

THE NATURE AND ROLE OF CONSECRATED LIFE IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN POLITICS: AN EXISTENTIAL APPROACH

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Abstract

Man is a political being who naturally exists in a given society, that is, he is born within a given polis, interacts with others at various dimensions, helps to organize his community and partakes in the decisions of how well to live in it. The Consecrated Persons are not left out. They are also men and women living in the society with others and having shared responsibilities for the good of one another and for the common good of the larger society. Part of this responsibility is political in nature. Therefore, this paper gives an insightful existential approach to the nature and role of Consecrated Persons in contemporary Nigerian politics. As it tries to respond to the question of what does the life of Consecrated men and women hold for Nigerian nation especially given the tensed political atmosphere of the moment, it takes into considerations the nature, meaning and unique role of consecrated life in the society. The paper elucidates that throughout the history of the Church, holy men and women have always been source of renewal in difficult situations. Therefore, their active participation in the political life of their society is necessarily and urgently needed to demonstrate that politics is at the service of peace. The study also highlights various factors that militate against their effective discharge of such political role. However, it recommends serious renewal of commitments of both personal and common lives of the consecrated persons so to live up to their political role in the society for which no one can comfortably feel excused in the spirit of patriotism.

Keywords: Nature, Role, Consecrated Life, Contemporary, Nigerian politics

Introduction

A fruitful and fulfilled life is rooted in the understanding of one's values. The Greek influential philosopher, Socrates once articulated that unexamined life is not worth living. Man is in constant search to give ultimate meaning to his life and existence in order to live happier. We are now at the threshold of twenty first century. The great preparation to welcome the new Millennium brought a lot of enlightenment both in the Church and in the larger world. Specifically, in the Church, the need for new evangelization and more commitment in the world

was highly emphasized. Consequently, the particular features and vocation of various states of life, namely; the married, the clerical and the consecrated states were clarified at individual synods for more effective existence and for more fruitful mission of the Church in the world at large.

The *Vita Consecrata*¹ which was published by Pope John Paul II of blessed memory and was given on 25th March, 1996 was a post-synodal document of the time; an Apostolic Exhortation “On the Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World”. It vividly tabulates the identity and enormously treasurable role of consecrated life in variety of its forms and charisms as it evaluates it in the light of its origin, role, challenges and the expectations of the contemporary society. At the basis of its manifold nature however, is the oneness of purpose and common mission of the imitation of Christ who is poor, obedient and chaste², the re-enactment of his presence in the world and the effort to draw everyone to the kingdom of God.³

This paper focuses primarily on the nature and role of consecrated persons in the political life of Nigerians in contemporary time. With examining the nature of the life, it tries to give an in-depth insight into the vital features of Consecrated life for a more understanding of its role and consequent applications to concrete life existence.

The Nature of Consecrated Life

Consecrated Life is an age-long form of Christian existence. Its ultimate origin is found in Christ. In the light of Jesus’ consecration, the nature and mission of consecrated life is made manifest. “Jesus is the One Whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power... Accepting His consecration, the Son in turn consecrated himself for the sake of humanity (cf. Jn 17:19). His life of virginity, obedience and poverty expresses his complete filial acceptance of Father’s plan (cf. Jn 10:30, 14:11). His perfect offering confers an aspect of consecration upon all events of his earthly existence.”⁴ Consecrated life is not lived in isolation. Its evangelical nature confers on it a concrete existence at the service of God and man.

The Meaning of Consecrated Life?

¹ The *Vita Consecrata* will later be given the acronym VC.

² cf. Phil. 2:8

³ cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, Liberia Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, 1996, no. 22

⁴ Ibid.

The *Vita Consecrata* stated clearly that, “The consecrated life truly constitutes a living memorial of Jesus’ way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brethren”⁵. So understood, the full realization of consecrated life is a harmonious blending of ‘being for Christ and acting in his service’. That is, living and acting in God’s name individually and communally in conformity to each institution’s charism and rule of life as recognized by the Holy See and guided by particular superiors. History accounts that just about nine days before he announced his resignation, Pope Benedict XVI urged the consecrated people to clothe themselves in Jesus Christ and put on the armour of Light.⁶ St. Paul expresses it even better, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”⁷

The consecrated persons are invited to embrace the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience more fully in their specific forms and institutions into which they are gracefully called. As the distinguishing features of consecrated life, the vows affirm their choice for ‘Christ alone’ as the ultimate Happiness which presuppose unreserved self-renunciation for better commitment to the proclamation of His message to the ends of the earth. The three major aspects of Consecrated Life include:

Contemplating and Bearing Witness to the Gospel: In contemplating and bearing witness to the Gospel, the person of Christ and His salvific mission are made the fulcrum of the consecrated life. It has an evangelical nature as it manifests in the world the visible sign of God’s kingdom and expresses the ever relevance of the Gospel even in our own time⁸. The consecrated persons constantly re-enact Christ’s way of life and actions (his way of being and acting). Through their way of life (Prayers; personal and communal, liturgy of the hours, celebration of the Holy Eucharist, words and actions) the consecrated persons share the joy of salvation and propel it to the ends of the world.

Being Prophetic: The consecrated life is prophetic in nature in that it keeps watch over the Gospel as well as the human values. This is a great gift to the Church and humanity. Like the biblical prophets the consecrated persons are graced with passionate desire for holiness. Rooted in the examples and teachings of Christ they are models of virtuous life in words and deeds; they play corrective role, condemn evils of their time, warn against indifference to holiness

⁵ VC 22

⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Homily on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord*, Feb. 2nd, 2013.

⁷ Gal 2:20

⁸ cf. VC 3

of life and in fact be 3A^s - at **alert**, **alive** and **active** (the watch dogs of the Church) to the signs of their times without losing their essence.

Being Hopeful and Offering Hope: The consecrated life is a life of hope. The consecrated persons harbour and foretell of the glory of the heavenly Kingdom and of eternal reward; an anticipation of the world to come for transformation of man. Having an eschatological character, the consecrated life casts fervent hope to the new future fortified by faith that enables man to direct his actions to effective aspirations for justice, peace, love, forgiveness, solidarity, etc. The consecrated persons teach that the human history is moving towards a “new heaven and a new earth.”⁹ The prayers “Come Lord Jesus” and “Thy Kingdom Come” offer constant hope to the often pessimistic and discouraged minds, that at the manifestation of the definitive glory, God will swab their tears and dispel their fears. There will be no more death, pains, sorrows, crying, etc.¹⁰

Consecrated Life as a Divine Gift

Consecrated Life is a special gift of God to humanity. It is a vital aspect of the universal Church and the society at large. Touched by the Divine, those who are called are inspired to make themselves freely available for consecration. They are totally and exclusively dedicated to God’s service, while they live no longer for themselves. Consecrated life requires a lively faith response; an inward passion. The gracious Divine invitation- *veni, sequere me* requires a human spontaneous but free and generous response - *ecce ego!* with an energizing joy of commitment in a meaningful way that demands modicum of sacrifice. Of course, “No one takes this honour upon himself, rather, he is called by God just as Aaron was.”¹¹ It is a life-long response with renewal of interest and deeper commitment. Therefore, the consecrated men and women are those who are found, touched and transformed for selfless service to God and humanity.

Who are the Consecrated Persons?

Consecrated persons are those who are chosen by God exclusively for himself. “You did not choose me, I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.”¹² The psalmist says, “Happy are those whom You Choose,

⁹ Rev. 21:1

¹⁰ Cf. Rev. 21:4

¹¹ Heb. 5:4

¹² Jn 15:16

whom You bring to live in Your Sanctuary. We shall be satisfied with the good things of Your house..."¹³ In the words of Christ, "Come, follow me!"¹⁴ (*veni, sequere Me!*), it is perceived that the initiative is God's, while the called cooperates by God's grace. As the early apostles, the consecrated persons are divinely invited not just to welcome the message of Christ but also to be at the service of others through close following of Him who called them and to leave everything behind in conjunction to His admonition, "If anyone wants to be my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me."¹⁵

The Mission and Apostolate of the Consecrated Persons

The first missionary task of consecrated persons is duty to themselves. This entails complete conversion of self (true self-renunciation) in order to seek first the kingdom of God and live fully for Christ in openness to the Holy Spirit in consciousness of their vocation. Being called to embody Christ and to witness to the Kingdom of God, the Consecrated men and women are equipped and expected to engage in particular missions both in the Church and in the world according to their specific charism and spirit of foundation.

Consecrated Persons as Political Beings

Given that a state is a natural givenness into which man is naturally created and designed to live together with others for a common purpose and activity. Aristotle established that "man is a political animal (*zoōn politikon*)"¹⁶ - a member of a *polis*, a political entity of a certain culture, language and custom. Naturally, man is also a social creature who is dependent on others. "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main."¹⁷ As an altruistic being, one's actions affect others. In his assertion, "One who is without a state is either above humanity or below it. Such a person is an outlaw, a beast that flies alone."¹⁸ To this end, all men including consecrated persons are political beings. That is, all men are innately drawn to relate with others in the society in order to realize their full human nature just as individual parts are joined together to complete a puzzle. Pope Francis says, "We [the religious men and women] are all Political animals with a capital P."¹⁹ In his apostolic exhortation,

¹³ Ps. 65:4

¹⁴ Mk 1:17

¹⁵ Mk 16:24

¹⁶ Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1253a1-3

¹⁷ John Donne, *Devotion Upon Emergent Occasions*, Meditation XVII, 1624

¹⁸ Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1253a4-5

¹⁹ Jorge Mario Bergoglio (Pope Francis) and Abraham Skorka, *On Heaven and Earth: On Faith, Family and the Church in the 21st Century*, Bloomsbury, 2013, P. 136.

Pope Paul VI outlined that, “As a social being, men and women build their destiny within a series of particular groupings which demand, as their completion and as a necessary condition for their development, a vaster society, one of a universal character, the political society.”²⁰ In the Catholic Tradition,

Responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. This obligation is rooted in our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, “It is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person... As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life” (nos. 1913-1915).²¹

Consecrated Persons and Politics

Politics is generally viewed as a government over a community. But the concept of politics reminds us of man’s unique place in the universe. It is derived from the Greek *Polis* which denotes a city-state or a body of citizens with a common interest. As a community of citizens, polis is characterized by a sense of communion with observance of certain rules and customs. Language, culture and religion among other factors are the uniting forces of a city. So understood, politics means an organization of human society for a common good (*bene commune*). It deals with the role of the individuals as well as the government in the society. Politics and society are related notions.

Man naturally lives together with others, helps to organize his community and determine how well to live in it. On this note, man is a political being, that is, born within a given *polis*. The consecrated persons are not left out. They also live jointly with others and have their unique role to play for the well-being of all.

Politics at the Service of Man

Politics is all about the common good of man. Pope Francis delineated that politics is a commitment to humanity and holiness. Consequently, he urged politicians across the world to see politics as service to society and an opportunity to impact on human communities and institutions.²² One of the most influential Greek Philosophers Aristotle whose philosophical thought focuses

²⁰ Pope Paul VI, 1971, *Octogesima Adveniens (“A Call to Action”)*, 24.

²¹ U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, 2007, 13.

²²CF. Pope Francis, *The Celebration of the 52nd World Day of Peace*, January 2019, Vatican, Rome.

chiefly on purposeful living, virtuous life (*aretē*) and man's happiness (*eudaimonia*) presented politics as "a practical science" which aims at making citizens happy. As such, politics has a lot to do with ethics; how one ought to act in a given society in pursuit of happiness.

It is a practical normative activity that can in a way be considered as an extension of ethics which lays down norms for rightful living and applies them to man's conduct for good and happy living and for enhancement of quality and dignity of human life. To this end, the concepts of justice, right, freedom, equality, virtue, prudence, courage, etc. are central to politics. The Church teaches that,

Justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics. Politics is more than a mere mechanism for defining the rules of public life: its origin and its goal are found in justice, which by its very nature has to do with ethics. The State must inevitably face the question of how justice can be achieved here and now.²³

Again, "The members of the Church, as members of society, have the same right and duty to promote the common good as do other citizens. Christians ought to fulfil their temporal obligations with fidelity and competence. They should act as a leaven in the world, in their family, professional, social, cultural and political life."²⁴

The Role of the Consecrated Persons in Contemporary Nigerian Politics

The world without the consecrated persons is unimaginable! Religious men and women have always been known not only for their commitment to the spread of the gospel, human and spiritual formation, Christian education, charity works and concern for the sick, the needy and the less privileged but also for justice and peace in human family. "Totally consecrated to God, they are exclusively given over to their brethren, to carry the light of Christ there where the darkest is thickest and to spread his hope to the hearts who are discouraged...The year of consecrated life was celebrated so that people can benefit from greater knowledge and presence of consecrated men and women."²⁵

Here, the issue of the role of the consecrated persons borders understandably on the relevance of the consecrated life in our own epoch. The role of consecrated life is drawn from its nature of existence. To the question, what does the life of Consecrated men and women hold for our dear nation especially given the

²³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) 2005, 28.

²⁴ World Synod of Catholic Bishops, *Justitia in Mundo* ("Justice in the World"), 1971, 38.

²⁵ Scottish Catholic Observer, Reported by Stephen Reilly, Feb. 7, 2018.

tensed political atmosphere of the moment? The articulations of the Holy Fathers seem to offer soothing responses. Pope Francis encourages appropriately,

Individual Catholics must get involved and "embroiled" in politics because it is one of the "highest forms of charity" since it seeks the common good. Yet, it isn't easy, especially when there is so much corruption...It's a kind of "martyrdom" where one carries the cross of the ideal of the common good every day "without letting yourself be corrupted" or discouraged in the midst of failure. It is hard to be in the middle of it all "without getting your hands or heart a little dirty," he said. "Ask the Lord to help you not sin, but if you get your hands dirty, ask for forgiveness and keep going;" don't get discouraged.²⁶

On another note, Pope Paul II expressed,

"If charity is to be realistic and effective, it demands that the Gospel of life be implemented also by means of certain forms of social activity and commitment in the political field, as a way of defending and promoting the value of life in our ever more complex and pluralistic societies."²⁷

In another passage, he stated,

By virtue of our sharing in Christ's royal mission, our support and promotion of human life must be accomplished through the service of charity, which finds expression in personal witness, various forms of volunteer work, social activity and political commitment. This is a particularly pressing need at the present time, when the "culture of death" so forcefully opposes the "culture of life" and often seems to have the upper hand. But even before that it is a need which springs from "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). As the Letter of James admonishes us: "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled', without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (2: 14-17).²⁸

²⁶Pope Francis, during an informal question-and-answer session with members of Italy's Christian Life Community and the Student Missionary League -- groups inspired by Ignatian spirituality. As a Jesuit priest, Pope Francis served as a national assistant to the Christian Life Community in Argentina in the late 1970s.

²⁷ Pope John Paul II, 1995, *Evangelium Vitae* ("The Gospel of Life," Donders translation) 90

²⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* ("The Gospel of Life," Donders translation), 1995, 87.

Pope Francis told a diocesan priest who is involved in formation programmes that "the best medicine to cure the disease of indifference is touching 'the wounds' of the Lord in the poor of our time...You will never know Jesus Christ if you don't touch his wounds." Earlier on, Pope John XXIII hinted that "the dignity of the human person involves the right to take an active part in public affairs and to contribute one's part to the common good of the citizens."²⁹

So, in spite of the tragedies, violence, misery, rivalries, thuggery, exploitations, riggings and all sorts of election malpractices and hopelessness that mark the political history of the nation and endanger the social harmony, people of good political ambition who sincerely understand it as service for which it stands still exist and they need the encouragement of the consecrated men and women to emerge courageously. The social teachings of the Church reveal that a good Catholic meddles with politics. "We are all called to constructive political activities among our people. None of us can say, I have nothing to do with this, they govern...No, no! I am responsible for their governance and I have to do the best so they govern well and I have to do my best by participating in politics according to my ability."³⁰

In conjunction with the teaching of the Church that, "Citizens should cultivate a generous and loyal spirit of patriotism, but without narrow-mindedness, so that they will always keep in mind the welfare of the entire human family which is formed into one by various kinds of links between races, peoples, and nations,"³¹ the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) ahead of the tensed political atmosphere of the country, issued a directive to Major Superiors of Institutes of Consecrated Life, consecrated men and women, Catholic Priests and the Catholic Lay Faithful that reminds them of their roles as Christians and as existential members of society. The statement partly runs,

We, the members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, as teachers of the faith and morals do have the serious obligation to educate our faithful on their role in the political life of the country...As has always been our stand, the Catholic Church in Nigeria remains apolitical and does not support or subscribe to any political party. Our concern is for a peaceful election process seen to be free, fair, credible and just, and a

²⁹ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* ("Peace on Earth"), 1963, 26

³⁰ Pope Francis, Sept, 16 2013

³¹ Vatican II, 1965, *Gaudium et Spes* ("The Church in the Modern World"), 75.

democratic governance that guarantees peace, justice, equity, among others...³²

As the major general elections draw much nearer with implicit heightened pressure, hostility and the like peculiar to Nigerian existing political activities, the holy Assembly reminded again with understandable emphasis,

With the ongoing campaigns of political parties gathering momentum, we deemed it necessary to again remind all priests and religious to keep to the position of the Church on the issue of non-partisan politics...We also enjoined the lay faithful to play their roles in the forthcoming elections premised on good conscience, play their roles at the election without prejudice or inducement and ensure that their votes count and the right people voted into power for the common good. Liturgical ceremonies must never be used as opportunities for political campaigns. Similarly, ecclesiastical properties should not be used as places for support for any political candidate or party. All priests and laity should avoid giving the impression that the Church favours one candidate over another or one political party over another. These are difficult times in the history of Nigeria. As people of faith, we must work hard and also pray hard for the future of Nigeria. During the military rule, the CBCN composed the prayer for Nigeria in distress. Dearly beloved in Christ, Nigeria is in distress. We consequently call on Catholics to recite this prayer at all masses and other liturgical celebrations. We entrust Nigeria in the hands of God and implore Him to improve the situation in our Country...³³

Owing to the above, the consecrated persons in Nigeria have serious obligation to contribute to the renewal of the society. They must be conscious of their specific role to the common good and dedicate themselves to it but with caution and vigilance.³⁴ The major roles are:

Prayer: With the understanding that power is God's gift to humanity, the consecrated persons have the sacred duty to pray for all leaders. St. Paul writes, "I exhort therefore first of all to pray for all men and for the king and for all in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and

³² Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), August 7, 2018

³³ CBCN, Dec. 7th, 2018

³⁴ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* ("The Church in the Modern World") 1965, 75.

honesty.”³⁵ They should remember them in their personal and community prayers and in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

Enlightenment of the Citizens: Good education of the citizens is of paramount importance. The schools are fertile grounds for useful enlightenments. Through proper, sound and moral education, the consecrated persons serve as Gospel leaven (*Sauerteig, gärstoff*).³⁶ Yeast is a well-known agent of change. It slowly transforms from within. Like yeast, the kingdom of God exerts its influence from within (cf. the formation of individual consciences). Usually, a small quantity of it is needed but which confers great effects. Naturally, it grows and changes whatever it comes in contact with. As it rises, it reaches everywhere slowly and silently but comprehensively. It impacts internal changes with external manifestations. It is to the floor what grace is to man; invisible but evident, little but with pervasive influence that is felt everywhere. This goes with the saying that “in some cases, efforts are not seen but results.” As the Church demonstrates,

Civic and political education is today supremely necessary for the people, especially young people. Such education should be painstakingly provided, so that all citizens can make their contribution to the political community. Let those who are suited for it, or can become so, prepare themselves for the difficult but most honorable art of politics. Let them work to exercise this art without thought of personal convenience and without benefit of bribery.³⁷

Bearing Witness to the Gospel: The consecrated persons should be very prayerful as they mirror Christ’s way of life and make God more visible through their life and activities. This is an effective testimony that reminds the people of God of the need to keep their eyes fixed on justice and peace and strive for ultimate Happiness. The sanctification of humanity is a rich manifestation of Gospel values. Through their way of life, the consecrated persons share the joy of salvation and propel it to the ends of the world. Pope Francis urges them to “Be glad, rejoice and radiate joy”³⁸ as he reminds them of the lines of St. Paul who said, “Do not grieve like those who have no hope.”³⁹ With Francis, the beauty of Consecration is joy. “It is joy! Joy!...There is no holiness in sadness...sadness and

³⁵ 1 Tim 2: 1-2

³⁶ Lk. 13:21

³⁷ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* (“*The Church in the Modern World*”), 1965, 75.

³⁸ Pope Francis, *Letter to the Consecrated*, (LC)

³⁹ I Thess 4:13

fear must give way to joy..."⁴⁰ This joy consists in bringing God's consolation to all. So, Be glad, Rejoice and Radiate Joy!

Being Prophetic: The consecrated persons play a corrective role and condemn the evils of their time like the blind goddess (Mother Justice). In their watchfulness, they remain be alert, alive and active to the signs of the changing society without losing themselves therein. In addressing the General Assembly of the Superior Generals of religious men, Pope Francis highlights that the consecrated life is a prophetic vocation that has a privileged setting of the periphery of the society for greater clarity of vision, analysis and effective actions. So he said, "I am convinced of one thing: the great changes in history were realized when reality was seen not from the centre rather from the periphery."⁴¹

Being Hopeful: Pope John 23rd's opening address to the second Vatican Council in 1962 reminds everyone that religious life remains a place of hope and promise. In his apostolic letter addressed to the Consecrated Men and Women during the year of Consecrated Life, Pope Francis admonishes them to "wake up the world!" from its slumber. In their eschatological role, the Consecrated persons live diametrically to the standards of the world as they buttress the need to give transcendent meaning to reality. Pope Francis admonishes, "Look to the past with gratitude, live the present with passion and embrace the future with hope."⁴² The God-ward life and an unearthly outlook to the ephemeral world and fidelity to specific charisms and spirituality cast fervent hope to the coming of the new Jerusalem as it motivates good conducts of the people.

Challenges of the Consecrated Persons in their Roles in Contemporary Nigerian Politics

Generally, life is a challenge. Every way of being is a choice that goes with its particular challenges. Consecrated life harbours its own peculiar trials. The efforts of the consecrated persons to actively participate in political life in Nigerian society and to remain faithful to their distinct way of life implies the challenges and pains of existence even to martyrdom but which have its rewards. Some of the challenges that confront the effective discharge of the role of the consecrated life in contemporary Nigerian politics have always been militated

⁴⁰ Pope Francis LC, 7-8.

⁴¹ Pope Francis, Meeting with 82nd General Assembly of the Union of Superior Generals of Religious Men, Nov. 29th, 2013.

⁴² Pope Francis, *Rejoice! A Letter to the Consecrated Men and Women: A Message from the Teachings of Pope Francis*, 2nd February, 2014.

against by human elements which include personality, social, cultural and religious matters. Other challenging factors involve formation issues and preparation for mission, variety of motives to the consecrated life, the ever-changing society, transvaluation of values, superficial life, fear, rigidity, security risks (physically, mentally, financially, etc.), moral decadence.

Recommendations

The 'courage to be' is an existential decision. Consecrated persons should remain powerfully resilient to what they believe and preach, uphold an indomitable spirit that refuses to give up and sustain the irresistible conviction to the evangelical vows by constantly giving deeper meaning to their life and existence in the society with others. They should also invoke the Holy Spirit to continue to strengthen, bind, invigorate, inflame, radiate and enrich them in their vocation, mission and apostolate especially as it concerns their life in the society for the common good of all. There may be need for serious renewal of commitments to both personal and common life for which no one can comfortably feel excused.

Suggestion for Further Studies

There is a dire need to deepen the way(s) consecrated persons touch lives through their way of life as they respond to the twists and turn of their precious vocation especially in relation to the contemporary politics.

Conclusion

Throughout the history of the Church, holy men and women have always been source of renewal in difficult situations. The story will not change in our own era. Consecrated persons will not be indifferent to the changes and signs of our time. The ever-changing condition of Nigerian *polis* demands each time newness and urgency of actions. However, the consecrated persons should exercise their political roles with caution and vigilance in conformity to their state of life so as not to lose their essence. When do we get it right then? Delay is dangerous and procrastination is a vice. Therefore, the consecrated persons need to do something now. He who calls them strengthens them. They are already bequeathed with necessary graces for their various missions. In the thoughts of Roosevelt, I exhort, "do what you can, with what you have and where you can".

With Joshua, they should be bold and strong! They should banish fear and doubt for the Lord God is with them wherever they go.⁴³

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⁴³ Josh. 1:9

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