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Personality Dimensions of Church Leaders

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Abstract

Although there are many levels of leadership in the Church, this article focuses on the personality dimensions of priests. The article first gives some understanding of personality and personality styles in psychology and moves on to describe characteristics of healthy and unhealthy personality, presents an analysis of personality profile of priests in relation to these characteristics as found in psychological theory and available research data and concludes with suggestions for priestly formation to enhance the healthy personality dimensions of Church leaders.

Keywords

Leadership, personality, healthy and unhealthy personalities

Understanding Personality

From the time psychologists began to discuss personality the term has remained quite ambiguous. There are many definitions and descriptions of the term. Each of them makes sense but there is no consensus as to which of them is a satisfactory one to be used in discussions on the subject.

Personality has been often viewed as a combination of major psychological systems such as motivation, memory, emotion and intelligence.[1] Through the first half of the 20th century eminent psychologists like Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Raymond Cattel and Gordon Allport developed their own systems of personality.

Freud's (1960/1923, 1966/1917)[2],[3] view of personality was based on his two tripartite models of the mind.[4] [5]In the topographical model the mind is divided into the conscious, the pre-conscious and the unconscious. Freud gives primacy to the unconscious in the development of personality. In the structural model, the mind is divided into id, ego and superego. The id is a cauldron of primitive impulses which run riot with little care for reality. Ego is the reality principle by which one acts with maturity. The super ego is the internalized parental imago that curbs the id and influences the ego. Which of these three dominated the mental function would determine one's personality.

Jung's (1971)[6] version of personality was based on two major dimensions of the psyche— extraversion and introversion. Extraverted individuals find stimulation in and are energized by external events while introverted individuals find stimulation within themselves. Masculinity and femininity, more accurately the animus – the internal masculine in a woman and anima -

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1   Mayer, John D. 2005. "A Tale of Two Visions: Can a New View of Personality Help Integrate Psychology?" *American Psychologist* 60(4): 294-307.

2   Freud, Sigmund. (1960). *The Ego and the Id.* (J. Riviere, Trans.). New York: Norton. (Original work published 1923).

3   -------. (1966). *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (J. Strachey, Trans.). New York: Norton. (Original work published 1917)

4   Freud, Sigmund. (1960). *The Ego and the Id.* (J. Riviere, Trans.). New York: Norton. (Original work published 1923).

5   -------. (1966). *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (J. Strachey, Trans.). New York: Norton. (Original work published 1917)

6   Jung, Carl G. (1971). "Psychological Types." In *The Collected Works* (vol. 6). London: Routeldge and Kegan Paul.

the internal feminine in a man, and the way one handles one's persona (the masks one wears, or the image of self that one projects to the outer world) and the dynamics of the shadow (the rejected, disowned as well as unknown aspects of the self) also influence the development of personality.

Eysenck (1952, 1967)[7, 8] formulated his concept of personality rooted in the working of the central nervous system that provided a genotype explanation for the variability in human behavior. He began with two major personality dimensions: extraversion-introversion (like Jung's), and neuroticism. He later added a third - psychoticism.

People who are highly extraverted are sociable and outgoing, and crave excitement and the company of others. People who are highly introverted are quiet and introspective; they tend to prefer time alone and to be cautious in the way they plan their lives. People who are highly neurotic tend to be anxious, moody and vulnerable, whereas people who are low on neuroticism tend to be stable, calm and even-tempered. People scoring high on psychoticism are described as egocentric, aggressive, impersonal, cold, lacking in empathy and concern for others, impulsive, manipulative, and generally unconcerned about the rights and welfare of other people.

Much attention has been given in psychology to various traits that make up the personality of an individual (Goldberg 1993).[9] Personality traits are enduring patterns in perceiving, thinking and relating to the environment and the self, exhibited in a wide range of social and personal contexts. As McAdams and Pals[10] observed: "Personality traits provide a rough outline

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7   Eysenck, Hans. J. 1952. *The Scientific Study of Personality*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

8   ---------. 1967. *The Biological Basis of Personality*. Springfield, IL: Thomas.

9   Goldberg, Louis R. 1993. "The Structure of Phenotypic Personality Traits.*" American Psychologist,* 48: 26-34.

10   McAdams, Daniel P., and Jennifer Pals, L. 2006. "A New Big Five: Fundamental Principles for an Integrative Science of Per-

of human individuality, a first cut, a recognizable signature that a person tends to express in a range of situations (though not in all) and over a relatively long period of time (though not necessarily forever)."

One model based on the traits approach that is gaining widespread acceptance today is what has come to be known as the Big-Five factor model. The Big-Five model is based on what is known as the lexical hypothesis which states that most important personality traits can be found by searching for the most frequently used trait terms in everyday language.[11] A factor-analysis of the terms used to describe personal characteristic of individuals in the English language threw up five major categories. These were labelled the Big Five as each of them could be divided into smaller units. These major categories are most commonly labeled *extraversion* (vs. introversion), *neuroticism*, *conscientiousness, agreeableness,* and *openness to experience.* Extraverted individuals are socially dominant, assertive and adventurous; neurotic individuals tend to be negative, moody, and unstable; conscientious individuals can be trusted and counted upon to be reliable, responsible and committed; agreeable individuals tend to be friendly and cooperative; openness to experience indicates that the individual is open to change and learning, to others' opinions and suggestions and new ideas. Hence the Big Five does not simply refer to traits only; it takes into consideration how these traits affect an individual's relationship to the social surround.

According to McAdams and Pals (2006)[12] "The new trait psychology heralded by the Big Five is arguably the most recognizable contribution personality psychology has to offer today to the discipline of psychology as a whole and to

sonality." *American Psychologist* 61 (3): 204-217.

11 Mayer, John D. 2005. "A Tale of Two Visions: Can a New View of Personality Help Integrate Psychology?" *American Psychologist* 60(4): 294-307.

12 McAdams, Daniel P., and Jennifer Pals, L. 2006. "A New Big Five: Fundamental Principles for an Integrative Science of Personality." *American Psychologist* 61 (3): 204-217.

the behavioral and social sciences." (p. 204). However, these categories, though important and relevant, do not tell the whole story about an individual's personality. The characteristic adaptions an individual makes to a wide range of situations have also a significant bearing on personality. These adaptations depend on a number of dynamics within the individual beyond the Big-five as well as on situational variables. As McAdams and Pals observed:

   "*Beyond dispositional traits, human lives vary with respect to a wide range of motivational, social-cognitive, and developmental adaptations, contextualized in time, place, and/ or social role.* Characteristic adaptations include motives, goals, plans, strivings, strategies, values, virtues, schemas, self-images, mental representations of significant others, developmental tasks, and many other aspects of human individuality that speak to motivational, social-cognitive, and developmental concerns."[13] (p.208*)*

   The wide range of dispositions, goals, values, motives and so on mentioned in the quote above has a significant bearing on the development of personality. Moreover, human evolution allows for wide variations on many features of psychological individuality. These variations are also influenced by cultures in which the individual grows up. Individuals make characteristic adaptations to meet the demands of specific cultural contexts and ever-changing social environments. The configuration of these characteristic adaptations varies tremendously across cultures, families, and phases of the life span. Hence, these evolutionary, cultural and developmental contexts also shape the development of personality.

   Another element that contributes to the personality of an individual are the "integrative life stories, or personal narratives, that individuals construct to make meaning and identity in the modern world." The life story is an "internalized and evolving narrative of the self that incorporates the reconstructed past and the imagined future into a more or less coherent whole in

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13   Ibid

order to provide the person's life with some degree of unity, purpose, and meaning" (p. 209).[14] These ongoing life stories that individuals construct help to shape behavior, establish identity, and shape their personality. It is the intensive examination of the life story that reveals the rich texture of human individuality. These life stories in turn are profoundly influenced and colored by the cultural context in which they are shaped.

McAdams and Pals (2006, 204)[15] recall a remarkable observation that Kluckhohn and Murray made in 1953 about the dynamics of personality formation: "every person is like all other persons, like some other persons, and like no other person." Accordingly, an integrative framework for understanding personality should include, they argued, species-typical characteristics of human nature (how the individual person is like all other persons), individual differences in common characteristics (how the individual person is like some other persons), and the unique patterning of the individual life (how the individual person is like no other person).

Keeping these principles in mind, McAdams and Pals (2006)[16] have formulated a comprehensive framework for understanding personality that includes the Five-Factor model but goes beyond it to include the impact of evolution and culture. "Personality is an individual's unique variation on the general evolutionary design for human nature, expressed as a developing pattern of dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations, and integrative life stories complexly and differentially situated in culture" (p. 212).[17]

Following a systems framework (Mayer, 2005)[18]

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14   Ibid

15   Ibid

16   McAdams, Daniel P., and Jennifer Pals, L. 2006. "A New Big Five: Fundamental Principles for an Integrative Science of Personality." *American Psychologist* 61 (3): 204-217.

17   Ibid

18   Mayer, John D. 2005. "A Tale of Two Visions: Can a New View of Personality Help Integrate Psychology?" *American Psycholo-*

presents a definition of personality that takes into consideration an individual's global psychological functioning rather than just traits or trait categories, or the impact of evolution or culture: "Personality is the organized, developing system within the individual that represents the collective action of his or her motivational, emotional, cognitive, social-planning, and other psychological subsystems" (p. 296).

All these contemporary descriptions and definitions show that personality is something that evolves over time, the result of the dynamic integration of several psychological subsystems and influenced by innate dispositions as well as the changing environment and culture. Personality is a complex reality with many dimensions.

Personality Styles and Disorders

When dealing with personality dimensions it is also important to refer to personality styles[19,20]) and personality disorders (APA, DSM-V).

While personality styles are healthy expressions of personality, personality disorders refer to pathological expressions of personality traits or characteristics. Personality traits become pathological when they are inflexible and maladaptive, cause significant functional impairment or subjective distress, and result in behaviors that deviate significantly from the traditions and expectations of the individual's culture.

The 5th edition of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Manual of Mental Disorders (APA, 2013 DSM-V) catalogues eleven specific categories of personality disorders. It also has a

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gist 60(4): 294-307.

19   McMartin, Jim. 1995. *Personality Psychology: A Student Centred Approach.* Thousand Oakes, CA. Sage.

20   Oldham, John, M., and Lois B. Morris. 1990. *The Personality Self-Portrait: Why You Think, Work, Love, and Act the Way You Do*. New York: Bantam

category of other specified and unspecified personality disorders. The following are these categories.

Paranoid Personality Disorder (pattern of distrust and suspiciousness); Schizoid Personality Disorder (detachment from social relationships and a restricted range of emotional expression); Schizotypal Personality Disorder (acute discomfort with, and reduced capacity for, close relationships, cognitive or perceptual distortions, and eccentricities of behavior); Antisocial Personality Disorder (disregard for, and violation of, the rights of others); Borderline Personality Disorder (instability in interpersonal relationships, self-image, and affects); Histrionic Personality Disorder (excessive emotionality and attention seeking); Narcissistic Personality Disorder (grandiosity, excessive need for admiration, and lack of empathy); Avoidant Personality Disorder (social inhibition, feelings of inadequacy, and hypersensitivity to negative evaluation); Dependent Personality Disorder (submissive and clinging behavior related to an excessive need to be taken care of); Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder (preoccupation with orderliness, perfectionism, and mental and interpersonal control at the expense of flexibility, openness, and efficiency).

There is also a category labelled Personality Disorder Not Otherwise Specified. This category is considered in two situations: 1) when traits of several different Personality disorders are present, but the criteria for any specific Personality Disorder are not met; or 2) when the individual is considered to have a Personality Disorder that is not included in the classification (e.g., passive-aggressive personality disorder).

Personality Styles of Church Leaders

Keirsey and Bates (1984)[21] used Jungian typology to distinguish between four temperaments that impact leadership. These four personality styles are the SJ, SP, NT and NF. Keirsey

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21 Keirsey, David and Marilyn Bates. 1984. *Please understand me: Character and Temperament Types.* Del Mar, CA: Prometheus Nemesis.

and Bates used names of Greek gods to represent each of these types. The Epimethean (SJ) types are dutiful, traditional, eager to serve and conserve. The Dionysian (SP) are engaged, action-oriented, and eager to do something new. The Promethean (NT) are eager to understand, explain, shape reality and take pride in personal competence, and Apollonian (NF) are idealistic, empathic and seeking authenticity.

Oswald and Kroeger (1988, cited in Francis and Crea 2015)[22] used these temperamental categories of Keirsey and Bates (1984) to formulate four different kinds of Church leadership. These are "the conserving, serving pastor" (Epimethean); "the action-oriented pastor" (Dionysian); "the intellectual, competence seeking pastor" (Promethean) and "the authenticity-seeking, relationship-oriented pastor" (Apollonian). Francis and Crea describe these clergy leadership styles as follows.

The *Epimethean* Church leaders focus on stability and continuity. They are committed to a straightforward faith and down-to-earth rules to sustain and promote that faith. They protect and promote received traditions. They are not interested in change or innovation. They love to build community, fostering a sense of loyalty and belonging. They can be trusted for their reliability and efficiency.

The *Dionysian* leaders are action oriented. They love to make things happen. They make the Church alive with lots of activities. They can grasp the need of the moment and respond to it. They are flexible and spontaneous and at home with the unpredictable aspects of Church life. They can handle any crisis successfully. They are good at starting new things, many things, but may not be that good at seeing them through.

The *Promethean* Church leaders are the intellectual, competence-seeking pastors. They are the most academically and

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22   Francis, Leslie J. and Giuseppe Crea. 2015. "Psychological Temperament and the Catholic Priesthood: An Empirical Enquiry Among Priests in Italy." *Pastoral Psychology* 64: 827-837.

intellectually grounded of the four personality styles and search for novelty and possibilities. They are visionaries who have a compulsive need to excel. They tend to push their parishioners to go beyond their comfort zones. In pushing the parishioners to make things happen, they may not be that concerned with harmony. While they listen to alternate viewpoints, they do not bother much about reconciling them, and would like to push ahead in the direction they set.

The *Apollonian* Church leaders are relationship oriented. They are idealistic and empathetic and score high on inter-personal skills. They can feel the suffering of their flock and love to respond to them with sensitivity. They seek to touch hearts rather than shape minds. They are the quintessential people's pastor, excelling in relational and listening skills and their capacity to inspire and draw the best out of the parishioners. However, they are not very good at dealing with the down-to-earth aspects of ministry.

Studies on catholic priests in Australia, Italy and the United States have shown that many of them fall within the Epimethean (SJ) temperament, producing "the conserving, serving pastor" who likes to maintain traditions, who prefer stability to innovation and for whom worship tends to be "formal and predictable" and who approach ministry in very organized and practical way. This has implications for the future of the Church. These Church leaders will strive to maintain the status-quo. Hence change will be slow. They will have no patience with those who seek innovation and development. Focus will be on adherence to clear policies and precise procedures. In other words, with the majority of Church leaders having the Epimethean temperament, the Church will remain conservative, focusing on maintaining and strengthening traditional beliefs and practices. The saving grace is that next in terms of temperaments, though far fewer, are priests with the Apollonian (NF) temperament. These, guided by their drive for change and innovation, will provide a vision of ministry and a style of leadership very different from those of the Epimethean priest. The sad part is that the Promethean (NT) temperament that

produces "the intellectual, competence-seeking pastor" and the Dionysian (SP) temperament that produces the "action-oriented pastor" are in short supply among Church leaders.[23]

Several studies in the USA on the personality of Catholic priests using Jungian typology[24] and Eysenck's personality dimensions[25, 26] have shown strong preferences for the feeling function, which is unusual among a group of men and more characteristic of women. On the extraversion – introversion scale, they are more introverted than men in general. Introverts are less sociable, are more orderly, restrained and serious. On the neurotic scale, they were found to be more neurotic than men in general. Those who are high on neuroticism scale tend to exhibit anxiety and tension. They tend to be anxious especially about work and health, are liable to mood swings and more likely to experience feelings of loneliness and depression. At the same time those high on the neurotic scale manifest enhanced empathic capacities, in which women usually excel.[27,28]

However, scores on psychoticism scale show priests are more tough-minded than men in general. This appears to contradict the inclination toward more of feminine characteristics. Tough-minded individuals tend to be impulsive, selfish, cold, insensitive and aggressive. They tend also to have difficulty in

23   Francis, Leslie J. and Giuseppe Crea. 2015. "Psychological Temperament and the Catholic Priesthood: An Empirical Enquiry Among Priests in Italy." *Pastoral Psychology* 64: 827-837.

24   Jung, Carl G. (1971). "Psychological Types." In *The Collected Works* (vol. 6). London: Routeldge and Kegan Paul.

25   Eysenck, Hans. J. 1952. *The Scientific Study of Personality*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

26   ---------. 1967. *The Biological Basis of Personality*. Springfield, IL: Thomas.

27   Francis, Leslie J. and Giuseppe Crea. 2015. "Psychological Temperament and the Catholic Priesthood: An Empirical Enquiry Among Priests in Italy." *Pastoral Psychology* 64: 827-837.

28   Louden, Stephen H., and Leslie Francis J. 1999. "The Personality Profile of Roman Catholic Parochial Secular Priests in England and Wales." *Review of Religious Research* 41(1): 65-79.

being patient with those who have differing viewpoints from themselves. They are firm and decisive. They lack empathy a trait on which individuals who score high on femininity end of the indices of masculinity and femininity excel. [29]

Church leadership is influenced significantly by the spiritual maturity of the leaders. There is some research that has looked at this dimension. Saroglou (2002, cited in Piedmont 2005)[30] did a meta-analysis of the relations between the Big Five Factors and spiritual maturity. He found that spiritual maturity was related to all five personality Factors. We can conclude that those priests who score high on these categories will manifest spiritual maturity, something expected of them. Correlations between various spiritual and religious indices and the domains of the Five-Factor model has shown that Openness and Agreeableness particularly contribute to spiritual maturity and consequently to more effective Church leadership. Individuals who subscribe to Agreeableness tend to be friendly and cooperative. Individuals who subscribe to Openness are amenable to change and learning, to others' opinions and suggestions and new ideas.

Coming to personality disorders, a meta-analysis by Nauss (1973, cited in Plante and Boccaccini 1997)[31] of several studies in the latter half of the 20th century using the MMPI (an instrument normally used to measure psychopathology) to assess the personality features of catholic priests showed elevated scores on K (correction), Hy (Conversion Hysteria), Pd (Psychopathic Deviate), Mf (Masculinity-Femininity), and Ma (Hypomania) scales and low scores on the Si (Social Introversion) scale.

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29   Ibid

30   Piedmont, Ralph L. (2005). "The Role of Personality in Understanding Religious and Spiritual Constructs." In *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, edited by Raymond F.

31   Plante, Thomas. G. and Marcus Boccaccini T. 1997. "Personality Expectations and Perceptions of Roman Catholic Clergy Members." *Pastoral Psychology* 45(4): 301-315.

Elevation on the K (Correction) scale indicates defensiveness, a tendency not to reveal unfavorable aspects of the self and to impress others. Conversion Hysteria indicates presence of psycho-somatic disorders. Individuals high on this score often complain of physical discomforts for which no organic cause can be detected. The psychopathic deviate often has problems with authorities and with the law, has a disregard for most social and moral standards of conduct and exhibits emotional coldness. Those who score high on the Masculinity-Femininity scale tend to experience gender identity confusion and homoerotic feelings and manifest contra-sexual characteristics and behaviors. Those high on Hypomania tend to suffer from manic-depressive disorder. These tend to manifest at times high energy, over-ambitiousness, extraversion and high aspirations. At other times they may manifest poor self-image, low energy and enthusiasm and depressive moods. Scores above the mean on the Social Introversion scale reflect higher levels of social shyness, preference for solitary pursuits and a lack of social assertiveness. Scores below the mean indicate the opposite tendencies (Hathaway and McKinley, 1989).[32]

In other studies, elevated scales have been found on the Sc (Schizophrenia) suggesting idiosyncratic and unrealistic thinking, and feelings of being misunderstood and hurt, on Si (Social Introversion) suggesting strong need for affiliation, on the L (Lie) scale suggesting defensiveness and lack of openness, and on the Pt (Psychasthenia) scale suggesting worry and anxiety, obsessive compulsiveness, rigid efforts to control impulses and deep feelings of inadequacy.

The overall picture emerging from these MMPI-based studies is that the Catholic clergy tend to be perfectionist, introversive, anxious, rigid, and defensive.

Psychoanalysis which owes its origins to Sigmund Freud traces the roots of behavioral problems in unconscious processes.

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32 Hathaway, S. R. and McKinley, J. C. 1989. *MMPI-2: Manual for Administration and Scoring.* Minnesota: Minnesota University Press.

There have been many studies on the personality of priests from this perspective. Lourdes, Patel and Paranjpe (p. 39)[33] quotes a summation by Godin (1983) of the emotional difficulties found in clergy from a psychoanalytic perspective:

Lack of empathy, an unconscious seeking of omnipotence in various pastoral activities, a distortion of logical thinking through the artificial effect of language, serious conflict between the idealized self-image and the actual self-concept, excessive dependency needs, often finding expression and sublimation in an intense religious devotion, or often frustrated and turned into a state of depressed passivity.

Greeley (2004)[34] looked critically at some of the more recent data published on the personality of Catholic priests in the United States, especially the Loyola study funded by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and led by Eugene Kennedy[35] and the 1990 study published by Richard Sipe. Greeley found that there were several methodological deficiencies in these studies that make the validity of their conclusions questionable. Their samples were not representative of the American priests and they did not have a control group for comparison, a normal tool of social science. Kennedy's conclusions were that priests in general were sexually immature, deficient in intimacy skills, and that they were just "ordinary" men.

Sipe (1990)[36] did not have a probability sample from which he could generalize to the whole population of priests. His sample consisted of priests he had talked to in clinical interviews, priests who shared information with him during various

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33   Lourdes, Peter, P. J. S. Patel, and S. A. Paranjpe. (1991). *The Human Face of Clergy.* Pune: National Vocation Service Centre.

34   Greely, Andrew M. 2004. *A Calling in Crisis*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

35   Kennedy, Eugene C. and Victor Heckler. 1972. *The Catholic Priest in the United States: Psychological Investigations.* Washington, DC. United States Catholic Conference.

36   Sipe, Richard A. W. 1990. *A Secret World. Sexuality and the Search for Celibacy.* New York: Brunner/Mazel.

meetings, and another group of persons who "knew" about the behavior of priests. Data from these sources could provide interesting stories about the pathology of priests. However, Sipe claimed to have derived from these samples "accurate and precise numbers" to paint a pathological portrait of priests in general which (Greeley, 2004)[37] observed is methodologically erroneous or even deceptive.

Greeley (2004)[38] cites a study by the National Opinion Research Centre (NORC), also commissioned by the National Conference of Bishops, which reached different conclusions from Kennedy and Sipe. The NORC study looked at the personality of a subgroup of priests from their sample using the *Personality Orientation Inventory*.[39] This tool purports to measure nine dimensions of "self-actualization" as described by Abraham Maslow (1962).[40] The NORC study found that on none of the nine scales the priests were significantly lower than the control groups. Priests appeared to be relatively stronger than others in their ability to affirm their own self-worth and to accept themselves for what they are despite weaknesses. One emotional deficiency that the study found in priests compared to their peers was the ability to cope with aggressive feelings. The priests in general tend to be more passive-aggressive and control others by their passivity.

Greeley (2004)[41] also cites a 1993 study by Thomas Nestor who did a comparative study of a sample of priests of the Archdiocese of Chicago and a matching sample of single and married men of the same age and educational background.

37   Greely, Andrew M. 2004. *A Calling in Crisis*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

38   Ibid

39   Shostrom, E. L. 1963. *Personal Orientation Inventory*. San Diego: Educational and Industrial Testing service.

40   Maslow, Abraham. 1962. *Toward a Psychology of Being*. New York: Van Nostrand.

41   Greely, Andrew M. 2004. *A Calling in Crisis*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Nestor's data showed that these priests experienced higher levels of intimacy in their close relationships than the other men. They enjoyed providing support, nurturing, care and concern to others more than the other men. They demonstrated greater readiness to self-disclose, express affection and closeness than the other men. Nestor also reported that the priests experienced greater work and life satisfaction than the control groups.

The studies cited above show that though there are deficiencies in their personality profiles, priests in general, do not appear to be less emotionally healthy than their peers. In some personality dimensions they appear healthier. Some of these studies also point to personality dimensions that contribute to effective leadership.

The Indian Situation

Whether the data and conclusions presented above are applicable to Church leadership in India is debatable, as personality dimensions are shaped significantly by culture and social realities. Their applicability or non-applicability can be ascertained only through similar research. Unfortunately, there is very little published data on the personality structure of priests in India. However, there are two studies that give us a glimpse into the personalities of Church leaders in India, one by Lourdes, Patel and Paranjpe and the other by Parathazham.

The study by Lourdes, Patel and Paranjpe (1991)[42] comparing the personality traits of 300 clergy (priests, sisters and seminarians) and 300 lay persons found that clergy overall were far less mature psychologically than lay persons. Peter Lourdes, the lead writer of the study, observed that "some of the findings are not very flattering" (p. xiii). Of the 11 positive traits (practical, determined, decisive, fixed aims, adaptable socially, will-power, frankness, optimistic/cheerful, cautious not rash, relaxed and diplomatic/peaceful) measured, lay persons

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42   Lourdes, Peter, P. J. S. Patel, and S. A. Paranjpe. (1991). *The Human Face of Clergy.* Pune: National Vocation Service Centre.

scored more positively on nine. The two traits on which the clergy scored higher were will-power and optimistic/cheerful. Of the eight negative traits (very nervous, bad temper, poor concentration, show-off, very conservative, postponing-not active, very jealous, and easily led away) clergy fared worse on six. The two negative traits on which the lay persons fared worse were poor concentration and postponing-not active. Lourdes[43] observed that though it may be difficult for the clergy to accept the findings of this study that present them as inferior to lay persons in emotional health and maturity, they parallel findings in similar studies done in the West.

The studies on vocation and formation undertaken by Paul Parathazham and colleagues at Jnanadeepa Vidyapeet, Pune, point to serious flaws in the personality structure of future priests. In one study (Parathazham, 2006a)[44] which investigated how seminarians and religious sisters assessed the effectiveness of their formation, most participants rated their peers outside as significantly better than themselves on all eight criteria of psychological and emotional maturity measured. These eight criteria were: self-reliance, emotional maturity, ability to face difficulties with confidence, ability to get along with people, adapt easily to different situations, realistic approach to life, taking initiative and hard work. This deficiency noted in seminarians can easily be extrapolated to apply to priests as these same seminarians are the ones who go on to become priests and Church leaders.

The same study [45] made a comparison of the clergy and the laity on two specific attributes, namely, achievement orientation (the need to achieve something difficult, overcome obstacles, attain a high standard) and self-abasement (ability to

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43   Lourdes, Peter, P. J. S. Patel, and S. A. Paranjpe. (1991). *The Human Face of Clergy.* Pune: National Vocation Service Centre.

44   Parathazham, Paul. V. 2006a. "Vocation and Formation of Priests in India: An Empirical Study." In *Shaping Tomorrow's Church: Formation of Priests and Religious for India,* edited by Kurian Kunnanpuram,* 15-61. Mumbai: St. Paul.

45   Ibid

accept blame, criticism, admit error). On the achievement scale, the laity scored higher than the clergy at a statistically significant level. On the self-abasement scale, the clergy scored higher than the laity at a statistically significant level. Parathazham pointed out that these findings support the conclusion that, compared to the clergy, their lay peers have greater emotional maturity.

Causes of Immaturity in Church Leaders

The reason for these deficiencies in the Indian Church leaders was attributed mostly to an irrelevant formation system which gives little importance to development of healthy personalities. This was confirmed in another study [46] which sought to elicit the views of formation personnel on issues and challenges in the formation of priests and religious in India. Parathazham's conclusion:

Human formation, which is the foundation of priestly formation, is arguably the most neglected aspect of formation in India. We seem to be concentrating all our efforts on building a spiritual "superstructure" without the human "base structure," thus rendering the entire enterprise tenuous and futile. Every other aspect of formation, be it intellectual, spiritual, or pastoral, is institutionalized in seminaries with a specific program, designated personnel, and prescribed activities or exercises. But for human formation there is no such program in place. It is largely taken for granted!! (p. 7)

The emphasis in formation has been and continues to be on helping candidates to be good religious or priests, without giving enough attention to the base – becoming a decent human being, someone possessing and practicing natural virtues, and enjoying physical, mental and emotional well-being. There is need for alternate models of formation that help candidates to mature as a person by facing real life situations, rather than in the insulated environments of large seminaries.[47] The Post-

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46   Ibid

47   Parathazham, Paul. V. 2006a. "Vocation and Formation

Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (John Paul II, 1992/2005) has also stated emphatically that human dimension is the foundation of all formation and listed a series of human virtues and relational abilities needed in the priest.

A new disturbing phenomenon the world over including India is that of serious psychological problems emerging within a year or two of ordination (Farthing, 2007).[48] Farthing pointed out some of the underlying factors. Some young priests seem developmentally younger than their chronological age. They lack some of the important skills necessary for adult functioning. They appear to function well within the well-structured life of the seminary, but fall apart under pressure of the real world. Another area of deficiency Farthing (2007)[49] pointed out was lack of relational skills and affective maturity. When the seminarian's inner world remains unexplored and unintegrated, he is ill equipped to handle the complex interpersonal situations that he as a priest

> " We seem to be concentrating all our efforts on building a spiritual "superstructure" without the human "base structure," thus rendering the entire enterprise tenuous and futile. "

has to face and deal with. Successful emotional adjustment calls for comfort with feelings, clear inter-personal boundaries along with readiness to be vulnerable.

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of Priests in India: An Empirical Study." In *Shaping Tomorrow's Church: Formation of Priests and Religious for India,* edited by Kurian Kunnanpuram, 15-61. Mumbai: St. Paul.

48   Farthing, Carol. 2007. "An Open Letter to Seminary Formators." In *Luke Notes* 11 (4): 1.

49   Ibid

Occasionally, Farthing (2007)[50] observed, one sees newly ordained priests whose emotional problems are so deep and acute that there is little hope any intervention can lead to sufficient change and growth. We can easily imagine the leadership and ministerial problems that these priests will create.

Two Suggestions

An effective formation program and well-thought out recruitment policies must address these challenges. Structure of personality is usually set by early life experiences, especially those in the family. But it is not set in stone, impervious to any future change.[51] Although at one time the belief was personality characteristics do not change especially over the age of 30 today there is a different understanding. Personalities are amenable to change even after 30, and more so before 30. Hence a revamped formation program that emphasizes human formation, particularly helping candidates develop emotional wellbeing can contribute to some degree in forming psychologically healthier and more effective Church leaders. [52,53]

Revamping the formation structure alone is not sufficient. Greater attention must be given to the recruitment process. One cannot be helped to develop healthy personality if one lacks the basic requisites for it. Too often psychological health is not a criterion used in the selection of candidates to the priesthood. Many candidates enter the formation process without the basic requisites. Dysfunctional family environments and dynamics often create contexts that predispose individuals toward emotional immaturity and mental illness. Many formators and

50   Ibid

51   Clark, Lee Anna. 2009. "Stability and Change in Personality Disorder." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 18 (1): 27-31

52   Parappully, Jose, and Mannath, Joe. 2004. "Religious and Priestly Formation and Emotional Health. Part I: Psychological Needs and Healthy Ways of Meeting Them." *Jnanadeepa* 73(4): 274-293

53   Pereira, Vincent. 2002. "The Human Formation of the Seminarian." In *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 66, 211-220.

formation programs waste enormous amount of time, energy and resources trying to build a spiritual superstructure over a weak and deficient human base.

In this context, stringent inclusion and exclusion criteria must be adopted and adhered to for selection of candidates to the priesthood. O'Doherty (p. 50-60)[54] lists some significant exclusion criteria – mental, psychological, behavioral defects which are counter indications in respect of vocation or which will make it very difficult to live authentic priestly lives. Among these are: lack of sufficient intelligence, personal immaturity (lagging behind the cultural norm for one's age group), personal inadequacy (such factors as basic insecurity, lack of will power, incapacity to make decisions, inordinate dependency), serious deficiencies in psycho-sexual development, sexual hyperaesthesia ("pathologically frequent and intense psycho-sexual disturbance to neutral or relatively neutral stimuli"), infantile and/or cultural deprivation (absence in childhood of significant adult figures), psychopathological conditions (neurosis and psychosis), latent morbid dispositions (factors within the personality which in future could light up a psychosis or neurosis) and behavior disorders (kleptomania, active homosexuality, sadistic behavior, psycho-pathic irresponsibility). A thorough evaluation process to assess the psychological health and personality features of the prospective candidate should be an essential aspect of the recruitment process.

Conclusion

This article first traced the different understanding of personality in psychology and delineated some important features of healthy personality. It then noted some of the studies that have specifically explored the personality structure of Church leaders and stated their conclusions. Some of these studies have noted healthy personality features in priest leaders. More of them have

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54 O'Doherty, E. F. 1972. "Psychological Fitness." In *Maturity and vocation. The Way Supplement,* Spring: 54-61.

noted deficiencies in these characteristics in priests compared to their lay peers. The article concludes with a call for revamping the formation structures and especially the recruitment policies and procedures so that the Church in India will have leaders who are psychologically and emotionally more mature and healthy.

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