

A Christianisation Approach to the Understanding and Application of Cicero's Classical Idea of Formation

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Abstract: Administration and formation are two hinges on which the prospects and fortunes of any organization hangs. The administrative structure ensures that the structure and functionality of formation will uphold the ideals and values, while the formative structure serves the organization by preparing leaders who will protect and take responsibility for its goal. The complementary roles play by these two, define the present condition of the organization and indicate what the future holds. This study considers the basis for the application of the Ciceronian ideals of formation to the Church. This will be done by examining within the realities and experiences of the Church, the similarities of contexts, contents, structures, practices and means that she shares with the Ciceronian Roman Republic. In the face of such similarities, it will address if it is permissible to liken the Ciceronian orator to a mature Christian. And taking into consideration the contemporary experiences of the Church, the extent the classical values as espoused by Cicero will be examined in complementing the quest for efficient formation in the Church.

Keywords: Christianity, Catholic Church, Values, De Oratore, Roman Society

Introduction/Acceptance and Adaptation of Cicero in the Church Fathers

It will not be out of place to acknowledge and examine, before going deeper into the Christianization of Cicero's classical idea of formation, similar practice among Church Fathers and early Christians, in order to give a further basis to what we are proposing in this study. The adoption of Cicero's style and form of expression can be seen in the Church as early as the period of the apologists,

especially in the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix.¹ Lactantius, who was famously referred to as the “Christian Cicero,”² did not only emulate and choose Cicero as a model, he also affirms an anticipation of Christian doctrines in the works and thoughts of Cicero.³

St. Ambrose also recognized the depth of resources that the Church can tap from Cicero. In fact, his book *De Officiis Ministrorum*, which was “for a long time the chief Christian manual of ethics, was practically a rendering of Cicero’s *Duties* into Christian language, in which Ambrose solved the difficulties he met with the use of allegory. He acknowledges his indebtedness to the orator at the beginning of his book in the words, *sicut Tullius ad erudiendum filium, ita ego ad vos informandos filios.*”⁴ More than this, a Christian application of Cicero in St. Ambrose’s homilies has been argued through a comparison of Ambrose’s sermon at the burial of his brother and Cicero’s letter from exile to his brother.⁵

As at the time of Tertullian, there were divergent views on whether pagan views, Cicero inclusive, should be welcomed into Christianity or not. It is on record that Tertullian, with reference to this, not only exclaimed: “what has Jerusalem to do with Athens?”⁶ He also warned that Christians should “beware of those who have devised a Stoic, a Platonic, or a dialectical Christianity.”⁷ In contrast to the view of Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria “compares the opponents of the pagan literature to the sailors of Ulysses, foolishly stopping their ears to the Siren music.”⁸ Where does this lead us? Despite Tertullian’s opposition to the adoption of pagan tools for Christianity, elements of Ciceronian influence can be seen in his works, and many other prominent Church Fathers after him still drew influences from Cicero. This shows that his objection had a specific undertone, an elaboration of which is beyond the scope of this work.

Other prominent Fathers like St. Cyprian and St. Jerome also adapted elements from Cicero. The latter was in fact, described as having had a dream in which he was described as more of a

¹ John Rolfe, *Cicero and His Influence* (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1923), 114.

² Rolfe, *Cicero and His Influence*, 115.

³ Ibid.

⁴ “Like Tullius [wrote] in order to educate his son, so also I, in order to instruct you, my sons,” (Rolfe, 115).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ M. Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, trans. Gino Mazzoni (Siena: Cantagali, 1929), 7.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Rolfe, *Cicero and His Influence*, 116.

Ciceronian than a Christian.⁹ While it may sound an exaggeration to say that St. Augustine, to some extent, owed his conversion to Cicero's influence, it is necessary to consider where a Christian adaptation of Cicero's view on formation may lead us, using Augustine as a case study. His personal testimony of the effects of Cicero on his life and faith goes thus: "In the ordinary course of study, I fell upon a certain book of Cicero, whose speech almost all admire... This book of his contains an exhortation to philosophy, and is called *Hortensius*. But this book altered my affections, turned my prayers to Thyself, O Lord; and made me have other purposes and desires. Every vain hope at once became worthless to me; and I longed with an incredibly burning desire for an immortality of wisdom, and began now to arise, that I might return to Thee."¹⁰

On the kind of presence that Cicero had during the Medieval Period, we can point at a letter written by Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, the future Pope Pius II, in 1444 affirming that "it is true there have been among the English some who have cultivated the eloquence of Cicero, among whom common consent would place the admirable Bede."¹¹ In the midst of the extreme Ciceronianism which became popular with the works of the humanists, the voice of Desiderius Erasmus reechoed in 1528 when he wrote a dialogue titled *Ciceronianus*, where he argued for a mild Ciceronianism, adducing that recourse can and should be made to Cicero, but it would be absurd to reduce everything to Ciceronianism.¹² Thus, any adaptation of Cicero's view becomes not a 'return' to him as a *condicio sine qua non*, but a 'recourse' to him in search of a methodology suitable for the challenges of the present situation.

Terminologies and Practices in Christianity and Classical Roman Society

While the state is described by Cicero as "concordia coetusque hominum iure sociati,"¹³ the Church is an assembly of people, convoked by God for a mission.¹⁴ Just as the state has a unifying

⁹ Ibid., 116-17.

¹⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, III, 4 (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1924), 109 – 110.

¹¹ Rolfe, *Cicero and His Influence*, 121-22.

¹² Ibid., 137.

¹³ "A collection or body of people (cives) united by law." M. Cicero, *De Re Republica*, VI, 13 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 264.

¹⁴ Kenneth Adesina, *Active Participation of the Laity in the Mission of the Church: A Pastoral Analysis of Christifideles Laiciviv-a-vis Lay Apostolate*

factor, the Church is united by her divine vocation as a family that shares in the mission and life of Jesus. Consequently, it can be said without doubt that the Church also needs her citizens, that is, the members, who will do all within their power to defend her ideals and maintain her identity.

Every institution has a goal, the pursuance of which necessitates a systematic formation. The defence of the Republican goals and values made Cicero to affirm the need for the formation of orators, citizens whose main pre-occupation is the salvation and well-being of the state; who do all within their power to ensure the safety and welfare of citizens.¹⁵ This defence occasionally called for even warfare and opportunities for heroic offerings.¹⁶ Even if the kingdom that the Church has to defend is not necessarily territorial, there is the need also in the Church to maintain ecclesiastical integrity in the areas of faith, morality, pastoral care, social welfare and doctrinal understanding.

Christian Values: Cicero adduces a specific form of formation that not only ensures the acquisition of classical values like *pietas*, *dignitas*, *fides* and *auctoritas*, but also creates a system in which their absence rings a bell in those who do not stand for these values. Christianity does not in any way reject these values, but raises them to a higher level, where grace complements their acquisition and prepares a solid basis for the formation of a mature Christian.

Cursus Honorum: As it was the case in Ancient Rome when every citizen looked forward to completing the *cursus honorum* and contributing to the well-being of the state, there is also the need in the Church to create a working mentality in the members, a mentality that both understands the Christian missionary injunction to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Mt. 28: 19-20); and is ready to commit all available and sane resources to the well-functioning of every aspect of the Church's life and mission.

Custom and Law: Going back to the admiration expressed by Polybius and the basis on which the achievements of Ancient Rome was built, the roles and place of both the *mores maiorum* and the laws are inestimable. Like Rome, the Church is established and nurtured on the teachings of Jesus - both in written form as

Activities in Osogbo Dioces (An unpublished B.Th. submitted to the Department of Theology, Ekpoma, 2003), 1-3.

¹⁵ M. Cicero, *De Oratore*, I, 34 (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1948), 27.

¹⁶ The heroic offering involves giving something for the benefit of the state and citizens, examples include Scaevola's burning of his hand to prove the resilience and resoluteness of Romans in the face of adversity; and Cicero's voluntary exile from Rome at a time and his refusal to run away from the hangmen.

Scriptures and in the form of customs and tradition handed down by forebears in the faith. If making recourse to the faith and deeds of the ancients help in solidifying the living, how much more will a celebration and a return to the heroic deeds of the Christian ancestors sustain the faith and commitment of the contemporary Christians?

Leadership Structure: Based on the teachings of Christ, the leadership structure of the Church is such that whoever aspires to be relevant as a leader has to do so through humble services to the community. The idea of martyrdom entails heroic offering, which is not alien to the ancient Romans. The legendary and heroic act of Gaius Mucius Scaevola¹⁷ calls not only for admiration, but the more, a reflection on how he got to that level of faith in the Republic.

Idea of the Family: In the contemporary image of the Church as a family, the idea of communion of life is further stressed and the inter-connectivity of individual members is emphasized. The idea of the individual families as 'domestic Church' also gives an indication of a sort of structure that helps in achieving a better supervised and more effective formation. In this practice, we can identify the position, roles, and responsibilities of the families, more especially in line with idea of the *paterfamilias* of Ancient Rome. How then can the Church build a consciousness in the mold of the *paterfamilias*, such that the familial structure can equally be used efficaciously in the perfect integration of the young members of the family into the ecclesiastical challenges they have to grapple with?

Aspects of Formation: In the encyclical *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, four areas of formation are underlined for the future priest, namely: human, spiritual, social and academic.¹⁸ While one is of the opinion that all these should also be included and emphasized in the formation of every young Christian by virtue of their participation in the common priesthood, it could be deduced that Cicero proposes a similar frame for the young orator. If there is a difference in the

¹⁷ Gaius Mucius was given the the name Scaevola after he lost his right hand in a great display of will power and dedication to Rome. He had tried to assassinate the commander of the Etruscan army who were encamped around Rome, the attempt failed and he was captured. In the presence of the commander and his army, he thrust his right hand into the fire and left it until it was completely burnt, showing them that every Roman citizen was ready to defend the city, with their lives. The Etruscans left Rome in peace because they could not withstand the assault of 'citizens' like Mucius, who felt no pain in the defense of their city.

¹⁸ John Paul II, *A Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: Pastores Dabo Vobis - On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day* (Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1992), 43-59.

effect they achieve, it might not be unconnected with the emphasis one lays on the different aspects and the opportunities given to those under formation.

Movement from Theory to Practice: The major difference between the Romans and the Greeks lay in the former's emphasis on praxis and tangible application of theories. The goodness of the Ciceronian orator lies not just in what he knows or the wideness of his knowledge but most importantly in the application of this to the wellbeing of the state through the acts of instruction, persuasion and appeal to emotion.¹⁹ This emphasis of the Ciceronian formation on actions that lead to tangible result is also at the centre of the quest for a 'sacramentalization' of the Christian belief.²⁰

Structure of Formation: There is the presence of a structure of formation in both the Republican Rome and the Church. Starting from the family, every agent of formation has significant roles to play in safe-guarding the state and the Church. However, it is left to be said that in the contemporary era, where the duties and rights of some of these agents of formation are being reduced by secularization and subjectivity through a relativized value-system, within available and legal means, there is the need to adapt roles according to the exigencies.

Spiritualization of Roles: Rome was presented to citizens not just as a divine project in which the combined spiritual effects of the deities and ancestors were at work, but more of a place where every citizen who played his role well and contributed in some way to the glory of Rome was actually walking tall with the ancestors and the gods of Rome. The Church does not just offer her members the full benefits of the communion of saints, but gives them the chance to work with Jesus for the salvation of the whole world. So, every effort that is put into the mission of the Church becomes a salvific opportunity and a foretaste of eternal communion.

The Ciceronian Orator and a Matured Young Christian

As a 'citizen' of God's Kingdom and in the manner of the Ciceronian orator, the young Christian must embrace "the practice

¹⁹ Cicero, *De Oratore*, II, 310 (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1948), 434.

²⁰ By sacramentalization, we mean: giving a physical expression to the entire content of our faith and practices as Catholics, in a sort of 'incarnation'; whereby people can almost touch, experience and perceive the ideals and values of the Catholic faith through the examples of our lives. Cf. B. Spinks, "Sacramentology," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Catholic Theology*, ed. I. McFarland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 452-54.

of spectacular virtue in the course of an active life in the setting of a political community – which... Cicero treats as the natural end of human existence.”²¹ So, since the identity of the Church goes beyond a mere political community, we can infer that Christianizing the values of the orator will bring an added responsibility to the matured Christian in the practice of spectacular virtue within the course of an active life in the setting of a spiritual, pastoral, human and moral community – which is the natural end of his Christian identity.

A young Christian is incorporated into the Church-fold through the sacraments of initiation. By means of Baptism, he becomes a child of God, member of the Church, and a citizen of God’s Kingdom.²² Through Confirmation, “a sacrament in which the Holy Spirit is given to those already baptized in order to make them strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ,”²³ he takes up a more challenging leadership role in the community, using all his abilities and capabilities to sustain and defend the Kingdom of God on earth. In the Eucharist, he has the opportunity of living in a loving union with Jesus Christ,²⁴ receiving an increase of sanctifying grace in his soul,²⁵ and foretasting the glorious resurrection and eternal happiness promised by Jesus.²⁶

In these sacraments of initiation, especially through baptism, the young Christian makes an affirmative response to the divine call to participate in the prophetic, kingly and priestly mission of Christ. As a result of this call-response interaction, he becomes an integral part of the Church’s mission, taking responsibility for the defence and propagation of Christ’s Kingdom on earth like the Ciceronian orator for Rome. In union with the Church, he disposes himself favorably to the divine assistance of the

²¹ J. Connolly, *The State of Speech: Rhetoric and Political Thought in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 267.

²² P. De Clerck, “Baptism,” in *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, ed. J. Lacoste (New York: Routledge, 2005), 154-56.

²³ T. Scannell, “Confirmation,” *New Advent*, April 20, 2013, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04215b.htm>.

²⁴ John 6:57; St. Cyril of Alexandria (Hom. in Joan., IV, xvii) beautifully represents this mystical union as the fusion of our being into that of the God-man, as “when melted wax is fused with other wax.” J. Pohle, “The Blessed Eucharist as a Sacrament,” *New Advent*, April 20, 2013, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05584a.htm>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ John 6: 54, “Whoever eats my body and drinks my blood has everlasting life and I will raise him up on the last day.” See Ignatius, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 20; Irenæus, *Against Heresies* IV.18.4, and Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, 8.

Holy Spirit, so as to “preach the Goodnews to the poor, proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4: 18-19). Consequently, his vocation is such that, whether he proceeds to the sacrament of Holy Orders or not, he already has enough basis for active participation in the mission; he should be conscious of the obligation to offer the example of his way of life as a testimony for his status as a citizen of God’s Kingdom, and should grow in the desire to make the prayer of the psalmist his own: “Lord, do not let those who place their hope in you be put to shame through me” (Psalm 69: 9).

It is pertinent to say at this point that, like the Ciceronian orator, the young Christian has to be brought up in a way to realize his identity, the rights, responsibilities and obligations that come to him as result of this identity, and then the inevitability of working assiduously for the Kingdom of God, so as not to lose his claim to eternal salvation. However, some important questions should come to mind here: what is the possibility of the young Christian doing this if he does not understand his very identity? How can he make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28: 19), if he does not have real and adequate knowledge of his faith and the reality of those he wants to convert to God? How does he hope to achieve any success without a methodic approach? How will his effort make impact on others if he is not a man of good character, moral probity and Christian virtues?

Following from the questions raised and for efficient Christian formation, we are proposing five important aspects that are evident in the Ciceronian model for the formation of the orator: *Civic or Ecclesiological Formation*.²⁷ The civic or ecclesiological formation gives the young Christian the real idea of the Church, his own identity as a member of the Church community and the expectations that come to him as a result of his membership of the faith community. This formation integrates him into both the functionality of the universal Church and the activities of the local Church community. Learning the unavailability of incarnating the Christian values²⁸ into concrete actions that are felt in the

²⁷ The usage of civic or ecclesiology is with a specific reference to focus and intentionality. Cicero’s focus was on the terrestrial city of Rome, with the intention of forming statesmen who will uphold the ideal of a civic state; so, adapting the same model to the Church brings in a nuance that supersedes the civic realm. Ecclesiology becomes a more suitable means of capturing the new realm into which we are situating the narrower concept of civic formation.

²⁸ As “admirable or praiseworthy trait of character,” virtues are commonly identified by different societies and linked to specific roles. For the specific

community, he discovers the necessity of taking up ministerial, devotional and social activities in his local faith community. In addition, he gets to appreciate the Church as a common patrimony that should be defended and sustained in the different areas of: spirituality, doctrine, liturgy, tradition, morality and social status within the society.

Spiritual Formation: It goes beyond doubt that one of the motivations for the heroic offerings and sacrifices recorded in the history of Rome is the notion of Roman divinity. The young Christian needs to be brought up in a way to appreciate the Holiness of the One, Catholic and Apostolic Church, understand his own identity as a call to participate in the divinity of God, and embrace the different forms in which the divine presence is experienced and related to in the community. Within the context of the Church's history and experience, the responses of our forebears in the faith and saints should be made clear to the young Christians, so that from that tender age, they can choose a model of spirituality to follow and strive after heroic offering that will grant them a place among the saints. Consequently, it is pertinent to emphasize activities like personal and communal prayers, devotions and whatever will call their attention to the spirituality of their vocation, duty and challenges as Christians.

Human Formation: In view of the demands of his vocation and challenges, this aspect of formation looks into helping the Christian attain a pleasing personality and some level of "affective maturity."²⁹ It goes beyond mere acquisition of some moral values to the acquisition of character that invokes respect, honour and dignity from others. The importance of human formation is such that it is the fulcrum on which others rotate, it gives credence to others. No matter how vast one is in other areas of formation, if his character or his very person does not stand the test of character, his efforts are pointless.

role of the orator, Cicero specifically put the four classical cardinal virtues into a specific context and role; in Christianity, especially in the writing of St. Paul, the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Love are attached to the identity of a Christian. While the superior and divinely instilled theological virtues are necessary conditions for the Christian state, the 'cultivation' of the cardinal virtues is necessary to give open and heroic expression to the practice of the theological virtues.

Cf. 1Cor. 13:13; Cf. J. Porter, "Virtues," in *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology* 1, ed. J. Lacoste (Michigan: Routledge, 2005), 1681-684.

²⁹ Cf. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 44.

Intellectual or Academic Formation: Since *nemo dat quod non habet*,³⁰ the young Christian needs a basis for proper understanding of the contents of his beliefs and a platform that gives him an insight into the inter-connectedness of these to other realities around him. Intellectual formation is “deeply connected with, and indeed can be seen as a necessary expression of, both human and spiritual formation. It is a fundamental demand of the human intelligence by which one ‘participates in the light of God's mind’ and seeks to acquire a wisdom, which in turn opens to and is directed toward knowing and adhering to God.”³¹ Apart from helping to acquire wisdom, which in turn opens to, and is directed towards knowing and adhering to God, an intellectual formation that is integrated with a spirituality marked by a personal experience of God³² affords the Christian the opportunity to possess the knowledge of many things and the ability to argue from the different sides of an argument.

Formation in Rhetoric or Evangelization: The role of the Christian can be likened to the Samaritan woman, who after having encountered Jesus, went into the village to tell others about Christ and brought them to him.³³ For the Christian, how will he do this if he is not vast in the art of convincing people? The contents of faith and our Christian mission are admittedly rich, soothing and salvific, but how do we present these to others if we do not develop the technicality of presentation and the intricacies of persuasion? If evangelization can be simply defined as having Christ and making him known to others, there is the need not just to cultivate the appropriate style, mode, means and atmosphere for evangelization in the same way that rhetoric teaches the orator both the style and the whole mechanism of working upon the *pathos* of the audience; but also to facilitate a contact between them and the Saviour through the faith community. Thus, for effective formation, it is necessary to create an atmosphere that is conducive, in the frame of the Ciceronian *negotium sine periculo* and *otium cum dignitate*. This is important because the Ciceronian model of formation extols the full and free co-operation of the pupil under formation in an environment that is not menacing.³⁴ By and large, it should be

³⁰ “Nobody can give what he does not have.” Cf. J. Stone, *The Routledge Dictionary of Latin Quotations: The Illiterati's Guide to Latin Maxims, Mottoes, Proverbs and Sayings* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 68.

³¹ Cf. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 51.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Cf. John 4: 1-42.

³⁴ By this Cicero means that formation is better done when there is a full cooperation from the person to be formed; coercion may at best bring

affirmed that adopting the Ciceronian model of formation for the Christian places great emphasis on the centrality of the human person in communication.

So, to communicate and present Christ to others as an active participant in the mission of Christ, the first three aspects of formation adapted from Cicero, that is, civic or ecclesiological, spiritual and human aspects of formation, must give the right identity, necessary zeal, just motivation and the Christian conscience that will ensure that he makes good use of the tools offered by the intellectual and rhetorical/evangelizational formation. Otherwise, the effect of oratory and wide knowledge would have a devastating consequence on the society if they are not accompanied by proper human formation and high sense of ecclesiological and spiritual responsibility.³⁵

Catechesis and the Methodological Enrichment of Ciceronian Formational Ideals: A Re-Appraisal

The word ‘catechesis’ is derived from the Greek verb *κατηχεω*, which means ‘to resound.’³⁶ In its noun form, *κατηχησις* means an oral instruction or teaching.³⁷ Thus, the word ‘catechesis’ in its original usage in Greek, in the work of Cicero³⁸ and in the New Testament connotes the idea of oral teaching.³⁹ It can be said in fact that “since Christian initiation required knowing both Christian dogma and moral, the history of catechesis is also that of teaching lay Christians, especially children, the essential elements of Christianity.”⁴⁰

Going by the famous dictum of Tertullian that “Christians *are* made, not born,”⁴¹ we can deduce that catechesis has been a practice in the Church right from the beginning of her existence. In

satisfaction to the agent of formation, but it is never a guaranteed means of achieving the goal of formation.

³⁵ Cf. M. Cicero, *De Oratore*, I, 30 (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1948), 23.

³⁶ J. Lacoste, ed., *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 265.

³⁷ F. Montanari, *Vocabolario della Lingua Greca* (Torino: Loescher Editore, 2004), 1121.

³⁸ Cf. M. Cicero, *Ad Atticum*, XV, 12.2, ed. T. Page, *et al* (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1961), 328.

³⁹ Lacoste, *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, 265.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ “Fiunt non nascuntur Christiani.” Cf. Tertullian, *Apologia*, ed. G. Goold (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1977), 90-1.

history, however, there have been different modifications to its nature, focus and methodology. Apart from the various instances of instruction in the New Testament, “the earliest catechesis of which we have details is given in the *Didache*, in which a text called ‘The Two Ways’ ... presents the duties of the convert to the ‘Way of Life’ (honesty, chastity, humility, and charity), which separates him from the world and from the Way of Death.”⁴²

At the very early period, we can infer the nature of catechesis from the work of the Church fathers, who at various times described the nature of instruction and formation given to the neophytes. Justin the Martyr writes that “the enlightenment of initiation is for those who have been taught the Gospel and pledge to live accordingly.”⁴³ By late second century, there are indications of the presence of groups under instruction, being taught the rudiments of the faith and its moral obligation before baptism.⁴⁴ In fact, by the end of the third century, “the catechumenate involved scrutiny of motives, lifestyle, and employment; ... the whole process marked a dramatic journey from worldly society to sacred communion.”⁴⁵ All these show the vantage attention given to the person of the Christians as a testimony to their faith in Christ.

The challenges of the fourth century brought about an increase in the doctrinal and theological content of catechesis, and by the fifth century, infant baptism gradually became the norm, “baptismal instruction declined ... [and] enrolment, exorcism, renunciation, and profession were compressed into a series of rapid steps at the start of the baptismal service.”⁴⁶ From this point, the doctrinal enrichment of catechesis did not carry along with it a commensurable attention to the human and character formation of the Christians. The situation was so serious that “numerous injunctions from local councils and bishops in the period 800 – 1500 show the efforts made to ensure that the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer and the Ave Maria were known and understood by all.”⁴⁷ The emphasis on doctrinal instructions continued in the medieval ‘Question and Answer’ catechesis, and the Roman Catechism of the Council of Trent.

⁴² Lacoste, *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, 265. Similar description of the early catechesis is also given in the Shepherd of Hermas, 2.

⁴³ I. McFarland, David A. Fergusson, Karen Kilby, Iain R. Torrance, eds., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Catholic Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 86.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 86-7.

⁴⁷ Lacoste, *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, 265.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* of the late twentieth (20th) Century is an enrichment of the Catechism of the Council of Trent in a manner that captures the spirit of the Vatican II Council. It is in fact a good response to “the desire for a catechism or compendium of all Catholic doctrine, both on faith and on morals that could serve as a reference for the catechism written in various countries.”⁴⁸ However, the simplistic attitude of many Christians to this compendium shows that something is still amiss. How is it that many countries and cultural groups have not been able to make the proposed adaptation requested by *Fidei Depositum*?⁴⁹ What basis have we put in place for the free acceptance of the contents and challenges of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*?

At this juncture, it should be known from the outset that the contents of formation adduced by the Church have no defect. The main challenges now border on the practicality of formational structure and approach, the suitability of style for contemporary exigencies, and an appraisal of the factors responsible for the contemporary diminution of interest in matters that relate to the Church. It is actually in these regards that the Ciceronian model of formation becomes very handy. If truly ‘Christians are made and not born,’ the Christian formation has to start from infancy. The immediate family has to take responsibility for bringing up their infant member in the faith, teaching him the basic tenets of the faith and making him participate actively in the life of the local community. Assisted by the mechanism of the local faith community, the young Christian is provided with the avenues to practice his faith, taking responsibility for the good of the Church in his own little way.

In a permissive society that has no yard-stick to measure and reward good deeds, there is always the risk of redundancy. So, the adaptation and subsidies that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls for should be developed in such a way that the contents of faith and morals therein presented will be put into teaching curriculum that gives equal importance to all the five aspects of formation treated. Cicero proposes a formation that is on-going, giving an ideal that the orator has to strive to attain. So, the effort of the orator to improve himself and the quality of life in the community is not a once-and-for-all struggle. Formation in the

⁴⁸ Ibid., 266.

⁴⁹ *Fidei Depositum* is the document for the promulgation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and it calls for an inculturation of the teachings therein presented into the different cultures, languages and reality of the members of the Church.

Church, using catechesis as a source of contents, should go beyond mere preparation for the sacraments.

More importantly, in the model of Cicero's orator, formation in the Church (even if we are looking at it as catechesis), should be seen and treated as a complement to Church governance. By so doing, a good formation given to the young will ensure the presence of young and dedicated Christians, who are ready not just to take up roles of responsibility for the Church, but also to use all just and available means in expanding the frontiers of Christianity. The implication of all these proposed methodic adaptations of the classical values in *De Oratore* is that: formation in the contemporary Church should be more person-centred and practical; it should not be limited to the reception of the sacraments; every member of the community should have active roles to play in formation; and the Christian values should be celebrated and extolled in the communities.

The Future of Formation: Enriching Christian Formation with Classical Values

The goal of formation in the Church is the making of every member of the Church, Christians like the apostles – who at the risk of their lives and comfort took responsibility for and carry on the mission of Christ; Christians like the members of the early community of Antioch – whose *ethos* and exemplary lives of charity and holiness gave all of us the name 'Christians' (Acts 11: 26); Christians, like the Samaritan woman, whose encounter with Jesus at the well prompted her to go into the village, narrated her experience of the Saviour, and brought the whole village to him.

In the reality of our present experience, where men are apt to adopt whatever is *in vogue* irrespective of its morality and negative effects, formation in the Church will achieve its goals if the tested classical values are maintained and the contents of formation are never compromised. Taking a cue from Cicero's preference for Romans' practical application instead of Greeks' celebration of theoretical knowledge, the entire structure of formation in the Church should make a practical and concrete response to the view expressed by Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* that "the modern world does not want teachers, but witnesses. If it does listen to teachers, it is only because they are first of all witnesses."⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation: Evangelii Nuntiandi – Evangelisation in the Modern World* (New York: Pauline Books & Media, 1975).

In order to produce witnesses and not just academics who are not in touch with the reality of the Christian mission, formation should make use of various incentives that will attract young men to the Church and encourage them to willingly embrace formation. They should be challenged to show their worth and capability under the guidance of the various agents of formation. In order to encourage others, those who are doing well should be celebrated in the community. At the same time, those who are not pulling their weight should be encouraged; a possible way of doing this is to encourage youths to minister to their peers. So, the future of formation lies in an uncompromising insistence on classical Christian values that are inculcated in the young ones. Such uncompromising approach will aim at forming their character, so that, mindful of their identity as members of God's family and the challenges associated with such identity, they are positioned to make good use of whatever tools are available to them for their good, for the good of the community, and above all, to the glory of God, in whom they live, move and have their being.

Following from the above, it is clear that the Church already has the contents, the structure and the agents of formation. While it is undisputable that the contents of the Church's formational programme are adequate, it should be stated that the Church, at every level of her existence, should modify the structure or mechanism of formation and prepare the various agents of formation in such a way that the recipients of the contents will be so prepared to incarnate fruitfully the ideals therein contained and move the Church closer to her goals of establishing the Kingdom of God in every human heart. The question that arises is: how can this be done?

First and foremost, under the guidance and support of the local ordinary and the relevant organs of the universal Church, every local community should put in place mechanisms that check and evaluate the parish community in the five aspects of formation examined above. In addition to using the roles of individual members in community activities, their characters and compartments in the larger society should also be considered as measures of their levels of formation. And wherever there is a lack, supplementary programme of formation should be organized.

The adequate preparation for the sacraments and homilies constitutes the main avenues for formation in the contemporary Church. This calls for two important responses. The first is the need to form an aggregation of people with similar challenges in the local community, so that training or formation programme can be organized for them in order to position them better for the

challenges of their state of life.⁵¹ Then, there is the need to break down the anonymity of the crowd we have in the Church. By this, we mean that formation should target individuals and solicit their personal commitment to Church projects. This becomes important if we consider that the crowd that listened to Jesus, despite the fact that they benefited from his miracles and were moved by his preaching, not only abandoned him when his words were no longer conducive to their hearing (John 6: 59-66), they shouted in his presence: "crucify him!" (Luke 23:23). It was only among those he called by name that he heard the pronouncement: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the word of eternal life" (John 6: 68). The contemporary craze for subjective individualism and uncharitable privacy, coupled with rave of scandalous acts should not in any way make the Church forget the values of inter-personal relationship in formation.

Conclusion

The future of the Church's missionary endeavour depends to some extent on the link between the sacraments and her mission of evangelization. This realization calls for a re-appraisal of the curriculum we are using for the preparation of young Christians for the sacraments, especially for the sacrament of Confirmation, which makes them not only perfect Christians, but more importantly, 'soldiers of Christ.' Imbuing the curriculum with Ciceronian values and practices like: moral probity, *dignitas*, *virtus*, *tirocinium* and practice, will entail that the suitability for the sacrament is judged not just by theoretical knowledge or mere attendance at catechism classes, but more importantly by character, moral probity, affective maturity and readiness to cooperate with the sacramental grace in the practical mission of evangelization. There should also be the need to include in the curriculum, training in the art of preaching the Gospel to others and practical experience of this, just as Jesus sent out the disciples (Luke 10: 1-23), before they eventually received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Cicero stresses the need for constant practice in formation. The future of the Church depends so much on the opportunity given to young people to establish their relevance in the Church, in the same way that the forum and regular disputation afforded the young orator growth opportunity in Ancient Rome. Beyond this, we

⁵¹ Such groups may include youth, young couples, married men, married women, health workers, etc.

should be weary of referring to youths ordinarily as future leaders. The kind of influence they wield through the social media and other means of communication shows they are already leaders. The Church must as a matter of great urgency invest in their human, spiritual and ecclesiological formation, so that equipped with a strong Christian character, they will seize and use the contemporary means to propagate the Christian doctrine, minister to their errant peers and change the world for good. Considering the direct effects that quality formation has on the leadership and future of any organization, it is clear that the future of the Church will be guaranteed by co-operating with her divine spouse in instilling in the hearts and conscience of her children, the abiding human and Christian values that are necessary for the attainment of the Christian goals of universal salvation.

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