

**MINISTRIES IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TODAY:
THE NIGERIAN SITUATION**

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STATEMENT OF SOURCES

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees (where required).

Signed ----- *BAEhor* -----

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ABSTRACT

AIMS

This thesis seeks to study ministry, as it is understood today in the light of the renewed ecclesiology of Vatican II, and to relate this study to the church situation in Nigeria. This thesis proposes to investigate the possible need for changes in the practices of ministries in the church in Nigeria.

The study aims to articulate a theology of ministry and to critically review the growth and development of ministries in the church from the beginnings of Christianity up to the mid-second century. It will also critically review the understanding of ministry in Vatican II and post-Vatican II documents, and describe and critically analyse the development of ministries in the Nigerian church before and after Vatican II. It will suggest a way forward in the broadening and diversifying of ministries in that country by suggesting ways in which the practice of ministry may be enhanced in the local churches in Nigeria. By local churches, this writer is referring particularly to small Catholic communities or rural out-stations of the church in Nigeria.

SCOPE

The study is undertaken in five chapters with an introduction and conclusion. Chapter One considers the theological understanding of ministry at the present time; it explains the meaning of ministry and differentiates it from other concepts such as lay apostolate and Catholic Action; it posits baptism as the foundation for ministry and outlines a theology of ministry. Chapter Two traces the origin of ministry in the New Testament and its evolution in the early church. The findings of Chapter Two will be applied in Chapters Four and Five that concentrate on the church in Nigeria.

Chapter Three focuses on the understanding of ministry at the Second Vatican Council and in post-conciliar documents. This chapter analyses and summarises the teachings in the documents concerning ministry, which will later be applied to the church in Nigeria. Chapter Four traces the development and organisation of ministry in Nigeria before and after Vatican II within the framework of chapters one to three. The chapter begins with a sketch history of the church in Nigeria and proceeds to highlight the present

organisation of ministry in Nigeria. Chapter Five proposes a broadening and diversifying of ministries in the church in Nigeria. It considers the significance of the local communities and how a broadening and diversification of ministries would help the progress and growth of these communities.

CONCLUSIONS

There has been a shift in the Catholic theology of ministry and the central idea in the theology of ministry is the church in which all members are participants in diverse ways in the various responsibilities of the community. The historical overview of the New Testament times highlighted the arrangement of ministries in the early church. Ministries existed according to the needs of the local community. The ministerial arrangement of the first century of the church was stifled by the emergence of the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons. Vatican II offered the basis of a renewal for the church in matters of ministries. The Council presented a renewed understanding of the church in terms of mystery, Body of Christ, sacrament, communion and, above all, people of God. This new understanding of the church demands a new approach to ministries in the church.

This study concludes that the communal dimension of the church stressed by the Council should prevail in Nigeria. The ordained ministry dominates in the church in Nigeria. In the local church situation, the catechist is looked upon as the spiritual leader of the community who collaborates with other members to meet the various needs of the community. These people are hardly literate, yet they provide the essential leadership that is needed for the community. But they are not able to lead the community in the Eucharist because they have not been given the power. From this we conclude that catechists should be empowered with ordination to the priesthood that will enable them more effectively to fulfil the pastoral responsibilities they already have. In the provision of a higher quality of ministry in rural churches, the ordination of catechists would play a big part. Other lay people should be allowed and encouraged to function as acolytes, lectors, eucharistic ministers and in other capacities in the local churches. The rapid growth of the church in Nigeria demands the emergence and encouragement of new ministries in parishes and out-stations to meet the needs of the people.