. Nigeria is the lodestar of Africa's vocations boom. With 31.5 million Catholics in 2019 (less than half the number in the United States) Nigeria has increased steadily in vocations since 1970, and in 2019 saw only five fewer men ordained priests than the United States, despite the differences in Catholic population. The Democratic Republic of Congo has a population which is just over 50% Catholic, giving it more total Catholics than Nigeria. But the country's number of priestly vocations is smaller. From 1970 to 2010 the number of priestly ordinations increased in the DRC by more than eight times, to 216. But the 2019 number was somewhat lower, at 133...But while the number of diocesan priests globally remains flat, the number of Catholics around the world is continuing to increase...And in countries like Nigeria where the number of diocesan priestly ordinations per year is steadily increasing, the annual net change in diocesan priests continues to march upwards. (Hodge, 2022)

The local church in South Africa is now in charge of trying finding a solution to the vexing issue of lower numbers of ordinations. In the early church, the mediaeval church, and the modern church with its crisis and considerations, the ecclesiastical office was interpreted by the use of the terms priest and priesthood. If the Catholic Church now considers the problems in the historical development in which those terms were used, this was not one of the problems facing priests or the priesthood (Rahner, 1975:1282). A number of the issues at that time were divisions between the laity and clergy. Martin Luther's protest against the divide between clergy and laity, which he believed to be an established truth in the mediaeval church, served as the first indicator of the modern crisis in the old understanding of the official priesthood (Rahner, 1975:1283). Not all religious missionaries to South Africa were/are good role models, young people have been overexposed to the outside world, and the church has an independent relationship with the government and these are some of the concerns that the South African church should not undervalue.

The local South Africa Catholic church is now legally required to address this issue by engaging foreign religious missionaries, specifically to work as vocation promoters, such as evangelizing Sisters of Mary in the Diocese of Tzaneen. They also send revered local clergy and seminarians to study abroad and they create prestigious seminaries across the nation, like for example, St.



John Vienne. In South African dioceses, they ordain seminarians who have completed their theological studies to the priesthood and seminarians who have completed their studies to the episcopacy. They accept young men from missionary congregations who aspire to serve as diocesan priests or as seminarians. This does not prevent the indigenous youth who meet moral, human, and academic standards from enrolling in prestigious seminaries (SACBC, 2019). Each diocese covers the cost of sending its own seminarians to the top seminary.

### Tracing the problem

The creation of the Church by the “incarnate logos of God created a new and unique relationship with God’s people that allows humanity to enter into the Covenant and to become part of the ‘people of God’ (Nicolaidis, 2010:1). The terms “priest” and “priesthood” must be kept in mind by the church in South Africa when referring to the priest, also known as “*Vhafunzi*” (in Venda) and “*Morudi*” (in Northern Sotho). But these two South African local dialects don’t precisely refer to a cleric, but maybe in fact allude to any minister. A suggested term for a cleric in northern Sotho may well be “*moprista*” (The Pedi Liturgical Commission, 1999: 189, no.19) alluding to the appointed clergy as it were. Both are applicable to church officials. Except for the letter to the Hebrews, the New Testament does not employ them to characterize ecclesiastical office. Both phrases are used to describe Christ’s work of salvation in the early church. It refers to God’s people in the New Testament AS His nation (Nicolaidis, 2010; see also 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6; 10:20:6). They are used in the letter to the Hebrews to refer to the Old Testament Jewish-Christian society. The practice of the high priestly ministry is referred to as the priesthood in the theology of Christ’s work of salvation. “Neither doth any man take the honour to himself, but he that is called by God.” (Hebrews 5:4)

The local South African Catholic Church always views Christ’s work as the definitive fulfillment of the promises contained in the cultic order of the Old Testament and the end of the New Testament sacrifices, which can neither be repeated nor surpassed, while being aware of the historical development of the understanding of the term “priest” or “priesthood.” In Psalms 109:4, statements from the Old Testament are applied to Christ and show how his “priesthood” is immensely superior to all varieties of priesthood among the Israelites (Hebrew :3; cf. 1:2-13; 3:6; 4:14; 5:5; 7:28). The culmination of his self-sacrificing obedience was the crucifixion (Hebrew 9:12ff, 28; 10: 8ff). In the areas of sin forgiveness, sanctification, and providing access to God, His action is total and ultimate. His sacrifice on the cross served as a “once and for all” mediation (Hebrew 2:27; 9:12, 25–28; 10:10–18). The Old Testament era was only a shadow of genuine salvation (Hebrew 8:5; 10:1) and a parable (Hebrew 9:9). The early church body adhered to this as the local South African Catholic Church believes.

### The Early church

The local South African Catholic Church is aware that the twelve Apostle’s vocation and mission are crucial to understanding the role of the office in the early church. A trait of the twelve was their closeness to Christ’s redemptive work, which was evident even during Jesus’ lifetime. The selection of apostle assistance became important due to the continued expansion. Because of their reliance on the apostles, they were able to exercise their authority with legitimacy. They obtained their authority from the apostles. The Apostles established the college of elders (which yields the English word “priest”) in Acts 6:1–7, within which the position of their president or head (English “Bishop”) arose. The term for believers as the nation of God, suggests a proprietorship which is freely selected by God, by virtue of His love for His own people. But this term is also sometimes used to refer to all common people. This is apparent in Matthew 4:23 and Luke 9:13, in which milieu the word is used to denote a crowd which congregated to hear Jesus speak. The



term Church is used to denote all who are compliant to Gods will and who represent a universal manifestation of God's concern for the whole human race, thus including vocations such as the deaconship and the priesthood (Megesa, 1984; Nicolaidis, 2010; Catholic Culture, 2013).

The deacons' office also made an appearance. It was taken to mean ministry or service and the ministry carries forth its work as Christ. The widows in the early Church offered a thought-provoking Christian charisma, which was derived from their innate desire to do virtuous deeds and from their austere practices that suggest a solid Christian discipleship even though they operated honorifically. The *Didascalia Apostolorum* informs us that an Order of Widows existed in the early Church but this decayed in importance at the beginning of the fourth century, as several of its roles were adopted by deaconesses (Nicolaidis, 2021:1-2). Having said this, the proper placement of each officeholder into the historical lineage of those who were put in place by Christ himself at the beginning of the chain is necessary for the legitimacy of Church claims and actions (that is Apostolic succession). The local South African Catholic Church feels that being knowledgeable of the mediaeval church provides a clearer grasp of a priest's vocation or priesthood.

### **The Mediaeval church**

Between the time of Constantine the Great, Roman emperor from CE 306 to CE 337, who was the first emperor to convert to Christianity, and the Protestant Reformation which was a religious reform movement that swept through Europe in the 1500s, we find the mediaeval era. The focus was transferred to one specific task, although the most important one a priest could perform was offering the Eucharistic sacrifice. At this time, the church was not simply a religion and an institution but was viewed as a way of life. The phrase "*potestas in corpus eucharisticum*" was used to define the priesthood (Rahner, 1975:1283; Leo-Dufour 1970:407). The other activities became less prominent. The idea of the power of orders" was set apart from the idea of the power of jurisdiction, which had some repercussions on how their fundamental relationship was perceived. The deacon's role was diminished to that of a temporary position.

The "*potestas in corpus mysticum*," or power to rule, was associated with the office of the bishop. Its sacramental nature was occasionally disputed, and the relationship between the bishop and the priest was overly inhibited to the level of authority. The formal priesthood was in jeopardy of losing its initial singleness with the laity since the "*homo spiritualis*" (Rahner, 1975:1283) was morally superior to the man in the world and was not only perceived as its opposite. The main causes of the mediaeval church were social, as seen by the privileges granted to clerics under civil law, which helped to generate a distinct caste or class of clerics and the creation of the territorial parish as such. The political power inhibited pastoral work organization, claiming the right of patronage, and viewing churches as the ruler's personal workers by abusing its position as the landlord. All of this resulted in the priests becoming more independent of their bishops.

### **Modern times**

Martin Luther's teaching, and that of the Reformation period, is generally summarized in three "*solas*." *Sola gratia*, *sola fide* and *sola scriptura* — by faith alone, by grace alone and by scripture alone. He brought up the general priesthood of the faithful once more in the perspective of the local South African Catholic Church. This was not meant to discount the idea of a spiritual office or the fact that Christ established one through the ministry of the word and sacraments. Luther, however, rejected the idea that the baptized and confirmed Christian male needs any special religious training, or anything conferred by a sacrament of orders, or any need exists for things to



be codified into church law for one to perform their duty. The chat would suffice. Baptism and confirmation gave the fundamental qualification. He implied that the celebrant's role was not a priestly one by rejecting the idea that the Eucharist is a sacrifice. Contrary to his assertion, the ecclesiastical magisterium asserts, particularly in Trent, that there is an external, visible priesthood in the church that was established by Christ, passed down through the sacrament of orders, and independent of the will of the State or of the people of the church (Denzinger, 1957: 949, 957, 961, 963; 2301). In addition, for the local South African Catholic church, it is fitting for the official priesthood, as opposed to the universal priesthood of the faithful, that only the priest can celebrate the Eucharist in the name of Christ, offering sacrifice in this way and being referred to as a "priest" because of this (Denzinger, 1957: 957, 961, 2300). He also has admittance to a few more sacramental abilities in a similar manner and this includes the admission of sacrament of penance. Another tendency is the secularization of society, which substituted religious institutions in society with purely utilitarian ones. The impact of democratic political behaviour on church life as well as on the acknowledgement and use of the church's authority was the final factor.

### **Priests Leaving Priesthood**

A priest is a person who adheres to the Melchizedek King of Salem's order (Vatican II's Dominus (CD, 1963:564- 580). According to Genesis 14:17–19, He is "a priest of" the Highest "God," who bestows blessings, and His priesthood is "forever" (Hebrew 7:17). The Canon Law of 1983, which declares that "holy ordination once properly granted never becomes invalid," is consistent with this. People who have experienced "a cleric, losing the clerical condition" (Canon, 290) may mistakenly interpret this as a contradiction even if there is none. By stating that "for severe causes, a priest can be released from the obligations and powers associated with ordination or forbidden to execute them," the Catholic Church's Catechism (CCC) emphasizes this.

A priest cannot, however, return to being a layman in the literal sense. Ordination leaves a permanent mark on a person's character. He will always carry with him the vocation and mission assigned to him on the day of his ordination (CCC, 2017:395-396, no.1583). Due to the suspicions surrounding certain validly of some ordained native and missionary priests in South Africa, this information has not been well received. For instance, it is forbidden in the Catholic Church for priests to marry. As a result, the church is compelled to free them from the duties and responsibilities associated with their ordination with the approval of the Pope. The priest cannot, however, return to being a layman in the literal sense. Ordination leaves a permanent mark on a person's character.

The worst effect that the local Catholic Church in South Africa must deal with, nevertheless, is their personal crisis or a change of heart that has led some priests to resign from their priestly vocation, since it has been discovered that some of them quickly transition to become clergy of different denominations. Therefore, it is simple for parents and their sons to perceive a priestly vocation as being a risk that they choose not to take. It is important for priests to always keep in mind that earning holy orders "leaves an irrevocable spiritual mark" and cannot be renewed or granted "temporarily" (CCC, 2017:395-396, no. 1585; CIC, canon 290-293; 1336 1,3,5;1338 2; Council of Trent: Denzinger, & Schonmetzer, 1965: 1774). A priest cannot formally retire from the priesthood. Priests who leave the church frequently stop carrying out their duties. The church uses this distinction between a person's internal rank and their external function. Although a priest can resign and have his duties removed, his inherent "priestliness" cannot be altered. This can be done in several ways, one of which is to just leave. Legally, the Church has never forced someone to become a priest. It puts a lot of pressure on society. To legally relieve the priest from



his obligations, you must ask church officials for a "dispensation" (Canon Law Made Easy - CLME, 2009).

### **Catholic Church Missionaries**

For the benefit of the church, the Roman Catholic Church holds that every person has a missionary vocation at their heart (AG, 23). Church community chapels, and church schools are just a few of the institutions that get needed support. They are to be cared for by specific pastors in South Africa, as well as the locals. According to Paul VI's *Lumen Gentium* (1964: no. 23), their duties include "announcing the Gospel in the world," "planting the church in the human community," and "helping the faithful become deeply rooted in the moral and social life in conformity with the local cultures in order to enjoy certain firmness and stability" (AG, 19). It is a helpful method of leading the church that enables local people to gradually convert to being devoted Catholics. This appears not to be the only manifestation concerning Catholic church missionaries in South Africa due to human failings and racial discrimination.

### **Effects of race**

In South Africa, "it was impossible to identify a field not yet 'tilled' by Protestants, and Catholic church personnel were significantly involved in aiding the white population, which indeed represented the majority in many parishes" (Baur, 1994:404). This indicates that the local South African Church used to be "a white-dominated church" because of inherent racism. The local Catholic Church management was difficult due to the large black population in the area. Black indigenous people perceived this as colonial "white dominance" since it consistently resembled mission churches. It helped that South Africa was the first African Catholic nation to set up an Apostolic Delegation, which was done in 1922 after the nation declined to open diplomatic ties with the Vatican. To hasten the development of priests, the Delegate asked the Bishops' Conference to establish two national seminaries in 1947. St. John Vianney in Pretoria was consequently made available to "white applicants," while for those who were "black" St. Peter's in Pevensey was given national status and transferred to Hammanskraal, 30 miles north of Pretoria, in 1963. To create a Joint Academic Institute, a process of unification was started in the 1970s. Three weeks prior to the Soweto Uprising in 1976, a five-year dispute between students and a black rector and white staff members broke out. When St. Peter's became the College of Philosophy and St. John Vianney became the College of Theology, the merger was ultimately completed in 1981. John Baur, stated, and the history of South Africa says:

The seminary crisis was but a reflection of the tension between black and white clergy. All the time the African priests have felt that they played a very subordinate role in a church that was practically a white man's 'cab' in its leadership. Their treatment in the parishes by white priests discouraged African candidates. Dissatisfaction over this situation and over the running of St. Peter's seminary induced part of the black clergy to split from the Southern African Council of Priests and to form the Black Priests' solidarity Group in 1973 (Baur, 1994:406).

This is to give some hints of failures on the part of Catholic missionaries to inspire locals, especially black people, to enter the priesthood and holy life. It is something that both present and future missionaries for the Catholic Church must learn from, so that they do not make the same mistakes ever again. When Catholic missionaries started serving both black and white South African communities, the African Catholic Church picked up the pace. However, racial discrimination made it challenging for some missionaries to integrate.



## **Obstacle to Inculturation**

In preserving African traditional values there are tools that missionaries couldn't understand. What some missionaries had to do was to put a halt to native Catholic converts. This involved, Churchgoers being prevented from singing in various native languages due to discrimination. Included was disengaging from traditional practices such as playing traditional instruments, such as drums, in churches. In fact:

...missionaries made the mistake of believing that to become a Christian, Batswana had to completely abandon their indigenous cultures. They treated African religions as evil and did everything possible to ensure that it was ousted. The western missionaries believed that traditional religious beliefs and practices were inferior, and together with the traditional customs, had to be done away with before the acceptance of Christianity. However, this was vehemently resisted. (Nkomazana & Setume, 2016:2)

It was a failure from the part of the missionaries not knowing that it made people detest their own culture and society. It's almost as if African culture was something evil. Western missionaries undermined cultural and religious traditions of Africans. The missionary tactic was to enforce western values which they considered to be superior. They assumed a western preeminence and thus undermined the cultural, religious, social ways of life (Nkomazana & Setume, 2016:2). In South Africa natives were even told not to dress traditionally inside church structures. South Africans consequently developed a disdain towards imported goods. Even now, the wound has not completely healed. Most South African parents and young people don't seem to be persuaded despite the local church's emphasis on "ending racism" (SACBC, 2020). Many of them are unaware that SACBC engages in anti-racial activity, and due to some racist behavior, South Africans are suspicious of foreign visitors. More than simply the clergy and religious life in South Africa have been damaged by the problem of racial prejudice which existed. However, xenophobic behaviour that took place in 2019–2020 significantly influenced the nation's politics (Tamir & Budiman, 2019; Spatari, 2020:64). This is an indirect way of addressing some of the concerns raised when the local church deals with the problem of a shortage of native priestly vocations in South Africa.

## **The impact of external exposures**

The lackluster interest among young people in the West in becoming priests is also one additional factor contributing to the reduction in vocations (Roy, 2019; Woods, 2012). This nation interacts with other countries throughout the world, including those in Europe, North America, and other continents; it is not a solitary one. Most Christians live outside of Christianity's traditional houses in Europe and the United States, according to van Aarde (2019). There are certain unpleasant things that South Africans experience and that the media covers that could have a negative impact on the populace. The innate priestly vocation is one of them. Priesthood is viewed by Roman Catholics as a "vocation" or, more particularly, as a "calling." The person is approved for ordination by the church after being called by God. In South Africa, there aren't many people that answer God's call. The concern is expressed in this work regarding the clerical service call and the lack of men in accepting it.

This serves to raise an awareness of possible repercussions, especially among Catholics who are not aware of the significance of working with SACBC bishops and priests to encourage vocations to the priesthood. After making attempts to address the issue of a lack of priestly



vocations in South Africa, there has been little success as many refuse to enter the priesthood. Michael Walsh asserts that the circumstances were similar in North America and Western Europe. Increasing the number of Catholic clergy members who could be hired, has placed Churches under so much pressure that many people felt compelled to advocate for women's ordination and the relaxation of the statute requiring priests to maintain single status (Walsh, 2006). Events like these in Europe and America may have also had an adverse impact on young South African Catholics, but not on the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC). The SACBC serves as a communication link between the South African Catholic Church and the public, who are then contacted by regular bishops on a range of important issues.

### **Lack of collaboration**

Regarding vocations to the priesthood, there is no collaboration between the church and the government in South Africa. The government and the church are separate entities. They share a concern for the welfare of the families even though they go by various names. The following indicates that Paul VI's *Gaudium et Spes* must have had an impact on both institutions: "The church, by the reason of her role and competence, is not identified with any political groupings in society. The political community and the church are autonomous and independent of each other in their own fields" (GS, 76).

This statement suggests that closer collaboration between the two organizations will encourage more young people to enroll in primary seminaries and thus to choose careers in the priesthood, the brotherhood, and the sisterhood and a religious life because both the integrity of people's eternal destiny and the temporal order constrain people's perspectives. Since it draws more young people, the government has an edge over the church in this situation. Through the government and the church, everyone can find employment. On the other hand, because of its focus on expanding God's kingdom, the church lacks economic clout. Young people might interpret some church talk as supporting God's metaphysical kingdom. Since they only have a bodily understanding of who they are, they are prone to contradiction. As a result, the church in South Africa is frequently linked to poverty, especially among young people and their parents. Due to the church's continued work in family pastoral care and national growth, some of the older languages still in use by the church may need to be altered. Despite the government's financial ability to pay working young people, a lack of cooperation has left many qualified young people in South Africa without access to paid employment. Government and church cooperation is desperately needed in South Africa to combat unemployment and some of the risks it entails, as well as to promote vocations to the priesthood and convent life.

This topic is shaped by several theories, but the theory of "vocation" is the most significant. The Latin word "*vocare*" or "*voctio*," which means "to call," "calling," or "to be addressed by a voice," is where the word "vocation" originates (Cremen, 2020). The word also has the meaning of "a commitment" in medicine to a "limited field of labor," in other words. Like a calling, a vocation also denotes a "profession" (Derman, 2012:98).

### **Calling concept**

Vocations have traditionally been connected to religious life or the "profession" of caring. Therefore, asserting that vocation is about "calling" and that accepting a call entails making a "profession" of faith, practice, or both, weren't exaggerating the situation (the shorter Oxford Dictionary on historical sources: 2486; Percy, 2016:309). Pursuing vocation employment differs from other professions or careers in this regard. A "strong belief that one should pursue a





particular vocation or occupation" is meant by this (Catholic Culture, 2013; Soanes, 2008:1031). The priest is in essence what is termed an *alter Christus* or another Christ. He is called to his vocation so as to be a witness of Christ to the flock that he has been entrusted with. He is called to minister of the holy sacraments, proclaim the word, teach the faith, and to be a faithful steward of the Church of Christ. The priest must guide his flock so that they are able to reach the promised heavenly kingdom.

Men and women called to live the religious life as religious sisters and brothers or monks and nuns are also called to this act of accompaniment. They are called through a life dedicated to poverty, chastity and obedience to be a witness of the life of heaven living here on earth. They are to serve as a reminder and an encouragement to us to live our own lives with hearts and minds fixed on Christ. They live their lives in radical contrast to this world that is fading away. (Catholic Diocese of Arlington, n.d.)

Systems for teaching priests hold various perspectives on vocation. A transcending or heavenly other, whose call is very different from a summons from a worldly other, is thought to be making the call in a priestly religious setting. Such a call is impractical in secular settings because no such entity is known to exist. Therefore, it would be incorrect to assume that the idea of vocation, as it is used in Christian priestly training, can be applied to other secular training environments without losing some of its characteristically Christian elements. As demonstrated by the focus on the word's history and the subtlety of its application to religious experience, the relational and communal dimensions of language communication represented by vocation, however, may very well serve as a meta-disciplinary description of the experience of beginning training.

### **Metaphysical concept**

The distinction between this kind of calling and other language acts or exchanges cannot be made just based on communication, along with a philosophical perspective of vocation, which is concerned with interdependence. It can be distinguished because of training exercises. However, vocation is connected, directed, and responsive, as the term suggests. It is possible to exaggerate the importance of vocational training as a vocal appeal that is both urgent and more than just a technique to place oneself within an institutional hierarchy. Callings are portrayed as individually felt obligations to others to engage in cooperative work activities. Additionally, it suggests to the vocal components of communication that callings are shared. A critical component of a profession is this. Vocation assembles the traits it has in common with verbal communication as a relational network (Matthews, 2011). It would be an understatement to suggest that for example convent life is not included in the definition of vocation. It thoroughly examines a variety of training disciplines' occupations. Rather than actual facts, a vocation in the context of Christianity refers to a person's consciousness of a particular duty to act.

### **The vocational trends**

The term "vocation" has undergone numerous interpretations throughout history, from traditional to mediaeval to modern. In fact, when someone says to a friend that you have a vocation, the listener (or listeners) may quickly think of a person who has been given instructions by God to pursue a profession in religion and to carry out a singular spiritual responsibility or task in one's religious life, to use a religious term. In the Middle Ages, vocation came to mean being called away from the realm of active employment. but in the direction of a prayerful and reflective way of living. That is a priest's daily existence. Martin Luther (Matthews, 2011) and John Calvin (Imliwabang, 2016:72ff) promoted clerical vocation during the Protestant Reformation by



associating secular professions with spirituality. It suggests that they are also heavenly callings. Human endeavour is also a divine calling, according to a notion that emerged in Protestant work ethics. In 1930, this protestant viewpoint received support, which is consistent with South Africa's capitalist mindset. This is where "South Africa's Johannesburg is known as the 'Golden City,'" according to Oswald Hirmer, "the heart of South Africa's wealth and social difficulties" (Hirmer, 1981:4). Because you put in labour and earn money, you are confident in Christ.

In 1930, the German Marxist and political economist Max Weber disparaged this protestant idea of vocation as a damaging force due to the economic reasoning behind capitalism's growing dominance. The idea of vocation or calling was thereby eradicated from its spiritual foundation to attach it to the needs of the labour market and the development of the economy in the modern industrial society (Weber, 2004). In keeping with this heritage, vocational education is now referred to as training for a particular profession or industry in South Africa. As a result, the word "vocation" is now available for recruitment. The term "vocation" is pushed by the post-industrial neoliberal economic paradigm, discarding its spiritual or soulful foundation as a long-gone thing. The South African Church's idea of vocation is based on these vocational perspectives. The local church in South Africa defines vocation as the traditional idea of a call to a priestly or spiritual life that is prompted by something more than a person's desire to better their community or themselves. It is determined by how committed a person is to a certain cause, such as social advancement in the family pastoral care ministry of ill people, the elderly, widows, orphans, the destitute, etc. Vocation becomes a divine inner calling as a result.

## Reflection

The parents are mostly to blame for the lack of priestly vocation in South Africa. In this sense, the "parents" refers to the biological mother, father, grandmother, and guardian (male and female, this can be an uncle or aunt, etc). These are crucial people who serve as the cornerstone and managers of the family. Children do not establish and run the family in South Africa. Parents serve as examples for their children. As stated by Pope Paul VI:

They are the first to pass on the faith to their children and to educate them in it. By word and example, they form them to Christian and apostolic life; they offer them wise guidance in the choice of vocation, and if they discover in them a sacred [priestly and religious] vocation, they encourage it with all care (Paul VI's AA, no. 11).

The importance of the children obeying their parents' rules and instructions is stressed. To protect their legal rights, the other believers work alongside the parents. But in South Africa, where many fathers frequently leave the house to take care of their children, not all parents treat their children in this way. Such male behaviour is easily linked to a child instigating anger toward God, whom Christians also refer to as "father," in the case of children. It is hard to understand how children could agree to serve a father figure like God. However, by promoting and aiding vocations to the priestly life, the local Catholic Church in South Africa might directly address this issue. Mothers may be the best option because they spend more time with their children than fathers do. When Christians gather for religious occasions, many women bring their children. The absence of this vocation in the nation is a glaring indicator that they are not the best individuals to put Paul VI's teaching into reality by encouraging their children to pursue it (AA, 11). However, during the petition season, parents offer prayers during Mass asking God to send more priests and nuns to our nation. We also need to note that Catholic priests faces a range of restrictions in their life, one of which is a life of celibacy. Added to this there is general decline of religious enthusiasm in some parts of the world.



As a result, detractors can interpret parents' prayers to God for their children to be called to the priesthood or the convent as prayers for other people's children rather than their own. In other words, parents do not want their children to become nuns or members of the church. However, they do want the next generation to carry on this business. South African parents seem to fear something that they do not want their children to experience. To enable parents to work with the church by allowing their children to pursue priestly and religious vocations, the local South African Catholic Church must recognize and address these issues. The "home church" (LG, 11), where parents worship with their children, should be regarded and honored by the local catholic church in South Africa as the foundation of the nation's priestly vocation. To acquire a deeper understanding, one needs to go into greater detail about the call to the clergy.

## **Discussion**

The call to the priesthood has theological and social repercussions in South Africa. Despite being accessible to all South Africans, it is scarce in this country as a study. It is not just up to the nuns, religious brothers, priests, and bishops to spread the word. Parents have no excuse for not being the first to encourage their children to pursue this vocation because they are the ones who give birth to and raise them to responsible people. The primary calling for all Christians is to be in a personal relationship with God through one's faith in Jesus Christ. The call to priesthood involves a man conforming his life to Jesus Christ, the high priest. The church requires priests in as much as a body needs a head. Identifying the call to priesthood by a believer is as simple as recognizing Christ in one's internal life and in and through His church.

## **Implications for Theology**

There is a divine calling at work as well as human inventions in the priestly vocation. The priest is like "Melchizedek, King of Salem," according to the Bible, because of his ordination. He distributes the food and wine while dedicating half of the remaining supplies to God. He serves the Highest God as a priest (Genesis 14:18). Three types of people, by refusing to be married are added by Christ in the gospel of Matthew (19:12). Christ identifies those who are unfit for marriage (which all exegetes take as indicating eunuchs). Congenital eunuchs are those who, out of their own free will and for the glory of God's kingdom, are born with a disability and choose not to wed (voluntarily). Although there is supernatural involvement in the priestly vocation, for young people to believe in it, human cooperation must be acknowledged. But children must first hear about it from the people they trust, especially their parents because the life of a priest is fundamentally the life of Christ. Young people who want to become priests should want to live like Christ. In South Africa, this is difficult, especially when it comes to promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life. In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul describes such individuals in the following way:

They will not ask his help unless they believe in him, and they will not believe in him unless they have heard of him, and they will not hear of him unless they get a preacher, and they will never have a preacher unless one is sent, but as scripture says: the footsteps of those who bring good news is a welcome sound. Not everyone, of course, listens to the Good News (Romans 10:14-16).

Therefore, to have the faith to accept the vocation to the priestly profession, there must be some form of communication, or as St. Paul puts it, "from what is declared." The message must be in line with God's, which St. Paul describes as coming "from the world of Christ." "Christian parents



must witness the Catholic faith, transmit it to their children, and teach them in it by virtue of their divinely ordained vocation" (AA, no.11). By speaking and acting in this way, they can succeed. They need to get apostolic Christian training and be given wise direction about their career path. They must take great care to cultivate their heavenly calling if they find it.

Parents in South Africa can do this. It can reflect their dedication to fostering religious and clerical vocations in the nearby Catholic church. The only requirement is that the parents demonstrate clearly by their behaviour that they are committed to leading holy lives in their marriages, which is marriage indissolubility and the holiness of African relationships. Society must vehemently support parents' and guardians' rights to nurture their children in the Christian faith. They need to be ready to stand up for the family's honor and legal autonomy. Few married individuals have always been responsible for this (AA, 11). It is now, however, the most important aspect of their apostolate. The problem with parents is that they don't understand that others are merely partners in bringing up a child to be responsible and God-fearing. Others might not be aware that the priestly and religious vocations involve God as well as human endeavors. Though God freely summons anybody He chooses, regardless of qualification, the local South African Catholic Church must not undervalue Him. St. Peter's numerical constraints as the head of the Apostolic College serve as evidence that the apostle was not picked because he was better than other candidates. Although they may not always be the greatest candidates, God selects "those He desires" (Mark 3:13).

### **Ordinary Catholics' perspectives**

Priestly and religious vocations are viewed differently by clergy and non-clergy Christians. One cannot but observe the priesthood of the faithful, God's priestly people when doing pastoral duties. The sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation offer the faithful a share in Christ's priesthood, and Christ has made his church a "kingdom of priests" (CCC, 784, 1119, 1546). When the priest is present in the congregation, this is evident in the Catholic church in South Africa. The general population holds priests in high regard. A person who has a strong bond with God has a nickname among Northern Sotho speakers which is "*Monna wa Modimo*" (English translation: a man of God). This happens frequently in casual conversations and at funerals. Non-Christians may mistake this for Christianity (Nostra Aetate - NA, 1965). A priest is a celestial being, not an ordinary human being. At times it is common for Catholics to be shocked when they run into their bishop or priest in a store or bank. Even worse, when they disagree, he turns into a real scandal for them and feels insecure due to the criticism from other Christian faiths and religious groups. "Unity among all Christians" (Vatican II's Unitatis Redintegratio, 1964:1) and with the "non-Christians" (Vatican II's Nostra Aetate, 1965: 1ff:) are vital for them. This is a little concern on the side of the clergy because they fail to see how rapidly trivial issues can undermine the laity's and young people's esteem for the priestly vocation.

Some people would argue that ministerial priesthood is what drives the laity's highly sensitive response to the clergy's behaviour. In essence, the common priesthood shared by all believers and the ministerial priesthood acquired in the sacrament of Holy orders are two different things. Its goal is to uphold and lead the church in the name of Christ, the Head of the body, to serve the priesthood of all Christians (CCC, 1547) as the people of God, His nation (Nicolaidis, 2010; Megesa, 1984). In order to encourage priestly vocation in the local Catholic church in South Africa, the clergy must also take the priesthood of Christ seriously. The Melchizedek order maintains that the high priest's priesthood was and is exclusive to Christ. All that the Old Covenant priesthood foreshadowed was fulfilled in Christ (Hebrew 5:10; 6:20). He made a perfect sacrifice of Himself on the cross once and for all (Hebrew 10:14). The ministerial priesthood, which is conferred



through the sacrament of Holy Orders, is one way in which His priesthood is made present in the church (CCC 1539, 1544, 1547, 1554).

### **Parents, Children, and Teenagers**

With a few notable exceptions, South African parents, children, and teenagers all have similar feelings about priestly vocations. In this category, a person who is under the age of 18 is considered a child (The Constitutional Assembly, 1996:14, Article 28 § 3).<sup>1</sup> He or she is a youthful family member who depends on her parents for financial support. A young person is one who is between the ages of 17 and 24. (Diocese of Tzaneen, 2011:61). To avoid being hampered by their studies for the priesthood in South Africa, the two last categories and their parents need to receive assistance. For them and a lot of other Catholics in South Africa, six to eight years of seminary preparation is too long. The fact that they are surrounded by other religions is one of the reasons. To hide their identities, some pastors hastily complete the necessary coursework to become pastoral agents.

Some people have established their own churches and become pastors as a result. While they are busy earning money and spending it on themselves and their family, some have questioned if they are working for the church or for themselves. When young people in the same age group, or "the peer group," are involved, it is a terrible situation (Diocese of Tzaneen, 2011:64). A situation that encourages a luxurious lifestyle of wealth, large cars, lovely ladies, and expansive residences exists. Youth in South Africa are not immune to such issues. They, like other South Africans, desire to earn a tidy sum of money so they can live like other common people and have plenty of material possessions. In South Africa, most parents and their boys think that priests—with all their integrity, humility, and simplicity—are a waste of time. Because both parents and their children believe that they won't be challenged when they look at other faiths and non-Christians, there doesn't seem to be any "catechesis" on careers. The worst-case case scenario is when parishioners experience humiliation and degradation because of a priest who professes to be a Roman Catholic but evidently lacks sufficient knowledge of Roman Catholic traditions and customs.

### **Local Church**

Numerous missionaries are employed as priests and other clergies in the nearby South African Catholic Church. By doing this, the shortage of priestly vocations and native religious men and women in South Africa is addressed. Some of these missionaries, like Fr. PJ Fitzgerald of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in the Catholic diocese of Tzaneen (Diocese of Tzaneen, 2015:9), rose to prominence as vocation advocates in various South African dioceses. The vocation promoters have made it possible for the local South African Catholic church to start incardinating both native South Africans and those from other countries as diocesan priests in that country. The greatest course of action for the local Catholic church is to be committed to helping young people and fostering religious vocations in South Africa. Bishops frequently bring up vocations to the priesthood and religious life during their canonical pastoral visits to different parishes in South Africa. The fostering of vocations in the parish is the priests' main area of concern.

Bishops in South Africa founded important seminaries, including St. John Vienne in Pretoria, with the intention of pressuring young men to complete their academic and theological training in South Africa. The local Catholic church has made significant efforts to lower the expense of sending a

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<sup>1</sup> The Constitutional Assembly. 1996. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996).



seminarian for training overseas. But fewer young males chose to take part compared to the majority who do not. Certain regular catholic bishops send young men abroad to complete their seminary education while sizable seminaries have been constructed here in South Africa for the same purpose, there is then clearly a contradiction. This is allegedly used to fund the travel expenses of respected clergymen attending pontifical universities overseas. the Catholic Church and its intellectual institutions, such as major seminaries, are typically led by university graduates who are elected by Rome.

The local South African Catholic priests encourage religious and priestly vocations in South Africa by raising deserving priests to the position of the episcopate and the majority to the diaconate (Selemela, 2022:38). South Africans make up most people who are ordained. The fact that most young South Africans show little enthusiasm in pursuing religious or priestly vocations, suggests that most South Africans are unaware of the messages that ordinations convey, even though only a few local clergy members received ordinations at the episcopal and diocese levels. Most young men don't seem to be drawn to priestly occupations. Regardless of their foreign nationality, ordinary bishops are required to admit seminarians from missionary organizations who wish to serve as diocese priests. The essential seminary should be closed off to native speakers while this is being done, if they possess morals, good character, and education. In South Africa, each diocese oversees paying for its main seminarians. This must have originated in Rome because every diocese in other African nations, like Uganda, pays for its seminarians.

A pastoral plan entitled "Evangelizing Community Serving God, Humanity, and All Creation" already exists in the local church in South Africa (SACBC, 2019). This plan must develop a new approach for the girl child's vocation to convent life that is as local to the male child's commitment to the priesthood to focus on the young men to the priestly vocation. The local Catholic church's initiatives to encourage priestly vocations have drawn criticism for being biased against women, more specifically, by drawing attention to the fact that male missionary priests serve alongside religious sisters who serve as missionaries in this nation. The local nun is the only equivalent to the diocesan clergy, who are working alone. The local Catholic Church in South Africa is therefore in need of local Catholic nuns in this situation. They begin in South Africa and travel all over the world to promote vocations to convent life locally and to missionary service abroad.

## **Conclusion**

In this article, South Africa was depicted as a complex society with a variety of cultural conflicts, lifestyles, and religious groups. Inadequate catechesis, a lack of zeal, and the mentoring of young people in Africa who wish to enter the priestly religious vocation were all noted. Young people today generally follow a lifestyle that has been deemed troublesome because of circumstances that make them feel as though they would like to depart society as affluent people caught up in the desires of a materialistic world where they can have fancy automobiles and houses. They are constantly seeking easy money (material wealth). The two things they want most in life are money and a beautiful spouse.

These could be taken to imply that they are unbothered by prayers, adoration, and meditation, as well as visits to those who are ill, the elderly, widows, and orphans, and charitable work for the underprivileged. Spiritual concerns ring more loudly in their minds while they are in that type of disease or on a sick bed. They then suddenly turn to God for assistance. They think there is a serious risk to their life at that point. This situation has kept parents from understanding the necessity of enabling their children to become priests and of sending their daughters to live in convents. In addition, the situation has motivated men to enter the clergy and women to join



convents. Finding a remedy to this problem—South Africa's lack of priests—has, however, proven challenging for all Catholics in that country.

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