

**“I PLANTED, APOLLOS WATERED BUT GOD GAVE THE INCREASE” (1COR.  
3:6): TOWARDS COLLABORATION IN PASTORAL MINISTRY**

Evaristus Ifeanacho (PhD)\*

**ABSTRACT**

*The care of souls remains central in any Christian religion worthy of the name. That implies an inclination towards the transcendence. That is however founded on the fact that man is composed of two natures - body and soul, reminiscent of the hylemorphic composition of man. This viewpoint however led to a dualistic metaphysics, which views the body and soul as two substances really distinct even if they are united in the formation of man. However, Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy sought for the concrete unity of these two realities, because though man is a corporeal being composed of the material stuff of the inorganic world, still, he cannot be completely explained in terms of his corporeal life alone for he also possesses a spiritual-intellectual life, which is intrinsically independent of everything material. Consequently, if man is a being that can perform both immaterial and spiritual acts like thinking, deciding and knowing, ipso facto he is a spiritual being. By dint of this fact he enjoys spiritual existence. However the two dimensions complement each other. All in all, this natural inclination to God is the fulcrum of our faith, which is based on God's revelation of Himself and man's response. Consequently, faith requires human agents and human response. Faith needs nourishment through collaborative pastoral ministry in which every plays his/her part reasonably well. The researcher therefore will expose how pastoral ministry has to be aimed at drawing people to God and not to the person of the pastor. The research will use descriptive methodology aimed at unveiling exegetical implication of this verse under consideration and analytic approach that will delineate its implication to collaborative pastoral ministry. In the end, the research will recommend the necessity of giving God a central place in every pastoral ministry.*

**Keywords:** Planted, pastoral ministry, collaboration, pastoral collaboration, co-responsibility

**INTRODUCTION**

Man is regarded as a co-creator with God through the sacrament of matrimony. It is a sacred assignment that demands the ever-abiding trust in divine grace for the accomplishment of

the mystery therein. More so, through the font of baptism the Christian family is time and time again populated and re-populated. The onus lies on the church to guard these sacraments and guide the Christians towards a proper understanding of the faith. Christ handed over this mission to his apostles through the missionary mandate: “Go, therefore make disciples of all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20). The Apostles handed over the mandate to their successors. While handing on what they themselves had received,

the Apostles warn the faithful to hold fast to the traditions which they have learned either by word of mouth or by letter (2 Thess. 2:15), and to fight in defense of the faith handed on once and for all (Jude 1:3) Now what was handed on by the Apostles includes everything which contributes toward the holiness of life and increase in faith of the peoples of God; and so the Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes. (Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*8)

The content of faith that is handed over has to be kept intact and preserved from all forms of error. That is could be done if the successor insist on teaching and maintaining the truth. Therefore, the “sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known.” (Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* 9)

In this regard, the spreading of the faith down the centuries has demanded the involvement of many human agents. These agents have employed various methods towards seeing that the gospel reaches to the ends of the earth.

### **UNDERSTANDING 1COR.3:6**

Paul started by building his argument a careful but scholarly distinction between two Greek adjectives rooted in the noun *Sarx* (flesh): *sarkinoi* (made of flesh) and *sarkikoi* (dominated by the flesh). The former is a prerogative of every human being but a relapse to the latter does an unconscionable discourtesy to the spiritual realm of human existence. It mirrors spiritual childishness evidently suggestive of spiritual immaturity. This tendency culminated in engendering of factions within the Christian community. Paul without mincing words was

vehemently rebuking the Corinthians against party spirit, dissension which was symptomatic of being dominated by the flesh (*sarkikoi*). Such tendency leads to a proneness to their belongingness to a particular preacher. For, it was this divisive tendency according to Chrysostom (1997) that “brought forth jealousy, and jealousy had made them ‘carnal’, and having become ‘carnal’ left them not at liberty to hear truths of the sublime sort” (8,5). Paul skilfully unveils the evident foolishness of this party spirit with its concomitant glorification of human leaders. He went further to employ the imagery of planting and watering as evident in Philo (1960). In fact, Collins(1999) enthused that “within the biblical tradition agricultural imagery evokes the image of growth in the realm of creation (e.g., Genesis 2) and of Israel as the vineyard (e.g., Isa 5:1-7). The seed parables of the synoptic tradition (Matt 13:3-9, 24-30, Mark 4:2-9, 26-32; Luke 8:5-8) reflect similar imagery” (p.142). Paul's emphasis on God and the divine initiative is a dominant theme, perhaps the dominant theme of 1:18-4:5.

There is no gainsaying the fact that

in a garden one man may plant a seed and another may water it; but neither can claim to have made the seed grow. That belongs to God and to God alone. The man who plants and the man who waters are on one level; neither can claim any precedence over the other; they are but servants working together for the one Master – God. God uses human instruments to bring to men the message of his truth and love; but it is He alone who wakes the hearts of men to new life (Barclay 1995, p.31).

In fact, for Collins (2006) the whole effort is geared towards letting the Corinthians understand that Paul and Apollos have worked side by side but the power comes from God and the enterprise belongs to God. Hence, *Paulus plantavit, Apollos rigavit sed Deus incrementum dedit* (Paul planted, Apollos watered but God gave the increase). Rather than being dominated by the human tendency they should be focussed on spiritual growth which the agricultural imagery strongly evokes.

God's work does not admit of any form of monopoly; neither does it permit a *scit omnia* mentality. It is rather a conglomeration of individuals endowed with a miscellany of gifts and talents. It is a perfect promotion of the beauty of diversity. There are no superstars in this task, only team members performing their own special roles. We can become useful members of God's team by setting aside our desires to receive glory for what we do. Everyone must be aware and deeply appreciate the fact that it is a matchless privilege to be allowed to get engaged in the work of God, our frailty notwithstanding. We must always be aware that though faith is a divine gift, it does not bypass incarnational channels. To that

effect, a defective instrument can impede or distort the action of the principal cause. Such a gracious employment of human instruments is out of His divine magnanimity; and as such detests any form of boast. One could be a seasoned evangelist, another a consummate catechist but all is nothing without God who gives the increase.

### **THE DIVINE-HUMAN COLLABORATION**

Collaboration is derived from the Latin preposition *cum* meaning “with, together” and the Latin infinitive “*laborare*” meaning to work. Therefore, collaboration presents the idea of working together. It therefore has an underlining synodal spirit. Nelson (1996) presents collaboration as taking others into an open and honest partnership where people and groups co-operate, share strengths and weaknesses, and work towards a common good. This spirit of working together enhances what Camarihna-Matos, et al., (2008) called shared creation which involves a process through which a group of entities enhance the capabilities of each other. It more fundamentally involves mutual engagement of participants to solve a problem together, which implies mutual trust and thus takes time, effort, and dedication. It is an all-involving exercise founded on unmitigated commitment of all the parties in order to yield abundant fruit. In the words of Onyiuke (2005),

full collaboration requires a commitment to participate in shared vision, in goals and objectives, decision-making and implementation processes in a given enterprise. It entails pulling together the individual resources – physical, academic moral, and spiritual – for the accomplishment of a common purpose or a specific mission. Collaboration builds on the conviction that while retaining the uniqueness and autonomy of the individuals concerned, each one shares the hope that the group can achieve more by working together than they can on their own.

This collaborative spirit has biblical foundation and as such ought to permeate the pastoral life of the church. Right from creation God has continued to give man the opportunity of collaboration in the work of creation. This is evident in the mandate given to man to be “fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). The human participation in divine operation is an opportunity towards continuing and improving on the work of creation. In this way, man continues to transcend himself and aspire towards the spiritual realm which is his ultimate goal. This divine-human cooperation according to Murphy-O’Connor (1990) is a mode of divine activity inaugurated by Christ. This collaboration is made manifest in the First of St. Paul to the Corinthians where Paul and Apollos are presented as God’s co-

workers. In fact, even though all the credit must go to God, this employment of human acknowledges the reality of the ministerial contribution. It is not a one-man show punctuated with the selfish spirit of *scit omnia* (he knows it all). It is not a creation of one who pretends to be a factotum in pastoral affairs. It rather reflects a collaborative spirit. To that effect, when there is a denigration of the primacy of the grace of God in the pastoral ministry the tendency is for pastors or pastoral workers to see themselves as the be-all and end-all. They get ourselves pastorally deified and begin to think that without them everything crumbles; and when they are not there progress in pastoral life grinds to a halt. This could be a mere colossal deception, pathological self-glorification and blatant self-adulation that in no small measure go to negate the apostolic spirit.

“I planted” is bloated up, the ego is terribly inflated and pride mercilessly forces humility into oblivion. The resultant effect could be to devote one’s energy in thinking that only oneself matters; striving for personal achievements instead of collaborative results. Such disposition wherever it exist, drags to the reputation of the pastor and co-workers to the mud and equally ridicules the whole pastoral ministry and all it stands for.

Those involved in pastoral work ought to bear in mind that they are nothing except for the grace of God. They should not eject the Master out of their lives and begin to act in a most bizarre manner. They must put Christ at the centre of personal and pastoral life. For Francis (2013), it is obvious that “when we put Christ at the centre of our life, we ourselves don’t become the centre! The more that you unite yourself to Christ and he becomes the centre of your life, the more he leads you out of yourself, leads you from making yourself the centre and opens you to others.” In fact, Francis (2013a) continued, “we are not at the centre; we are, so to speak, ‘relocated’. We are at the service of Christ and of the Church.”

All in all, there is no gainsaying the fact that faithful discipleship is a combination of grace and love in action; it is a daily exercise in the manifestation of sacrificial charity. Such sacrificial charity often times involves self-immolation evident in challenges therein. According to Francis (2013b), when we journey without the Cross, when we build without the Cross, when we profess Christ without the Cross, we are not disciples of the Lord, we are worldly. We may be bishops, priests, cardinals, popes, but not disciples of the Lord.

There is actually the need to be convinced in order to be convincing; and the conviction of our being convinced sets in motion a pastoral encounter that is as all-inclusive as it is rewardingly enriching.

## **CO-RESPONSIBILITY: THE NEXUS OF PASTORAL MINISTRY**

Benedict XVI (2009) addressing the clergy of the Diocese of Rome, reflected on the mission of the laity in our times by introducing the neologism, co-responsibility, into the church parlance. This term has ecclesiological as well as pastoral importance. He thus states that

it is necessary to improve pastoral structures in such a way that the co-responsibility of all the members of the People of God in their entirety is gradually promoted, with respect for vocations and for the respective roles of the consecrated and of lay people. This demands a change in mindset, particularly concerning lay people. They must no longer be viewed as "collaborators" of the clergy but truly recognized as "co-responsible", for the Church's being and action, thereby fostering the consolidation of a mature and committed laity.

Such co-responsibility has its confluence in the different agents involved in preaching the Good News ranging from the Bishop, priests, consecrated men and women, and lay faithful. It reflects the "diversity of ministry but oneness of mission" (Vatican II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* 2). None should be neglected in the pastoral engagement. The requisite all-involving nature of the call reflects the church as communion. Stressing on the crucial nature of co-responsibility, Benedict XVI (2012) added that it is important that a mature and committed laity be consolidated, which can make its own specific contribution to the ecclesial mission with respect for the ministries and tasks that each one has in the life of the Church and always in cordial communion with the bishops. When co-responsibility becomes an obvious concrete reality, Bowen (2021) maintains that the laity will assume a more active and positive commitment. They will therefore not be merely passive recipients of the ministry of the ordained. Neither are they only collaborators in ecclesial affairs. Instead, lay people have an identity and role that is unique in the Church's very being and acting in the world. The ordained, empowered as they are through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, represent Christ by teaching, sanctifying, and governing. The laity are empowered through the Sacrament of Baptism to represent Christ in the world and spread the Gospel to every corner of society. Consequently, Suenens corroborates that, the layman who assumes his co-responsibility for the prophetic mission of the Church can bring to his task specific contributions which have great consequences for the life of the Church itself. His training, his professional competence, his wide range of interests can greatly enrich and develop the role of the Church in the world. The attitude of the layman in regard to the Church should be active and ready to collaborate, rather than passive and inert. It is based on that, that the lay people have to live out the reality

of their co-responsibility in the pastoral council and other related bodies in the church. In this way they use their talents for the growth of the church. Suenens further maintained that, “we need the skill of our administrators, the knowledge of those engaged in law and teaching, the talent of our writers, the sense of social justice of our labour leaders. We wish to be helped by the practical insights of our sociologists, as well as the professional skill of our city planners and architects so that our Christian effort in our ever growing urban areas may be genuinely effective. And we await the wisdom of our doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists in bringing God's teaching to bear on the modern problems of family, marriage and education. Briefly, the Church stands in need of a widespread exercise of apostolic co-responsibility on the part of the laity.

When this familiar relationship is created between the pastors and the laity, definitely the pastoral progress of the Church is more and more guaranteed. More so,

the sense of their own responsibility is strengthened in the laity, their zeal is encouraged, they are more ready to unite their energies to the work of their pastors. The latter, helped by the experience of the laity, are in a position to judge more clearly and more appropriately in spiritual as well as in temporal matters. Strengthened by all her members, the Church can thus more effectively fulfil her mission for the life of the world. (Vatican II, *Dogmatic constitution on the Church*, 37)

From the foregoing, there is no doubting the fact that co-responsibility and collaboration are two sides of the same coin. Both in the long run are rooted in the ecclesiology of communion which is manifested vividly in participation at all level in oneness of mission and multiplicity of roles. The perspective of communion in the words of Donio and McCrabb (2014) reminds us that we are not only called to collaborate with one another in the mission of the church as baptized, but that we also collaborate with the Trinity. Our triune God models a collaborative relationship where each distinct being relates one to another and with us. Hence Paul Steven (1999) avers that “the Father creates, providentially sustains, and forms a covenantal framework for all existence. The Son incarnates, mediates, transfigures and redeems. The Spirit empowers and fills with God’s own presence. But each shares in the other—co-inheres, interpenetrates, cooperates—so that it is theologically inappropriate to stereotype the ministry of any one.” In that regard, Donio (2015) avers that “collaboration and co-responsibility among all the baptized does not mean that there is not a diversity of roles, as we have heard. There is a diversity of roles. But the mission is one, and all the baptized participate in this mission. Who’s mission? Christ’s. What mission?

Evangelization of all peoples by the baptized” (p. 46). Evidently, collaboration is a complementary exercise witnessed in pastoral ministry. Pastoral ministry is an ongoing process that has a synodal and dynamic character. It involves the hierarchy as well as the lay faithful. Francis (2013) interestingly and fraternally advised and insisted that pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way”. I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities....The important thing is to not walk alone, but to rely on each other as brothers and sisters, and especially under the leadership of the bishops, in a wise and realistic pastoral discernment.”

In the context of the verse of the Letter to the Corinthians under consideration, the planting has to be complemented by the watering. Any of them that goes without the other risks not bearing the desired fruit. The Church that is on the move must use the agricultural metaphor of planting and watering. No arm of the Church should be neglected in the process because the Church that is on the move abhors any form of stagnation. Stagnation is a mark of a non-synodal Church. As Francis strongly remarked, “if it is not on the go, it is not Church. A Church on the go, a missionary Church is a Church that does not waste time lamenting things that go wrong, the loss of faithful, the values of the time now in the past.” It could be a bruised church but it must move on. The move must be a reasonable and positively progressive one. The watering must go on. Some will be revived, some will be stunted, and others may even die off. That’s the watering process which bespeaks of continuity of the pastoral ministry. Such ministry naturally endowed with dynamism in the words of Francis (2013) “seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way”. This pastoral irrigation and sprinkling demand some boldness and creativity with the aim of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in every pastoral setting. For, Christ's works do not go backwards, they do not fail but progress.

The tumor of “not watering” is evident in a pastor of souls that remains inaccessible to the lay faithful especially when they are in need of spiritual assistance; it is also evident in a pastor of souls who is deficient in the breaking the word of God for his congregation and thus does not get them meaningfully and spiritually nourished. Breaking the word of God should not done haphazardly, it rather demands proper meditation on the word in order to tap from its inner riches. To that effect, the pastors of souls should remember that the homily as admonished Benedict XVI (2010) “should lead to an understanding of the mystery being



celebrated, serve as a summons to mission, and prepare the assembly for the profession of faith, the universal prayer and the Eucharistic liturgy” (p. 59). According to Eterovic (2008) all forms of “improvisations must be avoided, since the homily is too serious a reality to be delivered to the faithful without adequate planning”. The tumor of “not watering” actually begins when a priest does not devote some time in primarily watering his mental environment through personal adoration, ongoing formation, reading culture in order to properly arm himself with the spiritual ingredients that will help him in watering his physical environment and the mental environmental of his faithful.

### **CONFIGURATION TO CHRIST: THE CRUX OF COLLABORATION**

In the words of Benedict XVI (2012) always remember that,

there is a need for an interior bond, a configuration to Christ, and at the same time there has to be a transcending of ourselves, a renunciation of what is simply our own, of the much-vaunted self-fulfillment. We need ... not to claim our life as our own, but to place it at the disposal of another – of Christ. We should be asking not what we stand to gain, but what we can give for Him and so for others.

In the same vein, John Paul II (1992) exposed this fact of configuration based on the sacramental consecration through which the priest is “configured to Jesus Christ as head and shepherd of the Church, and he is endowed with a "spiritual power" which is a share in the authority with which Jesus Christ guides the Church through his Spirit.”The priest represents Christ and thanks to his configuration to Christ he carries His message to others and thus schools them in the footsteps of the Master by making them listen to His voice (Jn. 10:27).

This configuration is more fundamentally built on the Trinitarian collaboration. Expressing that relatedness Newbiggin (1995) maintains that

interpersonal relatedness belongs to the very being of God. Therefore there can be no salvation for human beings except in relatedness. No one can be made whole except by being restored to the wholeness of that being-in-relatedness for which God made us and the world and which is the image of that being-in-relatedness which is the being of God himself. A glimpse of this is given to us in the consecration prayer (John 17) where Jesus prays that those who believe maybe made part of the very unity of the divine being, united by that which binds the Father and the Son, which is nothing other than the glory of God. (p.70)

It is not a stagnant but dynamic involvement. In that vein Ellul (1986) adds that, “our God is a God of beginnings. There is in him no redundancy or circularity. Thus, if his church wants to be faithful to his revelation, it will be completely mobile, fluid, renascent, bubbling, creative, inventive, adventurous, and imaginative.”

It is necessary to be afire with zeal for souls (*zelus animarum*). Such zeal both on the side of priest or the laity must be matchless and should not be dampened under any pretext real or imagined. It is a collaborative zeal that should never be relegated to the worshipping of any cult of personality or be lured into serving other gods. In the face of false gods, it is always necessary to remain self-contented and always focused on doing the right thing not minding whose ox is gored. Like the good shepherd who sees, calls, speaks, touches and heals, they must have to work together so as to touch the lives of others.

## CONCLUSION

From the foregoing exposition, it is clear that collaboration remains important in pastoral ministry. It has therefore to be constantly nourished by all the agents involved. The pastors of souls through their preaching and dispensation of sacraments with holy and uncontaminated enthusiasm take care of souls. Even the preaching is not a personal affair rather it has to cohere with the gospel of Christ; thus reflecting the same configuration. “My teaching is not mine. It comes from the one who sent me” (Jn 7:16). As a corollary St. Augustine writes, “what is so much mine as myself? And what is so little mine as myself? I do not own myself, and I become myself by the very fact that I transcend myself, and thereby become a part of Christ, a part of his body the Church.” The ecclesiology of communion reflects the fact that we though many are one body in Christ (1 Cor. 12:12). In that regard, John Paul II (1988) teaches that,

Ecclesial communion is more precisely likened to an ‘organic’ communion, analogous to that of a living and functioning body. In fact, at one and the same time it is characterized by a *diversity* and a *complementarity* of vocations and states in life, of ministries, of charisms and responsibilities. Because of this diversity and complementarity every member of the lay faithful is seen *in relation to the whole body* and offers a *totally unique contribution* on behalf of the whole body. (p. 20).

Such communion informed the presence of different administrative structures in the church – the Parish Pastoral Council, the Finance council etc. These structures help in the smooth-

running of the church and thus get others involved in the work of salvation. However be it, after the planting and watering it is God that gives the increase.

**\*Evaristus Ifeanacho (PhD)**  
eo.ifeanacho@unizik.edu.ng  
+2348139035530

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