

**PRIESTLY CELIBACY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: AFRICAN
PERSPECTIVE WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON NANDI COMMUNITY IN
KENYA**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES, DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND THEOLOGY
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARD OF
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN RELIGION**

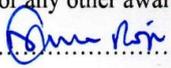
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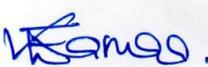
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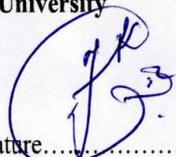
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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my late parents, Mr. & Mrs Paul and Veronica Maru, Late Brother Mark Rop, brothers and sisters and the entire family for their support. Secondly, I dedicated this work to the Catholic Clergy and Religious Men and Women starting with Rt Rev Dominic Kimengich, Bishop of Catholic Diocese of Eldoret, Auxiliary Bishop Rt Rev John Kiplimo Arap Lelei and the entire lay faithful of the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret.

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ABSTRACT

Priestly celibacy, a core feature in the Catholic Church is controversial in Africa as the indigenous African cultural and philosophical thought on marriage contradicts with priestly celibacy. Due to the dearth of studies detailing the indigenous African stance on priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church, the study examined the indigenous African and Protestant Church viewpoints on priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church with a special focus on the Nandi Community. The study had four objectives: to examine the development of priestly celibacy in relation to the Catholic Church in Africa; to evaluate the African indigenous worldviews on celibacy with a special focus on the Nandi community; to examine the perspectives of the protestant clergy on priestly celibacy, and to assess the acceptability/non-acceptability of priestly celibacy within the Nandi community. The study was undergirded by the social constructionist theory and the biological theory of human sexuality, supported by interpretivist philosophy and took a qualitative exploratory cross-sectional design. The study purposively sampled 50 individuals: 10 community members, 25 Nandi sages (75 - 86 years old), 10 Catholic priests, and 5 Protestant clergy. Data collected through interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed before being subjected to a content analysis(NVivo 8). The findings indicated that indigenous Nandi religious ceremonies required ritual purity from the priests (*tisik*). A celibate priest (*kiborenatiot*) was groomed separately and tasked with the oblation offerings at the shrine(*Kapkoros*) during periods of strife, calamities and epidemics. Furthermore, specific indigenous ceremonies, such as circumcision and marriages, required the sponsors (*matirenik*) and celebrants (*boiyop – tum*) to observe ritual purity. The indigenous Nandi community viewed chastity as an important virtue to the young and unmarried, while valuing marriage as a means of continuity of life. As such, an unmarried individual (*kipsongoiyat*) was ostracized and could not participate in any communal event. The indigenous Nandi community could not fathom the practicality of priestly celibacy and loathed Fr Kuhn on sight (the pioneering Catholic priest in Nandi County). Celibate Catholic priests were not culturally and socially accepted by the Nandi community in the mid-20th century but by the turn of the 21st century, priestly celibacy has gained acceptance. There has been a gradual societal acceptance towards priestly celibacy at the community level because of the value attached to purity to indigenous ceremonies. Whereas Catholic priests are acclaimed, they are still individually questioned on their choices at cultural, and societal levels. The study concludes that there exist cultural and social rigidities in the Nandi Community concerning priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church. The study recommends that the Catholic Church hierarchy appreciate the natural and cultural philosophical value attached to African indigenous marriage. The celibacy requirement for Catholic priesthood should remain as it based on the voluntary acceptance of celibacy rule by the individuals who are called to serve as priests. Catholic priests and church ministers across the divide should strictly adhere to the ideals of ministerial priesthood; fidelity and service to God and Humanity.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AD:	Anno Domino
ADM	Administration
AIC:	African Inland Church
AFER:	African Ecclesiastical Review
CDE	County Department of Education
CG	County Government
DPHIL	Doctor of Philosophy
FGDs:	Focus Group Discussion
II	Second
III	Third
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
NACOSTI	National Commission on Science, Technology and Innovation
NDI	Nandi
Pl	Plural
REL	Religion
SASS	School of Arts and Social Science
St	Saint
US	United States
VOL	Volume
XVI	Sixteenth
VIII	Eighth
XVI	Fifteenth
XXIII	Twenty Third

LIST OF NOMENCLATURE

<i>Akputakpu</i>	Indigenous shrine in Nigeria
<i>Anno Domino</i>	in the year of the Lord
<i>Asis</i>	Sun/Deity in Nandi language
<i>Asista</i>	Sun in Nandi language
<i>Asaase Yaa,</i>	Earth deity in Ghana
<i>Barsirian araap Manyei</i>	Son of Koitaleel Samoei
<i>Boiyop-tum</i>	Main celebrant in the indigenous Nandi ceremony
<i>Caelebs</i>	unmarried, single
<i>Chesorpuchot</i>	Derogatory name in Nandi Language for an ‘ <i>unmarried woman/girl who has given birth</i> ’
<i>Didascalía apostolorum:</i>	Teaching of the Apostles
<i>Emdit</i>	<i>Olea chrysophila</i> species in Nandi Language
<i>Imoka</i>	Indigenous shrine in Nigeria
<i>izihlwele</i>	Ancestors in Xhosa community in South Africa
<i>Kambakta</i>	A cultural and celebratory dance by warriors (<i>murenik</i>) in the Nandi Community
<i>Kapkoros</i>	Indigenous Nandi shrine
<i>Kapsisiywo</i>	Geographical and administrative location in Nandi County
<i>kebir moo</i>	Foretelling through ‘ <i>reading the contents of the rumen</i> ’ in Nandi Community
<i>Kiborenatiot</i>	Groomed Celibate priest in Nandi Community
<i>Kemeliet</i>	<i>Calodendron capense</i> in Nandi Language
<i>Kilaal maat</i>	Literal meaning ‘ <i>to light a fire</i> ’ which metaphorical translates ‘ <i>to sire or procreate</i> ’ in Nandi Community

<i>Kipsongoiyat</i>	Derogatory name for ‘ <i>unmarried man</i> ’ in Nandi Community
<i>Komee maa</i>	Literal meaning ‘ <i>the fire died down</i> ’ which metaphorical translates to ‘ <i>he has not procreated</i> ’ in Nandi Community
<i>Kiruogindet</i>	Spokesman/counsellor in Nandi Community
<i>komugul soromya</i>	Metaphorical means ‘ <i>Not having expended bodily energy in procreation</i> ’ in Nandi Community
<i>Korosiot (pl korosek)</i>	Indigenous symbolic religious artefact made of several plant species in Nandi Community
<i>Kowa komugul</i>	Literal meaning ‘ <i>He died intact</i> ’ which metaphorical translates ‘ <i>He died without an heir</i> ’ in Nandi Community
<i>Kurset-ap Lakwet</i>	Indigenous naming ceremony for a new born child in Nandi Community
<i>Lapotuet Solanum campylanthum</i>	in Nandi Language
<i>Latentur Caeli</i>	Let the Heavens Rejoice
<i>Lipwuop</i>	Exemplary and fortuitous living in Nandi Language
<i>Iryaget</i>	Horn made from buffalo’s horn in Nandi Language
<i>Luget</i>	Foraging battles in Nandi Community
<i>Maina</i>	Age group that precedes <i>Chumo</i> and succeeds the <i>Nyongi</i> age set in Nandi Community
<i>Makiteschin tum kessesnot</i>	Metaphorically and culturally dictates that the ‘ <i>physical sexual activity cannot go hand – in - hand with customary ritual and ceremonies.</i> ’
<i>Maotiot(pl Maotik)</i>	<i>Seer</i> in the Nandi Community

<i>Masarik</i>	Specific ornamental beads worn by young bride denoting a chastity in living in Nandi community
<i>Matiriot(Pl Matirenik)</i>	<i>Ceremonial/ritual</i> ‘sponsor’ in Nandi Language
<i>Maximae et apostolicae ecclesiae:</i>	Greatest and apostolic church
<i>Melilik</i>	Young chaste teens in Nandi Community
<i>Menjet</i>	Huts used for secluding initiates in Nandi Community
<i>Mogoiywet</i>	<i>Ficus sycomorus</i> species in Nandi Community
<i>Muratanet</i>	Male circumcision ceremony in Nandi Community
<i>Murenik</i>	Warriors class men in Nandi Community
<i>Nana Onyame,</i>	gods/goddesses in Ghana
<i>Ngene</i>	Indigenous shrine in Nigeria
<i>Nananom Nsamfo</i>	Ancestors in Ghana
<i>Nyamdutik</i>	Act of caressing and fondling in Nandi Language
<i>Nyongi</i>	Age group that precedes <i>Maina</i> and succeed the <i>Kimnyigei</i> age set in Nandi Community
<i>Ng’oogi</i>	Sin/transgression in Nandi Language
<i>Oiik</i>	Spirits of the departed ancestors in the Nandi Community
<i>Orkoiyot</i>	Oracle/spiritual leader of the Nandi Community
<i>Pororiet/pororiosok</i>	Division/division (a collection of clans) in the Nandi Community
<i>Pastor Aeternus:</i>	Eternal Shepherd
<i>Princeps ecclesiarum:</i>	Principal Church
<i>Saeculum obscurum:</i>	Rule of the Harlots
<i>Saket-ap-eito</i>	Age set transitioning ceremony in the Nandi Community
<i>Simndo</i>	Dirt/blemish in Nandi Language

<i>Simotuet</i>	<i>Ficus elegans</i> species in Nandi Language
<i>Societa perfecta:</i>	Perfect Society
<i>Sacerdotalis caelibatus:</i>	Of priestly celibacy
<i>Sigiroinet</i>	Hut for young men in Nandi Community
<i>Talai</i>	Clan in Nandi Community
<i>Tegat</i>	<i>Arundinaria alpina</i> in Nandi Language
<i>Tisindet(pl tisik)</i>	Indigenous priests in Nandi Language
<i>Tumdo</i>	Significant ceremony in Nandi Language
<i>Tongoanik</i>	Oblational offerings in Nandi Community
<i>Ultimis Temporibus</i>	Ministerial priesthood
<i>Vita Consecrata</i>	The Consecrated Life and Its Function
<i>Viri probati</i>	Ordination of married men
<i>Qamata</i>	Deity in South Africa

Divisions in the Indigenous Nandi Community include: Cheptol, Kakimno, Kakipoch, Kakiptalam, Kamelilo, Kapchepkendi, Kapianga, Kapsile, Kapsiondoi, Kaptumoiis, Kimng'oror, Koileke, Murk ap Tuk, Parsieny, Tepingot, and Tuken.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Apostolic church	The community of followers of Christ in the first century
Asceticism:	The severe self-discipline that shuns of all forms of bodily pleasure typically for religious reasons.
Canon:	A unique legalistic rule of the Catholic Church
Canon Law:	The version of rules and regulations governing the Catholic Church Worldwide
Catholic Church	A section of the global group of Christians who have the Pope in Vatican, Rome as their spiritual leader
Code of Canon Law	A collections of the canon laws
Decretals:	An authoritative decision taken by a Roman Pontiff on a point of canon law.
Ecclesiastical:	Relates to the church's hierarchical structures
Ecclesiastic:	Comprises deacons, presbyters (priests), episcopates (bishops) and prelates (archbishops, cardinals and patriarchs)
Ecclesiastical celibacy:	practise of celibacy by the ecclesiastics.
Diaconate:	Members of the clergy alongside priests and bishops.
Encyclical:	The official communication relating to the official teachings of the Church issued to all Roman Catholic bishops by the Roman Pontiff
Eucharistic:	The sacrificial aspects (Holy Communion) of the Catholic Mass service
Episcopate:	The collection of the bishops in a specific region/location

Filioque controversy: The theological difference between the Greek Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church on the type of bread to be used during Eucharistic celebrations. The Orthodox Church preferred the use of leavened bread while the Catholic Church prefer the use of unleavened bread.

Levitical: Pertaining to Leviticus or law in the Old Testament

Prelate: An individual holding a higher ecclesiastical office such as archbishops, cardinals, patriarchate and other officials in the Roman Curia

Presbyterate: The collective union of all catholic priests in the pastoral ministry with the diocesan bishop.

Priestly celibacy: The long-term abstinence from any sensual pleasure by a presbyter in the Catholic Church

Roman Catholic Church: The Catholic Church between 6th century and early 20th century

Sacerdotalism celibacy: The requirement of priestly celibacy for the performance of sacred rites and rituals

Sacerdotalism: A religious tradition dates back to Ancient and pre-Christian societies whereby an anointed priest would be the main celebrant leading and offering sacrifices at the altar in a religious ceremony (Frazee, 1972).

Sacerdotal marriage: The practice of allowing clerical men to marry (Clerical marriage)

Synod: A congregation of bishops of the Catholic Church

Vatican Council: A global synod of the bishops and prelates

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The introductory chapter delves into the term celibacy by first defining the term from several viewpoints including the rationale and justification for the priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church. By definition, celibacy is a cultural and social paradigm from the average person's understanding of sexuality (Sipe, 2013) and as a practice takes a social or religious definition with the accompanying meanings (Olson, 2007). When considered as a social phenomenon, celibacy entails shared values where individuals jointly endeavour to abstain from all sexual relationships for a specific goal or objective such as the attainment of one's personal goals (Olson, 2007). When celibacy takes a religious phenomenon, it entails a perpetual vow to forego the instinct to procreate (Powers, 2008), coupled with an occupational career of priesthood that goes with the renunciation of marriage (Parish, 2010) and enforced and justified by a religious order or legal framework such as the Canon Law (Cozzens, 2006).

The term '*caelebs*', literally means 'single life', (Parish, 2010) which entails a declaration to forego all sexual intercourse with the opposite sexes and does not necessarily mean perpetual virginity. Celibacy can be voluntary where it does not require a vow, however, it can be enforced on a person because of social or religious circumstances (Olson, 2007). The practice of celibacy ranges from temporary celibacy arrangements to a long-term commitment (Olson, 2007). Ecclesiastical celibacy takes its meaning from the precedent of the Levitical priesthood, and the sacrificial role of the priest at the altar (Parish, 2010). As indicated, priestly celibacy has not been a constant tradition even in the Catholic Church (Sipe, 2013) with historical accounts from as early as the third century indicating contrasting views (Lea, 1884).

Priestly celibacy has gained favours and justification during the growth of Christendom since the beginning of the apostolic church when celibacy practice was considered a matter of personal choice (Frazee, 1972) to being legislated as a canon (Frazee, 1972) and later formalized as obligation to priesthood (Cozzens, 2006; Aguilar, 2001) through the church's code of Canon Law that began in 1917 (Siecienski, 2017). This introductory chapter presents the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the research objectives and questions, the significance of the study, and the theoretical framework.

1.2 Background of the study

Celibacy is a religious phenomenon that draws from the observance of religious practises in service to God and humanity (Parish, 2010) whose history is drawn from the lives of priests such as Melchizedek as documented in Genesis 14:18, Hebrews 5:6, Aaron as read from Numbers 3:10, Eli as read from I Samuel 1:9 or prophets such as Samuel as read 1 Samuel 2:21 and the long list of prophets that include Isaiah, Jeremiah and many others. Secondly, celibacy relates to ritual purity which involves the observance and maintenance of purity during religious rituals (Lea, 1884). This largely draws from Jewish or pagan tradition or culture relating to sacerdotalism which involves the performance of religious ritual by a priest (Prince, 1992; Lea, 1884).

Apart from asceticism, there was no legal foundation for celibacy until the inceptions of canons (Frazee, 1972), decretals (Lea, 1884) and canon law (Komonchak, 1986) and the Catechisms of the Catholic Church (Joseph *et al.*, 2010) and encyclicals (Ballano, 2019; Flannery, 1996). Celibacy practices were considered a matter of personal choice (Frazee, 1972). The first viewpoint on celibacy emanates from the canons or legal frameworks as indicated by the first canon, *Didascalia apostolorum* which focused on the sexual continence among the episcopates (Frazee, 1972). The canons just become

the official and standard propositions and commands to the ecclesiastics in their work (Frazee, 1972).

Sometimes the canons were ambiguous and contradictory in their propositions. For instance, the *Didascalia apostolorum* focused on the sexual continence of the episcopates (Frazee, 1972). Canon 33 of the Council of Elvira in 360 AD did not prohibit women from marrying the clergy but focused on the sexual continence for all ecclesiastics including the diaconate, presbyterates and episcopates. However, the canons of Ancyra permitted the marriage in orders only as far as diaconate (Lea, 1884). The 12th-century canons instituted mandatory celibacy for the priest and stopped the ordination of married men, forcibly separating priest and their wives and punishing recalcitrant priests (Prince, 1992). As per Lea (1907), the canons were largely ignored by all the ecclesiastics (Mayblin, 2019; O'Loughlin, 1995) and the literature on these canons indicates vagueness as their application were left to the conscience of the ecclesiastics (Lea, 1884).

The extant literature on celibacy takes three viewpoints; the philosophical thought that emanates from the recommendations from encyclicals from the Popes (Ballano, 2019; Flannery, 1996), the legal framework in the form of canons (Joseph *et al.*, 2010; Prince, 1992) and canon law as from 1917 (Horvat, 2022; Mayblin, 2019; O'Loughlin, 1995) such as canon 277 (Horvat, 2022). The third viewpoint on celibacy largely relates to the consequential effects of celibacy and this has largely examined the celibacy practise, its effects on the individual (ecclesiastics) as expressed through loneliness (Ballano, 2021), self-doubt (Covell, 2005), disillusionment (Prince, 1992), sexuality and illicit relationship with women (Sipe, 1994; Serbin, 2006), and concubinage (Mayblin, 2019), the community of the believers (church) through resignations by priests (Prince, 1992; Wubbels, 2011; Schoenherr & Yamane, 2004), the silence of episcopates and

prelates during the sexual abuse pandemics in America among others (Böhm *et al.*, 2014), and the society through clerical sexual abuses (Rossetti, 2002; Kung, 2010; Frick, Moser & Simmons, 2021; Doyle *et al.*, 2004).

Over the centuries, synods and councils which are either provincial or regional possessed many instruments from the Church hierarchy used to manage and sustain the hierarchy itself. It is part administrative, political as well as spiritual (Lea, 1884). The synods and councils have taken unique dimensions regarding the question of priestly celibacy. The other defining mechanism is the encyclicals, which are the official communication from the office of the Roman Pontiff himself this was defined by the first encyclical called the *princeps ecclesiarum* (Principal Church) and the *Maximae et apostolicae ecclesiae* (greatest and apostolic church) (Siecienski, 2017). The other important encyclical was issued in the 11th century and was referred to as *saeculum obscurum* or the ‘Rule of the Harlots’ and focused on the concubinary, licentiousness and sexual continence in the Church Hierarchy in Rome which had brought Roman Catholic Church to its historic lows (Lea, 1884). The Union decree, *latentur caeli* signed by both Greek and Latin churches in 1439 sought to heal the schism between the East and West churches (Lea, 1907). The Vatican Council 1 (1869-70) promulgated *Pastor Aeternus* (Eternal Shepherd) (Siecienski, 2017) and decreed *societa perfectia* (Perfect Society) concerning the government of the clergy (Komonchak, 1986).

The post-Second Vatican Council saw the Church Hierarchy issue *Sacerdotalis caelibatus* (Of priestly celibacy) in 1967 which exclusively dealt with the issue of celibacy (Joseph *et al.*, 2010). The Code of Canon Law of 1983, John Paul II (1992), and the Catechism of the Catholic Church of 2002 and there have been 26 synods in Rome on family life, marriage and sexual morality (Allen, 2015). The specific synods on Priestly celibacy include Synod on *Ultimis Temporibus* (ministerial priesthood)

(1971), the *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (Of Priestly Formation) (1988); *Vita Consecrata* (The Consecrated Life and its Function) (1995), *Ecclesia in Africa* (African Synod) (1994) which examined the issue of priestly celibacy in Africa, Amazonian Synod (2019) which called for the ordination of married men (*virii probati*) and caused consternation among the Catholic Church worldwide (Edumalichukwu, 2020).

Several authors support the notion of priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church (Gwaza, 2019; Prince, 1992; Whalen, 2007) among others. Gwaza (2019) points out the charisms of celibacy as a manifestation of the life of Jesus Christ. Based on this perspective, celibacy is a prerequisite for would-be Catholic priests to imitate and share in the perfect priesthood of Jesus Christ (Gwaza, 2019). Olson (2010) also favours celibacy as a theological foundation based on the presumed apparent sexual abstinence of the apostles during missionary work and therefore served as a model for Christian practice. Asceticism significantly contributed to celibacy in the 2nd century (Lea, 1884) and has important implications as the early apostolic church adopted sexual abstinence to establish the authority of prophetic figures and church leaders by making the human body a more appropriate vehicle to receive divine inspiration (Olson, 2010). Thus, the early Christians would sacrifice bodily passions and affections for salvation (Lea, 1984) and were subsequently glorified as the loftiest achievement of Christian virtue (Frazee, 1972). However, at the close of the 3rd century, the church hierarchy condemned ruthless asceticism (Frazee, 1972).

Prince (1992) observed that priesthood in the Catholic Church is perceived as a valuable vocation and a means of serving the church and people and its requirements preclude one from personal family life and its requirement is sometimes viewed to be unnecessary and unjust. Insider opinions from Clerics from the Catholic Church have informed the issue of celibacy based on the church position supports the notion that

‘celibacy is a state or lifestyle full of mystery and necessarily linked to the ministerial priesthood that is a service to God’s people’ (Edumalichukwu, 2020). Pope Paul VI spoke of celibacy as a "precious jewel" leading to a life of selflessness for the man who seeks to follow Jesus Christ in the priesthood. Thus, when Catholic priests talk about the subject, it is often in terms of its symbolic value as a total commitment to the service of the Lord (Frazee, 1972). Cozzens, (2006) takes the Church's position that clerics are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and are obliged to observe celibacy.

Celibacy was morally justified and supported by the early Church Fathers during the Patristic Age (Siecienski, 2017; Lea, 1884) and their recommendations became the second phenomenon to the asceticism in the 2nd century to support the notion of clerical celibacy (Frazee, 1972). The proposition is that a celibate life sets an individual apart as being a true Christian since marriage is only a concession to man's weakness and results from sin (Frazee, 1972). Jerome (c. 347-419) and Ambrose (c. 339-397) held that celibacy was a higher spiritual condition than marriage and that the ritual purity of the priest required abstinence from sex (O'Loughlin, 1995). Other Church doctors including St. Augustin and St Cyril of Jerusalem wrote lengthily on the topical issue of celibacy while providing a moral justification. There was also a push by several titular heads of the Catholic Church including Pope Damasus (366-84), Pope Siricus (384-399), Pope Innocent I (401-17), Pope Leo I the Great (440-61) (Frazee, 1972). Their encyclicals required the priest must remain celibate and abstain from sexual activity in that their liturgical role demands sexual abstinence (Frazee, 1972).

Celibacy has taken a deeper meaning and connection with the Catholic Church hierarchy. It has become a condition for ordination in the Catholic Church, as well as a tradition where would-be priests are inducted into celibacy practice (Aguilar, 2001).

Priestly celibacy has gained acceptance from would-be priests as well as congregants not because of a personal calling to celibacy but because of the conditional requirement for priesthood service (Prince, 1992). Celibacy is a special gift of God, by which sacred ministers can adhere more easily to Christ with an undivided heart and can more freely dedicate themselves to the service of God and humankind (Canon 277 of 1983).

Based on the church's legal framework, priestly celibacy has been engraved in canon law, whose idea and practise from one period, have become self-perpetuating and have been eventually seen as an ideal. The institution of canons in the 11th century created an instrument of power and doctrine (Prince, 1992). When a law is repeated over a long period, it justifies itself even if it does not accord with reality or the larger values it claims to serve (O'Loughlin, 1995). This law engraving has also been supported by the most recent encyclicals by Pope Benedict XVI, 2011 affirmed that 'priesthood is not a profession, to be engaged in part-time, but a full-time and perpetual vocation' (Encyclical from Pope Benedict XVI, 2011) with Prince (1992), affirming that 'Vatican II declared that celibacy has no theological mandate nor essential to priesthood but a matter of discipline'.

Over centuries, there has been a general acceptance of priestly celibacy from the European perspective (Kung, 2010) and the American perceptive (Rossetti, 2002), save for the insignificant number of wayward priests who have been indicted for sexual exploitation of young persons (Frick, Moser & Simmons, 2021; Makamure, 2004). Cultural acceptance is a consideration in priestly celibacy (Chu Ilo, 2017). The Catholic Church built a much more cohesive form of Western Christendom (Perzyński, 2017) which defined celibacy as a discipline for the Catholic Church and this has continued to the present day (Parish, 2010). This arose from the development of "Latin Christendom" envisioned a coherent community of believers bound together by its

common rite, common sacred language, and common sense of obedience to the Pope in Rome (Whalen, 2007) and later laid the foundation of that supremacy which eventually dominated Christendom (Lea, 1907).

The contrasting opinions on priestly celibacy are largely drawn from the contrasting viewpoints of celibacy including the moral viewpoint that was advocated by Martin Luther (O'Loughlin, 1995), the changing social and moral standard of the laity (Benz *et al.*, 2009), the sacramental contradictions between marriage and ordination (Cozzens, 2006) and the catechism of the Catholic Church (Cozzens, 2006). The Protestant theologians that included Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon (Lutheran), Thomas Cranmer and William Tyndale (Anglican), Martin Bucer and John Calvin (Calvinism) wrote extensively against the celibacy and its contrasting paradigm of ecclesiastical marriage (Witte Jr, 2012). Overall, the reformists condemned celibacy as a 'creation of canon law' (O'Loughlin, 1995).

According to Hastings (1978a), the church seems to base its celibacy practices on two assumptions; that Jesus Christ himself was 'celibate' and thus a priest should imitate Jesus as closely as possible 'because of calling to be another Jesus Christ' and that 'imposed' celibacy is justified by its advantageous accrued by the church. First of all, celibacy goes with prayer and provides time for it. Secondly, celibacy provides availability in that pastoral work for married men is inevitably greatly reduced by the needs of their families. Thirdly, a celibate clergy costs far less and the Catholic Church, already short of money, could not afford married priests, at least without cutting back on other important commitments.

Whereas the Catholic Church acknowledges that sexuality is God's gift, which is committed and expressed in the covenant relationship of marriage as one of the

sacraments of the Catholic Church, it gives the same sacramental meaning to the priesthood and this contradicts sexuality as God-Given (Cozzens, 2006). If sexuality is God-given, then why would the church advocate for unmarried priests who would be drawn from the same congregants? Since sexual urges are presupposed and embodied in one's body, then it is necessarily embedded in every other individual (Olson, 2007).

Much of the practices of celibacy require the social acceptance of the community at large (Wubbles, 2011). Humans are social beings, but in practising celibacy in contemporary environments, the priest requires a high level of social alienation, which can intensify the loneliness of the parish clergy. The changing social and moral standards of believers (Benz *et al.*, 2009). Within a specific context, Catholic diocesan priests, especially in the US, serve complex communities in highly urbanized settings who are more likely to live alone because of the social environment (Ballano, 2021). In such environments, priests face social isolation without a family or intimate support group which normally provides social bonding and spiritual support to inhibit sin and deviance (Ballano, 2021).

In addition to the social acceptability of priestly celibacy, cultural differences are dialectical (Chu Ilo, 2017). While there is cultural homogeneity that is embodied in the Western cultural viewpoints, it supports celibacy among catholic priests because of cultural acceptance of Western cultures (Rowe 2016). However, Wubbels (2011); Gwaza, (2019) observed that priestly celibacy in Africa has still not gained cultural acceptance among African communities. A piqued opinion on celibacy has been highlighted by two anthropological and cultural studies carried out in Brazil (Serbin, 2006) and Africa (Hastings, 1976 as reported by Sipe, 2013).

Both studies observed that the races were Amerindians and Afro-Brazilians and Africans were not suited to celibate lives. Serbin, (2006) observed that Amerindians and Afro-Brazilians were denied entry into the priesthood on the assumption that 'such races were unable to stay celibate', while Hastings (1976) observed that Africans 'were constitutionally incapable of celibacy'. As early as 1964, in an African Ecclesiastical Review (AFER), Hastings (1978) called for the church to change its celibacy rule for the African priest to allow the ordination of 'tried and tested married men' such as the trained catechists.

Hastings (1978), a former priest himself critiqued the celibacy practices in the Catholic church as a moral question that cannot be defended or criticized primarily in light of pragmatic pastoral advantage and disadvantage, whether in Europe or Africa. Hastings, thus refers to the canons on the celibacy practices as a semi-doctrinal statement that seems to contradict the meaning of holiness. Hastings (1978) criticizes the Catholic Church's insistence on celibacy for priests by pointing out that the Church Hierarchy cannot by supreme the word of God and thus it cannot substitute it but serve the Word of God. Thus, the exclusion of all married priests by Canon law throughout almost the whole of the Catholic Church is deeply unjustified. The author points out that 'it is not open to the Church to teach or legislate in such a way as to nullify the clear guidance of scripture which is what Canon 132 of the Code of Canon Law of 1907 does'

Hastings (1978) cites situations where cultural, personal and political forces may become an impediment to practising celibacy in the Catholic Church. For instance, the Lithuania government took over the Catholic seminaries in the late 1960s and thus there was no place for which the priest could be trained, while in the 1970s, instances of sexual continence among priests in France and Britain were ignored by the local bishops and the priest continued serving the church. In Africa, the nascent church in the 1960s

grew exponentially, while the serving white priest could not serve all the Christians at all times.

The major criticism of celibacy has arisen from the consequential effects of priestly celibacy which include personal and /or individual deleterious effects of celibacy as expressed by disillusionment (Prince, 1992), loneliness (Ballano, 2021), self-doubt (Covell, 2005), the socially unacceptable practices of sexuality and illicit relationship with women (Sipe, 1994; Serbin, 2006), and concubinage (Mayblin, 2019); communal impacts on the church through resignations by priests (Prince, 1992; Wubbels, 2011; Schoenherr and Yamane, 2004); and the societal impacts through clerical sexual abuses (Rossetti, 2002; Kung, 2010; Frick, Moser & Simmons, 2021; Doyle *et al.*, 2004).

Prince (1992) and Lea (1884) viewed the problem of sexual incontinence among the ecclesiastics from a personal perspective where the individuals could renege and refuse to change their old ways. Other important aspects include legal perspective through sexual abuses by clerics (Rossetti, 2002; Böhm *et al.*, 2014; Kung, 2010; Frick, Moser & Simmons, 2021; Doyle *et al.*, 2004) and social perspective through indigenous customs (Emeka, 2014), social ills such as paedophilia (Frick, Moser & Simmons, 2021).

The question of the sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests had been a brewing concern for the better part of the last half of the 20th century (Sipe, 2004). Massive sexual abuse of children and adolescents by Catholic clergy has been reported in the United States, Ireland, and Germany (Kung, 2010). Until the 1980s, sexual abuse was kept as secret from the wider society as it was within the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church cardinals and bishops, who were largely responsible for the scandal, resisted and refused to acknowledge and were unwilling to be held accountable for the sexual

abuse (Frawley-O'Dea, 2007). Sipe (1994) claimed that at least half the United States priests at any given time are involved in some pattern of sexual activity. In early 2010, the Catholic Church in Germany published the results of a systematic investigation of sexual abuse cases which revealed that 3,677 mostly male minors became victims of sexual abuse between 1946 and 2014 (Frick, Moser & Simmons, 2021).

The problem of clergy sexual abuse has been most visible in the United States, but it is by no means confined to this country. Exposure of widespread sexual abuse and consequent hierarchical mishandling has occurred in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Great Britain, Mexico, Spain, Poland, Austria, Germany, France, Argentina, and Hong Kong (Farrell, 2009) The denunciation of clerical abusers, their notoriety, and subsequent legal actions against them depends on several factors: the willingness of victims to go public, the cooperation of the secular media in exposing the problem, and the prosecution of suits by the civil legal system. Beneath these factors is an over-arching dimension that is perhaps the single most important issue: the place of the Catholic Church in civic culture. The problem of clergy sexual misconduct is attributed to the vow of celibacy (Scheper-Hughes & Devine, 2003).

Unlike in the Global North, where large-scale investigations and legal disclosures have produced extensive data, clerical sexual abuse in Africa is poorly documented due to weak legal frameworks, stigma, fear of reprisal, and the Catholic Church's tight control over internal investigations (Lüthi, 2020). The abuse in African contexts is deeply intertwined with the priest's perceived spiritual authority that is amplified by postcolonial reverence and the Catholic Church's role in education and healthcare (Boswell, 2021). In many communities, priests occupy dual roles as religious leaders and de facto social elites, making accusations against them culturally taboo.

This dynamic is further complicated by the historical legacy of missionary Catholicism, wherein European priests wielded significant influence during colonial rule, a legacy that continues to grant clergy a degree of impunity (Phiri, 2022). The Catholic Church's response in Africa has largely mirrored global patterns of internal handling and non-transparency. When allegations arise, they are typically managed through canonical (church) procedures rather than civil legal systems. In many African nations, canon law takes precedence in ecclesial matters, and bishops often opt for "reassignment" or "spiritual rehabilitation" over reporting to civil authorities (Gifford, 2023). For example, in Malawi, a priest accused of sexually abusing multiple boys was transferred to another diocese without any public acknowledgment or legal action (Nyirenda, 2021). Such practices not only protect perpetrators but also perpetuate cycles of abuse. In recent years, survivor advocacy groups and local journalists have begun challenging the Church's silence. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance, victims formed support networks to pressure bishops for accountability (Kabemba, 2023).

The impact of clerical sexual abuse has significant implications in the Catholic church with a reduction in the number of practising Christians in Germany (Frick, Moser & Simmons, 2021). Doyle *et al.*, (2004) traced the problem of clergy sexual misconduct from 1984 when the Catholic Church began to experience the complex and highly disheartening problem of clergy sexual misconduct in the United States. This problem was not geographically isolated; instances of clergy sexual misconduct surfaced with increasing notoriety. In Zimbabwe, the celibate priests are exploiting young women and boys which has resulted in conflict between celibates and the individuals practising religious life (Makamure, 2004). The apparent impact of the sexual abuse by the priest has been the calls for an end to mandatory celibacy and the incessant demand to reform the basic governance of the church itself (Crosby, 2003).

Child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church has been increasingly recognized as a problem not limited to individual institutions (Böhm *et al.*, 2014). In 2002 alone, approximately 300 American Catholic priests, including several bishops, were accused of child sexual abuse. Many were forced to resign their positions while others were prosecuted and went to prison. The sexual abuses by the Catholic church in the US have been examined by several authors with the numbers suggesting that between 1% and 6% of the Catholic priests in North America have a sexual experience with a minor. Other reports indicate that 2% of priests are paedophiles while 4% are ephebophiles (Rossetti, 2002).

The World Synod of Bishops in 1990, admitted that there is a worldwide shortage of priests with some areas being hard hit, particularly the US. The clerical shortage in the Catholic Church in the US has reached a crisis with a reduction in the number of vocations worldwide and the resignation in the number of consecrated priests (Prince, 1992). Priestly shortages have been an issue in many regions including Brazil as early as the 20th century (Serbin, 2006). The main reason for the resignations is the pervasive attitude that the church hierarchy is refusing to change or to deal with the issue at all. The most visible effect of the church's mandatory celibacy is the shortage of priests and seminarians with 42 per cent of the priests in the US resigning within 25 years of ordination (Prince, 1992). Schoenherr and Yamane (2004) reported that the number of Catholic priests has plummeted by 40% while the number of Catholics has skyrocketed, by 65% in the last fifty years because of the spread of the religion to new regions in the world.

The resignation of Catholic priests began as early as early 1968 and these events became newsworthy events with newspapers publishing reports of priestly resignations even if they were not from the localities (Anello, 2014). The number of priests has been

dropping since the 1970s. On the other hand, the world's Catholic population has increased remarkably. Some prospective priests do not want to choose between having a life with God and having a family. It is not inconceivable that the time will come again when they can have both (The Economist, 2017). They contemplated the spectre of a faith defined by full pews and empty altars which already hang heavy over the church. For them, the root cause of this problem is the church's insistence on mandatory celibacy (Schoenherr and Yamane, 2004). The concomitant decrease in candidates for the priesthood is at least in part due to a decline in the understanding and appeal of celibacy (Sipe, 2013).

Furthermore, priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church in the US has also led to an increase in the number of single persons in the US (Prince, 1992). Celibacy hurts the morale of many priests and contagion in the congregations as well. The stress of chronic loneliness plus the possibility of being overwhelmed by other people's problems can lead the priest to even a state of low-grade depression. Mandatory celibacy has meant that the congregants unwittingly become the substitute family for the priest (Prince, 1992), which can be a life of solitude, isolation and alienation when the family returns to its abode (Ballano, 2021). In the contemporary world, celibacy seems little more than the cultural survival of the priesthood than an aid to spiritual growth for priests (Scheper-Hughes and Devine, 2003). Verhoeven (2015) examined the psychological effects of celibacy on priests based on a metanalytical review of medical doctors and though the findings were not uniform, the medical practitioners condemned the church for its futility in maintaining mandatory celibacy rule for priests and held them responsible for the sexual immorality in the church.

In the South American region, the Catholic Church hierarchy in Brazil practically condoned priestly concubinage with slaves during colonial times (Mayblin, 2019). Moreover, priests engaged in the sexual exploitation of slaves, while others lived in consensual unions with women and fathered children (Serbin, 2006). Currently, a good percentage of priests in Brazil have common-law wives but remain officially unmarried in either secular legal or canon law and cannot be easily or automatically laicized. Many priests opt for the civil ceremony because they wish to retain their representative status as 'Padres' of the Church. Some even avoid civil ceremonies with their partners because this preserves the potent possibility of future material and legal encompassment within the Church (Mayblin, 2019). However, mandatory celibacy predated the increase in scandals and concubines and may lead to the persecution of the women involved in this relationship (Prince, 1992).

A poll of Brazilian Priests indicated an overwhelming opposition to mandatory celibacy rule (77%) and that two-thirds of the priests had difficulties in remaining celibate/chaste (Mayblin, 2019). Priests in Brazil are considered to be 'non-celibate' (Serbin, 2006) and significant numbers break their celibacy vows with a certain degree of theological assurance and ethical reflexivity. It is also true that the sex lives of priests produce relatively little threat to the ecclesiastical structure as a whole because priests privately break the rule and remain obedient to ritual form in public (Mayblin, 2019).

On a personal front, the celibate priest left all and risked everything in a heroic response to the gospel. However, the men and women of faith are continuously struggling day-by-day acutely aware of their limitations and the numbing pseudo-values celebrated by their culture. The celibate priest is surrounded and affected by sexuality Wubbels (2011). Further, there is a growing number of priests quitting priesthood after ordination and many are disillusioned (Prince, 1992). Throughout, centuries priests

have suffered to the point of martyrdom in their pastoral care of their Pope and fidelity to the human struggle for justice and peace (Cozzens, 2006). This scenario was observed by Hillman and Hastings (1967) in the early 1960s when serving white priests in Africa faced treacherous environments for having adapted to high living standards only to be posted to Africa where the environment was wanting and dependent on the financial support from their Bishops in their mother countries.

The celibacy debate began informally just before the Vatican II Council held in Rome (1962-1965) and continued to persist as a topical issue in the Church. Because of the heated debates, the Second Vatican Council, made celibacy an agenda that was deliberated upon seriously. However, the council resolved to exhort all Catholic priests to firmly embrace and esteem the law of celibacy as a gift (Flannery, 1996). The African Synod of 1994 re-emphasized it and directed the Bishops in Africa to see to it, that the ongoing priestly formation deepens the understanding of sacred celibacy and to persevere in living it faithfully (John Paul II, 1995).

In the African region, the historical overview of Christian evangelization in Africa puts us in the picture to understand how Africans came to be entangled with the celibacy controversy. Ethiopian eunuch evangelized by Philip in Acts 8 spread the gospel as he returned to Africa (*Acts of Apostles 8: 26- 40*). By the fourth century AD, the Christian Church's presence in Africa had spread to the entire Northern Africa and extended further down to Sudan. In the mission of evangelization, the Catholic Church brought with it several doctrinal beliefs and values to Africa including celibacy (Oduyoye, 2009).

Priestly celibacy in Africa is facing criticism at subdued levels. The criticism of celibacy includes the contradictions brought about by the ecclesiastical law on celibacy

which contradicts natural law (Gwaza, 2019). In Nigeria, priestly celibacy remains unacceptable to many Tiv people. Priestly celibacy is unthinkable, inconceivable, and absurd (Gwaza, 2019). According to Okolo (1994), celibacy is an imposed value in Africa since the African culture puts much emphasis on marriage, children and family life. The law of clerical celibacy therefore naturally presents a problem in Africa because it was part of the Christian ideals imposed upon Africans by the early foreign missionaries. In Kenya, Wubbels (2011) priestly celibacy has not gained social acceptance or empathy among the church congregants.

The Catholic Church's missionaries of the 19th century introduced the compulsory practice of celibacy for Africans wishing to be priests. It was logical for the Africans seeking to be priests to subscribe to the requirement of celibacy for them to be ordained (Thornton, 1984). This requirement made it difficult at first for the church to get candidates for ordination to the priesthood. The reason for hesitation to embrace the life of celibacy was that celibacy was considered by Africans as an unreasonable, unnatural rule and totally against African cultural traditions (Emeka, 2014).

Recently, priestly celibacy has courted controversy which became more pronounced when Emmanuel Milingo, the former archbishop of Lusaka, in Zambia, challenged the Holy See (Vatican) in 2001 on mandatory celibacy. Milingo then went on to marry and launched a new ministry in 2006 (Wubbels, 2011). Further, the contradiction was courted when the final draft of the African synod (1995) in Rome called for the priests to see chaste and celibacy as a form of witness. On the other hand, Benedict XVI made it easier for married Anglican priests to be welcome into the Catholic community (Wubbels, 2011). For example, in the year 2004, several Catholic clerics in Kenya followed Milingo's way to defect from the Catholic Church. They include Fr. Godfrey Shiundu, Fr. Daniel Kasomo, Fr. Peter Njogu, and Fr. John Karimi among others.

Almost all the clergy who decamped cited cultural incompatibility with the stand of the Catholic Church on celibacy. In 2019 Philip Muiga, 78, who had been a Catholic priest for decades decided to join the Renewed Universal church (Wubbels, 2011).

The Catholic Church over the years in Africa has remained unshaken by the Africans' dismal enthusiasm to embrace celibacy. It has consistently and strongly stood firm in defence of the law of priestly celibacy. This is attested by the most recent interventions that were made during the second African Synod of Bishops in Rome in 2009. The Catholic Church urged the priests in Africa to remain faithful to the celibacy rule. Hickey (1981) argued that Africa cannot expect to achieve a higher priest-to-people ratio than it has at present unless there is some drastic change on the issue of celibacy. Questions of scriptural interpretation, apostolic precedent, the nature and order of the priesthood, the value of celibacy to the faithful in practical and symbolic terms, and the desirability and attainability of a celibate priesthood have prominently featured in modern literature (Parish, 2010).

Continuously bombarded by sensational news stories and often influenced by the activities of the interested groups, committed priests are at times tempted to give a second thought to the validity of convictions on the vow of celibacy (Covell, 2005). This represents an enormous image loss for the Catholic Church and spotlights the profound crisis in which this church is caught (Kung, 2010). Bonny (2014) observed that several persons have taken advantage to exploit the situation further through sensational reporting of defections, and scandals like paedophilia.

Studies contemplate the spectre of a faith defined by full pews and empty altars which already hang heavy over the church. The ratio of priests to faithful is expected to decrease and this scenario might be replicated in most Catholic churches in the

continent of Africa (Böhm *et al.*, 2014). Currently, there is a marked increase in internal wrangles on the celibacy discipline that has even resulted in an actual revolt by some clergy to form splinter groups within the Catholic Church. The Church continues to deny obvious serious discord in its midst caused by the global violation of celibacy discipline, and sexual abuse allegations by the clergy (Rossetti, 2002). This is eroding the trust of the faithful hence, preventing the church from playing its pivotal role of providing moral guidance to citizens of the world and is often translated as hypocrisy by non-believers (Ballano & Vivencio, 2019).

The controversy on celibacy has spurred a conversation on the importance of priestly celibacy within and without the Catholic Church depending on the internal or external viewpoints. Okonkwo (2020) and Whalen (2007) give a positive internal view of celibacy relating to its positive influence on the church mission to evangelize as they strongly advocate for celibacy to free the ecclesiastic from worldly distraction (Prince, 1992) while the negative external view sees priestly celibacy through its harmful and deleterious effects of sexual abuse on the societies (Rossetti, 2002) and the communities and in particular, the church itself (Prince, 1992; Schoenherr & Yamane, 2004). From the African perspective, Makamure (2004) affirmed that the practice of celibacy was a reserve of the individual who participated in indigenous religious ceremonies and that most African communities practised celibacy temporarily only during indigenous cultural ceremonies (Olson, 2007).

Following their missionary experience in Nigeria, Richard Hickey published a book titled: *Africa: The Case for an Auxiliary Priesthood (1981)*. It highlights the controversial debate on celibacy since Vatican II (1962-65) and also proposes how to bridge the gap between the laity and clergy in Africa. The information in Hickey's book is not only true of West Africa about the disparity between the laity and clergy, but it is

also true wherever Catholics are prevalent in Africa. Arguments for changes in the conditions for admitting men to the priesthood are well organized in this book. Hickey points out that the present celibate, Seminary and full-time priests can never be numerous enough to meet the needs of the faithful, nor could the financial resources of the African churches support them (Hickey 1981). He argued that Africa cannot expect to achieve a higher priest-to-people ratio than it has at present unless there is some drastic change on the issue of celibacy.

From an African perspective, celibacy has not gained reasonable social acceptance (Wubbels, 2011) and is frowned upon by indigenous communities (Gwaza, 2019). On the converse, indigenous African emphasis greatly on procreation (Emeka, 2014) and consider celibacy a repugnant practice and ecclesiastical law on celibacy contradicts natural law (Gwaza, 2019). This also finds support within the local context, where priestly celibacy has not gained wider social acceptance or empathy among the church congregants because of interjection between customary law and religious practises (Wubbels, 2011). It is from this perspective that the study postulated that priestly celibacy is a controversial issue in different cultures and countries, at different times and in various situations (Sunardi, 2014). This background on the Catholic Church's perspective on priestly celibacy and its strong defence concerns serious controversies and challenges facing it, especially in Africa informs this study. The investigation into this controversial topic interrogates the African cultural perspectives, with special reference to the culture of the Nandi people in Nandi County, Kenya.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The requirement of the priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church has long stood in tension with African indigenous cultural values that emphasize on marriage as a social obligation and a matter of maturity. Priestly celibacy negates social values and cultural

attitudes (Olson, 2010) and is considered an anomaly in most African communities (Wubbels, 2011; Gwaza, 2019). It is for this reason that priestly celibacy is generating a debate and highlighting the challenges facing indigenous African priests (Sipe, 2013; Hastings, 1978). Anecdotal evidence from most African indigenous communities suggests the existence of celibacy in one form or another (Makamure, 2004), but an in-depth study is lacking on this front. This study sought to fill this gap by interrogating the phenomenon of celibacy, and how indigenous African societies perceive it. Based on the African Indigenous worldview, the study examined priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church with a special focus on the indigenous Nandi community and to provide clear insights into the indigenous African viewpoint on celibacy practice.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The study interrogated how indigenous African Nandi community perspectives on celibacy in the Catholic Church intertwine, challenge and accommodate the Church's doctrine on priestly celibacy in the Church as a way of promoting evangelization in Africa.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The research study sought to address the following objectives;

- 1) To examine the development of priestly celibacy in relation to the Catholic Church in Africa.
- 2) To assess the African worldview, in particular the Nandi Community on the practice of celibacy.
- 3) To evaluate the perspective of protestant clergy on priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church.

- 4) To critically analyse the non-acceptability of priestly celibacy within the African worldview with particular reference to the Nandi community, Kenya

1.6 Research questions

To generate research data, the study focused on the following questions:

1. How did the Catholic Church's discipline of celibacy emerge and how has it developed in the Catholic Church in Africa?
2. What is the indigenous African worldview on the practice of celibacy among the Nandi Community, Kenya?
3. What is the opinion of the protestant clergy on priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church?
4. Is priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church acceptable or not-acceptable in the Nandi community, Kenya?

1.7 Significance of the study

This study is of great significance first, to the Catholic Church to address the persistent controversy and challenges with regard to the law of priestly celibacy within the African context. An understanding of the indigenous African's view of celibacy, the Church may effectively accommodate the challenges to celibacy not only at the global level but more so in most parts of Africa that are detrimental to the Catholic Church's mission of evangelization.

The study critically explores indigenous African responses to celibacy in the Catholic church and thus provides a wider perspective on the celibacy rule as a way of sustaining a debate on priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church. The study is also useful for general public readership particularly in Africa to gain a clear informed understanding of the

concept and practice of priestly celibacy within the Catholic Church in the context of African indigenous cultures.

1.8 Scope and limitations

The study explored the Catholic Church's priestly law of celibacy concerning African's view of the same, with a special focus on the indigenous Nandi people in Nandi County, Kenya. The study targeted individuals who were over 75 years old from the Nandi Community and therefore excluded all individuals from the Nandi Community aged below 75 years and all individuals from other communities living in Nandi County.

The cultural experts and scholars were included as study participants because they are knowledgeable about traditional issues in culture, while the church ministers including the catholic priest and protestant clergy were included in the study to give an authoritative understanding of the practice of celibacy. It was hoped that the triangulation of data from elderly Indigenous Nandi persons, cultural experts/scholars, and Catholic priests from the Nandi Community would generate accurate and adequate information on the topic of study.

This study encountered some difficulties in accessing information that is crucial to indigenous Nandi culture because of the fast cultural changes brought by modernity. To counter this, the researcher engaged particular participants, among them Nandi sages who still have institutional memory of Nandi cultures.

1.9 Theoretical framework

The study was anchored on two theoretical frameworks that included social constructivism which views reality as a socially constructed phenomenon (Berger, 1967) and therefore celibacy is considered as a socially constructed phenomenon (Olson, 2007). Central to celibacy is the biological theory of human sexuality which

holds that human beings biologically and naturally engage in a sexual relationship for the procreation and continuity of human species (Powers, 2008).

1.9.1 Social Constructionist Theory

This study is anchored on the social constructionist theory. In social construction, the idea of an objectively knowable truth does exist but it is contested. Knowledge is constructed through social interpretation and the inter-subjective influences of language, family, and culture (Hoffman, 1990). The basic contention of social constructionists is that reality is socially constructed (Berger, 1967), that is, what we perceive as reality has been shaped through a system of social, cultural and interpersonal processes. There are four assumptions made by this theory namely: Human experience of the world is ordered; Language provides the basis on which we make sense of the world; the everyday reality of life is shared; any experience is a product of social interaction; and that shared symbols, ideas, knowledge of reality may become institutionalized at the level of society, or within subgroups (Gooding, 2012).

The social construction theory of human sexuality posits that sexual behaviors, desires, and identities are not solely the product of biological imperatives but are significantly shaped by cultural norms, historical contexts, and social institutions (Foucault, 1978). social construction theory asserts that human sexuality is best understood as a dynamic interplay between individual experience and sociohistorical context. While biological factors may provide certain predispositions, the expression, interpretation, and valuation of sexual behavior are profoundly influenced by social processes. Sexuality, therefore, is not discovered but enacted through repeated performances within structured social environments (Butler, 1990). These performances are learned, regulated, and modified through interaction with family, peers, institutions, and cultural texts.

The human body is a socially constructed phenomenon; thus, human sexuality is channelled in specific directions socially rather than on biological drives (Berger 1967; Gagnon & Simon, 1990). The decision by an embodied persona to engage in any sexual activity is not only a personal and mutual action but also a social one. Sexual relations then are a product of social context and result from numerous social and cultural practices, behaviours and discourses which operate to construct the body as a social artefact (Olson, 2010).

Celibacy assumes that sexual desires and instincts can be controlled and as such celibacy as a complex religious phenomenon seeks to control sexual desire for several functions such as to divorce oneself from a basic human biological drive, to extricate oneself from what is perceived to be impure or to distance oneself from the transient world (Powers, 2008). The phenomenon of priestly celibacy has been socially constructed and institutionalized over some time. It is a product of a particular culture, language and institution. Being subject to sexual urges presupposed that one is embodied and that one's body is necessarily embedded in the world (Olson, 2007). The practice of celibacy reflects a certain understanding of a particular cultural construction of the human body. From one perspective, a person's body is presented to him or her, while its meaning is taught by society (parents, relatives, peers and community) (Olson, 2007).

1.9.2 Biological Theory on Human Sexuality

The biological theory was propounded by Spinelli (1996) who argued that being sexual (however expressed) is the common human baseline through which all the different structures and expressions of being sexual emerge. The differences only arise out of the shared human foundation of being sexual. It is biological nature that human beings engage in a sexual relationship for the procreation of species as impelled by lust,

pleasure, enjoyment, companionship, comfort, relaxation or a combination of these drivers and needs (Powers, 2008).

The biological theory of human sexuality asserts that sexual behavior, desire, and response are fundamentally governed by physiological mechanisms, genetic inheritance, and evolutionary imperatives (Diamond, 2009) and is rooted in biological imperatives aimed at reproduction, survival, and species continuity (Fisher, 2004). Human sexuality is a fundamental aspect of neuroendocrine and reproductive functioning as sexual desire, arousal, and behavior are regulated by hormones which influence motivation, pleasure, and bonding (Bancroft, 2005; Diamond, 2009). The body does not cease to be sexual simply because behavior is restricted; rather, biological urges persist, creating an internal tension between embodied reality and behavioral compliance.

The human body is a natural system, even though the body is never experienced naturally because it is always mediated by society. Moreover, an individual's body is patterned in a way analogous to the pattern of the social body. In this way, society teaches us to control our bodies and as such it reflects a general cultural style (Olson, 2010). Since the body is associated with uncontrollable and irrational passions, desires and emotions, celibacy as a practice exerts discipline and control upon the human body (Abramson & Pinkerton, 2002). The body can also transform itself into a sign that functions in a self-referential way and as a referent for others utilizing its ability to acquire meaning (Olson, 2010).

Central to the celibacy controversy is human sexuality. Thus, if the human body and sexuality are inherently social, then celibacy takes the same notion, although its observance differs according to individual volition, either as elected or imposed and as

temporary or permanent (Olson, 2007). One may choose celibacy to control oneself to achieve either a short-term goal or a permanent goal in the everyday world. In practising celibacy, one is denying the body the natural urges and desires with the body being brought to further attention. Critically, the biological theory does not deny the presence of environmental or cultural influences but maintains that such factors operate within biologically constrained parameters. For instance, while cultural norms may regulate the expression of sexual behavior, the underlying capacity for sexual arousal and motivation appears to be universal and species-typical (Symons, 1979). This universality is seen in the consistent presence of sexual desire, orgasmic capacity, and reproductive behaviors across diverse human populations, regardless of cultural context.

The discussion on sexuality and celibacy presupposes a conceptual gap of the human body as a sensitive substance with the ability to produce both pain and pleasure (Olson, 2010). In many religious traditions, celibacy is part of the process of becoming holy, complete, perfect and clean (Olson, 2010). For many religious traditions, the physical human body is a microcosm of society, therefore, intense social controls are experienced as demands of strong bodily control (Olson, 2010). By agreeing or choosing to a celibate life, one enters or encounters a religious proposition and position such as priesthood which demands celibacy as a pre-requisite, a person is deciding to be ascetic. That is, one strives to harness bodily drives and re-channel them into more spiritual ends by denying fundamental biological drives (Olson, 2010). Based on the aforementioned theoretical review, this study critically analyses how socially constructed value relates to natural law specifically human sexuality.

1.9.3 Bio-Social Constructionist Framework on Human Sexuality

Human sexuality has long been shaped by two dominant theoretical paradigms: the biological theory, which emphasizes innate, physiological, and evolutionary mechanisms, and the social construction theory, which foregrounds the role of culture, discourse, and historical context in shaping sexual meaning and practice. Rather than viewing these perspectives as mutually exclusive, this study increasingly adopts a biopsychosocial or interactionist model that acknowledges both the biological underpinnings of sexual response and the cultural mediation of its expression (Tolman & McClelland, 2011). While these frameworks appear oppositional at first glance, one grounding sexuality in nature, the other in nurture, a more integrative synthesis reveals that human sexuality is best understood as an emergent phenomenon arising from the dynamic interplay between biological predispositions and sociocultural interpretation (Diamond, 2009; Foucault, 1978).

As Spinelli (1996) argues, being sexual is the baseline condition of human existence, manifesting in drives for procreation, pleasure, companionship, and comfort—drivers that emerge from a shared biological architecture. Even in contexts where sexual expression is restricted, such as in celibacy, the persistence of desire confirms that the biological foundation remains active, even if consciously suppressed (Powers, 2008). The body, as a natural system, inherently generates sensations of pleasure and pain, arousal and inhibition, biological realities that cannot be erased by social command (Olson, 2010).

Yet, the meaning, significance, and regulation of these biological impulses are not innate; they are socially constructed. Social constructionism asserts that reality, the body and its functions, is not passively perceived but actively produced through language, institutional power, and inter-subjective meaning-making (Berger, 1967;

Hoffman, 1990). Human sexuality, therefore, is not discovered in nature but enacted through culturally scripted performances that are learned, reinforced, and institutionalized (Butler, 1990; Gagnon & Simon, 1990).

This comprehensive understanding of human sexuality emerges not from choosing between biological and social constructionist theories, but from integrating their insights into a unified framework that recognizes sexuality as simultaneously embodied and culturally mediated. Rather than existing in opposition, these perspectives are complementary: biology provides the foundational mechanisms of sexual response, while social context determines how those mechanisms are interpreted, enacted, and valued (Dixson, 2012). From a biological standpoint, human sexuality is underpinned by conserved physiological processes (Berenbaum & Beltz, 2016). However, the expression of these biological capacities is never raw or unmediated; it is always filtered through cultural frameworks. Social constructionists argue that what counts as “sexual,” “desirable,” or “appropriate” is not self-evident but constructed through language, law, medicine, and media (Foucault, 1978). Crucially, biological responses themselves can be influenced by cultural cognition (Chivers et al., 2010).

This suggests a bidirectional relationship: while biology enables sexual response, the mind shaped by social learning interprets stimuli and shapes physiological outcomes. Thus, the body does not operate in isolation from culture; it is responsive to the meanings ascribed to sexual acts (Tolman & McClelland, 2011). An integrative model therefore views human sexuality as an emergent, biosocial phenomenon. Biological systems provide the necessary substrate hormonal, neural, and anatomical for sexual functioning, but these systems operate within environments that imbue them with meaning and structure their expression. As Diamond (2009) notes, “biology creates the potential, but culture determines the trajectory”. This synergy explains both the cross-

cultural commonalities in sexual capacity and the vast diversity in sexual practices, taboos, and ideals observed across human societies.

The phenomenon of celibacy exemplifies this process: it is not a negation of biology per se, but a culturally specific re-interpretation of bodily drives as obstacles to spiritual purity or moral transcendence (Olson, 2007; Powers, 2008). Celibacy, as a practice, emerges from a social construction of the body as a site of uncontrollable passion requiring discipline—a construction that aligns with broader cultural styles of bodily control (Olson, 2010; Abramson & Pinkerton, 2002). When chosen autonomously and aligned with personal values, celibacy may foster a sense of purpose, spiritual growth, or self-mastery (Pargament, 1997). However, when imposed, coerced, or internalized under conditions of guilt or fear, it may contribute to psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, sexual shame, or dissociation from the body (Olson, 2010).

Socio-culturally, celibacy is not a natural state but a historically and institutionally constructed norm, particularly within certain religious traditions (Foucault, 1978). It functions as a mechanism of social control, often reinforcing hierarchies of purity, authority, and obedience (Olson, 2007). The institutionalization of celibacy such as in priestly or monastic orders transforms a personal practice into a collective mandate, embedding it within systems of power that valorize asceticism (Powers, 2008). Celibacy, as a socially constructed phenomenon, intersects uneasily with biological realities and psychological well-being. Its moral or spiritual value must be weighed against its potential to disrupt the holistic balance that is deemed essential for human health. A more compassionate approach would recognize sexuality as a core dimension of the human experience and seek to integrate, rather than eradicate, embodied existence within ethical and spiritual frameworks (Abramson & Pinkerton, 2002).

In sum, merging biological and social constructionist perspectives yields a more holistic theory of human sexuality: one that acknowledges the body's material realities while recognizing that those realities are always experienced through culturally shaped lenses. Such a synthesis avoids the reductionism of biological determinism and the disembodiment of pure social constructivism, offering a nuanced account of sexuality as both a natural and a cultural fact (Tolman & McClelland, 2011; Diamond, 2009).

1.10 Literature Review

Below is a literature review derived from various publications including journals, books other published articles. The literature is structured under the following headings; scholarly views on the Catholic Church's law of priestly celibacy and how it developed over time; the indigenous African perspectives on celibacy; acceptability, or non-acceptability of priestly celibacy in Africa and gaps to be filled by the study.

1.10.1 Catholic Church's view on priestly celibacy and its development

The studies detailing the law on priestly celibacy are largely drawn from the canons as well as far as the first canon, *Didascalia apostolorum* focused on the sexual continence of the episcopates (Frazee, 1972) to the canons of the 20th century, canon 132 of the code of canon law of 1917 (Hastings, 1978), canon 277 of 1983 (Horvat, 2022). These canons have either stood alone as official communications on a contemporary issue such as *Didascalia apostolorum* (Frazee, 1972) to Canon 277 of 1983 (Joseph *et al.*, 2010; Horvat, 2022; Sunardi, 2014) or have been integrated into official communication from synods and councils which have ranged from regional councils such as the first to issue orders in the 4th century, the council of Elvira (Joseph *et al.*, 2010) to the large and global councils such as the second Vatican council through its widely known communication the *Presbyterorum ordinis (Order of Priests)* (Joseph *et al.*, 2010).

The first foundation for celibacy has largely been presumed to be linked to the apparent celibacy of Jesus largely due in part to his itinerant lifestyle and the apparent sexual abstinence of his apostles who served as a model for Christian practice. In the case of Jesus, Celibacy was an adjunct to his prophetic calling. The Biblical narrative suggest that Jesus remained celibate as there was no narrative to indicate an existing relationship with any female followers which prompted some of the disciples to remain unmarried to fulfil the higher goals of bringing salvation to humanity worldwide (Abbott, 2000). Lifelong celibacy received a theological foundation with important implications for women in the Second century and the Christian church adopted sexual abstinence to establish the authority of prophetic figures and church leaders by making the human body a more appropriate vehicle to receive divine inspiration (Olson, 2010).

As early as the 4th century, the Council of Elvira institutionalized celibacy (Joseph *et al.*, 2010) while the Council of Ancyra permitted marriage in orders only as far as diaconate (Lea, 1884). The Councils of Carthage (397 and 398) passed numerous canons relating to priestly celibacy, the Council of Nicaea advocated for celibacy while the Council of Laodicea (352) prohibited women from serving or presiding over the churches. The council of Saragossa (381) denounced the practice of monasticism but supported the notion of clerical marriages while the Fourth Council of Carthage (398) stayed indifferent on the issue of clerical marriages (Lea, 1884).

General legislation was first introduced in 325 AD on the occasion of the first ecumenical council at Nicaea. The law, which forbade priests to marry after ordination and forbade any cleric from having a non-relative woman in his household was not very strict and still allowed priests to be married. At the Synod of Pavia in 1022, the advocates of priestly celibacy ultimately gained preponderance. The following development is considered to have provided the main impetus for this reform (Ballano,

2019). The first Lateran Council (1123 AD), made priestly celibacy mandatory. However, the decree has faced several controversies and challenges. This reality is that despite the laws and common practices, celibacy has been widely violated over the course of centuries. Nevertheless, the church councils and various popes have constantly affirmed and strenuously upheld priestly discipline (Chu Ilo, 2017).

The Council of Chalcedon (451) introduced canons that forbade monks and nuns from marrying, the Council of Toledo (589) instituted celibacy laws that were earlier pronounced (Lea, 1884), while the Council of Trullo (692), reasserted the right of priests to marry but required abstinence from married candidates for the diaconate and presbyterate (Rice 1992) enforces the vows of chastity from episcopates and prelates (Lea, 1907). The synod in 742 decreed and insisted on celibacy among clerics (Lea 1907), the council of Vernon (845) upheld celibacy, the council of Bâle (1431) proposed the restoration of clerical marriage to all ecclesiastics, the council of Winchester (1076) sought to restore discipline among the ecclesiastics. The Lateran Council I (1123) and II (1139), promulgated canons that invalidated clerical marriage, and the Council of Constance (1415) sought to reform the clerics. The reassertion of clerical celibacy at the Council of Trent defined a discipline for the Catholic Church which has continued to the present day and raised the issue as a permanent marker of the divisions within Christendom and (Parish, 2010).

The Diet of Augsburg (1530) decreed that all married priests abstain from their wives, while the Diet of Augsburg (1555) accented to clerical marriages and the reformation of the ecclesiastics in Germany. Despite the stringency of the application of canons and punishment, the ecclesiastical clergy were stubborn (Lea, 1884, 1907; Rice, 1992). Other definitive councils included the Council of Constantinople (381) which focused on the nature of the triune God, comprising the Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy

Spirit (Siecienski, 2023). The Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-39) focused on the use of azymes, and the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-39) focused on the issue of purgatory (Siecienski, 2023).

The first general councils which could largely represent a universal synod of the Latin Church in the 12th century promulgated canons prohibiting ecclesiastical marriage (Lea, 1884). The Council of Trent (1545-1563) prohibited ecclesiastical marriage (Anello, 2014). The other important general councils or synods include the Vatican Council I (1869-70) promulgated *Pastor Aeternus* (Eternal Shepherd) which focused on the ‘infallibility’ of the pope (Siecienski, 2017). The Vatican Council II (1962-1965) reaffirmed the importance of priestly celibacy through *Presbyterorum ordinis* (*Order of Priests*) (Joseph *et al.*, 2010)

Canon 33 from the Council of Elvira (306) forbade clerics in the church-bishops, priests and deacons – from having sexual relations with their wives and from having children (Parish, 2010). It was not until ecumenical meetings of the Catholic Church at the First and Second Lateran councils in 1123 and 1139 that priests were explicitly forbidden from marrying (Sipe, 1994). Eliminating the prospect of marriage had the added benefit of ensuring that children or wives of priests did not make claims on property acquired throughout a priest's life, which thus could be retained by the church. It took centuries for the practice of celibacy to become widespread, but it eventually became the norm in the Latin church (Lea, 1884).

The other foundation of the canons for priestly celibacy has largely drawn from cultural (Gariepy, 2008; Lea, 1884; Cozzens, 2006) and social adaptation (Abbott, 2000). It is evident that the early Christian priesthood comprised both married and unmarried men, and there was no obvious root for the law of clerical celibacy in the practice of the

primitive church (Parish, 2010). Ancient Greeks considered premarital chastity as an essential requirement for brides and young women were thrust into marriages just after puberty to eliminate any possibility of a sexual lapse. The Greeks also used a pantheon of deities and goddesses, that is, Hestia, Athena and Artemis to maintain vigilance over their virginity. It was contrasting that virginity was essential for a bride not for the groom as lifelong celibacy was seldom perceived as a good thing (Abbott, 2000).

The Greek philosophical foundation on celibacy was bolstered by Pythagoras who founded a celibate brotherhood based on a religious movement that melded Orphic doctrine with Indian and Persian beliefs. The commune members subscribe to equality among males as well as females. The Greek Philosopher Plato refined celibacy from a dualist perspective and viewed the soul as morally superior to the body which tended to impede the execution of higher goals (Abbott, 2000).

In more than significant ways, several church doctors and pontiffs as early as the 4th century including St. Ambrose, St. Tertullian, St. Augustin and St Jerome have personally given impetus to the issue of priestly celibacy (Lea, 1907; Frazee, 1972). Tertullian admired several sacred orders that embraced continence (*De exhortation castitatis, cap. xiii*), while Origen contrasted the spiritual offspring of the priests of the New Law with the natural offspring begotten in wedlock by the priests of the Old (*In Levit. Hom. vi, no. 6*) (Wright, 2000). However, there is nothing in this or similar language which could be considered decisive, and so the debate continued into the fourth and fifth centuries. Eusebius declared that it is befitting that priests and those in the ministerial priesthood should observe continence (*Demonst. Evangel., I, C. ix*) (Rogaczewski, 2014).

St. Cyril of Jerusalem urged the ministers of the altar who serve God properly to hold themselves aloof from women (*Cat. xii, 25*), while St. Jerome spoke of a custom generally observed when he declared that; "Clerics, even though they may have wives, cease to be husbands". No Church Doctor did more than St. Jerome in imposing celibacy rule on its members. St. Thomas of Aquinas a Church Theologian affirmed that compulsory celibacy was an innovation on the rules of the primitive church (Lea, 1884) while St. Tertullian ascribed to the fact that celibacy was the most effective technique with which an individual achieved the clarity of the soul (Olson, 2010).

Other important persons who contributed to the mandatory celibacy for the priest were St Benedict of Nursia born in 494 and known for his 'effort in conquering temptation by throwing himself naked and rolling in a thicket of brambles and nettles until his naked body was lacerated from head to foot'. The rude experiment was exceptionally successful. Due to his dedication, he attracted zealous disciples from distant regions and founded the great Benedictine Order which was located in Monte Casino, his birthplace (Lea, 1884). St. Damian was an ascetic monk who devoted his life as a vocal proponent of asceticism and later became Pope (Lea, 1907). Drawing from important figures and church Doctors, medieval Christianity prescribed celibacy as a pre-requisite for religious office or position (Olson, 2010). However, the advent of the Reformation, and evangelical criticisms of the laws and traditions of the Catholic Church, reawakened the debate over clerical marriage and paved the way for the presence of a married ministry in the Latin Church for the first time in half a millennium (Parish, 2010).

The significant pontifical contribution to the issue of priestly celibacy started way back during the patristic age and included Pope Damasus (366-84), Pope Siricus (384-399), Pope Innocent I (401-17), Pope Leo I the Great (440-61). These pontiffs required priests

to remain celibate (Frazee, 1972). The last 20th century has also witnessed the powerful push from several pontiffs including Pope John XXIII (1958–63) who initiated the Second Vatican Council Paul VI (1963-78) and who promulgated *Presbyterorum ordinis* of 1965, the *Sacerdotalis caelibatus* of 1967 (Allen, 2015), Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) who issued the Code of Canon Law 277 of 1983, John Paul II (1992), and the Catechism of the Catholic Church of 2002 (Joseph *et al.*, 2010). The last two pontiffs Pope Benedict XVI (2005-13) and Pope Francis I (2013-2025) have largely contributed to the issue of priestly celibacy through their encyclicals and synods. The significant event in Africa was the African Synod of 1994 called by Pope John Paul II which re-emphasized priestly celibacy and directed the Bishops of Africa to see to it, that the ongoing formation of priests facilitates them deepen their understanding of sacred celibacy and to persevere in living it faithfully (John Paul II, 1995).

Pope Francis called for the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon at the Vatican-Rome (October 2019), and reiterated the issue of celibacy as the main agenda that the Congregation deliberated on and made drastic proposals. During the synod, there was a push for the ordination of married men (*virī probati*) in South America due to the low number of seminarians joining vocations attributable to the mandatory celibacy (Edumalichukwu, 2020). The synod resolved to exhort all Catholic priests to firmly embrace and esteem the law of celibacy as a gift (Mayblin, 2019).

The 20th and 21st centuries have seen several canons being pronounced starting with the *Presbyterorum ordinis (Order of Priests)* of 1967 (Joseph *et al.*, 2010) with other important canons being Canon 132 of 1983 (Hastings, 1978) and Canon 277 of 1983 (Sunardi, 2014). For instance, the role and the application of celibacy in the Catholic Church are described in the Catholic code of law, the *Codex Iuris Canonici*. According to Canon 277, sanctified Catholic priests are required to make a solemn promise of

celibacy. Before their diaconate consecration, the priest aspirants promise to refrain from getting married and to live in absolute sexual abstinence. However, from the Church's point of view, celibacy is more a voluntary promise than a legal requirement. Nevertheless, de facto celibacy is a compulsory requirement for being a member of the Catholic priesthood (Sunardi, 2014).

In a study carried out in Canada, Garipey, (2008) observed that the adoption of celibacy as a mandatory requirement stemmed from the influence of monasticism and to safeguard church property from inheritance by legitimate children of priests. The apostolic origin of clerical celibacy was an indubitable practice of the primitive church as the apostles commanded the observance of the clerical rule in general (Lea, 1884; Cozzens, 2006). Christian Theologians adopted the Greek (Pythagoras, Plato) and Roman (Seneca) philosophies among other philosophies and proposed widespread celibacy based on Jesus's teaching and life (Abbott, 2000).

Following the numerous defections of the clergy to embrace married life, the Catholic Church through *The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education* published a guide in 2009 on formation to priestly celibacy. The document is geared toward providing some guidelines on the controversial issue of celibacy and that celibacy is a gift from God that cannot be kept unless those who voluntarily decide to embrace it are properly trained (Kautzer, 2012). The Sacred Congregation further points out that, the celibacy controversy is not new but it has always existed since the beginning of the church. As the world has changed, the Church has had a harder time recruiting priests. Numbers have been dropping: between 1970 and 2014 the world's Catholic population grew from 654 million to 1.23 billion, while the number of priests declined from 420,000 to 414,000, especially in the Western World (Serbin, 2006).

Adrian Hastings, 1972 (cited by Johann, 2011) emphasized that mission does not start with denominational self-interpretations, but with the life of Jesus Christ. Ministries are time and culture-bound responses to the Gospel. African Christians should resist cultural, religious, ecclesial and Roman imperialism. It is not good to subject pastoral care to just one form of the minister that has been made absolute. The starting point should be ecclesiological: the whole church is the primary ministry. It is wholesome to see ministry as a response to local pastoral needs (Johann, 2011). Strenuous attempts have been made to indicate that the Church exacted celibacy on all her ministers of the higher grades from its early days (Brading, 2002; Lea, 2021) But the contrary view, represented by such scholars as Funk and Kraus, seems much better founded and has won the general acceptance of recent years.

Cozzens (2006) observed that underneath the sacerdotal celibacy are the apostolic privileges, power and secrecy associated with clerical culture. The English legislation was not, however, a defence of the discipline of obligatory clerical celibacy (Parish, 2010). However, celibacy was more prevalent among the monks, who were strongly active in evangelizing. With the growing number of Christians and the development of professional clergy, discussions arose about the necessity of celibacy for those now specialized in liturgical tasks (Benz & Reto, 2009).

The assumed incompatibility between sex and holiness seems to have been drawn from a non-Christian religious tradition and later became grounds for the new canons on celibacy, which next prohibited priests from marrying or the married from being ordained (Hastings, 1978). Nevertheless, the literature on the importance of canons in the Catholic Church took a twist with the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law in 1917 (Komonchak, 1986). Several canons on celibacy have been decreed by the Catholic Church Hierarchy including the Canon Law 277 of 1983 (Joseph *et al.*, 2010;

Horvat, 2022; Sunardi, 2014), Canon 132 (Hastings, 1978). But the real issue is that canons are just orders as can be highlighted by the revelation of the acts of sexual continence of the ecclesiastics throughout the world from the 4th century till the 21st century (Frawley-O'Dea, 2007).

Consider, the work by O'Loughlin (1995) who critiques the celibacy practises among the ecclesiastics as a 'creation of canon law', while Hastings (1978) observed that the law of celibacy has been part of a wider system all of which is in principle derived from the same false presuppositions. However, it should be acknowledged that priestly celibacy has acquired a special urgency and a greater importance in these times because of several factors for instance modernity, and the new psychological sensitivity that tends to reject the bonds of conventional arrangements. This study sought an authoritative response to the controversy of celibacy and is therefore indispensable to this study. However, in many studies, the input from the African perspective of celibacy is lacking.

1.10.2 Concept of African perspectives on celibacy

Studies on African perspectives on celibacy are on a continuum of indigenous African viewpoints (Makamure, 2004; Machoko, 2013) to indigenous religious viewpoints (Gwaza 2019) and lastly, the interjections between African perspectives and Christian Catholicism (Olson, 2007; Wubbels, 2011; Kangethe, 2009). Within the African indigenous religion, celibacy was viewed indifferently as it upset the social and religious order and the necessity to procreate. Celibate individuals in the African cultural tradition were treated with contempt and ostracized by their families and society. Celibacy with the African indigenous religions was not a lifelong commitment but it was practised for some time by the religious functionaries when they assumed the roles of intermediaries between divine beings and worshippers. Some elderly persons

who dedicate themselves to a deity also practice celibacy along with young girls dedicated to goddesses (Olson, 2007).

Makamure (2004) carried out a comparative study on African Celibacy versus priestly celibacy among the Karanga People of Zimbabwe. The qualitative study extensively examined the issue of celibacy at large and observed that the Karanga people structured the society with every individual playing a role based on age and function. The community allocated a specific function to a few celibate individuals who were 'called to be celibate by their ancestry' for specific religious and political functions. A celibate woman called '*Mbonga*' in Shona while their male counterparts called '*Syimborume*' performed specific religious functions. Either these celibate individuals performed the function of rainmaking referred to as '*Nyusa*' or religious and political function referred to as '*Chirikadzi*'. Further, there were celibate individuals because of physical, psychological and spiritual problems and were considered to be 'possessed by evil spirits'. However, celibacy without justification was frowned upon by the community.

Machoko (2013) examined the issue of albinism in Zimbabwe based on African indigenous religion through a qualitative study. The study observed that albinism was linked to water spirits and ascribed/notional celibacy by Indigenous communities and also linked to evil spirits as well. Albinism was regarded as a blemish that prevented one from a family ancestral spirit medium (*mudzimu wepamusha*) and therefore infanticide was commuted to a baby albino at birth in ancient times. Adebayo (2013) examined the question of celibacy in the Catholic Church in light of the recent clerical sexual abuse reported in the world. The qualitative study was situated in Nigeria and focused on the perceptions and challenges of celibacy with a view to justify the need to abolish celibacy. The findings indicated that celibacy from the African viewpoint is a deviant and anti-social practice and encourages homosexuality and paedophilia.

Gwaza (2019) examined the issue of priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church from the Tiv culture in Nigeria. The qualitative study focused on the contradictions between the Tiv culture and the Catholic Church. The findings observed that celibacy is unfathomable in the Tiv culture because it was natural for a man to procreate and ensure the continuity of his family name. A man without a no heir to his house is a useless person and is scorned. A Tiv man was expected to be sexually active at all times and it was considered impossible for a Tiv to remain continent for a month. Thus, a Tiv man who embraces clerical celibacy is as 'good as dead'.

Wubbels (2011) examined the celibacy among priests in Kenya using a convenient sample. The findings indicated that priestly celibacy is against African customs. The public perception is against priestly celibacy as it is believed that something must be seriously wrong with unmarried adults. Moreover, the author estimated that more than a third of the study informants would prefer to get married in the near future or hold the intention of getting married. The author asserted that 'it is incomprehensible that a church can ask its leaders not to marry'.

The opinions that interject between African indigenous viewpoints and celibacy in the Catholic Church are varied and include Kangethe (2009) who issued an opinion based on his missionary work in Kenya and Uganda having served as a priest. The author associated celibacy in the Catholic Church as a freely made choice in 'service to God'. Okolo (1994), a diocesan priest in response to *the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops* of 1994, pinioned that celibacy from the African perspective is still facing cultural and social challenges and thus there is a need to study carefully the cultural and social problems facing priestly celibacy in the continent (Okolo, 1994). He pointed out the conflict between African and Christian values.

Shorter (1998) examined the issue of celibacy in African culture and contextualize celibacy to the African situation. Interestingly, the author drew a parallel between celibacy and initiation ceremonies, where initiates go through a kind of poverty symbolized by nakedness, chastity, practising sexual abstinence during the rite, and obedience to the rite's authorities (Shorter 1998). However, the study does not explicitly culture subscribe to this parallelism to any community because of the diversity of cultures in Africa. Nkurunziza (2003) examined the ethical conflict in Africa arising from celibacy in the Church and brought forth the issue of clerical sexual abuse to the front. Nkurunziza (2003) certainly acknowledges that celibacy goes against African cultures and calls for the need to affirm the efficacy of priestly celibacy and develop a celibacy paradigm that reflects the socio-cultural context of Africa.

Johann (2011) examined the views of the catholic and protestant ministers serving in Christian churches in Kenya. The qualitative study observed that celibacy is not a challenge for (married) ministers of other churches, but more so for struggling celibates and that celibates are surrounded and affected by many sexual questions. The study concluded that a high percentage of informants believe that one in every three African Catholic priests would like to marry and that ministers of all churches agree that it is good to talk about the painful side of celibate sexuality. Johann (2011) argues it is commonly believed that something must be seriously wrong with unmarried adults.

Kirwen (2008) observed that several themes can be drawn from the African context. The themes touch the reception, expression and continuation of life. For instance, from the perspective of African cosmology, celibacy means permanent adolescence. Chu Ilo (2017) observed that the reply by African bishops on the issue of celibacy during the Special African Synod in 1994 statements was framed in dialectical terms as a reaction to Western cultural influence. They are also built on the idea of cultural homogeneity

among Africans on some of the contested moral questions. These problems are very real and pressing in the West, but they are not central to the life of families and Christian communities in Africa.

In his reflections on priestly ministry in Africa, Tambudzai (2011) provided ample material for theological reflection, debate and analysis for the renewed understanding of priestly celibacy. These reflections, however, are not contextualized on any specific African culture. Hence, it is important therefore to find out the African perspective on celibacy by focusing on a particular culture that could explain the way Africans view celibacy (Shorter 1998). The reflections by Okolo (1994) are central to the present study, that priestly celibacy is alleged to be foreign.

There is a need to objectively interrogate this view to establish how priestly celibacy could be considered alien or not alien to Africa's traditional cultural life and practice (Shorter 1998). However, there is no explicit culture that points to subscribing to this parallelism as there is a diversity of cultures in Africa. Nkurunziza (2003) sought to recapture the meaning and value of celibacy in the contemporary church in Africa but provided no proper justification for what his study advanced. The study critiques views on celibacy from the African perspective as challenges specific to the African context have not been adequately addressed by the Catholic Church in Africa.

1.10.3 Perspective of protestant clergy on priestly celibacy

The studies on the views of protestant clergy on priestly celibacy are founded on the ideological differences regarding marriage and celibacy (Witte Jr, 2012), the doctrinal foundations of marriage (Perzyński, 2017; Osborne, 2021; Ngundu, 2011) and celibacy (Parish, 2012). The protestant view on clerical celibacy revolves around false doctrines pushed by the Catholic Church (Perzyński, 2017) and in a dialectical manner

(Perzyński, 2017; Agadjanian, 2020). However, there is still a divergent view which supports the notion of chastity among the clergy but does not fully support celibacy within its clergy (Perzyński, 2017).

In the 16th century, marriage was the first institution to be reformed during the protestant reformation by the leading Protestant theologians that included Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon (Lutheran), Thomas Cranmer and William Tyndale (Anglican), Martin Bucer and John Calvin (Calvinism) wrote extensively on the celibacy and its contrasting paradigm of ecclesiastical marriage (Witte Jr, 2012). Many of the core issues of the Reformation were related to the Catholic sacramental theology and canon law of marriage. The reformers denounced the medieval Catholic Church's stance on marriage as a flagrant example of the church's usurpation of state authority. The canonical prohibition on the marriage of clergy and monastics stood sharply juxtaposed with Protestant doctrines of sexual sin and Christian vocation (Perzyński, 2017).

The protestant reformers understood clerical celibacy from a doctrinal perspective which is connected with the issue of imposition and for promoting a false doctrine of faith based on works (Osborne, 2021; Ngundu, 2011). The Anglicans indicated that marriage and celibacy were shaped by Scripture and not a sacrament that determined a person's final salvation (Osborne, 2021). The Catholic had erred in elevating marriage to the sacrament level which translated into a salvation grace and also elevated the celibacy state far above marriage so that a person could be especially certain of earning God's favour and grace through remaining celibate (Sahaya & Kyomo, 2004).

Thus, categorizing one's marital state as indifferent did not diminish the influential role marriage or celibacy could exert on a person's piety and service to God, though it did mean that Christians were free to decide for themselves which would be best for them.

Thus, the protestant defended the freedom of all people to marry or remain celibate (Osborne, 2021). The Anglicans contended that only those possessing the gift of chastity should elect to remain single. They denied Catholic teaching on the vow of perpetual celibacy and its relationship to the gift of chastity. They gave four reasons; first, they rejected the claims that the vow of lifelong chastity, as an evangelical counsel, was meritorious of salvation which contradicted justification by grace through faith (Agadjanian, 2020).

Second, they regarded the gift of sexual continence as exceptionally rare, rather than readily available to any who sought it. Since Scripture described it as a special endowment given by God to only a select few, it could never be obtained or merited through striving, even if one deeply desired it. Third, due to the divine origin of the gift, God was responsible for sustaining it in a person and could choose to withdraw it whenever he chose to do so (Osborne, 2021).

Finally, in place of binding vows, the Protestants tended to favour simply resolving to remain single to more freely serve and worship God. Even the few clergymen who supported the legitimacy of perpetual vows of chastity nevertheless concurred that only individuals assured of the gift of continence should invoke such a declaration (Parish, 2012). Thus, despite rigorously critiquing the theology of works-based righteousness underlying perpetual vows of chastity, English Protestants continued to affirm the practical advantages of celibacy if God miraculously enabled a person to live in a single state.

The Reformers were largely Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anglicans rejected the subordination of marriage to celibacy and the celebration of marriage as a sacrament. The celibate life had no superior virtue and was no prerequisite for ecclesiastical service

(Witte Jr, 2012). Moreover, participation in marriage required no prerequisite faith or purity and conferred no sanctifying grace, as did the true sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist (Plummer, 2016). Indeed, all persons were encouraged to marry when they came of age unless they had the rare gift of continence (Plummer, 2016).

The Protestants insisted that the gift of chastity was not only rare but also a precondition to remaining single helped the Protestants resolve the tension between the lawfulness of marriage and the expediency of celibacy. Scripture's commendation of celibacy only applied to those few whom God had empowered to live in that state for the sake of the kingdom (Perzyński, 2017). Marriage is a combination of secular and religious symbolism and practical implications that are altered by the position of the married clergy (Plummer, 2016). Therefore, it is also necessary to seek an understanding of how individual experiences can lead to shifts in the content of the evangelical message and changes in the institution of priesthood (Cozzens, 2006).

There is a growing divide between those studying clerical marriage in theological debates and cultures and those focusing on political roles. One of the most significant dialectical differences between Protestant and Catholic churches is the marital status of the clergy. Yet, research was done in Africa on how this shift from a celibate to a married clergy took place during the Reformation or what reactions such a move elicited from the indigenous communities in Africa with regard to celibacy.

1.10.4 Acceptability, or Non-Acceptability of Celibacy in Africa

The concept of worldview is widely used in African-centred psychology (Jamison & Carroll 2014; Mazama 2001) as a conceptual tool to highlight philosophical distinctions between African and Western cultures. Both the viewpoints on acceptability and or non-acceptability of celibacy from the indigenous African communities have been

highlighted in several African contexts. First, studies have largely indicated the personal acceptance of celibacy vows (Appiah-Kubi & Korsah, 2020; Adebayo, 2013). Adebayo (2013) observed that respondent priests who were celibate indicated that celibacy as a life of self-sacrifice along with it is an enormous challenge. Celibacy chosen for the kingdom of God is an extraordinary choice. Appiah-Kubi and Korsah (2020) examined the issue of acceptability of the celibacy among those currently serving in Ghana. The qualitative study indicated the full acceptance of mandatory celibacy and reported that celibacy vows in the context of African indigenous religion appear 'awkward' but it is still embraced by many religious men and women. However, the celibates continue to struggle in mind and body as it requires them to be on constant watch and conscientious. Gwaza (2019) also focused on the challenges faced by celibate priests that took psychological as well as social perspectives.

Newaygo (2003) contends that there is personal acceptance from would-be priests but expresses concern for celibate priests who struggle to live faithfully their vocation. The priests are challenged to re-examine their lifestyle and commitments to live faithfully their priestly celibacy. Hastings(1978a) having wrestled with his conscience as a priest and later got married in 1976 later justified the celibacy from a practical consideration as it allowed him to work unhindered in the pastoral ministry in Africa and freed him from worldly anxieties. He reported that the African Bishops in the 1970s called for the ordination of married catechists to answer the most elementary pastoral needs. But the Church Hierarchy refused all the requests.

Joseph *et al.* (2010) examined the commitment levels of catholic priests in India using a qualitative study. The study findings indicated that the priests are highly committed to celibacy vows but the commitment to celibacy was negatively associated with burnout and on the other hand, it was positively associated with engagement. Ballano

and Vivencio (2019) examined the celibate lives of priests in the US and indicated that there is acceptance of celibacy but argued that obligatory celibacy with its culture of clericalism deprives secular clergy of direct guardianship against clerical sexual abuse. They further state that living a relatively autonomous life, diocesan clergy find themselves without direct and indirect social controls offered by relations and obligations.

Theoretically, the church's teachings underscore the fact that the human spirit should trump nature and any sensual feeling. Contrastingly, the church acknowledges that sexuality is God's gift, which is committed and sexually expressed in the covenant relationship of Marriage as one of the sacraments of the Catholic Church (Cozzens, 2006). From the spiritual perspective, celibacy practitioners point to the transcendence of the mystery dimension of life itself to the human hunger for celibacy. Thus, a celibate person works against the natural inclination of the human body and its drives and he or she perpetuates violence on him or herself (Olson, 2010).

Studies that have highlighted non-acceptability are based on a communal perspective and Adebayo (2013) elucidated on the issue of celibacy in Indigenous African communities in Nigeria and observed that a celibate is outrightly rejected and the Indigenous cultures cannot comprehend celibacy, thus many kindred and family members of those seeking to be catholic priest are known to vehemently refused to accept the choice of the celibate in their family while some are disowned by the family. Further, Adebayo (2013) reported that celibacy is physically and psychologically detrimental to the development of a mature and well-balanced personality. The study concluded that celibacy is neither possible nor sustainable.

Hastings (1978) drawing from his missionary work in Africa observed that though celibate clergy are practically dependent on long years of training in major seminaries, the celibate institutions are extremely vulnerable to political pressure. This is also highlighted by the Former Archbishop of Zambia, Milingo (2010) who got married and argued that both married and unmarried priests should be holy because God is holy. Mandatory celibacy should be ended because it misses the point: it is a possible appendage but is not the root of the priesthood (Mickler, 2007).

From an African perspective, religion permeates their social and cultural life (Gyekye 1996; Mbiti, 1969). African religious and spiritual values are not necessarily aligned with all Christian spiritual values specifically the ideals stipulated by the Catholic Church such as celibacy vows from its priests. It is recognized that seminarians from Western cultures may also experience these 'counter values' as problematic and difficult to live by. This ideal coincides with views held in Africa where all life is understood to be spiritual; all aspects of creation and life are sacred and complement each other (Magesa, 2013). In traditional African societies, the younger generation is coached and guided in their holistic development by older people of their gender who are respected cultural examples.

Sunardi (2014) states that priestly celibacy will continue to pose problems with any efforts of enculturation. However, many of these problems are due either to a lack of appreciation for the profound religious meaning of celibacy or a misunderstanding of the true meaning of enculturation. When human cultural values take the upper hand, theology and faith become distorted. Instead of human culture being converted to the Christian faith, it attempts to convert the faith itself. In this question of priestly celibacy, it is imperative for everyone concerned to be aware of the profound religious meaning of the institution.

The charism of priesthood celibacy is imposed or legislated by the Catholic Church and this undermines the integrity of the church leadership and causes needless human suffering. If charismatic celibacy is the crown of priesthood, mandated, obligatory celibacy which is not blessed with charism, then it becomes a silent martyrdom (McLaughlin, 2010). Though celibacy has existed for a long time in the Catholic Church, most writings have remained on arguments for or against it. Some argue that allowing Catholic Priests the option of marriage would interfere with their devotion to the Church. However, others believe it would offer more insight into counselling members of the congregation.

Newaygo's (2003) article seems to stress the church's stand on celibacy without giving a clear explanation of the pertinent issues of African cultures concerning those who have opted to embrace celibacy and remain unmarried. There is no valid research available to prove that priests would neglect their duties if they were allowed to marry. Not a single study that I am aware of has attempted to empirically investigate African perspectives of celibacy in a specific African society. Though anecdotal evidence from some African indigenous communities suggests some existence of celibacy in one form or another, an in-depth study is lacking on this front. Hence the study carried out a deeper investigation to provide a clear and proper understanding of celibacy from an African perspective dwelling on the way Africans perceived celibacy with a particular focus on the culture of Nandi people in Nandi County, Kenya.

1.11 Research Methodology

This section focuses on research philosophy, research design, study area, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection instruments and procedures, reliability and validity instruments and ethical considerations.

1.11.1 Research Philosophy

A research philosophy is a set of beliefs or assumptions that guide the study or research (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). This study was based on an interpretivism philosophical stance because the study explored the subjective imports of the social actors. Interpretivism is supported by social constructionism which views reality as a socially constructed process and as such the social actors place dissimilar interpretations within the contextual settings. Interpretivism takes subjective imports and social phenomena while focusing on the contextual setting as the reality supporting the action of the social agents. It also allows for the use of small samples and qualitative in-depth investigations into phenomena of interest.

Social constructionist ontology was necessary for the understanding of how social interactions shape this process; therefore, the interpretivist philosophy was applied to understand how participants make meaning of the phenomenon being studied; i.e., the African perspectives of celibacy with a special focus on the Nandi community in Nandi County, Kenya.

1.11.2 Research Design

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative exploratory cross-sectional design. This entailed the application of different activities such as exploration, analysis, and description of phenomena from unexplained presumptions to achieve maximum intuitive presentations. Being qualitative research, this study used a historical research approach that involves analysing past events and developing the present concept and conclusion. The purpose was to gain a clearer understanding of the impact of the past on the present and future events related to life processes.

The study provided a description which began with a narration of events in a chronological sequence while addressing the objectives of the study and providing an explanation of the phenomena of interest. The study will therefore involve the review of not just written materials but also oral documentation. This design was considered to be appropriate for two reasons. First, the design ensured that historical evidence was achieved through the scrutiny of the documents to ascertain the authenticity of their sources and the validity of their contents. Second, it also enabled the researcher to deploy a non-probability sampling technique to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. This design offered the best approach to investigating the African perspectives of celibacy with a special focus on the Nandi people in Nandi County, Kenya.

1.11.3 Study Area

This study was confined to Nandi County in the western region of Kenya as indicated in Figure 1.1. The county borders Kakamega to the West, Uasin Gishu to the North East, Kericho to the South East, Kisumu to the South and Vihiga County to the South West. It is geographically located between the Equator line (0°) in the south and latitude 0034°N in the North. It lies between longitude $34^{\circ} 4'$ on the Western boundary and Longitude $35^{\circ} 25^{\circ}\text{E}$ on the Eastern boundary. Its headquarters are located in Kapsabet town. The County is divided into nine sub-counties namely; Kipkaren Sub County, Kabiyet Sub County, Kosirai Sub County, Kapsabet Sub County, Kilibwoni Sub County, Aldai Sub County, Kaptumo Sub County, Nandi Hills Sub County and Tinderet Sub County (GIS department of Geography, Moi University 2018) as indicated in Figure 1.2

The sub-counties are further subdivided into ten divisions as follows: Kapsabet and Kilibwoni, Kaptumo and Aldai, Kosirai, Kabiyet and Kipkaren, Nandi Hills and

Ollessos and Tindiret. The County is divided into six constituencies namely, Mosop, Chesumei, Aldai, Emgwen, Nandi Hills and Tindiret. Nandi County was purposively chosen as a research area because of the indigeneity of the Nandi people who still have an institutional memory of customary traditions and beliefs. Elders and sages in Nandi can be relied upon to provide accurate information on Nandi community culture. However, like in most cultures there are resilient values which may not be affected by modernity. It was therefore necessary to engage some of the faithful from the Nandi Community who would provide significant perspectives to the study.



Figure 1.1: Map of Kenya highlighting Nandi County

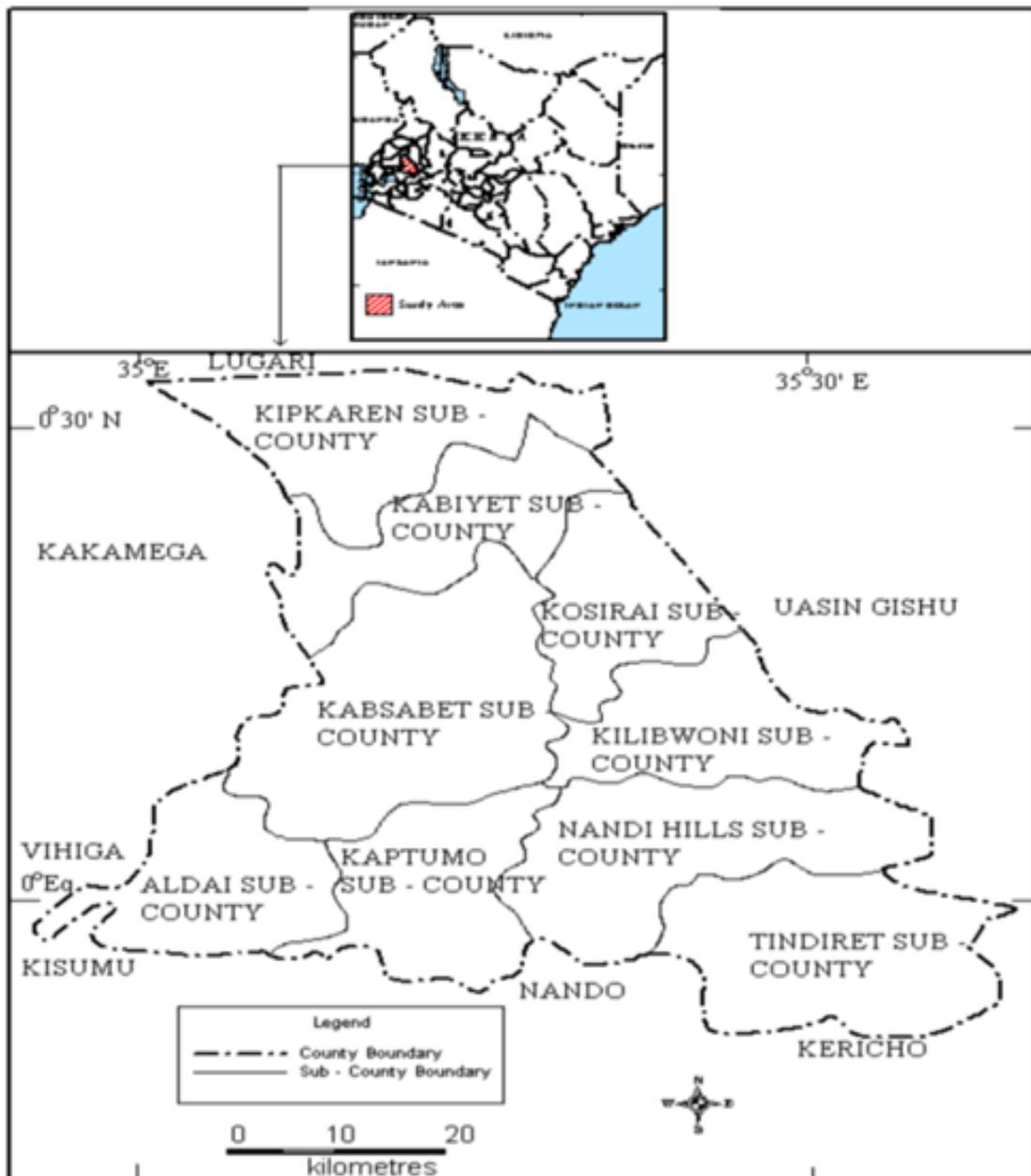


Figure 1.2: Map of Nandi County

Source : GIS Department of Geography, Moi University

1.11.4 Study Population

According to Skalland (2011), a study population is an entire population which the researcher uses to generalize the findings. Based on the estimates from the 2019 population census, there were approximately 13,987 persons in Nandi County who were aged 75 years and above (KNBS, 2019) but the proportionate numbers in Kabiyet, Kaptumo and Tindiret sub-counties were approximately 3,795 persons. The study

estimates that a quarter of this population approximated to be around 574 persons still hold repositories of indigenous ways of the Nandi community.

1.11.5 Sample Size

Samples for qualitative studies are generally much smaller than those used in quantitative studies and must be large enough to ensure that most or all of the important perceptions are captured, but at the same time prevent repetitiveness and superfluousness (Mason, 2020). The study had a sample size of 50 participants as distributed in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Sampling Frame

	Male	Female	Total
1 Catholic priests	10	0	10
2 Nandi elders and sages	18	7	25
3 Catholic Lay Faithful	5	5	10
4 Protestant clergy	4	1	5
Total	37	13	50

Based on the recommendation by Mason (2020) saturation point is a significant factor when making considerations on sample size decisions in qualitative research. Saturation is defined as the point at which the data collection process no longer offers any new or relevant data (Charmaz, 2006).

Based on the suggestions by Dworkin (2012), the study sampled a minimum of 25 individuals and a maximum of 50 individuals who were drawn from community members, Nandi sages, Catholic priests, Catholic lay faithful and protestant clergy. Considering that saturation depends on many factors such as heterogeneity or homogeneity of the population, the selection criteria, and key population strata. Other factors under the researcher's control include timelines and budgets for the study and the researcher's experience. The focus group discussions and interviews focused largely

on the perceptions of informants on the issues touching on celibacy among the Nandi Community.

The study targeted 50 individuals that largely comprised 33 senior community members and sages and Catholic Lay faithful (22 men and 11 women) aged between 75 and 86 years who were situated in three geographical zones as follows: Focus group discussion 1 (FGD 1) at Kobujoi had 12 participants (8 men and 4 Women); Focus Group Discussion 2 (FGD 2) at Tindiret had 10 participants (7 men and 3 women), and Focus Group Discussion 3 (FGD 3) at Kabiyet had 11 participants (7 men and 4 women). The other participants included six priests in Focus Group Discussion 4 (FGD 4) held at Eldoret town. The study interviewed four senior Catholic priests (ordained before year 2000), one Catholic prelate and four protestant clergies (one Adventist, one Anglican prelate and one AIC pastor, one Evangelical) all from the Nandi community

1.11.6 Sampling Procedure

A multistage approach was applied, incorporating multistage sampling which involved snowballing and judgemental sampling techniques. At the beginning of the study, the researcher identified key informants from a specific age set of the 'Chumo' and 'Sawe' who are knowledgeable in Indigenous institutions of the Nandi community. These community members are over 75 years old as the 'Sawe' age set was born before 1950. These individuals have institutional knowledge of Indigenous practises and are experts in Nandi culture and drawn from Kabiyet, Kaptumo and Tindiret sub-counties of Nandi County. When using in-depth interviews, Dworkin (2012) observed that a minimum sample size of between 25-50 is required to reach saturation and redundancy. This procedure is critical for the identification of study participants who are knowledgeable about Nandi cultural issues. Few of these elders and cultural experts are already known to the researcher.

1.11.7 Data Collection Instruments

Primary data was largely collected and the study employed two primary data collection instruments namely; interviews and focus group discussions. Interview schedules were designed with open-ended questions and additional probing questions and were considered suitable for obtaining first-hand information from the study respondents. These instruments were used to draw out an in-depth understanding of the African perspectives of celibacy with a special focus on the Nandi in Nandi County. The data collection process involved notes taking and audio recordings.

Interviews Schedule

The study held nine interviews that included four senior catholic priests (priest ordained before the year 2000), one catholic prelate and four protestant clergies (one Adventist, one Anglican prelate and one AIC pastor, one Evangelical) all from the Nandi community. Each interview took a maximum of one hour and occurred in different places. The interviews were preferred because it gives liberty to the interviewer, to explore the nature of the problem depending on the specific context, and ask additional questions that would draw out significant information given the nature of events within a particular context.

Interviews enable the researcher to establish a rapport with respondents, explain in person the nature and purpose of the investigation and clarify any aspect of the interview. The interviewer also confers the opportunity to prepare a respondent before asking questions. Oral information is very valuable in the study.

Focus Group Discussion

The study held four focus group discussions in four different places. There were three focus group discussions held in Tach Asis (Tindiret Sub-County), Kobujoi (Kaptumo

sub-county) and Kabiyeet (Kabiyeet Sub-County) which largely targeted senior community members and sages and one focus group discussion in Eldoret (for the catholic priest). The FGD at Kobujoi (FGD 1) held on October 17th 2023 had 12 participants (8 men and 4 Women), the FGD at Tindiret (FGD 2) held on October 28th 2023 had 10 participants (7 men and 3 women), while the FGD at Kabiyeet (FGD 3) held on November 6th 2023 had 11 participants (7 men and 4 women). The FGDs took over four hours each and began at 9:30 AM and went on till 3:30 PM with breaks in between. At some point, the researcher separated the different genders and carried out discussions separately. The FGD 4 held on November 14th 2023 in Eldoret took 2 hours and involved 6 priests (FGD 4).

FGDs are discussions in social units with more than one individual or a cohort of individuals sharing a similar environment. The focus group discussion was used to explore the topic, the collective experience with issues touching on celibacy practice among the Nandi community. Through, this method the researcher was able to observe group dynamics and the symbolic exchanges among the group members. The focus group discussion set the tone for a naturalistic inquiry and is deductive in nature and aids in checking for the reliability of the information collected which helped in improving the quality of the data collected.

The study used the triangulation technique which involves several research instruments including interviews, focus group discussion and literature review. The use of more than one method in data collection helps in complementarity allowing for the merging of different aspects of an investigation.

1.11.8 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data was reviewed for consistency then analysed, and interpreted into themes and meanings that laid the foundation of codification with the aid of Nvivo software complemented by manual analysis whereby transcription of data was performed. Since the interviews and focus group discussions generate qualitative data in the form of sound records and shorthand, data transcription mechanisms are used to translate the unstructured data into meaningful information. The researcher employed research assistants who understand the native language and thus aid in decrypting and defining the meanings of the terms used by the respondents and translating them into English words and transcribing the interviews and discussion into written format. The research consistently requested and stressed the translation of the terms and ideologies from the local language to simpler terms and analogies which could be documented easily.

Once, the process was completed, the data was summarized, categorized, structured and analysed through a combination of deductive approaches. Thematic analysis is a structured, qualitative analysis technique that follows the six-step process; familiarization, coding, theme generation, theme reviews, defining and naming themes and finally the writing. First, the researcher familiarized himself with the concept through reviews of empirical studies and literature. The researcher then generated themes to highlight common themes and meanings from the emerging patterns. Next, the researcher combined the themes, reviewed and refined them further. Lastly, the researcher generated a write-up based on the analysis with a write-up and discussion.

The researcher also complemented thematic analysis with narrative analysis to interpret the stories told within the context of research and/or shared in everyday life. Stories can reveal the complexity of human experience and understand how people make sense of their lives within social, cultural, and historical contexts. In this instance, narrative

analysis was used to describe in verbatim the nature of celibacy practices in the Nandi Community.

1.11.9 Reliability and Validity Instruments

Reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. Simon and Goes (2016) emphasized that in social research two main questions need to be addressed when determining reliability: (a) Are the data reliable? and (b) Are the methods reliable? To ensure the reliability of the findings, the researcher employed strategies suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) that included an audit trail detailing how data was collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry. The researcher used good rich descriptions thus enabling other researchers to make decisions about transferability that are external validity or generalizability. To increase conformability, the researcher controlled for bias by constantly comparing data, carrying out literature searches on the phenomenon, obtaining multiple viewpoints by searching negative instances of the phenomenon and checking and rechecking data. Triangulation of data is of critical importance to the trustworthiness of qualitative studies. For this study, interviews and field notes were compared to ensure trustworthiness.

1.11.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical tenets were strictly applied from the beginning to the end of the research. Before and during this entire engagement, the researcher sought approval from Moi University: SASS/DPHIL/REL/01/13 followed by the research license from the National Council for Science and Technology and Innovations (NACOSTI); Permit Number: NACOSTI/P/23/29669, and necessary permissions from the County Commissioner's Office: NC.EDU.4/3 VOLII/(46), County Government of Nandi: CG/NDI/ADM/1/14(b) VOL 1/15, County Education office; NDI/CDE/RESEARCH/1/VOL111/96, and

other community gatekeepers. Participants were approached to voluntarily participate in the study. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to them (the purpose, procedures including the time commitment of the subject, risks and benefits of the study, and the confidentiality of their information) after which their informed consent to participate in the study was accessed. They were notified of the option of withdrawal in the course of the study if they encountered any situation that they may feel uncomfortable with.

Since interviews are one-on-one conversation, confidentiality was easily assured and in the case of FGDs, the participants were assured that their views were solely used for the intended study. Last but not least, all the sources consulted for the study were properly acknowledged and cited. The informed consent document was provided to the prospective research participants after the researcher had negotiated for their participation and will be retained for a maximum of 3 years. The collected information was stored in a memory disk maintained on a password-protected flash memory data storage device. The hard copies of the transcripts including the signed consent form and instrument paper which include the participant feedback were sealed and safely stored, to which only the researcher has access.

1.12 Summary

The chapter delved exclusively into the phenomenon of priestly celibacy by providing a background and the challenges stemming from the development of priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church. A review of the literature along with the study objectives is presented and lastly, research methodology detailing what was done where, when, how, with whom, and why is provided. The next chapter details the history and development of priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church starting from the biblical foundation, the Early apostolic era and later the legal instruments (canons), the synods and councils and

the pope's official communications (Encyclicals) and further, the important events and people who advocated for priestly celibacy. Mandatory celibacy has also been regarded across the centuries as one of its greatest scourges. The watershed moments include the Council of Elvira, the great East/West schism, the Council of Trent, the Protestant Reformation, and Vatican II, each representing a definitive loss or victory for the practice (Mayblin, 2019).

The Catholic Church seems to draw largely from the biblical foundations, asceticism and monasticism from the early apostolic church before being given impetus by the Church Doctors in the Patristic Era. Moreover, the Church used canons and councils to further celibacy from the Council of Elvira to Vatican II Council (1962-1965). The 20th and 21st centuries has seen more and more councils on priestly celibacy, family and marriages.

CHAPTER TWO

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRIESTLY CELIBACY IN RELATION TO CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AFRICA

2.1 Introduction

The chapter details the evolution of celibacy in the Apostolic church and later the East/West schism that birthed the Western Church. The chapter presents the history and description for priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church. It largely draws from the works by Lea (1884) and Lea (1907) who provided an extensive historical background of sacerdotal celibacy practices in the Catholic Church. The Biblical foundation for celibacy in the Old Testament largely drew from the book of Leviticus in which Yahweh instructs Moses to guard against uncleanness. The Book of Leviticus 15:1-33 delves into in uncleanness arising from bodily discharge (New Jerusalem Bible, 1985).

In the New Testament, the Gospel of Mathew 19:27-30 requires Christians to strictly forego anything – any property and family relationship – for the sake of eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven. In 1 Corinthians 7:1-37, Paul elaborates on the issue of celibacy and marriage. The opening verses give instructions and reasons for staying celibate. In the verses, Paul endorses celibacy for the Kingdom of God by alluding to the fact that 'it is a good thing for Man not to touch a woman' for the avoidance of immorality.

The Catholic Church acknowledges that celibacy is central to the life of a priest, a reality to be faced and lived with, neither in a vacuum nor within an enclosure, but in the midst of the world (Gorres, 1965). Clerics are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the Kingdom of God and, therefore, are obliged to observe celibacy, which is a special gift of God, by which sacred ministers can adhere

more easily to Christ with an undivided heart and can more freely dedicate themselves to the service of God and mankind (Joseph *et al.*, 2010). As such, celibacy acts as an indicator of priest's commitment to spiritual calling by adhering to subscribe to the ascetic life of Jesus Christ.

Celibacy has gained varied viewpoints over the years (Mayblin, 2019). Whereas the conventional celibacy practice takes a horizontal dimension of human sacrifice, the religious celibacy practices take a deeper and vertical dimension in the form of God's will. The priest simultaneously provokes and masks the distance between three entities: the priest as man, the priest as Christ and the priest as Church (Mayblin, 2019). From a theological perspective, celibacy is considered a sign of freedom, empowered by God, which exists for the sake of service. First, celibacy involves a free and conscious decision to be celibate. Second, celibacy involves personal sacrifice to forego marriage and lastly; it is through God's grace to endure the challenges (Joseph *et al.*, 2010). The ordination ceremony is the apex of the priestly celibacy as the priest, in contrast to the secular celibacy practice, is welded irrevocably and irremediably to his role of pastoral charity. In the words of Pope Francis, a priest, 'leave[s] himself behind' and enters into a union with God 'in every aspect' (Francis, 2014). From the points above, it is clear that celibacy is a free and conscious decision; it is not coerced or imposed.

From a psychological point of view, celibacy is not only a renunciation; it is an affirmation of the priest's love and commitment to God and His people. An ideal celibate life is possible only if a priest harmoniously integrates the value of celibacy with the wider personality structure (Joseph *et al.*, 2010). This means that a priest's personality shapes, to a great extent, his ability to cope with the demands of celibacy. From a moral perspective, celibacy concerns primarily the moral obligation established by the theological order in the Catholic Church, and draws from the special relation

between God who calls and the person who responds, and secondarily the relation sanctioned by a legal framework, which forms the disciplinary obligation that carries its rights and duties (Horvat, 2022). Ironically, priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church is not essential to the ultimate salvation articulated by Christ Himself. The celibacy practices derive their origin from ancient norms of cultic purity that pre-dated Christianity (Mayblin, 2019). In other words, celibacy is a sign and means by which a priest detaches from the 'world' and stays more committed to the spiritual life.

2.2 Biblical Foundation to Priestly Celibacy in the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church's law on priestly celibacy largely draws from the rational proposition in several verses in the Old and the New Testaments of the Bible. The first proposition, largely drawn from Leviticus 15:1-33, is concerned with ritual purity, Mathew 19:27- 30 is concerned with the observance of religious law, and 1 Corinthians 7:1-37 instructs the converts of the apostolic church to stay celibate for the attainment of the Kingdom of God based on St Paul who was celibate (Lea, 1884). Additionally, 1 Corinthians 7:32-38 advocates the early converts to persevere for the attainment of the Kingdom of God and, lastly, Mathew 19:12 justifies the need for Christians to make a rational choice of staying celibate (New Jerusalem Bible, 1985). On the contrary, Hastings (1978) asserts that the New Testament does not explicitly instruct on celibacy; still, it is proposed as an example to be followed by the ordained.

Paul, being unmarried himself, prefers everyone to be celibate or unmarried like him. 'I should still like everyone to be as I am myself, but everyone has his gift from God, one this Kind and the next something different'. In the final three verses from verses 35 to 39, Paul recommends the course of life a Christian convert should emulate. He asks his disciples to carry themselves in an orderly manner by not putting themselves and restrictions (celibacy) in order to serve God but to willingly dedicate themselves

with undivided attention to serve the Lord. On the converse, Paul advises individuals with strong passions to 'follow their desire as there is no sin in getting married' (New Jerusalem Bible, 1985). As such, Paul, in his teachings, considers celibacy as a practice of spiritual commitment to the service of God. However, in his view, marriage does not necessarily preclude one from serving God. In fact, one can see that Paul regards marriage as a vocation that can only equal, if not rival, spiritual and pastoral ministry.

In 1 Corinthians 7:32-38, Paul chastises individuals against anxieties and recommends marriage for those who are not able to persevere and are anxious about the things of the world while prescribing celibacy for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord without distraction. Further, he asks those who can freely stand firm in resolution to have power over their own will and have made up their mind to stay celibate to do so (New Jerusalem Bible, 1985). This means that, in Paul's view, once sworn, one should not violate their vows of celibacy. Mathew 19:12 differentiates marriage based on individual capability: some are unable to marry because of naturally sterile; some, because of forced sterilization; while the remaining class of individuals are unable to marry because they willingly renounced marriage, for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (voluntary celibacy to partake in preaching the gospel to the pagans) (New Jerusalem Bible, 1985).

The Bible, as it is, never commands or instructs any individual to be celibate, as illustrated by the verses such as 1 Corinthians 7:32-38 and Mathew 19:12, which expound on marriage and celibacy. However, the Bible only instructs the community of believers to seek eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven. Mathew 19:27-30 further expounds on ritual purity that is found in Leviticus 15:1-33 (Joseph *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, the Bible advocates celibacy only as a sign of commitment to one's spiritual calling. This means that celibacy begins, not as a requirement by God or the Church,

but as a priest's responsive attitude towards the spiritual or pastoral vocation, which explains why celibacy is a free and voluntary decision by the priest.

2.3 Origins of the Priestly Celibacy in the Catholic Church

In the early and medieval Christian tradition, human sexual classification was understood as both an obstacle to the cultivation of virtues and a potential medium of transgression (Khonineva, 2018). Celibacy practice in the apostolic church related more to voluntary asceticism, which served as a way of repressing bodily weakness (Lea, 1907). It symbolised a priest's detachment from the material life that opposes spiritual growth and pastoral effectiveness. This later took a unique meaning largely due to the practice of sacerdotalism, which involved the performance of religious rituals as adopted from Jewish and pagan traditions (Frazee, 1972). St Paul, the disciple who was celibate, advocated for celibacy throughout his teachings and writings (Lea, 1884). Later, the first canon, *Didascalia apostolorum* was promulgated and this was related to the sexual continence of the episcopates (Frazee, 1972). The same canon was furthered by the Council of Elvira, which extended the church law on sexual continence to all ecclesiastics in Spain (Lea, 1884). The canon was further given impetus by the Council of Nicaea, which also introduced sacerdotal marriage (Rice, 1992; Lea, 1884).

The embryonic church lived in a difficult environment and, based on the prescription for ritual purity through the avoidance of sexual intercourse by the pagans (Frazee, 1972), the early converts distinguished themselves from practising asceticism as a way of repressing body weakness (Lea, 1907). There was nothing more than own volition to practise asceticism a precursor to celibacy in the apostolic church (Frazee, 1972). However, when the church adopted sacerdotalism practises, the apostolic church instituted the first canon, *Didascalia apostolorum* on sexual continence by the

episcopates (Frazee, 1972) and ascetic Christian sects multiplied and increased as voluntary vows of continence became more customary among Christians (Lea, 1884).

The council of Elvira prescribed ecclesiastical marriages (Joseph *et al.*, 2010), the council of Nicaea approved sacerdotalism practise in ecclesiastical marriages (Lea, 1884) while voluntary asceticism flourished in the Eastern Patriarchate (Lea, 1884). In the patristic age, sexual continence took a moral viewpoint from the advocacy of three great church Fathers, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose and St. Augustin (Siecienski, 2017), and the titular heads of the church, Pope Damasus (366-84), Pope Siricus (384-399), Pope Innocent I (401-17), Pope Leo I the Great (440-61) (Frazee, 1972). The Council of Trullo (692) reasserted the right of priests to marry (Rice, 1992).

In the medieval ages (Lea, 1907) to the Great East/West Schism, through the Lateran Council and the Reformation period, licentiousness, concubinage, simony, pretentiousness and all forms of ecclesiastical immorality gripped the Latin Church (Frazee, 1972; Lea, 1884) despite the Church Hierarchy introducing several decrees, statutes and local legislation to protect the image of celibacy practice and counter the Reformation from taking root (Mayblin, 2019). During the Lateran Councils I (1123) and II (1139), the church promulgated new canons that annulled, voided and invalidated ecclesiastical marriage while voiding ordination of married men (Joseph *et al.*, 2010; Sipe, 1990). The Council of Trent introduced more legislation on ecclesiastical celibacy but nothing seemed to deter the licentiousness of the ecclesiastics (Lea, 1884). The definitive moments came from the external forces during the German Reformation period, the Spanish Inquisition period and the French Revolution (Lea, 1884) all of which were as a result of political forces on immorality in the Latin Church.

The last internal and everlasting influence in the Latin Church took the form of Vatican Council 1 (1869-70), which introduced new legislation to govern priesthood and largely celibacy arrangements (Siecienski, 2017). The Roman Catholic Church promulgated the diverse canons into a new code of canon law (Komonchak, 1986). The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) reinforced the mandatory rule of priestly celibacy through several encyclicals, including the *Presbyterorum ordinis* of 1965, the *Sacerdotalis caelibatus* of 1967, the Code of Canon Law 277 of 1983, John Paul II (1992), and the Catechism of the Catholic Church of 2002 (Joseph *et al.*, 2010). Since 1967, there have been 26 synods in Rome on family life, marriage and sexual morality (Allen, 2015).

As indicated in this section, it is interesting that celibacy, which was a biblical proposition for spiritual commitment, was to be sullied by concerns of immorality in the church then. One can view this sudden upsurge of immorality as a symptom of the problem of the church' legalistic approach towards celibacy. It would appear that the more the legislations mandating celibacy, the greater the number of priests flouting their vows of celibacy. Again, this emphasizes the fact that celibacy, from its inception, was meant to be a free and voluntary decision.

2.4 Development of the Priestly Celibacy in the Catholic Church

The concept of celibacy in the Catholic Church began with the Council of Nicaea (325) where the church started to move away from their original stand of allowing priests to marry. The discussion centred on the ability of the priest to manage the church affairs and meet the marital demands. This echoed Pauline teachings on the priestly vocation, in which St Paul emphasized that marriage was not wrong but it placed great demands on the priest, which could compromise their spiritual and pastoral effectiveness. Historical records from the 11th century onwards showed that mandatory celibacy for priests in the Catholic Church became a default standard of celibacy (Barstow &

Barstow, 1982). O'Loughlin (1995) cites several decrees, statutes and local legislations from the Counter-Reformation period onwards that were aimed at protecting the image of the clerical celibacy, such as detailing the appropriate age of housekeepers, a prohibiting priest from sitting beside women, detailed consideration of the domestic arrangements of priests in parishes among other measures.

The institution of Canons in the 11th century created an instrument of power and doctrine. In the 12th century, the canons instituted mandatory celibacy for the priest and stopped the ordination of married men, forcibly separating priest and their wives and punishing recalcitrant priests (Prince, 1992). The Lateran councils, in 1123 and 1139, declared the ecclesiastical marriage as null and void. Effectively, the inclusion of the celibacy rule as canons gave celibacy the impetus that would withstand the shocks during the reformation period (O'Loughlin, 1995). It is at this point that celibacy ceased from being merely a suggestion or proposal and became an integral part of the Catholic Church doctrine.

The other aspect of the reformation during the 11th century brought about the schism between the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church that started in 1054 during the Council of Nicaea due to the differences in liturgy and ecclesiastical reforms (Doran, 1996). This schism contributed to the birth of distinct Latin or Western Christian Europe and the Greek or Eastern Orthodox Church based in Eastern Europe. Their controversy stemmed from the use of unleavened bread by the Western Church and the acceptance of the papal primacy in the universal church. However, the reforms took a further turn when the reformers gained significant support from the papacy in seeking to separate the laity from the clergy, purify its priesthood from perceived pollution, and establish the primacy of Rome over the offices, doctrine and sacraments of the universal Church (Whalen, 2007).

This development of "Latin Christendom" envisioned a coherent community of believers bound together by its common rite, common sacred language, and common sense of obedience to the Pope in Rome. The development of the Latin rite was embedded in a broader transformation of clerical cultural and intellectual life where the Western Church defended its Orthodoxy of using the 'unleavened bread' during the Eucharistic celebration as opposed to the Greek Orthodox of using 'leavened bread'. The supporters of Rome also claimed their spiritual supremacy from the Pope through the connection and linkages to Saint Peter, who upon Christ's blessing, the Church was founded (Whalen, 2007).

Further, the observance of the Mosaic Law that mandated the sacrificial use of unleavened bread during Eucharistic celebration prefigured the Christian celebration of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. The Western Church considered their Eastern Counterparts as heretics maligning the Eucharistic foundation by using leavened bread and thus, they also maligned the New Testament. This led to the rise of the Greek Orthodox Church, while the Roman church's apostolic foundations meant that it attained an unassailable position of supremacy over the faithful, including the definition and defence of sacramental orthodoxy (Whalen, 2007).

The discussion in this section has shown that celibacy grew from a voluntary ascetism and gained support with the institutionalization of Canons. Although the church understood that celibacy is a free and voluntary choice, its decision to entrench it as a law can be seen from a larger picture. It was part of the process of instilling discipline in priests as an isolated group of people dedicated to the service of God and the church. This explains why discussions and laws on celibacy were couched within the larger framework of ecclesial purity associated with the use of the leavened bread.

2.4.1 The Apostolic Era (Before 100 AD)

Celibacy has had a complex trajectory in that early Church Fathers were not celibate as many priests lived in long-term stable unions, a situation that was acceptable to their congregations (Plummer, 2013). Early Church ministers were married and would abstain from sexual intercourse during the Eucharistic Mass celebrations but were not expected to permanently endure celibacy throughout their lives (Mayblin, 2019). This Ancient and pre-Christian societies required the priest to observe sexual purity through abstinence to offer sacrifice at the altar. The early examples of sacerdotal traditions include the vestal virgins of ancient Rome, the Druids, a religious order in Ancient Britain, and the Aztec temple priest among others (O'Loughlin, 1995).

The universality of the demands for sexual abstinence before ritual celebration was common among the Semitic peoples, the Hellenistic religions and the old Roman cult. For instance, the Hellenic required ritual purity at the entrance to a temple and there was almost an insistence on the avoidance of sexual intercourse before attending to religious ceremony (Frazee, 1972). Thus, the first thought of celibacy largely draws from the specific interpretation regarding ritual purity from the cultic religions from the before Christian ages (Parish, 2010) and voluntary asceticism (Lea, 1884). In line with this, the next chapter of this thesis will elucidate more on the African worldview, in particular the Nandi Community, on the practice of celibacy.

The celibacy at the apostolic church was a way of life that could illustrate a new paradigm as it was deemed to distinguish Christians from non-Christians who were considered to have low moral grounds; thus, celibacy became a way and means of repressing physiological weakness among the early converts to Christianity (Lea, 1907). In so doing, some members of the community had the charism of celibacy (Frazee, 1972). Again, considering celibacy as a charism aligns with Paul's

classification of types of married people. It shows that there are some who, having been called to serve God, have been given the grace to live without marriage. However, this form of life was rejected and disapproved by the apostles as many converts left their wives to join in the missionary work (Lea, 1907).

The Apostolic church adopted sacerdotalism, a practice which relates to the performance of religious ritual under the guidance of a priest and thus a priest (presbyter) was largely consigned at the altar performing the ritualistic celebrations (Lea, 1884). This type of priesthood in the 2nd and 3rd centuries transformed the priest into a special kind of Christian class separate from normal Christians, a culture that largely drew from Jewish/Pagan 'cultic' ministers who worked on a full-time occupation in the service of the church (Frazee, 1972).

The important figures in this period largely drew from St. Paul who was considered to be celibate (Lea, 1884). St Ignacius alluded to the abstinence from marriage in honour of God, which was wholly voluntary and practised in humility and secrecy. Justin Martyr (150), Athenagoras (180) and Minucius Felix (200) all held that chastity and sobriety were good practices and praised the celibacy practices by some members (Lea, 1907). Tertullian (c. 150-225) proposed chastity for men and women in the honour of ecclesiastical orders. However, at the close of the 3rd century, the church hierarchy condemned ruthless asceticism but was subsequently glorified as the loftiest achievement of Christian virtue (Frazee, 1972).

The first apostolic canon, *Didascalia apostolorum*, spelt out the duties and responsibilities for the lay and clergy and required the episcopate officeholder to either be chaste or be faithful in marriage (Frazee, 1972). The canons went to the extent of deposing a bishop or a priest who separated from his wife under the pretext of religion

and rigorously punishing any layperson for abstaining from marriage and for not devoting himself to piety (Lea, 1884). However, the ascetic Christian sects had multiplied and increased, while voluntary vows of continence became more customary among Christians in the 3rd century (Lea, 1884).

The Early apostolic church was associated with voluntary ascetism and normative prescriptions to celibacy, which served as the foundation for celibate clergy. The church then was undergoing a transformation. Since there were no standard rules to govern the church then, the early converts borrowed a lot from the Biblical teachings. This resulted in varied interpretation of the rules governing Christian tradition and communal life as it led to the growth of ascetism as a way of differentiating oneself from the religious traditions and cults that were existing at the time. In such contexts, celibacy also became a means for priests to differentiate themselves, not only from the lay but also from the other ministers within the church hierarchy.

2.4.2 The Patristic Era (100 - 451 AD)

The commitment to the strict maintenance of ecclesiastical celibacy to the works of the three great church Fathers, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose and St. Augustin. In the three Church Fathers, ecclesiastical celibacy took a moral perceptive where moralism emerged as an approach to tackling the challenges relating to sacerdotal celibacy (Lea, 1884). During this time, the Church Hierarchy encouraged celibacy among the presbyters based on the opinion of the early church fathers that sexual intercourse and Christian ministry were incompatible.

Other important church figures were Pope Damasus (366-84), Pope Siricus (384-399), Pope Innocent I (401-17), Pope Leo I the Great (440-61). Their encyclicals required the priest to remain celibate and abstain from sexual activity in that their liturgical role

demands sexual abstinence (Frazee, 1972). This incompatibility of sexual activeness with liturgical role is not clearly justified. However, beliefs about the impurity of sexual intercourse in general, some of which teachings are to be found in the Old and New Testaments teachings, and other cultural myths about sex and contact with women before performing rites, may have informed this call for sexual abstinence.

St. Jerome is known to have had extreme contempt for marriage, St. Augustin an enthusiastic admirer and promoter of austere asceticism while St. Ambrose of Milan and St. Cyril of Jerusalem also wrote lengthily on the topical issue of celibacy (Frazee, 1972; Lea, 1907). St. Augustin expounded on the necessities of humanity by comparing the good of marriage and the evil of carnal desire. St. Eusebius of Caesarea proposed that ecclesiastics must abstain from sexual relationships (Frazee, 1972). He encouraged his followers to abstain from marriages to be relieved of family cares and anxieties. St. Martin of Tours pardoned marriage while punishing licentiousness (Lea, 1884). These church fathers idealized celibate life as true Christianity and considered marriage as a concession to man's weakness (Frazee, 1972). Obviously, this position diverted slightly from Pauline teachings, which form the basis of the doctrine of celibacy in the Church. Celibacy is not equitable to sexual purity, nor is it the ultimate measure of true spirituality. It is merely an outward expression of an inward commitment to the service of God.

The Patristic age is known for the influence of church doctors that included St. Jerome, St. Ambrose and St. Augustin, who provided important impetus to the celibacy debate by guiding the scholarly debate. The debates were centred on celibacy as the church doctors provided a justification to chastity and celibacy and took a stand on clerical celibacy.

2.4.3 The Council of Elvira (306 AD)

The Council of Elvira (306) by the Spanish Bishops promulgated Canon 33, which institutionalized celibacy among ecclesiastics in all ranks from the diaconate, presbyterate and episcopate (Joseph *et al.*, 2010). The Council decreed that no ecclesiastic was allowed to live with a woman except his sister or a daughter and that the ministers of the altar should maintain abstinence from their wives under the pain of forfeiting their ministerial position. However, the canons of Ancyra permitted the marriage in orders only as far as diaconate (Lea, 1884). Interestingly, canon 33 did not prohibit women from marrying the clergy but it was aimed at curtailing sexual relations between the priest and his wife (Frazee, 1972). Clearly, at this time, celibacy was emphasized as abstinence exercised by a married minister preparing to engage in pastoral or spiritual service.

2.4.4 The Quinisext Period (325-787 AD)

The Quinisext Period was marked by ecumenical councils beginning with the council of Nicaea (325), the Council of Constantinople (381), and Council of Trullo (692), the second Council of Nicaea (781) (Leclercq, 1911). The period is known for the various canons relating to clerical celibacy with the main councils, namely the Council of Nicaea (325), Council of Trullo (589) and the Council of Carthage (397-398), dealing particularly with clerical celibacy.

The Council of Nicaea (325 AD)

Whereas the Council of Elvira prohibited bishops, deacons and priests from marrying, the Council of Nicaea (325) undid the requirements for celibacy among ecclesiastics and allowed priests to marry or stay married while performing their priestly duties (Rice, 1992). This ecclesiastic was to strictly adhere to ritual purism through abstinence during the performance of ritual (Lea, 1884). The Council also decreed that no priest

should marry after being ordained and forbade any cleric from having a woman in his household who was not a close relative (Frazee, 1972). The Council of Laodicea (352) prohibited women from serving or presiding over the churches (Lea, 1884). The important figure in the Council was bishop Paphnutius of Thebais in Egypt who opposed the celibacy requirement. Clearly, celibacy was still a point of contention at this time, even though there seemed to be a unanimous agreement on the need to abstain prior to undertaking rituals.

The Council of Saragossa (381 AD)

The Council of Saragossa (381) denounced the practice of ecclesiastics from embracing the monastic life (Lea, 1884). The Fourth Council of Carthage (398) held a divided opinion on celibacy while the Council of Chalcedon (451) institutionalized perpetual monastic life for monks and nuns and forbade them from marriages (Lea, 1884). Pope Siricius was the first pope to render compulsory priesthood celibacy throughout Spain and parts of France. Pope Innocent followed the footsteps of Pope Siricius in asserting the authority of Rome and the inviolability of the canons.

As early as 386, Pope Siricius appealed to African Bishops to observe ecclesiastical chastity in the three higher orders (diaconate, presbyterate and episcopate) (Lea, 1907). Despite the canons, it was difficult to rigidly enforce the canon on sacerdotal celibacy as the clergy continued to disregard the canon. Either the bishops refused to execute the laws or were sympathetic to the offenders (Frazee, 1972). Nevertheless, this was one of the few times the African church context featured in the discussions on celibacy.

The Council of Trullo (589 AD)

The third council of Toledo (589) co-opted civil law to rein in on recalcitrant ecclesiastics (Lea, 1884). The Council of Trullo (692) reasserted the right of priests to

marry but required bishops (episcopate) to live continent lives (Rice, 1992). Sharp division emerged during the Council of Trullo with the Western Patriarchate considering celibacy as a point of discipline. The Council acknowledged the need for a promise of abstinence from married candidates for the diaconate and priesthood (Frazee, 1972).

The Eastern Church prohibited Marriage in higher orders (episcopate and prelates) while allowing the lower grades of the clergy (diaconate and presbyterate) to marry. The bishops (episcopates and prelates) were to be selected from the regular clergy or monks, and bound by the vow of chastity (Lea, 1907). However, the Abyssinians and Coptic Christians of Egypt adopted some Jewish customs and their episcopates and prelates (bishops) were permitted to retain their wives based on the canons of the Council (Quinisext) of Trullo (692) (Lea, 1884). One can see that the conversations on celibacy at this point had far drifted from the very essence of it as justified by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:8-9. Paul makes it clear that celibacy is a free and voluntary. His statement is more of a suggestion than a mandatory requirement. What is important, in Paul's view, is the priest's ability to fulfil, without distraction, the ministry to which he has been called by God.

The Council of Carthage (397 - 398 AD)

The Councils of Carthage (397 and 398) passed numerous canons relating to celibacy by prescribing the qualifications and duties of the clergy but the canons were left to the conscience of the individual (Lea, 1884). Voluntary asceticism, which was flourishing in the Eastern Patriarchate, grew in vigour and led to monachism in the Western Patriarchate. The Eastern Patriarchate based in Constantinople disregarded the canon of Nicaea and weighed on introducing compulsory celibacy for the ecclesiastics in a general council held in Constantinople in 381 (Lea, 1884). Monasticism became idyllic

and a model and sometimes took extreme cases of self-denial that were more admirable than clerical life. As a result, many priests adopted the celibate life of the monk (Frazee, 1972).

The important contributions to the Quinisext period were the canons against the Western Church traditions and clerical celibacy and the ensuing ecumenical differences between the Eastern and Western Churches. Whereas the Western Church considered the Quinisext period to be simple congregations with no doctrinal input, the Eastern Church considered the period to be Quintisext ecumenical period that had comprised seven councils: First Council of Nicaea in 325, the First Council of Constantinople in 381, the Council of Ephesus in 431, the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, the Third Council of Constantinople in 680 – 681 and the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 (Leclercq, 1911). Within the Quinisext period, four councils contributed immensely to the celibacy debate. These were: the Council of Nicaea in 325, the Council of Saragossa in 381, the Council of Trullo in 589 and the Council of Carthage (397-398) as monasticism became idyllic.

Up to this point, it is interesting that much of the discussions on celibacy across the different councils were informed more by the legal and moral dictates of the clergy than by the teachings in the scripture. Even where reference was made to biblical teachings in the conversations, contentions seemed to arise over the exact interpretation of the scripture insofar as celibacy was concerned.

2.4.5 The Mediaeval Ages (742 - 920 AD)

The synod in 742 declared that all unchaste priests and deacons were incapable of holding benefits and were degraded and forced to do penance and were punished through imprisonment (Lea 1907). Here, celibacy was a major indicator of a priest's

chastity. The monastic life strictly followed the rigid rule of St. Benedict. St. Benedict of Nursia was known for his supreme effort in 'conquering temptation by throwing himself naked and rolling in a thicket of brambles and nettles until his naked body was lacerated from head to foot in order to effectively conquer desires of the flesh'. The great Benedictine Order is headquartered in Monte Casino is named after him. He promulgated a rule on Monachism that focuses on the more practical character of asceticism, labour, charity and good works (Lea, 1884).

Throughout the 7th and 8th centuries, the situation on ecclesiastical celibacy was fluid. In many instances, more laws and canons were introduced to curb the transgressions but nothing was forthcoming. The ecclesiastics displayed cynic attitudes to the canons and displayed promiscuous and licentious behaviours (Lea, 1884). The situation continued until the 9th century when the council of Vernon (845) and the ecclesiastical authority were no longer sufficient to prevent the licentiousness, vagabondage and marriage of monks and nuns. The church hierarchy in Rome was skilfully emancipating itself from subjection to the temporal power and laid the foundation of that supremacy, which eventually dominated Christendom (Lea, 1907).

In the 9th century, the Western church issued an encyclical titled *saeculum obscurum*, also known as 'Rule of the Harlots', and focused on the concubinary, licentiousness and sexual continence in the Church Hierarchy (Lea, 1884). The Eastern Patriarchate questioned the position of the Roman Hierarchy and maintained the position that the Latin Church was embracing 'heretical' teachings concerning filioque and the use of azymes. Later on, the Fourth Crusade widened the schism between the East and West as Rome wanted filial obedience (Siecinski, 2017).

The main impact of the medieval ages was the contribution of the St Benedict to the practise of monachism and the contradictory values of harlotry, licentiousness, concubinage and sexual continence in the Church Hierarchy. The impact of the St. Benedict has seen more than sixteen popes named after St. Benedict with Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger taking the name Pope Benedict XVI. From the discussion in this section, one can see that the subject of celibacy rightly became the synecdoche of all conversations around the moral uprightness of the clergy.

2.4.6 The High Middle Ages (925 - 1050 AD)

As the 10th century proceeded, ecclesiastical marriage became more common (Lea, 1984). The whole of the 11th century, the Vatican was full of married priests and not even canons managed to tackle ecclesiastic marriages. Simony, licentiousness and concubinage were widespread among the church Hierarchy. The celibacy rules afforded regular revenue to the officials derived from the sale of licenses to sin which, Pope John XXII framed, as the tariff of absolutions for a crime known as the 'Taxes of the Penitentiary' (Lea, 1984). Council after the council, the Council of Spalatro (925), synod of Engelheim (948), and Council of Augsburg (952) sought to deal with the licentiousness, concubinary and promiscuity among the clergy. This stringent legislation proved utterly nugatory, and, futile as it was, it awakened considerable opposition. In the end, during the Council at Ravenna (967), Pope John XIII sought to summon a synod to promulgate the new regulations.

The clergy were arrogating to themselves the privileges of benefice, simony and matrimony, either through concubinary or licentiousness, while detesting ecclesiastical marriage. There was documentary evidence that a concubinary priest could procure absolution for less than a ducat, despite all provincial and synodal constitutions; while half a ducat was sufficient to absolve for incest committed with a mother or a sister

(Lea, 1907). The Church Hierarchy introduced several decrees, statutes and local legislation to protect the image of celibacy practice and prevent the Reformation from taking root (Mayblin, 2019). Historical records from the 11th century showed that a quarter of the priests were married, and their sons inherited the clerical position in the church, a practice known as 'simony'. Furthermore, the implementation of the law against married clergy resulted in a scarcity of priests in the majority of Continental Europe (Frazee, 1972). Clearly, the subject of celibacy had shaken the church to a considerable degree. It also helped the church to look inward and endeavour to address some of the moral questions within its hierarchy.

The important figures were Damiani and Hilderbrand, an 11th-century monk who called for the abolition of simony and enforcement of austerity within the Latin Church hierarchy. Both Damiani and Hilderbrand were proponents of Papal independence from the geopolitical power of the European Kingdoms. Hilderbrand, as Pope Gregory VII, introduced and enforced absolute chastity on the ecclesiastic. Absolution and indulgence grew to be a marketable commodity; it even became the interest of the ecclesiastics to demand money in return for service (Lea, 1884). Such being the state of ecclesiastical immorality throughout Europe, that occasional reformation could not eradicate the vices, licentious and concubinage (Lea, 1884).

The important contribution of this period was the influence of the hereditary benefices and simony, which was a consequence of the licentiousness among the priest. All around, the period was marked by simony, licentiousness and concubinage among the church hierarchy. However, several canons were enacted to enforce celibacy, yet ecclesiastical immorality was rampant. From the Biblical perspective, it is clear that celibacy was meant to secure the spiritual commitment of the priest to his calling. Choosing to stay celibate was a moral decision on the part of a priest. However, over

the years, the church defined celibacy an integral part of its doctrine, making it mandatory for those seeking priestly ministry. Yet, from the foregoing discussion, one can clearly see why the subject of celibacy, along with other moral concerns within the church, continue to draw considerable debates even in the modern church.

2.4.7 The East-West Schism (1054 - 1204 AD)

The East-West Schism could be traced 5th century when the Eastern Church in based Constantinople became the Eastern Patriarchate, as an autonomous Christian church. The Church had five patriarchal sees in Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, as well as general and local councils that defined the jurisdiction of the bishop's metropolitans and synods (Siecienski, 2017). The East-West Schism began to develop earnestly with some distinctness with the West following through the rules on celibacy observance and discipline enforced with Roman severity (Lea, 1884).

The first real issues in the East-West schism were the medieval and related to the use of unleavened bread by the Latin Church. The central dogmatic doctrine on the use of unleavened bread is derived from the celebration of the Lord's Supper while the filioque controversy represents a theological difference. The Greek Church argued that unleavened bread symbolized the 'misery and grief' of the Jews whereas the leavened bread of the Byzantines represented 'joy and mirth in its entirety' that elevated humans from the earth (Siecienski, 2023). There was the normative use of leavened bread throughout the Western Church until the 9th or 10th century when azymes (unleavened) rather than leavened bread were used in the Eucharist (Mitralexis, 2023) and was formalized in the Middle of the 11th century based on biblical argument drawn from synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke).

Second, the Filioque controversy surrounds a sentence in the Nicene Creed (Erismann, 2019), a statement of faith adopted by the First Council of Constantinople (381). This council decreed that the nature of the triune God, comprises the Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in Christianity is a divine force that is considered the third person of the triune God, neither serving as a prime cause, like the Father, nor God in human form, like the Son (Siecienski, 2023). Considering that Christianity is a monotheistic religion, the Greek Church considered that the divinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit implies the existence of three gods, a position incompatible with monotheism (Siecienski, 2017).

The filioque came at the third Council of Toledo (589 AD) and in it arose the triune God. The Filioque in the Latin Church is biblically derived from Matthew 10:20, John 15:26, John 16:7, John 16:14, John 20:22, 1 Corinthians 2:11, Galatians 4:6, Romans 8:9 and 1 Peter 1:11. The procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, equally and co-ordinately, is characteristic of Western trinitarianism since the time of St. Augustine (430 AD) (Erismann, 2019).

The entire Christian Church confesses that there is one God who is three separate and distinct persons. The Western Church always began with God's Oneness and approached the unity and divinity of the One in light of the shared *ousia*, or *substantia*. Since the Spirit proceeded from the Father, the Spirit also proceeded from the Son (Erismann, 2019). The Eastern Church believed that the Father is the Source and Origin of all divinity. The basis for the Eastern Church is that the Son is *homoousias* and shares in the *ousia* of the Father, and so also the Spirit (Siecienski, 2023). Whereas the West emphasized God's Oneness, Eastern orthodoxy emphasized the Threeness of the divine Hypostasis. The East believed the Father was the sole source of the Deity. The Western

Church endorsed the clause; the Eastern Church vigorously opposed and considered the "Filioque" to be a false doctrine (Siecienski, 2010).

Third, The Latin Church claimed that the Pope is the head of the church and has the right to define the faith while the Greek Orthodox Church maintained that no one bishop can alter or change a creed composed by an ecumenical council (Siecienski, 2017; Koandreas, 2021). The differences arose from the role that Peter played in the early church and the extent of Rome's Primatial authority. The Latin Church derived the logical thought from Matthew 16:13-20 and John 21:15-19. The Eastern Orthodox Church claimed that the Pope of Rome usurped the authority granted by Christ to all bishops, claiming privileges and powers and this became a theological dispute (Siecienski, 2017).

Lastly, the Latin Doctrine of Purgatory drew its history from the scriptures to the book of 2 Maccabees 12:41-46. In the New Testament, 'purgatorial fire' (*ignis purgatorius*) was drawn from Matthew 12:31- 32, Luke 16:19-26 and 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, which hold the idea of cleansing fire. Purgatory was raised between 1231 and 1236 and the notion of the 'purgatorial fire' (*ignis purgatorius*) seems to have raised the spectre of Origenis (if everyone could be cleansed after death, then it is possible for all to be saved). Purgatory as a doctrinal dogma was institutionalized in the Latin Church in the 13th century (Mitralexis, 2023). The Greek Church was content with the ambiguity of the fate of souls after death (Siecienski, 2023).

The three epochs discussed above show that the debates concerning celibacy raged on at a time when the church was still defining and refining some of the major aspects of its doctrine such as the filioque, papal authority and powers, and life after death. It is

perhaps for this reason that the subject of celibacy could not be treated in this time and the church transitioned across time without clearly settling the issue.

Other non-significant issues that shaped conversations about celibacy included differences in fasting, the type of food allowed, the practice of ecclesiastical celibacy or sacerdotal marriages, and its associated concubinage and the ransacking of Constantinople in 1204. The Latin Church differed on the sacerdotal marriages, incorrect consecration practices (adding water to the wine after consecration) and baptismal practices for the Latin Christians (Siecienski, 2023). In time, other dogmatic differences arose, which included the immaculate conceptions (1854), the bodily assumption of Mary (1950), and the use of Gregorian versus Julian calendars (Siecienski, 2023).

The prime cause of the schisms is traced back to the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-39) when the Latin and Greek Church met over the use of azymes. The Council raised another issue that widened the East-West schism in the form of the Western doctrine of purgatory (Siecienski, 2023). The council's agenda included the theological and ecclesiological issue of the addition of the filioque to the creed. The Union decree, *latentur caeli*, signed by both the Greek and Latin Church in 1439, gave the Latin Church everything it wanted. The Eastern Church eventually rejected the outcomes of the council leading to a widening of the East-West Schism (Siecienski, 2023).

The Schism reached its finality only after the eruption of violence between Western Christian conquerors and Eastern Christians at their capital in 1204. Modern scholars who have challenged the idea that 1054 marked the final break between East and West have pointed to 1204 as the date of finality. The Schism of 1054 saw the Eastern and Western church leaders exchange a mutual excommunication (Koandreas, 2021). The

second important framework occurred in the 11th century with the growth of monasteries (Frazee, 1972). In the West, monachism was in its infancy, while in the East, monasteries were rapidly filled and enlarged driven by the influence of the ascetic ideas of India (Lea, 1884).

During this period, the Latin Church in Europe suffered moral decay from infighting among prelates, open rebellion against ecclesiastical celibacy, and political influence of the church activities among other issues (Lea, 1884). In the 11th century, ascetic celibacy among the lay was more pronounced, while the canons were theoretically in force, ecclesiastical celibacy was practically impossible as legitimate marriage or promiscuous profligacy was almost universal, either as unconcealed or covered with a thin veil of hypocrisy (Lea, 1907).

The contributions to celibacy were more ideological as the schism had the Western Church supporting clerical celibacy for all orders while the Eastern Church accepted ecclesiastical marriages to the rank of Presbyterian and celibate life for the bishops, archbishops, prelates, curates and patriarchates. The doctrinal differences on the issue of celibacy were laid bare by the schism, as the Eastern Church condemned the celibacy rule as a creation of the church hierarchy with no theological justification or basis. Again, celibacy remained a contentious issue at this time.

2.4.8 The Lateran Councils (1123 - 1517 AD)

The Lateran Council I (1123) and II (1139) promulgated new canons that invalidated the ecclesiastical marriage and forbade the ordination of married men (Joseph *et al.*, 2010; Sipe 1990). There was gradual acceptance and reformation on priestly celibacy and the subsequent council of Mainz (1226) reinforced the prohibition on simony and benefices in the synod of Olmutz (1342). In effect, Popes Innocent III, Alexander III to

Gregory VIII maintained course and the policy of the church remained unaltered. Alexander's successors emulated his example in endeavouring to enforce the canons. Pope Clement III admitted that celibacy was only a local rule of discipline and that there was nothing incompatible between marriage and the holy functions of the altar (Lea, 1907). This position reiterated St. Paul's admonitions on celibacy in the scripture.

There were five Lateran councils that began with Lateran Council I in 1123 and ended with Lateran Council IV in 1215. Of these, Lateran councils were I & II, which invalidated ecclesiastical marriages for all clerical orders and consecrated life. This was significant as there was a doctrinal justification, and canons laid bare the penalties for any person who violated the canons.

2.4.9 The Reformation Period (1414 - 1525 AD)

Up to the 14th Century, the canons on ecclesiastical celibacy were just mere regulations that the clergy resisted. Wherever the canons were directed towards ecclesiastical marriages, the ecclesiastics rebelled and moved towards concubinage and other related vices (Lea, 1884). The Council of Constance (1415) tried to partake in reformation but all efforts of local synods were fruitless (Lea, 1884). Licentiousness had become so habitual among his clergy and that gambling, concubinage, simony, neglect of sacred functions among other vices accompanied the ministers of Christ.

In the 16th Century, reformation of the church began and gained traction in Germany. Luther nailed on the church door of Wittenberg the ninety-five propositions upon which the church Hierarchy in Rome branded him a heretic. Proponents in favour of priestly marriage energetically denounced the monastic vows as idle and vain. Luther himself was subjected to judicial commission in the Diet of Augsburg (1522). The Reformation era, which called for clerical marriage urged for a theological debate into the question

relating to the mandatory celibacy for the priests. The laity, local pastors and magistrates played a more active role in situating and shaping public controversies over clerical marriage in the early German Reformation (Plummer, 2013). One can argue here that the main issue of that the proponents of reformation had with celibacy was its canonization. They did not necessarily condemn priests who chose freely to be celibate.

The Imperial Diet at Nürnberg (1523) had a powerful influence on the progress of the Reformation. The Diet of Augsburg (1530) decreed that all married priests abstain from their wives, eject them, and seek absolution from their ordinaries, while the Diet of Augsburg (1555) accented to clerical marriages and the reformation of the ecclesiastics in Germany. Civil regulations regulating marriages were legislated in France, Germany, England and Ireland to curb the clerical licentiousness. Formal recognition of ecclesiastical marriages took place in Germany as early as 1518. The protestant reformation started with the abolition of sacerdotalism in all its forms and allowed any person to preach the gospel on any platform. This reformation gained traction and grew into a Lutheran Church. The imperial diet of worms regarded and regularized the sale of indulgences as a form of annual tax (Lea, 1884).

The period is associated with resistance to clerical licentiousness and clerical celibacy from the protestant movement. The proponents of the movement attacked doctrines on clerical celibacy and the hypocrisy of the church hierarchy to the concubinage and licentiousness among the clergy. They attributed these clerical vices to the clerical celibacy and called for clerical marriages as a solution to the problem. In return, the Latin Church hierarchy instituted reform in the church hierarchy and stressed on ecclesiastical celibacy. As such, Reformation seemed to dismiss celibacy as a measure of holiness of the priest. It instead considered moral uprightness as an indicator of holiness.

2.4.10 The Inquisition Period (1560 - 1600 AD)

In the 16th century, the inquisition and reformation of all religious houses took place and the purge took a judicial viewpoint as well as theological perspective. The inquisition was initiated by Pope Clement VII and King George and was geared towards purging of the married priest and depriving them their ecclesiastical functions. Ecclesiastics were subjected to civil procedures in France, Spain, England and Central Europe. Priests found to be licentious were purged of their ecclesiastical functions. In England, monasticism took a blow as the abbeys were taken over by the authorities. In Spain, the inquisition into priestly marriages took place. In Spain and Portugal, Latin Church Hierarchy issued bulls to the inquisitor general revoking immunities for all the ecclesiastics (Lea, 1884).

The contribution of the period was the purging and external influence of the civic authorities in enforcing and pressuring the Church hierarchy in Rome to act on the licentiousness and concubinage among the priest. These external civic forces pushed the Latin Church to reform its ecclesiastics and lead to the Council of Trent.

2.4.11 The Council of Trent (1545 - 1563 AD)

The Council of Trent (1545-1563), the longest synod, introduced a reformation agenda to curtail the licentiousness, simony and concubinage among the clergy. Among the important canons, the Council of Trent in 1563 proscribed the first conciliar doctrine on priestly celibacy (Anello, 2014). The deliberations upheld the clerical celibacy and gave the episcopates the power over the presbyterates and diaconates in disciplinary issues. Throughout the whole extent of Central Europe, the Tridentine canons met with a slackness of obedience. The disregard of the Tridentine canon continued, and as late as 1628, historical records of church discipline show that with the increasing decency

and refinement of society during the 17th and 18th centuries, the open and cynical manifestations of licentiousness among the clergy became gradually rare (Zöller, 2020).

The council of Trent, which was prompted by the Reformation, is known for its conciliar doctrine on several matters, including ecclesiastical orders, matrimony, among other important doctrinal matters. It is also known for its outreaching canons on priestly celibacy, which still stands out today. It was a landmark moment for the Latin Church as it introduced far-reaching reform provisions for priests and imposed sanctions for non-observance of disciplinary decrees.

2.4.12 The French Revolution Era (1789 - 1867 AD)

In the 17th century, the political powers in France decreed that no ecclesiastics were to take vows under the age of 22 years and nuns under 19 years. The licentious ecclesiastics were prosecuted by civil authorities while the religious orders were suppressed, monastic vows were declared void, and a moderate annuity was accorded to the unfortunates (Lea, 1907). At this point, church and state were intimately intertwined. Therefore, moral questions within the church circles, including celibacy, also became the subject of states. The Church Hierarchy in Rome decreed a new framework governing the ecclesiastics, such as the appropriate age of housekeepers, prohibiting priests from sitting beside women, giving bishops authority to oversight the domestic arrangements of priests in isolated parishes, and even prohibiting a priest from absolving his sexual partner of her sin (O'Loughlin, 1995).

Monasteries and church property that were taken over by civil authorities and occupants were sent away. However, a new form of asceticism was monachism where the women who devoted themselves to works of charity and mercy and were involved in education, health and other charities attracted more individuals (Lea, 1907). Nation states started

to disentangle themselves from the Latin Church and, as a consequence, civil marriages were established and sanctioned by many European States. The Latin Church hierarchy started enforcing celibacy to counter civil marriages in many European States as the states were seeking to counter concubinage, licentiousness among other vices by the priest (Lea, 1884). The introduction of civil marriages thus pushed the church to take a more united stance on celibacy.

The era is known for its reformation initiatives of the Church in France and the countervailing effect of the civic authorities in France. The main contributions were the insistence on ecclesiastical marriages by the civic authorities, the purging of married priests by the Church hierarchy and the suppression of monastic orders.

2.4.13 The Vatican I Council (1869 - 1870 AD)

The first global synod held at Rome, the Vatican I Council (1869-1870), promulgated *Pastor Aeternus* as a dogmatic constitution for the Western Church. The constitution decreed on four doctrines on Catholic faith that include the primacy of the supreme pontiff, the infallibility of the pope and that 'by divine ordinance, the Roman Church possessed a pre-eminence of ordinary power over every other church and the jurisdictional power of the Roman Pontiff was both episcopal and immediate' (Siecienski, 2017). The Eastern Greek Orthodox viewed Vatican I Council's pronouncement on papal infallibility as a 'point of no return' and the schism took an ecclesiological perspective (Siecienski, 2017). At the turn of 19th century, the Church Hierarchy raised the age of vows from 16 years to 22 for the diaconate and 25 years for the presbyterate. In 1917, the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy decreed the use and institutionalization of the Code of Canon Law. Before then, the church used *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, which was a compilation of canons over many centuries and the canon law was promulgated by Pope Benedict XV (Komonchak, 1986).

The 1917 Code, *ius* (right) is conceived as a *lex* (law) and contains 2414 canons that derive their authority from the will of the supreme pontiff. The code has three unique attributes, namely it is hierarchical, centralized and rationalized (Komonchak, 1986). In consideration, the literature after the Vatican I Council (1869-70) shows a significant shift in the way canons were given impetus to function as orders and not just propositions (Kadić, 1971).

The Vatican I Council is known for the establishment of hierarchical and centralized organizational structure that is based in Vatican City and rules and regulations governing the church hierarchy. The Council raised the entry age for the holy orders and introduced canons to support the application of rules and regulations governing the lives of clergy all over the world. This paved the way for the greater entrenchment of celibacy rules within the church doctrine.

2.4.14 The Vatican II Council (1962 - 1965 AD)

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) reaffirmed the importance of priestly celibacy (Joseph *et al.*, 2010). After the Second Vatican Council, the church hierarchy reinforced the mandatory rule of priestly celibacy through several encyclicals, including the *Presbyterorum ordinis* of 1965, the *Sacerdotalis caelibatus* of 1967, the Code of Canon Law 277 of 1983, John Paul II (1992), and the Catechism of the Catholic Church of 2002 (Joseph *et al.*, 2010). Since 1967, there have been 26 synods in Rome on family life, marriage and sexual morality (Allen, 2015). In the period of the Second Vatican Council, there were reports of concubinage being practised in parts of Western Europe, South America, Africa and the Philippines. Some bishops at the Council wanted the question re-examined (Roncalli, 2011).

Presbyterorum Ordinis, the council's Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, was a source of internal conflict during its development and received half-hearted reception in the following years (Anello, 2014). The discussion on priestly celibacy brought proponents and opponents on a collision course, with bishops from the Netherlands and Brazil hoping to change the mandatory requirement for celibacy. Following the *Presbyterorum Ordinis* was the encyclical *Sacerdotalis caelibatus* (On the Celibacy of Priests) of 1967 in response to the call for the critical examination of priestly celibacy. The 1967 encyclical, *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, affirmed that the choice of celibacy is governed by grace, which – far from destroying or doing violence to nature – elevates it and imparts to it supernatural powers and vigour (Joseph *et al.*, 2010).

Pope Paul VI lauded celibacy as a 'precious jewel' that leads to a life of selflessness for the man who seeks to follow Jesus Christ into the priesthood (Frazee, 1972). These views echoed the Biblical perspective on celibacy as a form of necessary detachment for spiritual growth and edification. The reactions of priests and laity to *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* were largely negative as it only dealt with the issue of priestly celibacy (Anello, 2014).

Third, the third encyclical, the ministerial priesthood (1971) is associated with the priesthood of Christ and requires the total and exclusive dedication of Christ to His mission of salvation provides reason and example for our assimilation to the form of charity and sacrifice proper to Christ our Saviour. Celibacy stands out from the monastic paradigm of singleness of heart (Joseph *et al.*, 2010). The Synod of Bishops in Rome in 1971 supported the priestly celibacy as it secured an undivided devotion to Christ and dedication to the apostolic task. The synod focused on addressing the distinction between the priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood, identifying the specific mission of the ministerial priesthood. Years later, the debate on

celibacy has gradually declined (Joseph *et al.*, 2010). This decline has come as a result of increased clarification of celibacy as a biblical proposition rather than a mandatory requirement. Over the years, priests have sworn celibacy more because they desire to dedicate their lives to ministry than because celibacy is enshrined in canon law.

In 1983, Pope John Paul II issued the revised Code of Canon Law of 1917 and in it Canon 277 decreed that clerics are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the Kingdom of God by which the sacred ministers can adhere more easily to Christ with an undivided heart and can more freely dedicate themselves to the service of God and mankind (Joseph *et al.*, 2010). This law seems to be quoting directly from St. Paul's teaching on celibacy (1 Corinthians 7:8-9). It clarifies the function of celibacy as giving a chance to the priest to more easily fulfil his vocation. The Synod on the *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (The Formation of Priests in contemporary society) issued a communique on the challenges faced by priests in modern times and called for changes in the formation of priests. There have been synods on various issues on a global level (1994), Lebanon (1995), America (1997), Asia (1998), Oceania (1998) and Europe (1999) (Vatican.va, 2024).

The council affirmed the mandatory rule for celibacy for priest by issuing an encyclical *Sacerdotalis caelibatus* of 1967 to govern the life of the priest. Furthermore, the Catholic Church has issue several encyclicals on celibacy, marriage and priesthood. Despite priestly celibacy becoming mandatory requirement for those seeking to become priest, the period is known for various sexual abuses linked to the clergy all over world and resignations by the priest in the developed world. The church in Africa is exponentially growing with the number of priests increasing and growing challenge of celibacy within the African context. Therefore, one of the objective of the study was to examine the African worldview on celibacy, a detailed discussion of which is done in

Chapter Three. Suffice it to say the aim is to explore the unique import of the African cultural context on the doctrine and practical observance of celibacy.

2.4.15 The 21st Century (2000 AD and beyond)

The Catholic Church entered into the 21st century with the release of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2002), which affirmed that the sacrament of Holy Orders for the presbyterate is only conferred to candidates who freely embrace and publicly manifest their intention to be celibates for the love of God's kingdom and the service of human beings (Serbin, 2006). The priesthood is not a profession, to be engaged in part-time, but a full-time and perpetual vocation (Benedict XVI, 2011). This declaration enabled priests to seriously contemplate their vocation; to appreciate the gravity and demand of the ministry to which they are called before responding in obedience.

The XI Ordinary General Assembly (2005) issued the post-synodal document '*Sacramentum caritatis*, or the Sacrament of Charity, which focused on the order of Eucharistic celebration among other issues. The XII Ordinary General Assembly (2008) focused on the word of God. A second special assembly for Africa (2009) was held and its deliberations were a continuation of the assembly in 1994, and focused on the Church in Africa and its activities (Vatican.va, 2023).

In his reign, Pope Benedict XVI issued several encyclicals, including *Anglicanorum coetibus* (2009), which provided for the acceptance of ordained and married Anglican clergy into the Catholic Church as priests. This was in response to the abuse of minors by priests and the accompanying procedures for handling sexual abuse allegations. The Pope's *Africae munus* (2011) focusses on the Church in Africa in the service of reconciliation, justice and peace. In the *Africae munus*, a section deals with the conciliar Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, the 1992 Post-

Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, the 1994 Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests and the 2002 Instruction on The Priest, Pastor and Guide of the Parish Community.

Pope Francis has issued several encyclicals, including *Lumen Fidei* (The Light of Faith) (2013), *Evangelii Gaudium* (Proclamation of the Gospel) (2013), *Laudato si'* (Praise be to you) (2015), *Amoris Laetitia* (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on love in the family) (2016), *Misericordia et Misera* (Mercy and Peace) (2016), *Vultum Dei quaerere* (On Women's Contemplative Life) (2016), and *Fratelli tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship) (2020). Based on the titles of the encyclicals, there is a shift from contemporary issues affecting the church to spiritual matters over the last decade. In it, the Catholic Church hierarchy has dealt with several contemporary issues by reorganizing itself, through its new constitution *Praedicate evangelium* (Preach the gospel), which reformed the Roman Curia and was promulgated in 2022, to the reformation of the code of the Canon Law on penal sanctions in the church (Canon Law 1311 to 1363), the institutionalization of *Vademecum*, and the procedures for treating cases of sexual abuse of minors committed by clerics in 2022. Evidently, these encyclicals have helped to highlight the high demand for holiness and moral uprightness that comes with celibate priests as detached Christian monks.

The period is known for the acceptance of the growing problem of clerical sexual abuse by the Church Hierarchy in Rome and the ensuing reformation of the processes and procedures governing the behaviour of the priest. The church withstood criticisms on priestly celibacy and still maintained its mandatory requirement of priests. More encyclicals have been issued by regional General assembly and there is a shift towards spiritual issues over the last two decades. The Catholic Church in Africa is still growing

and the number of priests is increasing despite the mandatory celibacy rule in the church.

2.5 Challenges Facing Priestly Celibacy

Empirical studies generally portray celibacy as a discipline, focusing on the sexual incontinence of priests and how such incontinence has shaped the power of the Church (Mayblin, 2019). The Catholic Church teaches that celibacy is a charism as a special grace from God that is to freely embraced by individuals who wish to dedicate themselves entirely to God and the service of the Church (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1997, para. 1579). According to this view, celibacy is not an end in itself but a means of imitating Christ's own life of self-giving love and undivided devotion to the Kingdom (John Paul II, 1993). In this theological framework, celibacy is presented as a voluntary sacrifice made out of love, not coercion. As John Paul II emphasized in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, "the decision to embrace celibacy must be a free and mature choice" rooted in personal vocation (John Paul II, 1993, no. 29).

However, in practice, celibacy functions as a mandatory requirement for ordination to the priesthood in the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church. Canon 277 §1 of the Code of Canon Law (1983) states that clerics are "obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven," thereby transforming what is framed as a spiritual gift into a non-negotiable condition of office. This legal codification contradicts the Church's own theological assertion that true celibacy must be freely chosen and sustained by grace rather than enforced by discipline (Brady, 2014).

In a study on priestly celibacy in Brazil, Mayblin (2019) observes that the unfaithful priest often blames the laity for sexual incontinence. The study revealed that the laity's insatiable thirst for sacred role models coupled with their tendency to worship their

'idol' priest contributes to sexual incontinence. Further, the study noted that the church in Brazil projects an image of a 'superorganic female person' who is universally tender, warm and caring to everyone. The study highlights the differences in attitudes of the laity towards the priests and indicates the external pressures facing the priest in their work. These pressures influence the priest's capacity to live up to the dictates of celibacy. The study also underscores the fact that, although celibacy is a call to discipline, many contextual factors shape the extent to which the priest lives up to the demands of purity and detachment.

Mayblin (2019) further noted that despite constant internal reforms by the church, Catholic Priests in Brazil in the 21st century continue to have consensual relationships with women behind the ecclesiastical scenes. According to the study, a significant numbers of Brazilian priests break their celibacy vows with a certain degree of theological assurance and ethical reflexivity. These actions had little implications on the ecclesiastical structure as a whole because priests kept their rule-breaking private, and remained obedient to ritual form in public (Mayblin, 2019). Thus, in the view of Mayblin, a good Brazilian priest cannot publicly doubt his theological foundation on celibacy because of his sexual urge. Instead, he performs his priestly duties to everyone and offers hope to all even with his human weaknesses.

Catholicism in Brazil encompasses both rites and traditions specific to the locality, as well as signs and practices continuous with a Brazilian secular, national identity (Mayblin, 2019). The study observes the cultural influence of the community on the priest and its ensuing impact on the lived experiences of priestly celibacy. Furthermore, it reveals the communal expectations that a priest is more like the lay than the clergy and as long as he is performing his priestly duties, then it is acceptable to be sexually

incontinent. Such views informed how the present study examined priestly celibacy within the context of Africa, marked by a complexity of cultures and social relations.

Joseph *et al.* (2010) examined the impact of celibacy practices among Catholic priests in Southern India. The study was a survey and evaluated the association between celibacy practices, burnout and engagement. The study observed that celibacy among the priests was positively associated with engagement and accomplishment but negatively linked to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The study highlights the professional challenges faced by the priest and these challenges influence the practice of celibacy by the priest.

Appiah-Kubi and Korsah (2020) conducted a study on the challenges faced by Catholic priests in Ghana using a representative sample. Based on the interviews, the study observed that the priest considered chastity as a challenge that takes a psychological perspective. Whereas they make a conscious effort to keep their mind pure, they face significant challenges in their physical and emotional world arising from the environment and advances made by women. The study highlights the context and the professional work challenges in which Catholic priests operate and thus informs the need for the evaluation within the study's context. The study underscores the need to evaluate priestly celibacy and chastity within the framework of the unique contextual features in their areas of operation.

In Eastern Europe, Khonineva (2018) examined the current views on celibacy in the Catholic Church. The author observed that celibacy is viewed as attractive and real but the church hierarchy proscriptions on celibacy means solitary lives for the 'called'. Although this finding provides insight on the challenges of celibate life for the priest, it depicts a misnomer in the representation of the real aims of celibacy, namely a

dedication to spiritual life in the company of God and the body of Christ. Other important challenges to celibate life reported in the Catholic Church in Europe include the subjugation of locals, which enabled the European priest to sexually exploit slaves, keep concubines and/or sire children (Serbin, 2006). The study provides a deeper understanding of the European context in which the celibate priest is highly esteemed and therefore absolved of his personal wrongs, including failure to observe chastity. It also shows how cultural contexts shape views on priestly celibacy, which was useful insight in the current study.

Sipe (2013), a former priest himself, disputes the use of the code of canon law to legislate and support celibacy among the Catholic priests. He argues that, from a theological viewpoint, charism is an unmerited gift of God. Such is the grace of celibacy and the perceived experience of the recipient of this divine favour. A man who presents himself for ordination to the priesthood is expected to be the object of this grace (Sipe, 2013). The charism is distinct from the ideal just as it is separate from the law. In Sipe's view, the salvific grace cannot be legislated and neither can a spiritual gift thrive without cultivation. Sipe's study offers a doctrinal view of celibacy and disputes the use of legislation to support celibacy. The study also sheds light and attaches richer meaning to celibacy, which was crucial to the current study. Of concern to the current study was to explore how African priests consider celibacy: is it a burdensome requirement mandated through the canon law, or is it a charism gifted to the priest to help him fulfil his call to ministry?

The reviewed studies have highlighted the various viewpoints on the subject of celibacy ranging from external influences in form of idol worship (Mayblin, 2019), cultural influences and viewpoints on celibacy (Mayblin, 2019; Khonineva, 2018), professional work challenges and how they impact priestly celibacy (Joseph *et al.*, 2010; Appiah-

Kubi & Korsah, 2020) and doctrinal viewpoints on celibacy (Sipe, 2013). It is evident that, though they have varied perspectives on the subject, majority of scholars support priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church. However, the bone of contention is on how celibacy is mandated by the church through doctrine and observed by the priests in practice. It is nonetheless noteworthy that these studies have not examined the African cultural viewpoint on celibacy, a gap that the current study sought to fill.

2.6 Summary

The chapter provided a description of the development of priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church. It examined the biblical foundations, beginning with the developments of priestly celibacy as early as the apostolic church, as described by the letters of St Paul. The study progressively highlights the important hallmarks in the evolution of celibacy within the Church's history, including the councils, the East/West schism, the Inquisition period, the Revolution period, the French Revolution, and the Vatican I and Vatican II. The studies show that celibacy in the Catholic Church has progressively shifted from voluntary ascetism to legislated act, which is not just a command but a mandatory requirement for those seeking to obey the call to priesthood. This evolution has received divided response from church theologians and fathers alike. Lastly, the chapter also highlights the challenges facing the priest in the vocation, especially insofar as the practice of chastity is concerned. The chapter also notes a dearth of literature on African cultural viewpoints on celibacy.

The chapter has also highlighted the challenges faced by the Catholic Church in the 21st century. From a review of the various encyclicals in the Church's history, it is evident that the issues of clerical sexual abuse and priestly celibacy have gradually receded into the background as the church hierarchy in Rome has continually shifted its focus to more spiritual issues, as epitomised in the current general assembly that started in

October 2023 and will end in 2025. The synod of Synodality seeks to bring the whole Catholic Church together, from the laity to the cardinal and Pope, to discern and consult on spiritual matters and the current and future direction of the Church at all levels from the local church to the Vatican.

The indigenous African worldview on church issues, including celibacy, has largely remained on the backburner save for the two general assemblies for Africa held in 1994 and 2009. The first general assembly (1994) focused on elements of African culture according to the five thematic areas: proclamation of the message, inculturation, dialogue, justice and peace, social media. Interestingly, inculturation in the church only focused on the important cultural practices but ignored the issue of celibacy, which represented a difficult challenge to the African cultural traditions. The second general assembly for African bishops focused on the changing social order and socio-economic transformation of Africa. Again, it overlooked any other issue touching on celibacy.

The next chapter explores the indigenous religious worldview on celibacy with a focus on the Nandi community in Nandi County, Kenya. The chapter begins with an exploration of the indigenous Nandi religious worldview and ends with African worldview on celibacy practises. The chapter demonstrates that the indigenous worldview of the Nandi community was based on the sanctity and purity at both individual, personal and community levels. The starting point for the celibacy in the community was the societal and communal demand that all young and unmarried remained chaste and that sexual abstinence was reserved for indigenous and communal ceremonies, rites and rituals which demand sexual purity from the personal to communal levels. Lastly, the community the esteeming of married life as means of continuity of life and detested celibate individuals.

CHAPTER THREE

INDIGENOUS AFRICAN RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW ON CELIBACY

3.1 Introduction

In seeking to explain celibacy in the indigenous Nandi worldview, the study considered the rationale or the means to an end of the celibacy practice. According to Prince (1992), celibacy as a practice can be viewed as a custom or a tradition of maintaining ritual purity during the performance of religious rituals or simply 'ritual purity'. The chapter delves into indigenous religious ceremonies that the Nandi community considers as primal. Since all aspects of life were considered sacred, the norms of ritual purity were binding to every member of society. The community considered every aspect of life to be sacred and adults were expected to say prayers when facing the sun.

Ritual purity was expected of all community members who partook in indigenous religious ceremonies, rites and ritual as standard for maintaining the sanctity of the rites and rituals. Thus, the community had special organizational structures that contain indigenous priest (*tisik*) in their midst who were drawn from specific lineage of priest. There were two kinds of priest (for blessing and good fortunes and for casting away bad omens and calamities) and they participated in the indigenous religious ceremonies, including naming of the newborns, cleansing ceremonies for any serious transgressions and thanksgiving ceremonies. In addition, the community had one specific instance, where a celibate individual (*kiborenatiot*) was groomed to offer oblations during communal strife, calamities and catastrophes. Therefore, as will be demonstrated throughout this chapter, among the Nandi – as was the case with many African traditional societies – purity was not the preserve of a few. In order to properly contextualize the Nandi worldview on celibacy, it is important to first examine the community's religious worldviews.

3.2 African Indigenous Religious Worldview

According to Wamue (2001), the indigenous religious worldview reflects the religious rites, rituals and practices of a specific African community and introduces the belief systems, the ensuing rites and rituals, ceremonies, entities and activities. African indigenous religion was discerned in terms of beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and religious ceremonies. The indigenous Nandi religious worldview heavily borrows from the African indigenous religious worldview, as explained in section 3.2.1.

3.2.1 Indigenous Nandi Religious Worldview

The indigenous Nandi religious worldview holds certain similarities as those drawn from other indigenous African communities. For instance, the participants highlighted the importance of virtuous living and distaste for iniquities, as captured from focus group discussions at Kabiyet, Tindiret and Kobujoi. In traditional Nandi society, virtuous living was exalted and practised. Therefore, all community members were expected to live virtuously and detest any transgression of the norms and regulations. Virtuous living served as the basic framework for religiosity at both individual and community levels. This was articulated aptly by various respondents. For instance, a 75-old male participant from FGD 3, observed thus:

'The Nandi community had specific customary laws and regulations to govern the behaviours of the community members and in particular, the community esteemed virtuous living and largely distasted iniquity and wickedness. The community guarded its members against any transgressions at all ages that might result in sin (Ng'oogi). The senior community members were the guardians of the customary law and regulations and oversight the community at an individual and group level.'

In a rejoinder to the discussion, 81-year man in FGD 3 concurred with the observation and further elaborated on the concept of virtuous living by observing that:

'The community examined all the facets of life (economic, social, personal life i.e. marital status), lineage of the selected individuals for the leadership and governance structures. If there were any outstanding issues, the elderly people were consulted for any challenges arising to defeat/deflect any misfortune that might befall the leader or the community. The choice of leadership and governance structures were discussed by the senior members before a person could assume the leadership position. The dictates governing these structures were that at the onset, the individual was chosen through evaluation and consensus followed by the seeking of paternal consent for the individual chosen for every other leadership and governance structure. Through paternal consent, the chosen individual is then informed of the wishes of the community to lead.'

From the above excerpts, moral purity or virtue was demanded of all members of society irrespective of social hierarchy. This observation was also in agreement with what was observed from a 72-year-old male participant in FGD 1:

'The Nandi Community at large had a set of religious practices that was centred on holistic communal living. Individuals were expected to live in harmony with other community members in good faith, perform good deeds always, and practice good neighbourliness with others good deeds, any transgressions against fellow community members were cleansed and the relationship between conflicting parties/individuals was mended. The community only selected specific people for the performance of customary ceremonies of circumcision, marriages, and religious rituals. These people were chosen based on their clan, family lineage and other specific attributes like productivity.'

The study participants in the FGDs pointed to the significance of virtuosity in all aspects of Nandi living. These were founded on the belief that everything is connected to the sacred, so that religiosity was not isolated from other everyday acts of living. It is in such contexts that the purity – the type that celibacy espouses in Christianity – was applied among the Nandi. Purity was not merely a religious requirement but part of the larger social norm and moral code. A study by Hollis (1909) affirms that, among the traditional Nandi, all transgressions, whether minor or major, were considered immoral and depraved and required cleansing by an indigenous priest as it is elicited by the cleansing ceremony of *Chesorpuchot*.

In a study, Mawere (2010a) observes that the traditional belief systems continue to inform much of the life and activities of the indigenous communities. For instance, the common beliefs in the use of taboos (*zvierwa*) are still critical in maintaining a moral, virtuous society, especially in the indigenous communities. Fundamentally, the African traditional customs and practices emphasized on the close connections between the empirical world and the cosmos. Mawere also draws the parallels between the consequences of good and bad, given that the cosmological world (*vadzimu and musikavanhu*) (ancestors and God/the creator, respectively) in governing the empirical world, and in consequence, judging humanity according to the virtue of their deeds.

Mawere (2010b) offers a unique view of the indigenous communities by alluding to the fact that an African is born with duties and obligations or responsibilities to his/her community. In turn, the community bestows rights and privileges to its members and everyone, whether poor or rich, physically challenged or otherwise, has a duty of service to make the world a better place to live. The studies allude to the demands of virtuosity in everyday life and is in tandem with the observations drawn from the FGDs. It is in such context that the Nandi perceived the demands of celibacy.

The other fundamental aspect of religiosity drawn from the FGDs is the belief in the Supreme Being, which punctuated the religiosity of the indigenous African communities. This spirituality was marked by the existence of actors (priest) and activities in the sacred grounds or the shrines. Practices in shrines were accompanied by ritual purity in form of sexual abstinence during the performance of indigenous rites. This was the common form of celibacy known to the Nandi.

Virtuosity as specifically linked to the indigenous religious ceremonies and this fact was corroborated by an 82-year-old male participant in FGD 2, who contributed to the discussion as follows:

'The religious ceremony was largely a communal prayer and petitions presented to their God, Asis. The religious ceremonies were always preceded by a unique universal happening that positively or negatively affected the community at large such as bountiful harvest, drought, hunger, and disease among others.'

This mirrors the observation by Hollis (1909) that the Nandi Community had a supreme deity referred to as Asis, who was believed to dwell in the sky. Hollis adds that Asis was believed to have created man and beasts and the world belonged to him, hence all prayers were addressed to Him. Asis was acknowledged to be the benefactor and provider of all good things and thus all offerings are all time made to him in return (Hollis, 1909). Ellis, (1976) similarly indicates that the Nandi community had indigenous religious practises relating to all aspects of life ranging from naming ceremonies for children at the family level to the thanksgiving communal ceremonies at the shrines (Ellis, 1976). The Nandi, therefore, obeyed without question any instructions from Asis. This could explain why the early Catholic missionaries, in order to better assimilate the Nandi into Christianity, chose to inculturate the gospel by adopting the names of Asis into Christianity. Inculturation then became a tool for pushing other less acceptable aspects of the Catholic doctrines and teachings, including celibacy.

Other empirical studies in Africa have also supported the indigenous religious worldview in which a deity was central to the beliefs. For example, in Nigeria, a deity called Ifa who was believed to determine the lives of individuals and the community (Ogungbile, 2015). In Ghana, the Akan indigenous religious worldview believed strongly in the creator God, *Nana Onyame*, gods/goddesses, *Abosom*, the earth deity,

Asaase Yaa, and ancestors, *Nananom Nsamfo*. In Southern Africa, the deity was referred to as *Qamata*, and the ancestors (*izihlwele*) mediated the relationship between people and their deity (Mndende, 1994). The primal belief systems were that these deities and spirits worked harmoniously for the total well-being of humanity (Amoah, 1998). Whatever instructions these deities mandated was accepted by the people. The greatest of these mandates was on individual moral purity. Purity was not the preserve of a few, such as priests, but everyone was required to be virtuous for the good of society, to appease the gods and for his own good.

The third component to the indigenous Nandi religious worldview centred on the location of the indigenous priest in the religious practises. This viewpoint was observed during the FGDs and was first introduced by an 83-year man in FGD 1 who made the following observations:

‘The Talai clan being the oracles/seers of the Nandi community at large lived largely among the community. The Talai clan was led by the Orkoiyot and the Orkoiyot was tasked with the prayers and petitions at the shrine were largely driven by the challenges faced by the community and each community had a seer/oracle who belonged to the Talai clan. During the challenging (epidemics, hunger, drought, foraging war) and bountiful seasons, the community would consult the seer/oracle who in turn asked, the division (pororiet) of the whole community to attend to the prayers and petitions at the shrine (Kapkoros).’

In support of the observation, a 78-year-old male participant in the same FGD 1 elaborated further on the linkages between priest and indigenous religious ceremonies by affirming that:

‘The supreme religious practice was referred to as the ‘Kapkoros’ a religious ceremony held by each pororiet. Each pororiet had a specific shrine (Kapkoros) for this supreme religious ceremony. Each division (pororiet) had a special anointed individual (maotiot) who was an intermediary between the community elders and their seer/oracle from the Talai clan who were placed into different divisions (pororiosoek).’

Because the priest performed rituals on behalf of the entire community, it was necessary for him to demonstrate or exhibit exceptional levels of virtue and moral uprightness. This observation is concurrent with the favourable view of the Orkoiyot as a ritual leader or an oracle (Ellis, 1976) and it aligns the ritual performance of the *Orkoiyot* to the indigenous Nandi religious worldview. The powers of the Orkoiyot (ritual leader) included prophecy, witch-finding and witchcraft, which greatly shaped the collective health and well-being of the Nandi community at large. The powers extended to rainmaking, ceremonies commencing the planting season, the fertility of women and cattle, the opening of the circumcision festivals, and the convening of the *saket-ap-eito* (age-set transitioning) (Ellis, 1976). According to Hollis (1909), *Maotiot* (plural *Maotik*) was an intermediary between the Orkoiyot and the territorial division of the community.

Based on the FGDs, the epitome of the indigenous religious ceremony was the rituals and rites performed at the indigenous shrine. The priests undertaking these rituals were required to exercise purity akin to celibacy. However, as observed during the FGDs, these priests were married and only observed celibacy when preparing and undertaking the rituals. As drawn from the FGDs, the principal religious ceremony was conducted by the Orkoiyot and involved all the divisions of the Nandi community. To provide more information on the nature and the person in indigenous priest (*tisindet*), a 77-years man in FGD 1 provide a distinction between indigenous social and cultural ceremonies as indicated below :

'The community had a kind of healers/oracles/seers drawn from the families of the Talai clan whose function was to either perform healing or foretell the future. In the instances of foretelling, the customary tradition dictated that a sheep, goat or bull was slaughtered and the healers/seers/oracles would foretell the future by observing the intestinal settings of the cattle that was slaughtered in an event called 'kebir moo'. This refers to the act of healing, while tisik refers to the

healer/seer/oracle whose task was to partake in foretelling or restorative cleansing ceremony for any transgressions by individuals or groups or community at large. This event was regularly carried out before any significant ceremony (tumdo) such as the naming of a newborn (Kurset-ap Lakwet), the beginning of the circumcision period (muratanet), luget (foraging battles) and religious ceremony (Kapkoros). The activity was considered holy by the community and thus the process was never questioned.'

The above excerpt makes a distinction between the oracles and the traditional priests.

The observation from the FGD is concurrent with the view by Huntingford (1935) that the Orkoiyot was an oracle and was renowned for the performance of rituals that related to rainmaking, circumcision ceremonies, and age-set transitioning among others in shrines where tree species, *Ficus elegans (simotuet)* grew (Huntingford, 1935). Hollis (1909) also posits the activities and functions of the Orkoiyot. The *Orkoiyot* was renowned for the performance of rituals that related to rainmaking, circumcision ceremonies, and age-set transitioning among others. The Orkoiyot took different names, such as chief medicine man (Hollis, 1909), witchdoctor (Huntingford, 1935) and ritual expert or an oracle (Ellis, 1976). The last communal religious ceremony occurred in the 'Nyongi' age-set in 1926 (Huntingford, 1935). Since the Orkoiyot was also the political leader of the Nandi, one can say that there seems to have been a conflation of roles in this traditional office, ranging from spiritual to political. This explains why purity was demanded of all people and members of society, irrespective of the titles they held.

The study also captured the nature and complexity of the interrelationship between the different entities involved in religious ceremonies. At the top were the *orkoiik*, below them were the *maotik* and finally the *tisik*. This was captured from the FGDs, which focused on the nature and delicate relationship between the three entities. As per the FGDs, there was intermediation by the *maotik* and the *Orkoiik* (seers/oracles). This was explained by an 80-year-old male participant at FGD 2:

'During petitions to the seer/oracle, maotiot (intermediary) accompanied two children carrying presents visited the seer/oracle for fortune telling. The seer/oracle would fortune tell to the pororiet through the maotiot (intermediary).'

Therefore, the Nandi traditional religion had a structured system with defined roles and expectations at each level. It is not surprising that the Nandi leaders held both spiritual and political or social roles, since in the community's worldview, there was no separation between the sacred and the secular. This was further corroborated by a participant in the same FGD 2:

'Concerning the question of healers/oracles, married, elderly and esteemed men were selected to partake in the restorative cleansing ritual through the process of restorative justice among the conflicting/warring parties for serious crimes and transgressions such as manslaughter, theft among others. The healer/oracle was selected based on his family heritage and lineage and was acclaimed to bestow blessings to the parties involved. These individuals participated as mediators.'

From the foregoing, it seems marriage was seen as a sign of good standing in society. A married man was thus assigned social duties. In fact, among the Nandi, a young man who takes too long to marry (*songo*) is deemed a failure, necessitating the intervention of the elders who find a wife for him. This explains why the demand for total celibacy in Christianity was incompatible with the Nandi traditional religious worldviews. This is not to say that purity was not esteemed in Nandi traditional beliefs and practices. In clarifying the requirement of purity, a 77-year-old female participant at FGD 1 also observed that:

The religious ceremony was led by an individual selected by the division (pororiet) for exemplary character and behaviour as well as purity (Lipwuop) based on an extensive evaluative process. Once chosen, the individual is elevated to be the tisindet (priest) at the shrine. The priest will conduct the community in the religious ceremony for the pororiet (division) and all the other individuals will assent in unison. The individual was highly esteemed and respected for the performance of the rituals. The lineage of the priest (tisindet) was examined based on the behaviour, exemplary life and purity. The religious ceremony was considered to be holy and pure, thus, the

priest was expected to practise ritual purity. ...The family of Maotik were largely hereditary and were more likely to be sages who were knowledgeable in virtually every other indigenous knowledge system. They only acted as intermediary between the Orkoiyot and the clan elders.

The above excerpt underlines purity as one of the considerations made in selecting a Nandi traditional priest. As shown by the findings, among the Nandi, assigning of specific roles to individuals became a way of ‘detaching’ them in a special way. Priests, for instance, were made to understand the full extent of demands expected from their office, and this included purity. Hollis (1909) also distinguishes the different entities and refers to the other Nandi community leaders as *Kiruogindet* (Spokesman/counsellor) who were chosen from among the people and were the real governors in the community.

Other important information relating to the structure and religious ceremonies of the Nandi community were also noted during the focus group discussions. For instance, a 79-year-old male participant in FGD 2 indicated that every other division held their own indigenous religious ceremonies:

‘The current grounds and church for the Kapkenduiywo Parish of the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret was a shrine (Kapkoros) where the Kakipoch division held their religious ceremonies. The choice of the location was based on the presence of the tree species, Ficus elegans (simotuet), which holds a specific reference in the performance of religious practice. The religious practice involved a procession towards the altar of the shrine passing an erected archway.’

It was typical for the missionary, and later, colonial authorities, to erect churches where the Nandi traditional shrines existed. This was one way to entrench Christianity in the Nandi society by acknowledging the sacredness of certain sites. This also finds support in empirical studies that indicate that the Nandi community was split into locations that largely violated traditional land division patterns along clan systems (Boit, 2024). Huntingford (1935) refers the traditional sub-systems as military divisions while Ellis

(1976) refers to them as territorial units. In total, there were fifteen distinct divisions included: *Cheptol*, *Kakimno*, *Kakipoch*, *Kakiptalam*, *Kamelilo*, *Kapchepkendi*, *Kapianga*, *Kapsile*, *Kapsiondoi*, *Kaptumoiis*, *Kimng'oror*, *Koileke*, *Murk ap Tuk*, *Parsieny*, *Tepingot*, and *Tuken* (Huntingford, 1935; Hollis, 1909). These names are, in fact, names of Nandi clans.

Other important religious elements in traditional Nandi society included the belief that the human soul is embodied in a person's shadow and, after death, the shadows of both good and bad people went underground and lived there (Hollis, 1909). Thus, the naming ceremony for a new-born child was based on the calling of the *oiik* (the spirits of the departed ancestors) and adult relations. These spirits were believed to be responsible for sickness and death and the Nandi prayed and appealed to them with sacrifices and propitiations in form of with milk, beer and food where necessary.

Empirical studies have highlighted the importance of the rites, rituals and festivals that were led by an eminent priest or a religious man in the African traditional societies. Among the Yoruba, for instance, the high priests from the *shango* was tasked with the performance of rituals and rites during religious festivals and ceremonies (Frobenius, 1913). Similarly, *Dibia* (diviner) refers to a priest in the traditional Igbo community in Nigeria (Jegade, 2015). Among the Nandi community, the high priest was referred to as the *Orkoiyot* (Ellis, 1976), but there was a general misunderstanding of the role of the *Orkoiyot* in the Nandi community. This confusion stems partly from the fact that the *Orkoiyot* was the unifying force, being both a spiritual and political leader of the Nandi. In the African indigenous shrines, there were different priests whose roles largely differed. For instance, older menopausal women acted as traditional healers (*n'anga*), and spirit mediums (*masvikiro*) in the shrines among the Shona community in Zimbabwe (Zvingowanisei, 2024). Menopause signalled the cessation

of sex as a reproductive function, and such abstinence for traditional societies was synonymous with moral purity.

In the African religious traditions, rites, rituals and festivals constituted some vital elements in the expression, experience and practice of indigenous religion (Jegede, 2015). The *Okija* shrine in Anambra state and the *Osun* shrine in *Osogbo* indicate the importance of shrines and sovereignty in indigenous African religions. Jegede mentions the use of plants, invocation incantation and songs during the prayers. The shrines possess a unifying force, as they bound the community together. Thus, the shrines represented meeting points of the human, the natural and spiritual entities (Ogungbile, 2015), which also signalled socio-cultural unity and harmony. Many indigenous African shrines (*Imoka, Akputakpu, Ngene* among others) found in Nigeria were largely maintained by indigenous priests (Ngozi, 2016). Such specialization imbued a unique detachment to these priests that may be construed as a degree of celibate living.

Equally, Lugira (2009) highlights the indigenous religious practices of the Agikuyu of Kenya. In the address to the Gods, the Kikuyu elders gathered people around a sacred tree with a procession being led by two children a boy and a girl. The boy carried a calabash or a gourd filled with milk while the girl carries a calabash full of honey-beer. A lamb follows them and last comes the elders. When the procession reaches the base of the sacred tree, the lead elder takes the calabashes from the children. He then raises the calabashes while addressing God in their prayers and offering the oblation sacrifices.

The observations from the FGDs indicate that the indigenous Nandi society held unique religious worldviews. These worldviews were underpinned by virtuous living and primarily centred on deity *Asis*. Additionally, indigenous priests led or officiated in the

Nandi traditional religious rites. These findings reiterate the view by Madukasi (2023) that African indigenous religious systems and their attendant ceremonies were ritualistic and that the ritualistic ceremonies had social dimensions to them. The next section examines closely the sacerdotal practices of the indigenous Nandi as a precursor to examining the perspectives on and practice of celibacy in the community.

3.2.2 Indigenous Nandi Sacerdotal Practises

This sub-section presents findings from the FGDs on the sacerdotalism in the indigenous Nandi society. Sacerdotalism is the practise of ritual purity before any religious ceremony (Prince, 1992). The observations from the FGDs indicated that the Nandi community highly esteemed ritual purity during religious ceremonies. This perspective emerged in the discussion on the indigenous Nandi religious worldview. An 80-year-old male participant in FGD 3, described the position of the high priest thus:

'The community had a specific position, referred to as tisindet (indigenous priest) that was similar to the priest who would perform the religious rituals on behalf of the pororiet. The said 'priest' was always called to action during the indigenous religious ceremony to handle any religious activity in the pororiet or the community at large. The religious ceremony was considered to be holy and pure, thus, the priest was expected to practise ritual purity. The lineage of the priest (tisindet) was examined based on the behaviour, exemplary life and purity. The tisik (priest) was chosen from among married men, behaviour, specific lineage, sagacious, bold and knowledgeable. They were considered to be 'lipwuop'.'

Further, an 83-year male participant in the same FGD 3 also concurred with the observation and provide further information regarding ritual purity in religious ceremonies by making the following observation:

'The religious ceremony was led by an individual selected by the division (pororiet) for exemplary character and behaviour as well as purity (Lipwuop) based on an extensive evaluative process. Once chosen, the individual is elevated to be the tisindet (priest) at the shrine. The priest will conduct the ceremony for the pororiet (division)

or the community and all the other individuals will be assenting in unison. The individual was highly esteemed and respected for the performance of the rituals.'

On the meaning of the term 'lipwuop', the following was adduced in an interview with Adventist minister:

The person who is 'lipwuop' was married at the first instance and had sired boys and girls. In particular, the individuals who sired boys at the first instance and led an exemplary marriage and family life were given the first consideration in any communal responsibility. The person, his wife and family displayed good behaviour in private as well as public life. The individual was considered to be 'lipwuop' and thus became a candidate for selection to leading roles in the community such as being the indigenous priest in the Kapkoros (shrine), and other communal responsibilities. Other important attributes were; free from any blemish such as battery, adultery, parental neglect, and other forms of transgression at all levels. A person who encountered misfortunes like losing a child among other things or was impoverished or quarrelsome or hot-tempered was not considered 'Lipwuop'.

From the above remarks, it is clear that the priestly office was highly esteemed in traditional Nandi community. Further distinction with regard to religious ceremony and ritual purity was also expressed in FGD 2 by a 79-year-old male participant:

'The religious ceremony was largely led by specially anointed individuals from families who were lipwuop and were drawn from specific families for the different divisions (pororiosiek). For instance, the priest for the Kakipoch division was drawn from the KapLel family of the Sirgoi clan, while the one for the Kapsile division was drawn from the KapAyego family.'

Being *Lipwuop* thus signalled purity. This purity was evidenced by a man's show of hard work and responsibility, first, to his family and then to the community. During the discussion on indigenous religious ceremony in FGD 2, a 79-year-old male participant described particular nature of the indigenous religious ceremony in the following observation:

'The religious ceremony was held every four years and occurred after a season of bumper harvest. First, the Kapkoros are preceded by the collection of 'tongoanik' or oblatinal offerings throughout each pororiet and not the whole community. During this ceremony, the

leading pororiet would actively participate in the collection of oblatinal offerings, lead the religious procession, and partake in every other activity required of the religious ceremony while the other divisions (pororiosiek) would be passive observers of the religious ceremony. They would only respond to the religious chants and observe.'

In elaborating further on the two classes of indigenous priest, a 79-year male participant in the same FGD 2 concurred with the fellow participant and justified the presence of an indigenous priest in the indigenous religious ceremony as follows:

'There were two types of priests who presided at the shrines. Some priests presided over religious ceremonies for blessings such as bountiful harvests and successful forages into other communities and there were ones who presided over religious ceremonies for misfortunes such as droughts, hunger, epidemics and failures in foraging wars.'

Whatever the role, a priest was expected to observe ritual purity. In a rejoinder, a 63-year-old priest interviewed (ordained in 1985) also affirmed that assertion that the Nandi had an indigenous priest:

'The community also had a priest (tisindet) for the performance of religious ceremonies. The individuals chosen to be priests (tisik) were to set themselves aside from the community to fully concentrate on religious ceremony.'

The above interviewees affirmed the value of spiritual detachment that enabled a priest to more clearly see and pursue their vocation. These observations concurrently indicate the presence of an indigenous priest who observed ritual purity before leading the religious ceremony. This is indicative of the sacerdotalism in the indigenous religious ceremony of the Nandi. Similar findings have been reported by several studies that allude to the presence of an indigenous priests in traditional African religious settings (Frobenius, 1913; Jegede, 2015; Ogungbile, 2015). Ngozi (2016) observes that the religious ceremonies were led by an indigenous priest who had many roles and responsibilities. Precisely, after being chosen to serve as a priest, such a person is mandated to reside in the shrine. During the isolation period, one would be initiated

into the cult of the divinity under the tutelage of an aged priest. Wubbels (2011) also alludes to the ritual purity during the African indigenous religious practices and this required the seers and oracles to have sexual abstinence during their religious practices in shrines. Seen from this perspective, one can say that celibacy was not a totally strange concept for indigenous African believers.

Ritual purity is found in certain religious doctrines of many African communities which endorse celibacy as a spiritual discipline. While not permanent celibacy, such practices reflect a cultural adaptation of biological drives to spiritual goals (Ahmed, 2020). In many traditional African societies, a man's status and a woman's security are tied to their reproductive roles; thus, prolonged celibacy can lead to social ostracization or even grounds for divorce or polygamous remarriage (Oyewumi, 2003). The biological drive for sex, therefore, is not merely physiological but is culturally encoded as a marker of identity, power, and legitimacy.

In many African communities, sexuality is not viewed as a private or individual matter but as a public and relational phenomenon embedded within kinship networks and communal responsibilities (Mbiti, 1990). Marriage is socially constructed as the only legitimate arena for sexual expression. Unmarried individuals, particularly women, who engage in sexual activity outside marriage are often stigmatized, while those who remain celibate past socially expected ages may be seen as deviant or incomplete (Nukunya, 2003). Thus, the moral and social acceptability of sexuality is conditional upon marital status, reinforcing marriage as a rite of passage into full adulthood.

From a social constructionist standpoint, the emphasis on marriage is maintained through cultural narratives, rituals, and institutional practices that frame procreation and family formation as essential components of personal and communal identity (Uchendu,

1965). These rituals construct marriage not merely as a personal choice but as a socially mandated role tied to honor, duty, and belonging. Celibacy, especially when voluntary and prolonged, disrupts these socially scripted life stages and is therefore discouraged or pathologized. The social constructionist theory illuminates how marriage in African societies is upheld as the primary and legitimate framework for human sexuality through cultural, religious, and institutional mechanisms. Sexuality is not seen as an isolated biological urge but as a socially managed force that must be directed toward marriage to ensure social harmony, continuity, and identity. Celibacy, while occasionally accepted in religious vocations, is generally constructed as abnormal, unnatural, or undesirable for the majority. Therefore, within the African sociocultural context, marriage remains a powerful social construct that legitimizes sexuality, while celibacy is marginalized as inconsistent with communal expectations and life-cycle norms.

The FGDs also provided a detailed view of the unique indigenous religious ceremonies that were undertaken at the *Kapkoros* shrine that took the sacerdotal format. The participants highlighted the nature of the indigenous sacerdotal practises. For example, an 83-year-old male participant from FGD 2 had this to say:

'During the ceremony, a specific tree species 'simotuet' (Scientific name: Ficus elegans) was used. Huntingford (1935) alludes to the use of this species during the religious rituals of Mogoiywet (Scientific name: Ficus sycomorus), and Huntingford (1935) alludes to the use of this tree for holding clan meetings. The specific attributes of the Ficus elegans can support the growth of other tree species (but not the parasitic types (Mandoywet) while Ficus elegans produces milky sap and at some point, its trunk splits to create an archway in its trunk. The indigenous religious ceremony used the Ficus elegans in the shrine as it produces milky sap and this was symbolic of the beliefs of the providence.'

The same viewpoint was reinforced by 80-year-old male participant in the same FGD.

'The ceremony was only initiated when the location that has a specified tree species, Ficus elegans with the desired attributes have been identified in a specific division and thus the Kapkoros would be held by that pororiet. The remaining pororoisiek (15 in number) would only be passive participants while the leading pororiet would actively participate in indigenous religious procession carrying the oblatinal offerings. During the ceremony, the procession included an esteemed and respected leading celebrant man (boiyop-tum) and his deputy, a virgin boy and girl, 12 warriors and men who were 'lipwuop'. The oblatinal offering includes salt and milk, grains and female lambs among other oblations.'

'The ceremony began with the setting up of a specific symbolic artefact (korosek) which is a collection of branches of representative tree species and herbal vegetation tied together and fixed upright on the ground and smeared with cow dung followed by religious-theme chanting. This was then followed by a leading prayer by the main celebrant while being assisted by his able deputy before the lighting of the fire upon which the grains are burnt by the celebrant to produce a smoke that is awaited to rise straight into the sky(heaven) while the whole community squats and wait for the smoke to rise. If the smoke rises straight into the sky, the main celebrant initiates the main ceremony with the warriors(murenik) starting religiously-themed chanting followed by the blowing of a special horn (iryaget) four times.'

'Once the iryaget (horn made from buffalo's horn) had been blown, the religious procession proceeds forward towards the entrance of the shrine passing beneath the archway with the boy on the right and the girl on the left using flywhisks to sprinkle a mixture of milk and tradition brew on the warriors who are standing in a guard of honour formation facing each other (considered as blessing). This is then followed by the 'Kambakta' dance where the warriors sing, dance and croon with the horn blown four times. The procession with oblatinal offerings passed in between the warriors standing guard four times and once the procession ended, four senior male community members stood to offer prayers for different petitions such as livelihood, productivity, foraging battles etc. After the Kambakta dance, the warriors are clustered into different divisions to be sent to different regions. If the smoke fails to rise and is blown away by the wind, the whole ceremony is postponed to another day. The community believed that this was a bad omen.'

'The shrine had an entry and an exit and thus participants would enter the altar of the shrine from one direction facing the rising sun before exiting in another direction. Nobody was to turn back at any moment or exit with his back towards the altar of the shrine.'

The above remarks attest to the fact that the Nandi traditional religion had an elaborate and structured system, much like the Christian church with different hierarchies in place. The indigenous religious systems also had clearly defined processes and responsibilities. Further information was drawn from a 75-year-old male participant in FGD 3 who concurred with the participants in FGD 2 while provided further description on the indigenous system of undertaking a religious ceremony in traditional Nandi:

'Before the Kapkoros ceremony, the two young teens (of shepherding age) were chosen based on their purity to represent the community at the religious ceremony. The indigenous religious ceremony in the Nandi Community involved a procession of individuals of different groups such as warriors, senior men, and teenagers at a specific location (shrine) in order of juniority. The procession was led by two teens (boy and girl), followed by teenagers (of shepherding age), followed by warriors and lastly senior men. At the ceremony, ritual purity was paramount and duly observed. The young teens leading the procession were considered to be chaste and pure from any transgression at first instance. During the annual bountiful harvest, the pororiet brought oblatory offerings such as cereal grains to the shrine to be blessed and all petitions were centred towards blessings.'

Again, the above respondent mentions ritual purity as a mandatory requirement for anyone, including teens, partaking in religious ceremonies. Similar viewpoint was shared by a 41-year-old priest (from FGD 4 ordained in 2009) as follows:

During the procession at the religious rituals, there were categories of young men and women (melilik) who led the procession into the shrine and were expected to be pure in spirit and heart as these religious activities involved sacrifices.

From previous studies, Hollis (1935) has also described the process and procedures followed during the indigenous religious ceremony at the Kapkoros shrine. Each *pororiet* held its thanksgiving ceremony after the harvest. During the ceremony, a large bonfire made up of *emdit* (Scientific name: *Olea chrysophila*) and *tegat* (Scientific name: *Arundinaria alpina*) was lit and then *lapotuet* (Scientific name: *Solanum campylanthum*) and *kemeliet* (Scientific name: *Calodendron capense*) shrubs were

thrown in and when there was a big blaze *simotuet* (Scientific name: *Ficus elegans*), wood was cast onto the fire. The warriors (*murenik*) filed past through the archway, old men standing at the archway, took a little milk and beer in their mouth and spat on them as a sign of blessing. This activity was then followed by the *Kambakta* dance performed by the warriors.

It is evident that priests were the chief leaders or officiators of religious ceremonies in traditional Nandi. The historical account of the indigenous religious ceremony provides a key feature of sacerdotalism, which is a significant component in religious ceremony. Sadly, the historical perspective of the ceremony, as observed by Ellis (1976), indicates that the indigenous religious rituals at *Kapkoros* shrines ended in the 1920s with the banishment of the *Orkoiyot* office in 1923. Between 1922 and 1923, the colonial government observed that the activities of the *Talai* clan (referred to by missionaries and colonial authorities as witchdoctors) had significantly increased. By 1923, Barsirian arap Manyei had become the most powerful *Orkoiyot* in Nandi after his father Koitaleel Araap Samoei, whose influence had greatly fuelled the famous Nandi resistance of colonial incursion. The colonial government had allowed the *saket-ap-eito* ceremony to take place weeks before, then deported the *Orkoiyot*, Barsirian arap Manyei (1882-1974) on the eve of the ceremony in 1923 to Meru to forestall the ceremony (Ellis, 1976).

The sad ending of the indigenous Nandi religious ceremony was also ushered in by colonial forces. This was substantiated by a 75-year-old male participant in FGD 2 who confirmed that:

‘The colonial authorities viewed the Talai clan as a threat to their dominance and colonialism because of the ability to bring the Nandi community together even after the killing of the Orkoiyot Koitaleel Araap Samoei. During the early colonial era of the 1920s, it was

alleged, that the colonial government stopped the transitioning of the age-set ceremony (Saget-ap-eito) which was to occur in 1922. Later on, the community held an indigenous religious ceremony in 1926/27 and that was the last Kapkoros ceremony held as the colonial government outlawed all the customary and religious ceremonies, while detaining and interning the last Orkoiyot Barsirian araap Manyei (the second-born son of Koitaleel Araap Samoei).'

In concurring with the fellow discussant, a 79-year-old male participant in the same FGD provided a historical account of the last indigenous Nandi religious ceremony that was held in the year 1926/25:

'The last Kapkoros was last held in 1926/27 in the Nyongi age set where the age set was the senior community members controlling the fortunes of the community. Each division (pororiet) had its shrine and the shrine at the Kapkenduwo belonged to the Kakipoch division. In each religious ceremony, a priest (tistik) was selected to lead the ceremony as has been the tradition. There was a shrine in Kapkeben in Kaptumo which belonged to all divisions of the community attended and this was led by several priests (tistik).'

As the discussion proceeded, more discussant contributed the topic as indicated by an 83-year-old male participant in the same FGD 2 who shed light on the history of the relocation and resettlement of the seers/oracles in the Kapsisiywa location:

'It was also during this time that the colonial government relocated all the seers/oracles from the talai clan to one location (Kapsisiywa) to gain control of the whole community. The colonial government considered the seers/oracles an impediment to the social change (Christianity) and development progress they were seeking to introduce to the community.'

Based on these views, one can argue that the meddling of colonial authorities in the religious affairs of the Nandi may have slowed down the spread of Christianity in the area. The indigenous Nandi society also underpinned their cultural and communal festivals with religious rituals and cultural ceremonies, as deduced by Madukasi (2023). This was evidenced by the explanation on the inter-generational transfer ceremony between the different age sets which also called for ritual purity as drawn from an 84-year-old male participant in the same FGD 2:

During the generational transfer, everyone attended the Kapkoros ceremony led by an elder. The ceremony was held in an enclosure with each group (young, men, warriors, elderly, girls) being apportioned a specific place to sit. Traditional brew and porridge were taken by the different groups.

At the entrance of the shrine, an arc-like gateway structure was constructed and this served as the entrance to the shrine. Several old men used the flywhisk to sprinkle a mixture of milk and cultural brew on the warriors as a sign of blessing as they entered the shrine. The procession continues forward toward the centre of the shrine until the shrine is full. The ceremony continues throughout the night.

As such, the disruption of the Nandi religious order also meant a disruption of their culture and social structure. Over time, many of the indigenous Nandi religious ceremonies, rites and rituals were lost as a result of colonial proscriptions and banishment of Orkoiyot Barserian Araap manyei and the forceful relocation of the clan of oracle. This upended the principal indigenous religious ceremonies at Kapkoros and fostered the spread of Christianity, as indicated by 78-year male participant in FGD 3:

'The proscription of the indigenous ceremonies (Kapkoros) has resulted in the gradual movement towards the church to replace the spiritual needs of the community. At some point, the indigenous religious practice got eroded and was lost forever between the generations of Nyongi and Maina age sets, and thus Chumo could have only heard about the indigenous religious ceremony (Kapkoros). Onwards from the Sawe age-set, Christianity gradually replaced the indigenous religious practice and the community largely was inclined to hold the basic beliefs such as the morning devotion of facing the rising sun and saying some prayers.

Since then, there have been drastic changes in the communal value systems that have been eroded and this has been witnessed by the transgressions against the natural and customary laws. This sustenance of the customary value systems has been made possible by the spread of Christianity and in particular the Catholic Church. The Catholic church is the only institution that is enabling the observance of the natural and customary laws within the community and is providing guidance on desirable and exemplary life for the community.'

In the end, the spread of Christianity in the Nandi society led to the loss of indigenous religious ceremonies, rites and rituals held at Kapkoros Shrine. This end signalled a

new chapter in the Nandi community, which has slowly accepted Christianity and values but still draws more of the values from the virtuous living.

3.3 Celibacy as a Practice among the Nandi Community

The study results revealed that celibacy per se, as a long-term custom and lifestyle choice, was not frowned upon in traditional Nandi. While sexual relationships were regarded as symbolic of the continuity of life, they were also considered a form of physical and spiritual impurity during the performance of indigenous rites or rituals. As such, sexual relations were highly regulated with various cultural and religious norms and taboos. The section discusses the instances where ritual purity was mandatory, circumcision ceremonies where sexual abstinence as a cultural norm of observance of chastity and distaste for celibate individuals as a customary norm.

3.3.1 Ritual Purity during Indigenous Religious Rituals and Ceremonies

The observations from the FGDs indicated that the Nandi community required ritual purity from the celebrants of religious ceremonies, ritual or rites. The celebrants were to abstain from sexual relationships for a specific time before leading the community in a religious function. From the responses in the study, ritual purity, first, required exemplary and virtuous living (*lipwuop*) and, secondly, the avoidance/abstinence of the sexual relationships for specific periods before the ceremony, rite or ritual. This was informed by several participants in the different FGDs starting with a 40-year-old priest (ordained in 2006) who observed that:

It was customary for the community to select leaders who were married with exemplary and virtuous living (lipwuop). During the kapkoros religious ceremony, the indigenous priests (tisik) were obligated to abstain from sexual intercourse and practise ritual purity for the performance of the religious ceremony at the altar to make their sacrifices worthy.

The above excerpt shows that marriage was esteemed as a sign of personal responsibility. However, ritual purity or sexual abstinence was also required from married priests. As observed from the interview with a sixty-year-old priest (ordained in 1988) who clarified that:

Specific individuals were required to practise sexual abstinence such as partaking in the oblatinal offerings in the shrines (Kapkoros). Not everyone was chosen to lead the community in the prayers at the Kapkoros (Shrine) as it required sexual abstinence for a specific period before the religious rituals. The sacrificed lamb offered to the deity in the Kapkoros was white and without blemish (as a sign of purity) and believed it was acceptable to God.

It must be noted that while traditional Nandi priests had to meet special requirements of purity especially during performance of ritual, virtuosity was demanded from every member and ensured throughout the entire community. The issue of ritual purity during indigenous ceremonies, rites or ritual was observed by an 84-year-old male participant in FGD 2:

The indigenous priest would be purified through seclusion to be purged of the sins and thus become pure. The indigenous priest (tisik) was to observe ritual purity and be free from any sin or transgression during the performance of religious rituals. It was expected that the whole community could verify his purity. Anyone could attest to the purity of the indigenous priest (tisik) before the ritual performance of the religious ceremony.

In support of the ritual purity, a senior Anglican prelate, in an interview, shared a similar viewpoint as that obtained from the FGDs:

From the indigenous practices of the Nandi community, the priest was a person who was considered to be 'lipwuop' and this has to do with purity, holiness and being free of any defilement. The Anglican Church encountered a Nandi cultural perspective which had their sexuality views within the confines of sponsors (matirenik), priest (tisik) and vocation among others which obligated self-sacrifice to mentor others. A priest is a mentor to the community and thus desires respect. In normal circumstances and during thanksgiving for bountiful harvests, and successful foraging raids, an indigenous priest who led the prayers was expected to practise sexual purity before leading the community in offering sacrifices in the shrine.

The foregoing discussion on ritual purity focussed on the times when the fortunes of the community were good. However, in times of struggles, such as calamities, epidemics and catastrophes, the community always groomed a celibate person who was tasked with oblatinal sacrifices at the shrine. An 83-year man in FGD 1 made the following observations to the presence of a celibate individual called ‘*kiborenatiot*’ among the family of the indigenous priest:

‘A closely knitted family were largely designated indigenous priest or ‘tisik’ and only specific individuals were particularly chosen to participate in the reconciliation and healing of any crimes or sins against humanity (manslaughter, transgressions against sacred customs), foraging wars, natural calamities any epidemics. This family lived within the community and were only consulted for the reconciliation and healing processes either collective as a family unit or communal. It is from the family that a celibate individual was groomed separately and was to observe celibacy until the performance of the community healing ritual.’

This was corroborated by a 36-year-old priest (Ordained in 2013) in FGD 4 alluded to the presence of a celibate individual (*kiboretaniot*) tasked with oblatinal offerings:

‘Concerning, the Nandi Indigenous culture, I once interviewed an old male participant during the eve of my ordination who told me about the indigenous religious ceremony, Kapkoros. During the oblatinal offerings, a celibate individual referred to as ‘kiboretaniot’ was tasked with the oblatinal offerings so that the offering could be worthy in the eyes of the Supreme Being. The celibate individual represented the ritual purity required of sacerdotalism so that he doesn’t blemish the offerings because he is untainted. This scenario could have only occurred during calamities such as drought, thus the ritual purity of the individual was believed to be acceptable to their Supreme being.’

Going by the above sentiments, one may argue that in times of calamities the Nandi raised the bar on celibacy or ritual purity, perhaps to ensure the rituals are effective in ridding the community of misfortunes. In support of the earlier observation on ritual purity from FGD 4, 48-year-old priest (ordained in 2011) further elaborated on the issue:

However, during wars, droughts, epidemics and other community-wide calamities, the community selected a celibate man (kiborenatiot) to offer oblatinal sacrifices as he was considered to be pure from blemish. Kiborenatiot, a celibate individual found in Kapkoros (shrine), was tasked with offering sacrifices during turbulent times and catastrophes. It was not just every other who could preside over the indigenous religious ceremonies in the Kapkoros shrine, as it was the reserve of specific families. The families then chose a specific individual who was to remain celibate for the performance of the religious activities in the Kapkoros (shrine). The individuals were identified and nurtured to offer sacrifices in the Kapkoros_(shrine) which was similar to the Levitical priest in the Bible.

Kiborenatiot was therefore a special kind of priesthood as it was marked by perpetual celibacy. In the same FGD, a 47-year-old priest (ordained in 2000) also affirmed the present of the celibate individuals in the religious ceremony by commenting on the discussion as follows:

The Ogiek community (the community that permanently resided in the forest) had a celibate individual who was celibate (kiboreniat) whose main responsibilities was to lead the community in prayers during the religious ceremonies specifically to ward off calamities and bad omens.

The study findings presented in this section indicate that the observance of ritual purity before any indigenous ceremony was a norm in the indigenous Nandi community. Most importantly, purity was demanded of every member of the society, especially since the Nandi did not demarcate between the sacred and the secular. The findings also showed that various contextual circumstances required ritual purity for the performance of indigenous religious ceremonies. A study in Asia has revealed that some indigenous communities required a period of sexual abstinence from upto one year both on land and at sea to about three months before the ceremony for priests and village leaders, to invoke the protection of the Creator during the indigenous *mane'e* ceremony (Laira, 2016). Aliyudin *et al.* (2020) similarly report that the *Ngalaksa* indigenous religious ceremonies in Indonesia required purity from any sexual intercourse between couples who participated in the ceremony. Likewise, women in their menses were not allowed

to participate directly in the ceremony, although they could be allowed to partake in related dances.

3.3.2 Sexual abstinence during Indigenous Rituals and Ceremonies

The study further interrogated the nature of sexual abstinence during indigenous ceremonies among the Nandi. As observed from the FGDs, religious ceremonies required periodic abstinence from sexual intercourse, which was concerned with the customary religious beliefs of ritual purity. The discussion on sexual abstinence was initiated by an 80-year-old male discussant in FGD 1. He observed that:

During the circumcision ceremonies of both girls and boys, the process involved the selection of a 'sponsor' and a mentor the young initiates into adulthood and during this time, the 'sponsor' couple were not to engage in any form of sexual relationship during the circumcision period. Furthermore, during circumcision ceremonies, the sponsors (matirenik) were to seclude themselves and practise ritual purity for them to guide the young initiates and make the sacrifices worthy and acceptable by men.'

In a rejoinder, a 77-year-old male participant in FGD 1 added thus:

'During circumcision, it was considered taboo for the sponsors to engage in any physical sexual relations because it was believed that the physical sexual activity was polluting the whole religious ceremony. The ceremony has both traditional customary and religious viewpoints which was followed to the letter during the circumcision as well as marriage ceremonies. Any individual who had engaged in physical sexual relations was to be prohibited from participating in any circumcision ceremony. The community believed the circumcision and marriage ceremony to be holy and this formed the religious aspect of the customary circumcision ceremony.'

During the circumcision period, the young initiates were expected to confess sins that they had committed during their lives. The most significant sin expected was any physical relationship that they have had in their lives. The initiates underwent rituals and confessed to every other sin before the customary ritualistic religious activity was undertaken. In the same instance, any other individuals who had engaged in a physical sexual relation were prohibited from participating in the ritualistic religious tradition of circumcisions.'

It is interesting that sex, even in the context of marriage, was perceived as a form of impurity by the Nandi community during the religious rituals, similar to many

traditional or indigenous cultures and religions. No other form of ritual purity has become the subject of cultural and religious taboos than that of one's sexual acts. In Christianity, sexual purity is emphasized because the body is considered the temple of the Holy Spirit. Sexual purity is also symbolic of the detachment of the spiritual from the physical or carnal, which is a necessary state of being for one to embrace priesthood as a Christian monk. As the discussion proceeded, more discussants contributed to the issue of ritual purity and one discussant touched on the matters regarding ritual symbolism as indicated by an 80-year-old male participant in the same FGD 1:

'During the indigenous marriage process, a significant ritual symbolism process was the shaving of both the groom and bride's hair and subsequent ritual entombment of the shaven hair was to indicate a union between the parties. Within the same context, the young men and women who were to be circumcised were to be cleaned and shaven and the hair was entombed in a symbolic ritual artefact called 'korosiot' that was assembled on the ground near the ceremony.'

The ritual described above parallels the Christian understanding of marriage, and the ultimate consummation of marriage in sex, as the union of two spirits through a physical expression. Similar viewpoints on sexual abstinence were observed in FGD 3 as recounted by an 83-year-old:

'The sponsor (matiriot) of the initiates was prohibited from attending to the marital duties to preserve purity for the performance of rituals. In the pre-independence period, the initiates would spend around six months in seclusion before they became the defenders of the community. It was decreed that purity was observed maintained during the circumcision period as the sponsor would be considered impure once, he has accented to sexual relations. The sponsor was to abstain from any sexual relations during the circumcision period. The sponsor (motiriot) of the initiates was supposed to start abstaining from any sexual relationship once he had acquiesced to become the sponsor of the initiates. The timing began with the preparations for the circumcision ceremony with the building of the seclusion area (menjet). The sponsor would observe purity at all times and ensure that he does not sin at any one moment.'

Adding to the same discussion, 79-year-old female participant in FGD 3 observed that:

'The sponsor (matiriot) was not allowed to go home and was expected to abstain from any sexual relationship during the initiation period. The parents of the initiate demanded that they abstain from any sexual relations until the initiates completed the ceremonies. Purity was paramount during the circumcision ceremonies until the sons had completed the seclusion. The sponsor was to maintain good behaviour and observe purity (Lipwuop).'

As more discussants in the same FGD contributed to the topic with a 77-year-old female participant rejoined the discussion by stating that; *'The parents were to immediately start abstaining from the sexual relationship from the first day of preparations until the initiates come of age.'*

Though the FGDs were different, the discussions on ritual purity seem to converge to one common theme of the obligation of ritual purity as observed by an 84-year-old male discussant in FGD 2:

'The sponsor (matiriot) is a mentor to the initiate as he took over the initiates and mentored them for a period of six months. The sponsor for the circumcision of the young men into adulthood was carefully selected six months before with their father's permission. The circumcision period was a special activity that required purity from sexual intimacies. The sponsor is supposed to be married with children, properly – behaved, esteemed and free from blemish or everyday transgressions against fellow humans. In particular, the period chosen was to enable the individual to practice transitory celibate life where he is supposed to deny himself sexual gratification for the period during the seclusion of the initiates and the fulfilment of the desired objective of circumcision rites.'

'The community expected the sponsor (matiriot) to take off the initiates and abstain from any physical sexual activity until the initiates have healed. The sponsor was to maintain the state of purity and this was believed to impair the healing and wellbeing of the initiates. The wife of the sponsor was also supposed to abstain during this circumcision period as any physical sexual intimacy would consequently affect the overall health and wellbeing of the initiates. The sponsor and his partner were expected to seek absolution of sins on their own accord by confessing to one another charting a new part of mentorship and being exemplary in family life. Promiscuous individuals were not to be chosen or allowed to become sponsors.'

Further, the discussion also brought forth the issue of personal sacrifice on the requirement of abstinence. In contributing to the earlier comment on the obligation of ritual purity by a fellow discussant, a 76-year-old female participant in the same FGD also affirmed that:

'In the same case, the parents of the initiates were expected to abstain from any physical sexual relations during the circumcision period until the initiates had come of age into adulthood. They were expected to partake in purity from any transgressions. It was a norm that sexual relationship between the partner and the sponsor (matiriot) was not acceptable during the circumcision period of the young men.'

It is evident that different levels of purity or sexual abstinence was practised in indigenous Nandi ceremonies and rituals. The duration and gravity of sexual abstinence depended on the nature and function of the impending ritual.

As the discussions went on, more and more important aspects and considerations were brought forth by the discussants. For instance, it emerged in FGD 1 that when it came to the issue of ritual purity, women of child-bearing age were considered unclean and polluted. This important consideration was made an 83-year-old female participant:

'Married women of childbearing age were considered unclean because of the menstrual flow. The community believed that as long as a woman was still of childbearing age of age, she was a significant source of pollution during any customary and religious ceremonies of circumcision and marriage.'

Just like sexual acts, menstruation is also historically treated with many taboos in many cultures. The same observation was further elaborated by a 79-year-old female participant in the same FGD:

'The community held purity on a higher end with women of reproductive age being considered impure during their menstruation period. The community believed that women of reproductive age were impure at all times thus they were restricted from interacting with adult men to prevent pollution. Secondly, unmarried individuals were barred from participating in religious ceremonies or rituals.'

It was unclear in the study why menstruation was considered an impurity among the Nandi. However, the implications for flouting the norms of purity by women in reproductive age were severe. It was decreed that any maternal parent (mother or guardian) who exhibited imprudence in her lifestyle was prohibited from participating in any indigenous rites of ceremony. This was revealed in the following remarks by a 75-year-old female participant in FGD 2:

'If the mother of the initiate is known to transgress against the laws of nature and marriage life (slanderer, licentious and ill-tempered), her sons will undergo circumcision rites not in their home but the home of a close paternal relative to pre-empt any misfortune that might befall the initiates traceable to her behaviour.'

As the discussion went on, the discussants also raised the issue of the observance of ritual purity before and during foraging raids because the warriors were blessed by a indigenous priest before commencing the foraging raids. The warriors were to abstain from sex before foraging or going for raids. This was observed from a 77-year-old male participant in the FGD 2:

'The warriors were expected to maintain sexual purity before embarking on hunting, raiding or war. Any active participant was supposed to abstain from any sexual relations for several days before attending a religious ceremony, circumcision ceremony and marriage ceremony. This was supposed to prevent any impurities arising from sexual relations in soiling the purity of the human being.'

From the aforementioned discussion in the FGD 1, 2 and 3, it is clear that religious ceremonies were occasions when the young men and warriors could be taught about moral values and the importance of purity. This partly explains why the adults involved in such ceremonies had to be models of purity. In support of the viewpoints from the community FGDs, the catholic priest in FGD 4 also shared their views on sexual abstinence during indigenous ceremonies in Nandi. For instance, a 41-year-old priest (Ordained in 2009) also concurred and state the following:

From a cultural viewpoint, there was accepted sexual abstinence during religious and customary practices such as circumcision ceremonies. For instance, sexual abstinence was also expected of the warriors (murenik) who had to go to the foraging wars and had to be secluded for several months before the foraging wars.

More discussants delved into the issue as indicated by the 38-year-old priest (Ordained in 2011) who indicated that

Celibacy in the indigenous Nandi Community was not accepted but, in some instances, men were asked to practice continence during specific ceremonies.

In support, a 36-year-old priest (ordained in 2011) made the following observation:

'In the indigenous Nandi culture, the saying 'Makiteschin tum kessesnot' culturally dictated that the sponsor (matiriot) and celebrant (boiyop - tum) were not to engage in sexual activity all through the seclusion period. The initiates were undergoing a period of transition and therefore the sponsor was to remain with them for that seclusion period and abstain from any sexual contact.'

Though there were contextual differences between interviews and FGDs, the study observed common thematic areas of discussion as indicated from the interviews. For instance, in an interview, a 63-year-old priest (ordained in 1985) also affirmed that the Nandi community cherished sexual abstinence:

'The Nandi community cherished celibacy from the following perspectives: Loved and accepted sanctity. Every customary ceremony that was performed was guided by a sponsor (matiriot) who had to observe purity by continence for a minimum of two weeks to a period of four months to remain pure and untainted during the ceremony period. This is considered a sacrifice of one's responsibilities to be ritually pure during the ceremony. The community didn't like blemish (simndo) during the customary ceremonies including religious ceremonies.'

In addition, a 60-year-old priest (Ordained in 1988) also affirmed on the sexual abstinence practise in one – on – one interview:

Celibacy was partially accepted by the Nandi community for specific reasons that include the performance of specific indigenous roles such as religious ceremonies, rites and rituals.'

Similar viewpoints were expressed by the Adventist minister who acknowledge the practise of sexual abstinence during indigenous ceremonies:

'The matiriot (sponsors) for the young initiates was a married person who 'lipwuop' and was exemplary in marriage and family life. The community always looked to the initiates having gained knowledge and skills to enable them to live an exemplary life from their sponsors.'

During the interview, the senior Anglican prelate remarked on the sexual abstinence practise among the indigenous Nandi community:

'The matiriot (sponsor) was to abscond from any sexual relationship during the circumcision and was requested not to defile himself by engaging in a sexual relationship during seclusion. This was the closest to the celibacy aspects that emphasize sacrifices. The one who shepherds must deny himself certain pleasures that are considered earthly and not worthy of the higher calling. This is why the word 'lipwuop' was loosely and widely used at the same time to connote this situation.'

'The community observed ritual purity during the ceremonies and therefore, the sponsor had to go into seclusion (away from wife, children and own faults and shortcomings) to purify himself of sin and ready himself/herself for the performance of the ceremony. The sponsor was not expected to commit a transgression verbally, physically and psychologically against fellow individuals and the community. Every other person was prohibited from joining the sponsor in seclusion except fellow sponsors and old persons who would offer advice on the same.'

The empirical support for the sexual abstinence is scarce. Nevertheless, Hollis (1909) describes the characteristic features of a circumcision ceremony which starts one week before the occasion when the young men are handed over to their *matiriot* (plural; *matirenik*) as sponsors and/or guardians. He observes that the *matirenik* (sponsors) would stay with the young initiates for a period of six months in seclusion in the forest until they completed the circumcision period. Such moments of seclusion then marked a time of celibate living for the sponsors.

3.3.3 Observance of Chastity as a Cultural Norm

Based on the observations drawn from FGDs, the next important aspect highlighted was the observance of chastity as a cultural norm for all the young and unmarried individuals. As indicated by the FGDs, the community also esteemed chastity among the young and unmarried persons. This was observed by a 79-year male participant in FGD 1;

'The community had a distaste for transgressions, sinning, wickedness and infractions. For instance, the community had specific prohibitions or taboos for any sexual relationships between the different age groups. Young unmarried persons (both male and female) were to stay chaste until betrothal, promiscuity was harshly punished, adultery was frowned upon and punished and other insincere and inappropriate sexual acts were penalized.'

The above remarks underscore the high esteem given to purity in the Nandi society in general. Moral uprightness was greatly emphasized. Further information was also drawn from 79-year-old female participant in the same FGD 1 who elaborated on the issue of chastity:

'The chastity among girls was highly esteemed and maintained through mentorship by older women such as the grandmothers and enforced through harsh retributions. For instance, the young girls would mingle with their male counterparts and observe chaste until they were initiated and married off. The young girls were obligated to mingle and stay with their male counterparts for specific times and would be punished for not mingling with their male counterparts. They were to eat 'nyamdutik' the act of touching, caressing and fondling with their male counterparts but to observe chastity by all means! The girls and boys were to pride themselves in their bodies during this act and to never engage in any premarital sex.'

Evidently, the Nandi society taught healthy sexuality to its youths. By allowing boys and girls to mingle, the society ensured that young people grow up to appreciate and control their sexual urges. In a rejoinder, an 83-year-old male participant in the same FGD 1 also affirmed the practice of chastity among young and unmarried girls;

'The young unmarried women were to stay with their grandmothers for specific periods and at specific times, they were to stay and enjoy the company of the male compatriots in a hut made for young men (sigiroinet) even during the night while remaining chaste at all times. During their initiation period, the family and community expected that all the young women were to sit on the three-legged stool as a sign of chastity in their lives. If the young woman on her own volition never sat on the three-legged stool, then it was evidenced that she had engaged in a premarital sexual relation and the male compatriot would be censored for breaking the chastity code. The girls who sat on the three-legged stool would be extolled for being chaste while their male compatriot was complimented for ensuring that the young woman had maintained chastity despite sharing a bed with her male compatriot.'

In FGD 3, more or less similar viewpoints on the importance of observance of chastity among the young and unmarried were expressed by several discussants starting with the 77-year-old female participant in FGD 3:

'Chastity was highly valued for all the girls and therefore any girl who remained chaste until married was given compliments including anointing her with special fat derived from milk while being seated on the three-legged stool and wearing a special ornamental head gear (Masarik) after undergoing circumcision. If the young woman had engaged in premarital sex, they were not to be anointed and would not wear the special ornamental headgear nor sit on the three-legged stool.'

The observation underscores the fact that chastity was nurtured as a product of personal moral responsibility. Young girls were thus to demonstrate their commitment to chaste living and admit when they had transgressed and engaged in pre-marital sex. In response, society would encourage those who demonstrated their commitment to moral purity. In a rejoinder, an 81-year-old male participant in FGD 3 observed that:

'The retributions for any unmarried girl who conceived before betrothal included being betrothed to an older married man as a second wife and the ritualistic infanticide process of 'feeding' cow dung to the newborn child and placing the newborn at the exit of the cattle enclosure (kraal) so that the child could be trampled by the cattle. The child would only be saved if a barren woman having prior information on the birth of the child would 'howl like a hyena' near the birth house and immediately, the relatives would sneak the newborn to her to save her from the ritual infanticide.'

'The child was believed to be a bad omen to the community because he/she was not to be named or given a name during the ritualistic naming ceremony that was to happen a few weeks after birth. On the other hand, the young unmarried man who fathered the child was to be ritually cleansed before betrothal by providing a ram for the cleansing ceremony. The ritual cleansing ceremony the involved slaughtering of a sheep in order to be 'cleansed' of the blood that was shed during the ritualistic infanticide process.'

'The ritual involved daubing the girl with a mixture of intestinal contents and fat, all from sheep on the forehead, chest, knees and feet as a way of cleansing the sins of impurity arising from engaging in a premarital sexual relationship. The community believed that once cleansed of the sins, the person is fully accepted and integrated into the community. The ceremony was conducted by the priest (tisindet) of misfortunes and sins.'

The practices and rituals described above demonstrate the gravity with which the Nandi held the practice of chastity or moral purity. Adding to the previous remarks on the ritual infanticide, an 83-year-old male participant in the same FGD corroborated with the observation of the fellow discussant and made the following remarks:

'If a young woman/girl got pregnant before being initiated (Chesorpuchot in Hollis, 1909), the relatives would obtain a ram from the culprit's family which is then slaughtered for the atonement of the transgressions (premarital pregnancy). There was a specific cleansing ceremony for the atonement of the transgression (premarital pregnancy) and the diktats were that the girl would be married off as a second wife to a specific family that would accept her.'

It is worth noting that the respondents never mentioned if there were any punishments meted out to a man who impregnated a young woman outside marriage. Nevertheless, it is to be understood that the traditional Nandi society was highly patriarchal, and such patriarchal societies place a high moral demand for purity on the girls and women more than on the boys and men. Nevertheless, the norms on purity were binding to all persons, irrespective of gender. While the community FGDs dealt with the chastity as an important issue, a 41-year-old priest in FGD 4 (ordained in 2009) place significant value to the practice of chastity by remarking that;

'The Nandi customary culture dictated that unmarried individuals and in particular, the girls were to remain chaste until they got married. The ones who remained chaste till marriage had their families rewarded with more dowry than the ones who were sexually active.'

The observations from the FGDs presented in this section indicate that chastity was a cultural norm and this aspect has been observed in several studies. Ahlberg (1994) reports that the Kikuyu community had a fairly similar normative description where newly initiated youths slept together and engaged in *ngwiko*; sexual penetration was controlled for the purpose of achieving sexual pleasure without penetration. For young people, sleeping together without intercourse required strong sexual discipline or self-control. In Nigeria, Nnazor and Robinson (2016) have affirmed that young women were expected to remain chaste until marriage. Women who fulfilled this requirement brought great pride and honour to her families and communities. Similarly, among the Yoruba, Alaba (2004) notes that chastity was valued greatly. In general, Wubbles (2011) observed that indigenous African cultures esteemed premarital chastity and sexual freedom was no permission for engaging in physical sexual activity.

3.3.4 Distaste for Unmarried Persons as a Cultural Norm

The findings from the FGDs categorically demonstrated that celibacy was culturally antithetical to the African indigenous beliefs. To the indigenous Nandi, an unmarried man (derogatory term; *kipsongoiyat*) was a sign of wilful disobedience of the nature of life as prescribed explicitly in communal customary laws. This fact was revealed by a 79-year-old male participant in FGD 2:

'Celibacy was not accepted as such and any unmarried individual (Kipsongoiyat) was detested. The community largely expected all individuals to ensure continuity in life through marriage and procreation and as such all individuals were obligated to marry and have progeny. Unmarried men (kipsongoin) were ostracized by the community and could not partake in any communal event. Being unmarried was abominable. The unmarried persons were prohibited from leading and actively participating in any indigenous ceremonies'

like circumcision and marriages. They were ostracized for their behaviour and despised for their lives.'

The indicates that the Nandi did not merely reject celibacy without reason. The main reason was the value the community attached to the continuity of family and the entire Nandi society through the birth of children in the marital context. As corroborated by an 84-year-old male participant in the same FGD, unmarried persons were anathema to the community:

'Any unmarried persons were prohibited from leading and actively participating in any indigenous ceremonies like circumcision and marriages. They were ostracized for their behaviour and despised for their lives. It was only married men, who could be considered to be maotik (Sages), tisik (Priests), and kiruogik (Leaders).'

As has been pointed out elsewhere in this thesis, marriage among the Nandi was a sign of individual personal responsibility. As such, men who married were esteemed and given more roles since they had proven capable of leading their families. The similar viewpoint was observed in FGD 1 by an 83-year-old male participant;

'The community did not respect any unmarried individual in any instance whatsoever. Any unmarried person was ostracized and could only live a solitary life in any forested region with minimal human interaction. Any unmarried bachelor (kipsongoiyat) was never to be 'named' during the traditional naming ceremony (kurset – ap - lakwet) and in an instance, where he dies abruptly and mysteriously, a child born of his distant relative was 'named' 'lule' meaning the one who died mysteriously.'

The interviewees also shared viewpoints similar to those from FGDs as indicated by the viewpoint of the Adventist minister who shared the following view concerning unmarried individuals in the Nandi society:

'The Nandi cultural perspective valued marriage to procreate and have offspring or continuity in life (kilaal maat) and didn't accept celibacy nor did they consent to celibate individuals (Kipsongoiya). An unmarried individual was perpetually excluded from any indigenous and customary ceremonies and festivals such as circumcision ceremonies. These unmarried individuals were not to be given any important role or responsibility in these indigenous rites and rituals. When unmarried individuals (kipsongioyat) died, he was

treated differently from the married. Instead of being carted in cowhide, he was tied by a rope and pulled to a resting place in a bush and left in the open as it is (the indigenous Nandi did not bury the dead). He was not to be reincarnated in the naming ceremonies of newborns (kurset – ap Lakwet). If a young man died abruptly, he would take the name of the unmarried man or 'lule' in remembrance of the unmarried individual (Kipsongoiyat).'

As revealed above, a Nandi man who failed or refused to marry was a threat to the continuity of the community. This explains why such a man was punished even in death.

Another AIC minister gave the perspective of the AIC Church on the issues regarding married clergy:

'The Church respects celibate individuals but they don't glorify or encourage anyone to be celibate. The people who remain unmarried are buried on the same day where they died and are not brought home for a celebration of life and burial. The celibate individuals are buried before three and are considered 'kawa komugul' to mean 'he is gone whole as he was in life.'

One must note that the Church in Africa (whether Pentecostal or Catholic) is still very much beholden to the good cultural norms of the people. As such, in burial rites, such as those mentioned by the AIC minister above, the officiating pastor/priest is still required to observe cultural norms. The same can be seen in the following views on the unmarried individual from an Adventist minister:

'The communal expectation on every other individual was that a person was not expected to die without having an offspring (komugul soromya) meaning 'not having expended his kidneys or one's bodily energy in procreation.'

The observations from the interviews and FGD participants provide a justification for the rejection of permanent celibacy in Nandi. Failure or refusal to marry was tantamount to a refusal to participate in the perpetuation of the family and community lineage. Similar viewpoints have been articulated by Ts'ehlo (2023) who avers that African societies scorned and ostracised unmarried people (both men and women). The author further says that marriage is one of the most important cultural institutions within the

African context. It is not regarded as a union between two people, but families, societies and the spiritual world. Marriage is thus more spiritual than physical and families are key structures in the African societies.

The discussion noted that celibacy was not acceptable in the indigenous Nandi Community which acclaimed married and the findings takes a biological perspective on human sexuality which seeks to promote pair-bonding and reproductive success (Fisher, 2004). As such marriage in African communities is not merely a legal or religious contract but a social institution designed to ensure offspring production, economic cooperation, and kinship expansion (Mbiti, 1969). The biological drive for sexual expression and reproduction is thus culturally reinforced: fertility is celebrated, childlessness is often stigmatized, and sexual abstinence within marriage may be perceived as unnatural or even pathological. In polygynous or monogamous unions across sub-Saharan Africa, these biological cues typically align with marital expectations of sexual intimacy (Okafor & Eze, 2018).

The biological theory of human sexuality posits that sexual behavior is fundamentally driven by innate, evolutionary mechanisms aimed at reproduction and the survival of the species (Buss, 2016). In the African context, this theory provides a compelling framework for understanding the cultural and social emphasis on marriage as a natural and necessary institution. Across many African societies, marriage is not merely a personal or romantic union but a biologically, socially, and spiritually endorsed pathway to procreation and lineage continuity. This discussion explores how the biological underpinnings of human sexuality support the institution of marriage while challenging the practice of celibacy, particularly within traditional African worldviews. In African marriages, these bonds are culturally reinforced through communal celebrations, shared economic activities, and interdependence between spouses and

their extended families. Thus, marriage serves not only a reproductive function but also a psychobiological role in promoting health and social cohesion (Fisher, Aron, & Brown, 2005).

In support, the social constructionist theory on human sexuality posits that sexual identities, behaviors, and norms are not biologically predetermined but are shaped by cultural, historical, and social contexts (Gergen, 2009). In the African context, this perspective reveals how marriage is socially constructed as a fundamental institution through which sexuality is legitimized, regulated, and given meaning. Unlike biological determinism, social constructionism emphasizes that what is considered ‘natural’ or ‘normal’ in sexual behavior including the preference for marriage over celibacy is contingent upon societal values, religious beliefs, and communal expectations

Celibacy, especially when prolonged or lifelong, contradicts this adaptive strategy by forgoing reproductive opportunities and reducing kinship networks critical for social support. Celibacy, particularly outside religious vocations such as certain Christian clerical roles, is often viewed with suspicion or pity in many African cultures. It may be interpreted as a failure to fulfill adult responsibilities or even as a sign of spiritual or physical affliction (Akinade, 2013). While celibacy is respected in specific religious contexts, it remains an exception rather than the norm and is frequently associated with temporary states rather than permanent lifestyle choices.

The biological argument against celibacy in this context emphasizes the unnatural suppression of innate drives that have evolved to sustain human populations. The social consequences of celibacy in African societies further illustrate its contested status. Individuals who remain unmarried and celibate beyond early adulthood especially women are often subjected to social pressure, ridicule, or pity. Terms like “spinster” or

culturally specific labels carry negative connotations, reflecting the deep-seated belief that one's social identity is incomplete without marriage (Omoyajowo, 1982). This social stigma is not based on biology but on constructed norms that equate maturity, success, and virtue with marital and parental status.

The biological theory of human sexuality strongly supports the institution of marriage in African societies as a natural expression of reproductive instincts, emotional bonding, and evolutionary fitness. Marriage facilitates lineage continuation, ensures child welfare, and aligns with deeply held cultural values. Conversely, celibacy, while occasionally accepted in religious frameworks, generally conflicts with the biological and social expectations surrounding sexuality and reproduction. Therefore, from both a biological and cultural standpoint, marriage remains a cornerstone of African societal organization.

From a biological perspective, human beings are inherently reproductive organisms, and sexual desire is an evolved mechanism designed to ensure mating and offspring production (Geher & Miller, 2008). In African communities, where extended families and communal living remain central, the ability to bear children especially male heirs is often seen as a primary function of marriage in African societies is deeply intertwined with fertility rituals, ancestral veneration, and lineage preservation all of which are rooted in biological imperatives. For instance, among the Akan of Ghana and the Yoruba of Nigeria, marriage ceremonies often include prayers and rites specifically intended to invoke fertility and successful childbirth (Nukunya, 2003). These practices underscore the belief that fulfilling one's biological potential through reproduction is a moral and spiritual duty. The biological drive for reproduction thus becomes institutionalized through marriage, reinforcing its centrality in African life.

3.4 Summary

The chapter synthesized information regarding celibacy practises and chastity in the Nandi community. The community accepted sexual abstinence, which was more sacerdotal in nature, for spiritual, religious and customary purposes. However, the Nandi had a distaste for any unmarried man (*kipsongoiyat*). There was a specific context where an individual (*kiborenatiot*) was groomed to become a high priest at the *Kapkoros* shrine. The priest then observed complete celibacy and was tasked with oblatinal sacrifices for the whole community during strife, calamities, epidemics and catastrophes. The Nandi community esteemed chastity among young and unmarried persons and had specific measures to guard against premarital sex guided by a framework. The most critical point to note is that chastity was a cultural norm and was supported with beliefs and taboos in traditional Nandi. In fact, any unmarried man (*kipsongioyat*) was chastised and ostracized.

Having elaborated on the context in which celibacy and chastity in the Nandi community was situated, the next chapter elaborates on the views of protestant clergy on priestly celibacy as practised in the Catholic Church. This is necessary since the protestant church is an offshoot of the Catholic and shares most of the theological foundations but differ in the celibacy requirement for the clergy, while valuing marriage in the same manner as the indigenous Nandi Community. Protestant churches offer a contrasting perspective to the Catholic Church with regard to the ministerial priesthood, which is the main bone of contention. The Catholic Church insists on celibacy among the clergy, while the protestant church insists on clerical marriages. Therefore, the study examined the theological foundation of the doctrine of ministerial priesthood in the Protestant church as a way to shedding light on the distinct differences in theological conceptions on marriage and celibacy in the Catholic Church.

CHAPTER FOUR

PERSPECTIVE OF PROTESTANT CLERGY ON PRIESTLY CELIBACY

4.1 Introduction

The study ultimately advances a divergent viewpoint from the protestant clergy, which supports clerical marriages and shares in the perspectives on celibacy in the Nandi indigenous community. The study observed that protestant church clergy share a heritage with the Catholic Church but hold a contrasting viewpoint on theological foundation of ministerial priesthood in the Catholic Church. The study noted that all the protestant denominations(churches) firmly believe in clerical marriages, but one protestant denomination (Anglican Church) has come to accept celibate clergy while others do not do not accept celibate clergy. The celibate clergy who are present in the Anglican Church are accorded respect similar to their married counterparts. It is important to note that one of the points of contestation during the Reformation was the subject of celibacy. It was therefore important to explore how the protestant church traditions have explored the subject of celibacy over the years.

4.2 Views of Protestant Clergy on Priestly Celibacy

The main observation drawn from the interviews of the protestant clergy is the theological foundation of ministerial priesthood. The protestant church in Kenya requires that an individual be married before being ordained a minister. Marriage in the protestant church movement is thus seen as a mark of maturity, a readiness to embrace the responsibility of stewardship of God's flock. This was drawn from the interviews on the protestant clergymen starting with the senior prelate in Anglican Diocese of Eldoret. The senior prelate drew a general distinction between celibate clergy and married clergy in the Anglican Church in Kenya. Below are his remarks.

'The Anglican Church heritage worldwide holds two cultural traditions of clergy; the celibate clergy and married clergy. In particular, the Anglican Church in Kenya drew cultures and traditions from the British culture, that is, the Church of England which had both married clergy as well as celibate clergy.'

The celibate clergymen date back to their historical background during the Reformation period when the Church of England was part of the Catholic Church. The celibate clergymen are found in Tanzania, Zambia, Central Africa and South Africa aside from the married clergymen. This is based on the tradition of the 'high church' which holds a high view of the church like the Catholic Church but the Anglican Church in Kenya did not inherit the tradition of the 'high church'. Its predecessor, the Church Missionary Society (CMS), had a low view of the traditions of the high church and therefore allowed marriage within the clergy.'

From the above sentiments, it would seem that the Anglican Church greatly parallels the Catholic tradition in its views on celibacy, except that in the Catholic Church, there is no such thing as a married clergyman. The prelate also affirmed the presence of celibate clergy in the local church in Eldoret:

'Within a local ACK diocese, there are 3 celibate clergywomen and two celibate clergymen still unmarried but are still respected for their life choices. Based on this, the issues of sex and sexuality are complex and have challenges for both married and celibate so the church must speak about sexuality.'

Celibate priests in the Anglican must be faithful and never have any physical sexual relationship. Faithfulness is an issue in the ministerial clergy in the ACK as the celibate priest sometimes fornicates while the married clergy also participate in adultery.'

The remarks above make a clear distinction between celibacy and sexual purity, which is important for this study. Sexual purity, as adduced from the remarks of the ACK prelate, entails both faithfulness to celibacy vows (for the celibate clergy) and to the vows of marriage (for the married clergy).

An African Inland Church minister who is senior pastor in Nandi provided the following view of the AIC church on the issue of celibacy:

'AIC in a regional context values family life in regards to the church leadership. They justify their value in family life from 1 Timothy 3:4-

5 (NIV) which says, "He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?" This is interpreted to mean a church leader must be a man but of one wife and, secondly, this person must manage his family well and his children are obedient. The question is how can he lead a church if he is unmarried and cannot manage a family? This is the justification as to why marriage was important in the customary ways. Even the culture only values married men and dislikes the celibate individuals.'

'The church considers and emphasizes family life to be an important aspect that is similar to the cultural life of the community. The church's views on eldership hold certain similarities to the Nandi culture which respects elders at all times. Elders were considered to be people of family life and having sires and thus were allowed to lead the community of believers. The church's understanding of leadership and family life is grounded in the bible and they do not neglect celibate individuals but never give them the deserving attention but value and respect celibate individuals.'

'Lastly, abstinence is not the biggest issue in the AIC church in that the pastors have embraced the notion that sex is beautiful as long as it is within the boundaries of marriage. This has not introduced the idea of abstinence as many pastors have normalized sexual relationship even before attending to the church service. The church requires that during important religious events or worship places, the pastors in the AIC church are requested to abstain from any sexual activity (conjugal rights).'

Again, like the ACK concept of married clergy, the AIC interprets the vocation of marriage and family life as a sign of one's ability to handle ministry in church. This is the chief reason the protestant movement tends to reject total celibacy, since it deprives the clergy the chance to demonstrate their ability to handle ministry through marriage and family life. It is nonetheless interesting that AIC does embrace celibacy, albeit not as an obligation but as a request made for pastors to abstain when undertaking certain ministry work. This shows that celibacy in the whole of Christendom is still valued as a sign of spiritual commitment and devotion to a close walk with God.

A similar viewpoint was drawn from the Adventist minister based in Sochoi, Nandi:

'The Adventist Church values family life, marriage and procreation as drawn from the book of Genesis in the Old Testament and John in the New Testament on procreation. The Adventist church thus

prescribes marriage to lay and clergy that they become men with one wife. The church does not agree to any divorce between man and wife. The last aspect is that once you have offered yourself to serve the Lord as a minister in the church of God, do it with all your heart but your objective is not geared towards ministership then quit to guide individuals and serve God and humanity.'

The above Adventist position does not seem to advocate any form of celibacy, compared to Catholics, ACK and AIC. However, it is evident that all church denominations affirm the centrality of the family as a basis for good service and ministry for the body of Christ.

Lastly, an evangelical minister based in Kapsabet Nandi shared his view on married clergy:

'The evangelical viewpoint is that all serving clergy in the ministry must be married to one wife with a family based on a biblical grounding. The minister should have a family and have a good moral standing in the community. The Bible also encourages individuals who are able to live a celibate by following the example of St Paul who was a celibate. Celibacy as a value should be highly respected and thus who have embraced it should remain faithful to it.'

The views of the evangelical minister attest that moral purity is the key requirement for one to serve in the ministry. Celibacy is deemed to be a minister's personal choice, which is respected by the church since it is in the scripture.

Based on the interviews, it is evident that the protestant churches mandate clerical marriages within their ranks and that every other minister must be married as per the biblical prescriptions. However, the Anglican Church tolerates celibate ministers as indicated by the Anglican prelate, which is quite similar to the celibate priest in the Catholic Church. One notable difference however is that the celibate minister is optional to the individual.

The mandated marriage requirement for the church minister in the protestant church largely drew from the protestant reformation, where the reformers envisioned a

priesthood for all believers to support the evangelical understanding of the church (Muwus & Anthonia, 2021). Though there are difficulties within marriages, Protestantism critiques monastic vows and celibacy based on the notion of the goodness/badness of the marriage (Besançon, 2009).

In support of clerical marriage, Wubbels (2011) affirmed that protestant clergy in Kenya view celibacy as a commitment to the discipleship of Jesus and thus remaining unmarried is optional, as Jesus does not reject the available and unmarried individuals. Furthermore, Johann (2011) posits that protestant clergy are usually sexual continent when it comes to the matters relating to the ministry and liturgy. It is for this reason that some protestant ministers often practice sexual continence for one night, three days or a week as they prepare themselves for liturgy and before leading prayers, as they believe that sexual relations affect their physical energy levels and that community worship deserves full concentration (Wubbels, 2011).

Other important considerations to the clerical marriages in the protestant church are theological and legal differences with the Catholic Church. The medieval Catholic Church treated marriage and the family in a threefold manner as a natural, contractual and sacramental unit. First, marriage was a natural association, created by God to enable man and woman to multiply and to raise children in the service and love of God. Second, marriage was a contractual unit, formed in its essence by the mutual consent of the parties. This contract prescribed for couples a life-long relation of love, service and devotion to each other and proscribed unwarranted breach or relaxation of their connubial and parental duties. Third, marriage, when properly contracted between Christians, rose to the dignity of a sacrament (Witte Jr, 2012; Perzyński, 2017).

The second important viewpoint from the protestant clergy related to the issue of sexual continence of the Catholic priest. As observed from the interviews, sexual incontinence is a controversial issue to the Protestants. Overall, they consider celibacy a good thing and, to them, therefore, it is only the incontinent Catholic priest who are damaging the image of the Catholic Church. The AIC minister based in Kapsabet raised an important issue regarding sexual incontinence among Catholic priests:

'The church's viewpoint is that priestly celibacy is mandatory and it is not a calling nor is it grounded in the law. This is not so much the biggest sin because unfaithfulness is an issue. Many of the challenges of catholic priests having families in Africa but not in Europe. It would be interesting to bring to light the European priest who has sired children.'

'The church's view on priestly celibacy is that why can't the Catholic Church allow priests to get married because, in some instances, there is circumstantial evidence that a local priest has had children and has a family although it is not publicly declared despite the celibacy requirement. The point is why and the incidences in the media but it is not true that all the priests are sexually incontinent. But when it arose, it brought added pressure and in the early history of the church priests were allowed to marry and at some point, the church prohibited the priests from marriages.'

The AIC minister clearly appreciates the value of celibacy as an expression of commitment to closely walking with God for the priest. However, the chief concern, which is not restricted to Catholic but cuts across the entire Christianity, is the moral uprightness of priests and pastors.

The evangelical minister also shared his view on incontinent Catholic priests:

'We respect the Catholic Church's stand on celibacy and incontinent catholic priests should be laicized and encouraged to marry. The church can help them with an alternative ministry within the church as leaving them out encourages them to venture into new evangelical ministries.'

The protestant ministers were of the opinion that the Catholic Church should consider laicizing incontinent priest and encouraged allowing such priests to marry in order to solve the protracted issue of sexual incontinence. The position of the Catholic Church

is that a priest can wilfully embrace lay life, where marriage is encouraged, cherished and promoted in the church. What is at issue is allowing a priest to marry and remain a priest.

Across the denominational divide, unfaithfulness and infidelity among church ministers is frowned upon. All the respondents seemed to concur that infidelity among church ministers is a serious issue that needs to be dealt with decisively by the church authorities. This was observed from the viewpoints of the senior prelate in the Anglican Church:

'ACK church has challenges in terms of unfaithful clergy who have been sanctioned because of unfaithfulness but the church prays that the clergy remain faithful to God and fellow humans. The prayers are that the clergy remain faithful to the vows and carry out their mission. The vows stipulate the commitment to faithfulness to the one who called you, God. Part of the faithfulness includes matter sexual activity and if you are unmarried then you are to remain celibate and avoid any sexual relationship. If you are married, then stick to your spouse as a sign of commitment to faithfulness.'

The question of moral uprightness thus cuts across all churches. It must be noted that the requirement of faithfulness in marriage applies to both the clergy and the lay across all churches. The issue of unfaithfulness was also raised by the Adventist minister:

'The issue of unfaithfulness in terms of adultery was also encountered in the Adventist Church and the church sanctioned him for his unfaithfulness. It is good to stay truthful to the vows and faith. If you are not able to be faithful, it is also right to renege on the celibacy vows. As a priest, do not be unfaithful and hide and then go to the pulpit and preach the gospel. The last aspect is that once you have offered yourself to serve the Lord as a minister in the church of God, do it with all your heart but your objective is not geared towards ministership then quit in order to guide individuals and serve God and the humanity.'

It is evident from the foregoing observation that, to the protestant churches, faithfulness in marriage parallels faithfulness to the vows of faith. The Protestants thus see no contradiction between the vows of faith or celibacy and those of marriage. Their main

concern, which is also the concern of the Catholic Church and the entire Christendom, is one's fidelity to their own vows. Within the same context, the AIC minister also identified some challenges facing the Church:

'Indeed, unfaithfulness is rampant and dominant among the married clergy in the AIC church and is becoming a serious issue. There are a number of clergy who have sired children outside marriage and have concubines despite them being married.'

The issue of clerical infidelity in the protestant churches finds support from the study by Thoburn and Whitman (2004), which elaborates on the subject of clerical emotional and sexual affairs. The study observed that sexual infidelity in protestant churches is as high as 20% and occurs in church-related affairs, with two-thirds of the affairs being characterized as both emotional and physical components. The present study affirmed that sexually inappropriate behaviours by clerics is not just in the Catholic Church; the protestant church also faces the issue of sexual infidelity among its clergy. Discourses on celibacy in both the Catholic and protestant church revolve around clerical infidelity, especially where priests and pastors act contrary to their vows of faith.

4.3 Summary

The study obtained important views on priestly celibacy from the protestant clergy which hold a dialectical positions with regards to priestly celibacy. The study noted that Anglican Church holds some similar positions with the Catholic church with regard to clerical celibacy and has come to accept celibate clerics among them. The protestant denominations firmly believe in ministerial priesthood that is rooted in clerical marriages. The interviewees from the protestant churches affirmed the respect they hold for the Catholic Church's position on clerical celibacy. The respondents also raised an important issue in the Christian church, namely that of infidelity to the vows of marriage

and faith among the clergy. They acknowledged that the problem of clerical sexual abuse is a concern across all Christian church ranks.

The next chapter is a discussion introduces the Nandi cultural viewpoints on priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church and explores whether priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church was acceptable or not-acceptable in the indigenous Nandi Community considering that the African community disparages celibacy. As such, the next chapter critically examines the perception of celibacy within both the Nandi community and within the community of the Catholic clergy in Nandi.

CHAPTER FIVE: NON-/ACCEPTABILITY OF PRIESTLY CELIBACY AMONG THE NANDI COMMUNITY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the issue of indigenous cultural viewpoints on Catholic Church's view on priestly celibacy. Priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church was considered an anomaly by the indigenous Nandi community who could not fathom the unmarried pioneering catholic priest who had settled in Chepterit among the Nandi community. As the indigenous Nandi religious practises were slowly eroded, the community still held strongly to the customary and cultural beliefs and ways of living that were centred on marriage as a means of continuity of life. In the mid – 20th century till the turn of the millennium, priestly celibacy became a proposition for a few converted young men to become and resemble indigenous priest (tisik) but were held back by the community expectations.

From year 2000 onwards, the priestly celibacy has somewhat gained acceptance from among the community of Christians as more young Catholic men have joined priesthood but still faced questions regarding their personal choices. It is from the two eras; from mid – 20th century to year 2000 and from year 2000 onwards that the chapter provide sections dealing with non-/acceptability of priestly celibacy from a communal perspective of lay Christians and non-/acceptability of the celibacy from the perspectives of the Catholic priests from Nandi community. As the chapter will elaborate, Emeka, (2014) observed that African societies were hesitant to embrace the life of celibacy because they considered it unreasonable, unnatural and totally against African cultural traditions.

5.2 Non-Acceptability of the Priestly Celibacy in Mid-20th Century

The conversation during the community FGDs began with the historical perspectives of the entry of Christianity. The participants cited cases of widespread disdain and scorn for the pioneering African celibate priests as early as the mid-20th century. From the FGDs, it was revealed that from 1926 the establishment of the Chepterit Mission and the establishment of the Kobujoi Mission in 1948 and the Kaiboi Mission in 1952, the Christian faith was nascent. The Nandi still had challenges accepting the celibate white priests. They were cautious of the latter's intentions and could not fathom how such men (the priests) deliberately chose to forego marriage. The discussion on the influence of white men began with an 84-year-old male participant in the FGD 2 elaborated on the reasons why the community rejected the white pioneering priest;

'The community rejected the early advances of the white priest because the seers prophesized that the white people were going to dramatically alter the communal custom of living. Therefore, the seers urged the people to resist the changes introduced by the white men. The seers still existing within the community but are disappearing because of the conversion to Christianity.'

This viewpoint was further corroborated by a 78-year-old female participant in the same FGD who stated:

'After defeating the Nandi community, the British saw that the community didn't accept their ways and decided to coax the community by bringing in white missionaries. The catholic missionaries were unmarried and therefore the community wondered how this was possible. The community at large didn't accept the white priest and thereafter, the priest enticed the community by giving out sugar and other goodies.'

In furthering what the previous discussant had said, an 85-year-old female discussant in the same FGD contributed immensely to the discussion by stating that:

'The pioneering Catholic priest faced significant resistance from the older community members. The young teens would only attend to the Christian teachings offered by the white priest while the parents would refuse their children. The older generation thought that the

white priest had come to teach the community wickedness and mischief and thus denied their children the opportunity to attend the Christian teachings offered by the white priest. They thought that the white priest would marry their daughters considering that the priests were unmarried. They wanted their sons to get married to differentiate them from the priest. The white priest bewildered the community because they were unmarried and therefore the community didn't want their children to be unmarried or 'komee maa' which implies 'the fire died down'.

The notion of 'komee maa' is in tandem with the high value that the Nandi attach to the continuity of society. 'Fire' in this case symbolizes the warmth that is generated by the existence of living beings. Therefore, abstaining from marriage was, to the Nandi, tantamount to a gradual extermination of the community, which was a serious crime from the community's cultural perspective.

The remarks above underline the fact that African communities resisted change brought by the white men, particularly Christians, which was antithetical to their cultures that were rooted in marriage and family, and the idea of continuity of lineage. Similar observations concerning the rejections of the influence of the white pioneering catholic priest were deduced from an 81-year-old male participant in FGD 3 who had the following to say:

'Before the 1950s, the community largely rejected Christianity. When the Catholic Church Mission sought to establish a mission in the present-day Mosoriot they could not because of the 10 Kilometre rule. However, the then Chief of the 'Koileke' division, arap Chemuigut, consulted with the colonial administration which allowed the Catholic Mission to be established in Chepterit (though it was within the 10 KM radius). That's how the Catholic Mission was built and the first Priest, Fr Joseph Kuhn settled and lived in Chepterit in the house of the Chief.'

'Fr Kuhn was able to reach out to the community at large and converted several men of the 'Nyongi' age set including the chief, one Raphael, one Gregory and others. The conversion of a small group of people was because Fr Kuhn allowed the community to continue practising their indigenous and customary traditions and ceremonies. This led to an increase in the number of converts as Fr Joseph Kuhn didn't interfere with the community's ways of living. The Catholic church became attractive to the community at large and the Church

Mission grew in numbers. Fr Kuhn was then deputized by Fr Meier. The Church grew and opened another mission in Kobujoi Mission in 1948 and then Kaiboi Mission later in 1952.'

The observation underscores how the Church had to adapt its evangelical approach in dealing with the hostile response of the Nandi towards celibacy. Fr. Khun chose to overlook the resistance as he pursued the bigger picture, which was the preaching of the gospel. This was in line with St. Paul's teaching on the chief reason for celibacy in scripture.

The early missionaries were still yet to learn a lot about the notion of inculturation, in which the Christian message could be spread by integrating it within the good cultural norms of the people. Perhaps the missionaries did not need to focus so much on the need for the natives to accept celibacy as opposed to the need for them to accept the salvific message of Christ. The real growth in the acceptance of Catholicism took an exponential growth in the 1950s and 1960s as many members of the Indigenous Nandi community began to attend catechism classes in Chepterit. This was intimated by an 83-year-old male participant in FGD 2:

'I attended Catechism classes in Chepterit in 1950 which took three months from August to October and was baptized in October 1950. The Chumo, Maina and Sawe age-set gladly attended these Catechism classes. The church teachings (Catechism) were supplemented by the catholic-sponsored schools in several schools such as Kimaren, Kesengey, Koibarak and Maraba primary schools where the priest (Fr Meier and Fr Kuhn) and his African catechist would attend the catechism classes. The next mission was established in Kobujoi in 1952 and then the Kaiboi mission in 1956. The Mission in Kobujoi spread to Kaptumek, Kapkeben, Samutet and Kapkenduywa where the earlier converts from the Chepterit mission established churches in these locations and used schools to propagate the Catholic faith. By the 1960s, the church started to spread to different localities within the region and with the help of the priest helped acquire a location for the building of a church.'

Similarly, a 79-year-old male participant in the same FGD stated: *"I attended catechism classes in 1957 at Chepterit Mission as one of the earliest Christian converts."*

As the discussion, went on, an 83-year-old female participant also indicated that he attended catechism in the Chepterit mission as early as 1957.

'My parents eloped and got baptized and married in Mukumu Catholic mission in 1933. I attended catechism in the Chepterit Mission and later in the Kaiboi Mission in 1957. The parents didn't allow her to interact with the community at large for those who had not accepted Christianity. The father always insisted on infant baptism in the first month and later their house was used for catechism classes for children in Tilolwa (near Chepterit Mission).'

Evidently from the above remarks, the early missionaries foregrounded baptism and conversion, followed by catechism, and pushed the subject of celibacy to the background. Further information on the Nandi community's stand on priestly celibacy was drawn from an 81-year-old male participant in FGD 3:

'I attended Catechism classes in Chepterit in 1950 which took three months from August to October and was baptized in October 1950. Later on, after having attended basic schooling, I sought to join the priesthood and proceeded to seminary for three months in Mukumu as sponsored by Fr Kuhn in 1955 to only be forcefully returned home by the grandmother because of a family tradition of lineage. The community distasted celibacy as my grandmother indicated that she would lose offspring (kame maa) if I went to Mukumu. She threatened to curse me if did not renege on my desire to join the priesthood.'

Further, an 84-year-old male participant in the same FGD also indicated that he had attended catechism classes in 1957 at the point when the Catholic faith was spreading out to other regions in Nandi County.

Although a significant number of the Nandi had embraced Christianity, it is clear that the vocation of the priesthood was still a long way from being accepted. It is interesting that, at this time, the Nandi perspective – which is also the Catholic Church perspective – was that priesthood was synonymous with celibacy. Yet, it seems that the Nandi were not opposed to the vocation of priesthood per se, but they only took issue with celibacy. Once the community had embraced the Catholic faith, they still didn't accept priestly celibacy. This was stated by an 80-year-old male participant in FGD 3:

'The community didn't object to the celibate white priest but had objections to their own joining the priesthood. The white priest taught the early converts and ensured that the community accepted the celibate life of a priest. However, the community has largely changed from indigeneity to modernism and thus celibate priests are readily accepted more than they were in the 1950s through 1960s. Colonialism has brought cultural changes that have seen the gradual accept the celibate life of a catholic priest.'

This was the turning point as the Catholic Faith spread all over the Nandi region. The early converts to Catholicism in the Nandi region could easily associate their set of laws governing the universe and some aspects of Christianity. Considering that indigenous religious ceremonies, rites and rituals had been proscribed by the colonial authorities for fear of igniting and spreading rebellion in the region (Ellis, 1976). The strategy of disciplining Nandi Christians through the teaching of scripture did seem to yield much fruit by way of the increased number of local converts to Christianity. Perhaps at this time, the missionaries had learned that the subject of celibacy tended to antagonize the Nandi to reject Christianity as a whole; hence, the issue was probably avoided.

The study noted that the pioneering celibate Catholic priests were mysterious to the community and therefore the community rejected and distanced themselves save for a few converts. This finding largely finds support in several previous studies that showed that celibate Catholic priests were frowned upon at a societal level (Mbiti, 1969; Gwaza, 2019; Wubbels, 2011) because the African culture emphasizes paternity, which conflicts with clerical celibacy (Juma et al., 2018). Appiah-Kubi and Korsah (2020) observe that celibacy vows in the Catholic Church appeared awkward in the African traditional societies in West Africa. Furthermore, Emeka, (2014) observed, that African societies were hesitant to embrace the life of celibacy because they considered it unreasonable, unnatural and totally against African cultural traditions.

The period between the 1950s to 1990s seems to indicate a wait-and-see attitude as the community stayed indifferent to the calling to priesthood. Historical records show that very few individuals from the community ventured into Catholic priesthood as records show that only two persons from the community were ordained priests before 1980, that is Fr George Cheboryot (ordained in 1972) and Fr Michael Toror (Ordained in 1975). Meanwhile, the white priest continued serving among the community (Catholic Diocese of Eldoret, CDE.co.ke, 2023). This evidence of the non-acceptability of celibacy in particular, and priesthood in general, is also adduced by Hastings (1978), a former priest, who called for the ordination of married catechists as early as 1964 in an article published in the *African Ecclesial Review*.

From the 1980s to 1990, only five individuals from the Nandi Community were ordained Catholic priests and this shows the non – non-acceptability of priestly celibacy among the Nandi Community. The period between 1980 and the turn of the millennium (the year 2000) seems to have been a period of transition as the number of catholic priests rose from two in the 1970s to five in the 1980s and nine in the 1990s and later gradual change in the communal attitudes towards priestly celibacy (CDE.co.ke, 2023).

5.3 Acceptability of Priestly Celibacy in the 21st Century

In the 21st century, the growing acceptance of celibacy and the conversion to Christianity among the Nandi could paralleled the loss of indigenous religious practises, as observed from FGDs. The FGD participants averred that the mass conversion to Christianity in Nandi was largely the result of the transformational changes in the community during the colonial period. As articulated by an 86-year-old male participant in FGD 2:

‘The Community slowly lost its indigenous religious practices once the colonial government relocated all the seers/oracles from within

the community divisions (pororiosiek). Essentially, the acceptance of priestly celibacy by the community was gradual and reluctant based on the loss of rich cultural religious practice, and the acceptance and enticement of the pioneering priest.'

One wonders if there was a way by which the Nandi could have been made to embrace celibacy without necessarily having to erase some of their cultural norms. Perhaps further scholarship on alternative ways missionaries could have converted Africans through inculturation can shed light on this matter. During the discussion, an 82-year-old male discussant in the same FGD also corroborated and commented as follows:

'At some point, the indigenous religious practices got eroded and were lost forever between the generations of Nyongi and Maina age sets, and thus Chumo could have only heard about the indigenous religious ceremony (Kapkoros). Onwards from the Sawe ageset, Christianity gradually replaced the Indigenous religious practices and the community largely was inclined to hold the basic beliefs such as the morning devotion of facing the rising sun and saying some prayers.'

Once the community had gradually accepted to be converted or largely coerced to accept Christianity, the discussion then shifted to the acceptability of priestly celibacy in the African Catholic Church. It seems the early missionaries were more interested in developing African priests and agents of evangelization than merely converting the Nandi to Christianity. The acceptance of priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church slowly gained traction, through some difficulties. This was observed by an 83-year-old male participant in FGD 2. He offered a unique viewpoint on priestly celibacy that linked the demands of ritual purity in the indigenous religious ceremonies to the Catholic Church's demands on purity.

'It was after the realization that the unmarried Indigenous priest (tisik) was more suited to the rigours of the Indigenous religious practises which required purity at all times. Thus, they slowly accepted the celibacy practice of the priest as they represented the ideal of the Indigenous priest (tisik) at the shrine (Kapkoros).'

An 86-year-old male participant offered a particular insight into the differences between Indigenous priests and Catholic priests which narrowed as the Nandi community

underwent transformational changes in its religious philosophy and beliefs from Indigenous religion to Christianity by stating that:

'Originally, the community could not fathom a person to be celibate for the religious rituals at the shrine and thus they resented the view that anyone including the white priest could fulfil the requirement of purity (celibacy) for the long run. However, the Indigenous priests (tisik) were to be secluded before the Indigenous religious ceremony while the priest had been living a celibate life and thus was suited to the rigours of purity of the religious ceremony. However, the indigenous religious ceremonies were outlawed and, in turn, Christianity grew and became a substitute. The priest then became a symbol of purity in the shrine.'

The colonial state outlawed the African cultural and religious beliefs and practices, thereby coercing the Nandi community to embrace Christianity. The colonial annexation of fertile land for the white settlers relocated the Nandi community to reservations, which also led to the loss of the physical shrines. Subsequently, the place of the indigenous African priest was watered down and replaced with the Christian priest.

In comparing an Indigenous priest with a catholic priest, a 79-year-old male participant in the same FGD 2 offered his insights by saying:

'A priest is a unique person in the community who is highly esteemed and is seldomly chastised for the choice of staying unmarried because of the enormous responsibility of providing spiritual and moral guidance to the community. Any reproach or censure towards the catholic priest can only be expected to arise from other Christian denominations. Based on the Nandi tradition, the choice of celibate life of a priest and nun is interesting as it is something unique, appealing and fulfilling as the individual chooses this 'humble' life of spirituality that is incomparable to anything else.'

'Furthermore, there is a distinction between the voluntary celibacy arrangement for the ritual performance of indigenous ceremonies such as the circumcision rites and the sacerdotal celibacy sought by the catholic priest. The indigenous Nandi Worldview on celibacy is more geared towards sacrificing for the greater good of the community values during the performance of rituals and ceremonies while the priestly celibacy is a personal sacrifice for the good of the church. If someone decides to become a priest, then he/she takes to

sacrifice for the greater good of spirituality while foregoing earthly pleasures.'

The above speaker was deeply trained in the Catholic doctrine, yet he was also informed on the nature of celibacy in the indigenous Nandi culture. His views underscore that the modern Nandi Catholic Christian is unequivocally in agreement with the importance and function of clerical celibacy. There isn't syncretism between the traditional Nandi concept of celibacy and the Catholic teachings on and practice of celibacy. In both cases, celibacy serves a spiritual function; it enables the priest to be more acutely sensitive to the spirit and presence of God as a mediator between the human and divine.

In a rejoinder, an 80-year-old male participant in FGD 2 opined that:

'The vocation of priesthood is considered a unique calling in that individuals who are called to it always face direct restraints from both the parent and community in their quest to join the priesthood. They are always asked not to be 'kime maa' as opposed to kipsongoiya (unmarried individuals). Maat usually means fire but when used in circumcision rites it takes a metaphorical meaning 'the fire from the loins' which implies siring offspring. kime maa directly implies the 'fire that died down' but takes a unique metaphorical meaning of 'someone who has refused to sire offspring'.

As drawn from the discussants, those who opt for a priestly vocation in Nandi still suffer from the stigma of family. They have to overcome the stereotype of being labelled as those who refuse to partake in the maintenance of lineage through procreation in marriage. At the personal level, they may be branded as men who could not bear the courage to take on the difficult responsibilities of marriage and family life.

It is nonetheless worth noting that priesthood was not an alien concept to the Nandi community as indicated by a 76 – year old male discussant in FGD 2:

'The Nandi Indigenous worldview deemed a priest having been chosen from among the community to lead in the religious ceremonies based on specific attributes' (Lipwuop). There are similarities between the Nandi Worldview and the Catholic Church. The processional view during religious ceremonies, obligatory offerings and petitions are

more considered to hold similar parallels. This could be drawn from the church's perspective on inculturation.'

During participation in the discussion, an 80-year-old female participant in FGD 2 shared her thoughts on the similarities between *tisik* (Indigenous priest) and Catholic priests:

'The priests are considered shepherds of the flock of the Church and would more likely hold certain similarities with the Indigenous priest (tisik) and the Catholic priest in that they both shepherded the community. Being unmarried is a choice and seems to follow lineage and thus at different ages, individuals would remain unmarried. It is not the wish of the priest to remain unmarried but the community accepted the personal sacrifice made by the individual to become a celibate priest.'

The observation is that the community insisted on ritual purity during ceremonies and this mirrored with the what the Catholic church insisted and thus validated the need for ritual purity during the ceremonies.

This understanding came from the steady efforts of the missionaries to catechize the converted Nandi who in turn explained the Catholic doctrine to their people. As the discussion moved forward, it was much easier for the discussants to offer practical examples of how a celibate white priest, Fr Martin Boyle changed the community in Taachasis as informed by an 84-year-old male participant in FGD 2:

'When Fr Martin Boyle came to Taachasis, he came and brought people together and baptized the community, he built a church and established a community of Christians, he cannot be referred to as Kipsongoiya (an unmarried man) because he has changed the community through salvation. Fr Boyle was esteemed and was given a traditional four-legged stool (only used by married men and elderly men) and was named after someone (Kwan Bo meaning 'father to'). The Nandi community being patriarchal in nature had separate symbolism where women would only sit on a three-legged stool.'

The acceptance of Fr Martin Boyle was thus one of the indicators that the Nandi were slowly acquiescing to the concept and practice of priestly celibacy in the Church. More

elaboration on this matter was given by a 79-year-old female participant in the same

FGD:

'Fr Boyle has begotten people in his name (several Christians have named their children Martin, Boyle and many others in his honour). It is the same, as the indigenous naming ceremony for the children in the early 20th century. Fr Martin Boyle was accepted because of his purity and because his community accepted to offer him to serve in the Christian missionary activity. When he arrived in Africa for his missionary work, his purity was comparable to the purity of the indigenous priest (tistik) who was leading the division in the religious ceremonies in the shrines. Fr Martin Boyle 'lit a fire' by having a community of believers and the fruits are now visible.'

As shown above, it was necessary for the Nandi to construe the Catholic concept of 'father' assigned to the priest as a sign of his spiritual birthing of others. This understanding helped the Nandi to regard the Catholic priest as a man taking responsibility over a family, just like any biological father in a marital context. It did help that Fr. Martin exhibited exemplary moral character that was in line with demands on a priest within the traditions of the Nandi.

Fr Boyle seems to draw certain similarities with the pioneering white priest, Fr Kuhn as elucidated by a 75-year-old female discussant in FGD 2:

'When Fr. Martin Boyle arrived at Taachasis in 1992 he focused on understanding the Indigenous cultural practises of the community at large more so in betrothal, marriage and circumcision rites. The current catholic priests are exemplary and pure (Libwuob) and are comparable to the Indigenous priests (tistik) who were married. Figuratively, 'we are all children of Fr Martin Boyle, therefore priest cannot be said to be unmarried'. He came and brought together, all classes of people from children to the elderly and shepherded them as his own. He took the Cross of Christ and 'carried the community as his own'.

'A priest remains unmarried but a catholic priest is married to the church (congregants) and not a person, thus he is simply married.' The name 'Father' connotes unique symbolism as it represents fatherhood and thus 'he has many children and was sent by God Almighty to help every congregant'. A priest seeks permission and his father's blessings to be unmarried and serve in the church while an unmarried adult man chooses to unmarried life of solitude thus, he is

despised for going against the customary tradition of getting married.'

The study also adduced evidence of hesitance towards a celibate priest from FGD 2. The discussion highlighted the Nandi community's perception of priestly celibacy when the Catholic Mission in Taachasis, Tindiret, was established. The Nandi community was, at first, hesitant to welcome the celibate white priests, but over time they began to understand the essence of celibacy in priesthood.

One of the mistakes made by early Christian missionaries in Africa was that of wholesomely dismissing indigenous beliefs and practices as barbaric and inhumane. However, as indicated by the above remarks in FGD 2, Fr. Martin Boyle took a different direction. He first sought to understand the Nandi before imposing or introducing Christianity. This approach helped him to easily teach and persuade the Nandi to embrace Catholicism, despite their objection to celibacy.

In contrast, one discussant in FGD 3 considered priestly celibacy as a matter of acceptance of the dictates of the Catholic Church. This was the contribution of a 78-year-old female participant in FGD 3:

'The priestly celibacy among the current community draws from the tradition and beliefs of the Catholic Church relating to Jesus Christ in person. Once you submit to the Church's teaching and seek to become a priest, then you accrue respect from being a priest while the Catholic view on priestly celibacy is the personal sacrifice someone makes concerning religious obligation. The current priest has attained purity at an early age because of their training in the seminary. He is therefore believed to have achieved purity at an early age and he is therefore unique after having attended the seminary. His behaviour at all times is exemplary having been anointed to serve Lord Jesus Christ.'

The viewpoint drawn from the FGD acknowledges the Christian view that priesthood is a calling. It is not a vocation that one enters out of his own volition. It is an invitation by God through the Holy Spirit to serve. Therefore, even before one is trained to be a

priest, he must have received and responded to the calling. Celibacy then becomes easy to observe when one understands the need to detach from the world and commit fully to hearing the voice of God and ministering through obedience to God's people. Evidence of social acceptance of celibate life was indicated by three individuals who had allowed their sons and daughters to join priesthood and priesthood. For instance, a 75-year-old female participant in FGD 1 observed:

'I encourage the priest to stay celibate and partake in the Lord's work for it were not for the priest, the work of our lord Jesus Christ would not prosper. For the nuns, I encourage them as they strengthen us in prayers as exemplified by the Book of Ruth. The nuns/sisters are stronger in prayers and help women to surmount the challenges.'

'The community highly valued procreation at all times and there were two instances where the community ensured continuity in lineage; a warrior during foraging battles and a youth dying unexpectedly. In both cases, the individuals were 'named' in a ceremony to ensure that their lineage continues. In the same instances, the unmarried priest does not lose his lineage by not marrying but his name remains forever by his deeds. For instance, the deeds of Fr Martin Boyle are still etched in the memory of the people of the Taachasis community at large.'

A similar viewpoint was expressed in support of personal acceptance of priestly celibacy, by an 80-year-old male participant in FGD 2:

'I am a father to the priest who is currently a serving priest in the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret from Taachasis. During the circumcision period, at his home, Fr Martin Boyle visited and celebrated the occasion with the family. During the reception of the young man, Fr Martin Boyle visited the family and requested him to offer him to the church so that I may encourage him to be a priest. I consulted my father of Maina age set on the request for my son. The grandfather consented and accepted the young man joining the priesthood but warned him that his grandson would not be married. He accepted the decision and allowed the son to join the priesthood.'

'I will still agree to have another son to become a priest after having one who currently serving in the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret.'

More support was expressed by a 76-year-old female discussant:

'My son is currently a serving diocesan priest in the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret. I will still agree to have another son to become a priest after having one who currently serving in the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret.'

In contributing to the discussion, one 76-year-old female participant in the same FGD 1 intimated that she always encourages young people to join the different congregations in the Catholic Church:

'I encourage the daughters and sons to join the ecclesiastical missions of priests and nuns. Refer to the Gospel of Mathew 19:27-30 where spiritual tasks are demanding and require one to forego marriage for the sake of having a united mind towards serving God. If a person is married, then he/she will focus more on personal desires as opposed to working in the Lord's vineyard.'

The study noted that the issue of 'naming' deceased individuals draws parallelism between the Nandi atavistic practice of assigning names of the departed to the living and the fatherhood of the priest who has 'sired' many spiritual children through his pastoral ministry. This fusion of perspectives on celibacy and heritage makes a convincing case for why Catholicism has enjoyed steady growth in the Nandi community.

It is clear from these remarks that in Africa individuals place a lot of importance on family approval in their personal choices. The choice to become a priest or nun can thus be difficult where the family is resistant to that choice. Nevertheless, the study noted that there has been a steady acceptance of clerical celibacy among the Nandi women folk over time. This was observed from all the FGDs where several female participants also accented to allowing their sons to become celibate priests in their communities, as echoed in these observations from FGDs:

I would gladly accept my son to be a priest because priesthood is not comparable to an unmarried life but a fruitful life where the priest is of benefit to the community at large.

I agree and accept it because it is an honourable and excellent vocation that is geared towards serving the Almighty God. The priest will serve all of us in the community.

I agree that priesthood is a blessing to everyone in the community and my household. A priest is a blessing to everyone.

I will agree with him because it is a calling that my son is following. I cannot deny him what when he is called. If it a God's calling, I cannot impede it.

As already pointed out, among the Nandi, ritual and moral purity were demanded of all people, but the highest form of purity was expected of those responsible for conducting rituals and other spiritual activities. When celibacy is seen in this context of the call to ritual purity, it becomes easier for the Nandi to embrace Catholic clerical celibacy. This element concerning the observance of purity before Mass service was large a prescription by pioneering white priests in the Nandi community who decreed the observance of purity before the converts could attend Eucharistic mass celebrations. This observation was made by a 79-year-old male participant in FGD 3:

'The pioneering priest in the Chepterit Mission also taught the early individuals to observe purity at all times in preparation for Eucharistic celebrations. The early converts to Christianity were instructed not to indulge in alcohol and any sexual relations two days (Thursday) before the Eucharistic celebration and successive days (Monday).'

The study observed that the societal transformation has seen increased acceptance of priestly celibacy in Nandi. Many of the participants indicated that they would consent to have their sons and daughters live celibate lives. This viewpoint finds support in various studies from several authors and researchers on the subject of celibacy and Catholicism in Africa who largely infer that priestly celibacy has been embraced both at the communal and personal levels (Appiah-Kubi & Korsah, 2020). On his part, Makamure (2004), observes that, in some African countries, acceptance of priestly celibacy is supported by the number of Catholic priests currently on the ground.

The increased acceptance of priestly celibacy in the Nandi community is in stark context to the current global challenges facing the Catholic priesthood in general. The discussants in all the community FGDs nonetheless preferentially supported the provision of both emotional and social support to sexually incontinent priests. This observation, for example, was made by a 76-year-old female participant in FGD 2:

'If a priest is sexually incontinent, then the church structures should withdraw him from the mission and give him time to reflect while counselling him. A parent may wish for a son to join the priesthood but the son may not join the priesthood. In the other case, a young man wishes and seeks to join the priesthood. The son will automatically join the priesthood of his own volition even if the parents dissuaded him and thus, we do not have a ground to castigate them or encourage them to marry. Therefore, we seek to respect and encourage the priest despite his failings to continue with his vocation so that the church grows and grows.'

The above remarks underscore an important aspect of priesthood which has not come out from the previous sections of this thesis: priests, despite their vows of celibacy and subsequently purity, do suffer from human failings. The above respondent was cognizant of this fact and rightly proposed an empathetic approach to dealing with issues of priestly sexual incontinence. On the same subject of priestly incontinence and abuse of position, several viewpoints from several female discussants were also adduced from all the FGDs. Below are samples of the perspectives:

'Every human being is bound to at one time, err and therefore a priest stumbling should not be viewed with suspicion or malice but the priest requires solace, prayers and understanding. If the women pray for the priest, then nothing can be an impediment. Priests should also pray for themselves to overcome the temptations. Let the priest read 1 Corinthians 7:32-38 to gain encouragement.'

'The priests hold similar capabilities of siring offspring, therefore any individual who has sacrificed his life for the sake of Christ only requires prayers to be steadfast. There is no greater sacrifice than the one an individual has chosen to be a priest. This calling to be a priest requires prayers and wishes from all the congregation.'

'Jesus Christ was not married and therefore the priest should also seek comfort in prayers and petitions. There is a parable in the Nandi language, that when loosely translated means 'Despite a cow having four limbs, it still stumbles'. The parable seeks to offer solace to anyone, who has stumbled based on the fact that a cow has four limbs to stand on while a human being is more likely to stumble because it has two legs to stand on.'

'Despite the media reports of sexual incontinence, we pray that the church stands firm with its priest so that the faith may spread and the church grows through the work of the priest. The priests and nuns should continue with their missionary work as they do despite the challenges.'

Similar opinions were drawn from male participants across the different FGDs:

It is only prayers that we can offer to the sexually incontinent priest so that he may overcome the challenges he is facing as a priest.

The priest and nuns should also pray hard to overcome challenges.

I can tell the priests and nuns that everyone faces worldly challenges and therefore I desire them they persevere and pray to overcome the challenges. Even married persons face challenges thus, when the challenges are significant, then know that victory is beckoning.

You are a priest or a nun who is a saviour to many so see challenges as part of life. It is also important that seek help from counsellors and close friends who may guide and help you to overcome these challenges.

The challenges facing priests may come from within and without and therefore once you have received the calling to be a priest, accept everything that comes with it. Let the priests humble, themselves and pray for strength.

I encourage the priest to stay celibate and partake in the Lord's work for it were not for the priest, the work of our lord Jesus Christ would not prosper. For the nuns, I encourage them as they strengthen us in prayers as exemplified by the Book of Ruth. The nuns/sisters are stronger in prayers and help women to surmount the challenges.

We will only pray for the sexually incontinent priests; we only pray for them to gain strength.

Marriage to a priest is not acceptable even if the priest is incontinent because a priest has a unique calling in society. Despite the unjustifiable media reports on priests' sexual incontinence, the Church hierarchy should maintain its stand on celibacy.

The above excerpts underscore that ritual purity on the side of the priest, is a product of ongoing formation. It is thus important not to overlook the notion that priesthood is

synonymous with moral perfection. In the same way, it is the responsibility, first, of the priest himself, then the whole church, including the hierarchy, and congregation to work towards moral perfection through a life marked by the study of scripture, Church teachings, meditation and prayers.

5.4 Acceptability of Priestly Celibacy among the Clergy

Since, the community perceptions from the FGDs seem to indicate the growing acceptance of the priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church against a customary cultural and societal traditions that draw from the natural and indigenous thought on marriage, the study also evaluated the perceptions of Catholic priests on the issue of priestly celibacy. The findings in this section were drawn largely from interviews with senior priests who were ordained before the year 2000 and FGD 4 for priests ordained after the year 2000. The general observation from the FGD 4 is that all the younger priests, with 10-20 years in the priesthood, talked favourably about having accepted the vows of celibacy and living positively.

Am happy with this gift of celibacy as I have lived it and it has given me the freedom to serve God. Perhaps, unlike married persons do not have the time to serve the Lord and the family. Am happy that all my energies and time are dedicated to serving the Lord (Ordained in 2013).

Celibacy is a choice that I have embraced and I ask God through my Charism to enable me to live a celibate life. It is something that the Church values as the Gospel indicated, I have decided to embrace and live a celibate life with an undivided heart and hold the responsibility of serving the church and community (Ordained in 2008).

Celibacy gives priesthood a 'bearing' or direction as priesthood requires the person to give undivided attention and love to Jesus Christ through the ministry. We ought to encourage one another to lead a celibate life and remain undivided in following Jesus Christ (Ordained in 2011).

I am enjoying the celibate life through the charism which gives me strength emotionally, psychologically and physically. Based on the teachings of the Gospel, I have sacrificed myself for the sake of the Kingdom. Celibate life is a noble and precious life conferred by Jesus

Christ and is lived through the charism and grace of God. Unless we understand God himself, then they cannot live the celibate life.

As a priest, I have accepted it as a sacrifice as a call to become a perpetual bioyop- tum so that the community can continue serving the people of God (Ordained in 2010).

As a priest, I came to appreciate celibacy as it comes from a cultural background with the responsibility of perpetually offering sacrifices. Celibacy is a choice and has value and that's why I have embraced it personally. It is a beautiful thing as some people have accepted me for the way I am (Ordained in 2014).

I embraced priesthood after being encouraged to become a priest. I have seen the priest living a 'good life'. For me, there was no fear in joining the priesthood. Having gone through the formation and in the light of the Gospel, then I understood celibacy as a discipline that requires God's grace to become a priest. The formation period also allows a would-be priest to make a conscious decision to become a priest or not (ordained in 2009).

The excerpts above refer to celibacy as a gift, which is an interesting perspective. It acknowledges the fact that priesthood is a product of God's calling. Living a celibate life is thus a charism, a gift of grace, in which God works through the life of the priest to help him overcome his humanness and embrace his union with God.

Similarly, the four senior Catholic priests and a prelate who were interviewed, with at least 20 years in priesthood, talked favourably of embracing celibacy and living it positively.

I accepted to be a priest because of my Catholic background and also my community accepted Christianity. I have lived as a celibate priest as it has given me time to serve people without any reservation because as a celibate priest, I can dedicate myself fully towards the service of humanity and the church (ordained in 1998).

It is a good ministry because I have been able to dedicate myself to serving God through people. As the book of Hebrews says, 'The priest is anointed from the people to partake in spiritual matters pertaining to God. An individual makes one's sacrifice to be a priest after having chosen to become one. You have been chosen from among people to become a priest through prayers, sacraments, and the sacrifice of the Eucharist (Ordained in 1985).

I freely and willingly chose a celibate life and have lived it fully and enjoyed it. I underwent theological training for six years and every time I was reminded of celibacy and lastly during my ordination, I was asked to live a celibate life which I gladly accepted. I have no regrets about living a celibate life, it is possible to live a life as it is a gift coming from God. You cannot live a celibate life if you think that it is an imposition or take it as a burden and then it becomes a challenge (Ordained in 1984).

Celibacy is a gift that sets me free to be able to serve the people of God. Celibacy allows the priests in the Catholic Church to dedicate their time and effort to serving the people and are wonderful agents of evangelization in the most difficult environments as they are encumbered by family and can serve the people of God. The whole paradigm of celibacy is about not getting married and living a life of continence where a priest never engages in any sexual relations (Ordained in 1986).

Overall, the above remarks underscore some key points about the vocation of celibate life of a Catholic priest. One, family's Catholicism does have an influence on one's choice to be Catholic and subsequently to embrace the life of the clergy. Two, celibacy is not just about service to others; by virtue of his dedication and time spent in study, meditation and prayer, a priest does benefit from the life of being a monk. He grows spiritually and cultivates a strong bond with God, which is the craving of every Christian. Three, even though priesthood is a call from God, individuals who enter this vocation need church support in form of encouragement, prayer and most importantly theological formation. This preparation helps the priest to more ably handle his pastoral and spiritual office. Four, a priest's perception of celibate life can make his work either difficult or easier. Regarding celibacy as an imposition leads to both a personal struggle and strive within the Church, which may ultimately impair with the priest's effectiveness in his pastoral ministry.

The Catholic priests who were interviewed by the study gave mixed reactions on the question of whether or not the Nandi had fully embraced celibacy. Nevertheless, a majority indicated that the society had embraced the priests' celibate lives. It was noted

that many families still struggled to accept the personal choices of their sons who opted for priesthood. The following comments were adduced from senior priests in the Nandi Community:

Celibacy is quite controversial to those who do not understand until you live a celibate life. I have met people who have asked me whether I am pretending to live the celibate life or I have kept a family secret and have been open to them that I choose to be celibate (Ordained in 1984).

Even from the perspective of the indigenous Nandi Community, the community has had pioneering Catholic priests like the Late Fr. Cheboryot, Late Fr Lelei and Late Fr Toror who practised celibacy throughout their lives. Their stewardship has seen the community accept celibate priests. The community still holds marriage in high regard but they have come to accept priestly celibacy (Ordained in 1984).

The Nandi people as a community have come to accept to allow their sons and daughters to become nuns and priests. This indicates that celibacy has been understood and appreciated at the current time (Ordained in 1988).

The observations highlight that, overall, priestly celibacy has been widely accepted in the Nandi. However, there are sceptics who cannot imagine the lived experiences of celibate priests. From the interviews, priestly calling is deeply personal and the choice to obey and embrace the life of celibacy can only be fully explained by the priest who goes through those experiences himself.

The discussants in FGD 4 also observed the societal challenges faced by young men seeking to become priests. There are still levels of resistance towards celibate priesthood in contemporary Nandi society.

It was difficult for me to be accepted as a priest save for the pioneering African priest before us. My uncle and aunties never accepted my choice to become a priest and considered me to be a kipsongoiyat. They said that 'we have stopped the fire (kome maa)' save for the spread of Catholicism and the pioneering African priest who blazed the part for us (Ordained in 2010).

Before I was ordained, a certain old lady told me that 'I was to disappear just like that' because I would not be married. These catholic priests always 'disappear just like that because they remain celibate' (Ordained in 2008).

Up to date, some of the community members still cannot allow their sons to join the priesthood because of breaking the continuity in life (Kame maa), the life has been broken (Ordained in 2009).

I have enjoyed my priesthood despite the challenges arising from societal expectations who cannot understand the reason why I chose to become a priest. (Ordained in 2010).

The discussants in the FGD 4 reiterated what has already been intimated by the discussants in all community FGDs: the Nandi's opposition against Catholic priesthood was not a rejection of Christianity. They took issue mainly with the practice of celibacy. This rejection of celibacy was not also on religious but cultural grounds; it was informed by the need to ensure the continuity of the Nandi lineage through the birth of children within the marriage and family context.

The discussion also took a cultural perspective as there is still reluctance from a cultural view which points out that priestly celibacy was and is still considered alien.

As per the Nandi Cultural perspective, the community was in a perpetual transition from childhood through death and ensures the perpetual continuity occurred through marriages. Individuals were therefore expected to marry for the continuity of the clan and the community. Celibacy is alien to African communities (Ordained in 2011).

Celibacy per se was not embraced by the community at large but there were periodic instances where sexual abstinence was allowed. Celibacy was specifically preserved for elders and diviners who were no longer sexually active (Ordained in 2010).

Priesthood is a challenge because of cultural viewpoints that a man must get married, procreate and propagate offspring for the perpetuation of the clan and community. It becomes a challenge because not everyone in the community would understand the breaks in the chain of life during priesthood. Celibacy breaks this chain of life as it breaks the perpetual continuity (flow) of life. Celibacy in the indigenous Nandi Community was foreign but, in some instances, men were asked for advice to practice continence during specific ceremonies (Ordained in 2013).

Priestly celibacy is foreign to the Nandi culture as the custom dictated that a man should marry to propagate offspring and perpetuate the community (Kolal maa) Celibacy is a discipline and remains very foreign to an African society (Ordained in 2009).

The remarks above show that the Nandi found perpetual celibacy alien, but the idea of sexual abstinence for spiritual reasons was present in their indigenous cultures. Some discussants held the view that priestly celibacy was not foreign and/or alien to indigenous African communities.

I do not think celibacy is alien to African communities as there were elements of celibacy in the community before the spread of Christianity into African communities (Ordained in 2013).

At the same time, I do not consider celibacy to be foreign because it has been universally accepted and embraced by multitudes of people all over the world. From the African cultural perspective, celibacy came with the spread of the Christian faith as a package and based on the vocation, some people have lived a celibate life and therefore African priests ought to embrace celibacy as it is despite the challenges. The challenges are everywhere just like in the world and we have to live a celibate life as discipline (Ordained in 2011).

Therefore, celibacy when understood as sexual abstinence and a mark of ritual purity, was not considered alien to the Nandi culture.

Further, the senior priest who were interviewed also observed that there are still cultural impediments to acceptance of priestly celibacy in the community.

Celibacy was not acceptable as life was valued through procreation as it was a sign of continuity in life. Individuals were encouraged to marry and whoever did not marry was considered an outcast, a misfortune and was not respected by the society and was still encouraged to marry. Individuals would look for wives for him to marry (Ordained in 1993).

As much as we are Africans, we still interact with other cultures and borrow good things. If celibacy is alien to Africans, it is a good thing that is worth embracing. Those who argue celibacy is un-African are implying that all African ways of doing things are good which is subjective (Ordained in 1998).

The following comments from the senior priests depict priestly celibacy as a cultural paradigm that is still evolving:

When Fr. Kuhn (the pioneering priest in Nandi) started working in Chepterit, the community referred to him as kipsongoiya (unmarried) even though they feared him. The first Nandi persons to become priests were also referred to as kipsongoiya.

The timing of celibate priesthood coming from the cultural point of virtuosity from the society indicates a manifestation of a rich culture that valued marriage and virtue. The evangelization from the missionaries was an eye-opener as it imparted the Christian faith to our grandparents and parents. The missionaries became the role models and inspired us to take up the challenge of evangelization and become catholic priests. I grew up in a strong catholic family and was inspired at a young age to become a priest as I was involved in church activities. As I grew up I got involved in young Catholic Students during my school years and through this I asked myself 'Does it mean that there is no black person who can serve in the church?' (Ordained in 1998).

I would attribute the desire to become a priest to the strong catholic uprising and be inspired by black Catholic priests like Fr Khaemba who was in Chesoi and Fr Kiriswa among others. This motivated me to join the priesthood and embrace celibacy as a higher value and good and to be outstanding in society stand out of the culture and serve people (Ordained in 1984).

All the years, I was in the seminary my mother did not accept the celibacy requirements, but two weeks before ordination she accepted and blessed me for accepting this call and urged me 'not to look back'. She encouraged me to continue serving the Lord and not to shame us. I was advised, encouraged and blessed and dressed traditionally as an elder even though I was celibate. Now that you are an elder, church leader, a community leader we have invested some authority in you to lead and guide us. These things are significant as the community look unto you for leadership and direction and also allow you to live to your calling (Ordained in 1984).

What stands out from the above remarks is that the moral propriety of the Catholic priests has greatly contributed to the acceptance of celibacy in the Nandi society. The Nandi Christians seem to take great issue with priests who, after taking the vows of celibacy, break those vows by engaging in sexual incontinence. It is also evident from the above responses that family's blessing and approval enhances the priest's

confidence in his obedient response to the call to priesthood. This view also emerged from the remarks given by the younger priests who participated in FGD 4:

I have embraced the gift of celibacy despite significant challenges because a man has natural desires which have to be catered for save for the sacrifices that I have made as a priest (Ordained in 2009).

For me, celibacy has not been easy as I had to make a sacrifice to live a celibate life. We the priests are called to sacrifice one's own life because we are living a call to carry a cross and imitate Christ's life. Celibacy is a discipline and as indicated in the Gospel of Matthew 19 'it is not everybody who can embrace the discipline and accept the sacrifice but only those who are granted the grace by God' (Ordained in 2011).

I am enjoying living a celibate life despite the challenges of human desire (Ordained in 2010).

The challenges are mainly related to the sacrifices that I make to serve the Lord and these challenges make me strong and I have to carry them because it is my sacrifice. Thus, when I encounter challenges, I see them as my cross, I have to carry them and dedicate myself to the Lord (Ordained in 2014).

Celibacy should be embraced for a purpose despite the challenges. We are all unique whether someone is married or celibate life, there are challenges. We are created especially for married or celibate life as per God's grace (Ordained in 2008).

Celibacy is a gift from God but has its challenges because of our human nature but God calls us the way we are. and we are not running away from marriage Celibacy is not a refuge from marriage as when celibacy is taken as a refuge as it will burden the priest, but when taken positively, as a God – Given Gift not for the motive of serving oneself but serving God, his people and humanity (Ordained in 2010).

The responses above highlight some of the challenges faced by priests in their vocation.

First, the option to priesthood and hence celibacy does not rid one of the realities of sexual needs, which are the natural gifts from God.

Overall, the study noted that priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church has taken a trajectory of non-acceptance by the community in the mid-20th century to early 1990s when the community began to acquiesce to priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church. There is still some cultural and social resistance; however, celibate Catholic priests at

personal level are accorded respect in the Nandi. This finding concurs with Wubbles (2011) who showed that the acceptability of priestly celibacy draws from varied viewpoints; the personal perspective where the priest formally accepts to be celibate during ordination and the social perspective, that is, how the priest views himself in the public sphere. The study showed that celibate priest feels more accepted within their churches than in other churches.

Several empirical studies have also observed the growing societal or communal acceptance of priestly celibacy (Olson (2007). In fact, some studies have shown that, certain indigenous communities accepted celibacy as way of life for specific people (Makamure, 2004; Gwaza, 2019), however, Gwaza (2019) considered priestly celibacy as alien to the indigenous communities, while Makamure (2004) indicated that celibacy was practised by the indigenous Karanga people way before the introduction of Catholicism.

5.5 Summary

The chapter has presented the analysis of the acceptability of priestly celibacy in Nandi based on the interviews with senior priests and FGDs with younger priests in the Catholic Church. The findings showed that at the onset and spread of Catholicism in the Nandi, the indigenous community was hesitant to embrace the new religion and its dictates. The community at large could not fathom how an individual (priest) could remain celibate for long periods. However, by 1950s and 1960s, with the rising number of converts to Catholicism, the Nandi began to understand and accept the place of celibacy in the Catholic priesthood.

Though understood and appreciated, however, the practice of priestly celibacy by the Nandi remained socially and culturally unacceptable for the whole of the 20th century.

There has been a gradual acceptance of celibacy in the community, but a cross-section of the contemporary Nandi community is still unable to appreciate priestly celibacy and considers it culturally inappropriate. The next chapter provides the summary of the study findings, conclusions and recommendations on priestly celibacy from a religious and Nandi cultural viewpoint.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter reiterates the essence of priestly or sacerdotal celibacy and proposes or advocates for a more tolerable and accepted view of celibacy. The study acknowledges that there is an ongoing conversation on celibacy within the church and between the church and others (denominations and cultures). However, while celibacy is largely a personal commitment founded on the obedience to God's call to priesthood, controversies around celibacy and the challenges that priests face in different contexts are sometimes blown out of proportion by the media.

6.2 Summary

The study took a qualitative approach and used interviews and FGDs. Several themes were drawn from the study findings including: the practice of sacerdotalism during indigenous ceremonies, rites and rituals; sexual continence during indigenous rituals and rites; observance of chastity among the young and unmarried, and distaste for the unmarried. The other main themes were the cultural and social rigidities and inflexibilities on the issue of priestly celibacy, and the gradual societal acceptance of priestly celibacy in the 21st century. A minor theme also relates to the social acceptance of celibate clergy serving in the Anglican Church and married clergy for the other protestant denominations.

In the context of the Nandi indigenous worldview, it was revealed that the community largely has religious practises relating to all aspects of life, ranging from naming ceremonies for children at the family level to the thanksgiving communal ceremonies at the shrines. The Nandi community at large had a set of religious practices that was centred on holistic communal living. Individuals were expected to live in harmony with

other community members in good faith, perform good deeds always, and practice good neighbourliness with others. Transgressions against fellow community members were cleansed and the relationships between conflicting parties/individuals were mended through elaborate cultural and traditional systems and processes.

The sacerdotal view of the indigenous Nandi community was centred on the indigenous priest (*tisindet*) leading the community in the Kapkoros (Shrine). The criteria for selecting people to be the Nandi priests (*tisik*) were: married men, good behaviour and moral uprightness, specific lineage, sagacious, bold and knowledgeable. The religious ceremony exemplified purity by all standards, and, as such, the priest was examined to ensure he was *lipwuop* (morally unblemished). The priest was also expected to practise ritual purity by abstaining for the specified time before leading the community in the indigenous shrine. There was a celibate individual (*kiborenatiot*) tasked with the oblation offerings during periods of calamities such as droughts, diseases, epidemics and other bad occurrences in the community. Furthermore, in the performance of specific indigenous ceremonies, such as circumcision ceremonies and marriages, the sponsors (*matirenik*) and celebrants (*boiyop-tum*) were also expected to practise ritual purity by abstaining from any sexual relationship before and during the rites and rituals.

The indigenous Nandi held chastity as an important value to the young and thus the young were expected to remain chaste until marriage. Both boys and girls were expected and obligated to mingle and share a bed for specific times but not get intimate. Both were expected to eat *nyamdutik*, the act of touching, caressing and fondling with their male counterparts but to observe chastity by all means. In so doing, they cultivated strength of character and discipline through self-control. The girls and boys were to pride themselves in their bodies during this act and to never engage in any premarital sex. During betrothal, girls who had remained chaste were extolled and rewarded while

those who had failed to remain chaste were shunned. The epitome of betrothal was having a chaste girl sit on a three-legged stool and crowned with *masarik*.

The Nandi community valued (and still values) marriage as a means of continuity with the chains of life. As such, an unmarried individual (*kipsongoiyat*) was detested and ostracized by the community and could not partake in any communal event. Staying unmarried was abominable. The cultural perspective valued marriage as a means to procreate and have offspring or continuity in life (*kilaal maat*), which means to ensure the continuity of life and the community through offspring. The communal expectation was that a person was not to die without having an offspring (*komugul somorya*), meaning not having expended kidneys or one's bodily energy in procreation.

Regarding priestly celibacy, the Nandi community could not fathom how a normal man would opt to stay unmarried and shun all forms of sexual pleasure. The Nandi thus detested the celibate life of Fr. Kuhn (the pioneering Catholic priest in the whole Nandi region) and suspected that he was seeking to marry their children. This indicated that celibate priests were not culturally and socially acceptable in the community in the mid-20th century. There has been a gradual societal shift in perception towards priestly celibacy at the community level in the 21st century as more young men are joining priesthood. The priests are respected and acclaimed but are still individually questioned for their choices on the cultural and social fronts. Therefore, among the Nandi, there remain cultural and social rigidities on the issue of priestly celibacy.

From the views of the protestant clergy, it was found that the Anglican Church has two traditions, namely celibate clergy and married clergy. The celibate clergy has been socially accepted at the local level since the Nandi do not regard this type of celibacy as a threat to the propagation of life. The other protestant denominations still maintain

married clergy. The protestant churches respect the personal choices of the celibate Catholic priests and emphasize faithfulness and fidelity to the ministry. There seems to be spiritual value of celibacy that is embraced by all churches, but the practicality of total abstinence is a bone of contention.

6.3 Conclusions

Based on the study findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

Priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church remained an issue of contestation for the indigenous Nandi community. Whereas the community largely accepted the Catholic faith in the mid-20th century, they could not fathom how a normal sensible man would choose to stay celibate for the rest of his life. Further, despite the cultural evolution in the 21st century, celibate priests are still facing social and cultural rigidities regarding their choices of vocation to be priests.

The indigenous Nandi community detested celibate life by all means and never consented to long - term celibacy at all levels. The closest circumstance to celibacy was the periodic sexual abstinence that could range from two months to less than a year for the obligatory performance of the indigenous, ceremonies, rites and rituals such as circumcision and prayers at the indigenous shrine. There was a small number of celibate individuals (*kiborenatiot*) who were tasked with oblatinal sacrifices at the Kapkoros (shrine) in times of calamities, epidemics, droughts and other adverse and deleterious human and environmental conditions.

The protestant community hold similar viewpoints regarding the tradition of marriage for the continuity of life with the indigenous Nandi community but differ in the way their view the task of ministerial priesthood. The protestant Christian community draw from a biblical and theological viewpoint that a church minister should be married and

thus contrast with the view of priestly celibacy in the catholic church. The Anglican Church shares long traditions with the Catholic Church and thus have come to accept celibate clergy in their midst. Further, the Christian communities are mostly comfortable with the Catholic priesthood as it is for the salvific objectives.

Catholic priests from the Nandi community are largely accepted by their own Christian community. In the mid – 20th century, the community could not accept their own to join priesthood, however, with time, and as the number of converts increased, the Nandi community began to accept a celibate priest at the beckoning of the 21st century. However, still, the community at large questions their choices regarding celibacy. Nevertheless, the community of believers in both divides (Catholics and Protestants) still find it difficult to accept priestly celibacy as mandated and practised in the Catholic Church. The cultural viewpoints and social backgrounds of Christians still shape much of how they believe and practice their faith.

6.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations.

Considering that there are dialectical differences in indigenous African worldview and Catholic Church with regard to celibacy and marriage, the study recommends that the Catholic Church hierarchy appreciate the natural and cultural philosophical value attached to indigenous marriages in most African communities. In this manner, the Church would draw specific indigenous and cultural values such as ritual purity and virtuous living that are more aligned and appropriate to Christian values. This would not only strengthen the Church's mission but also support the growth of the Christian communities in Africa.

The celibacy requirement for Catholic priesthood should maintain the celibacy rule upon the voluntary acceptance by the individuals seeking to become priest. This finds support in the notion that religious ceremonies and rituals required ritual purity and virtuous living by all standards as informed by the 'kiborenatiot', the celibate individual tasked with oblation offerings in the Nandi Community. In doing so, the Catholic Church hierarchy would be able to validate its long – held tradition of celibacy requirement for priestly formation and placate the African communities for seeking to promote clerical marriages.

The Catholic priests and church ministers across the divide should strictly adhere to the ideals of ministerial priesthood that is, fidelity and service to God and Humanity. Considering that priesthood was ordained by Jesus Christ himself in the service to God and Humanity, the ideals of ministerial priesthood seek to make Christ known to all people through faith, works and service. The two proponents of ministerial priesthood are Martin Luther King of the protestant reformation and Pope Paul VI in 1971 through the Synod on ministerial priesthood (*Ultimis Temporibus*) held in 1971.

Lastly, drawing from the necessity of ritual purity, the study recommends that young men seeking entry to priestly formation should pursue career orientation before entry to priestly formation. This initial career orientation should help expose and familiarize the potential with the societal dynamics before entering priestly formation. Further, regular spiritual formation should be mandated for all active clergy to forestall cases on incontinent ecclesiastics in their midst and promote a favourable view of catholic priesthood.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Consent Form

Michael Kiplagat Rop
P.O Box 6403
Eldoret

Dear respondent

Good morning/Good afternoon participants,

My name is Michael Kiplagat Rop a PhD student of Moi University, Department of Philosophy, Religion and Theology. Allow me dear participants, to welcome you to this very important engagement with you, and in particular for this interview. Please feel very welcome. Thank you very much for accepting my request to be a participant in this study on investigation the Nandi view of celibacy. I appreciate the time you have spared within your busy schedule in order to be here to assist me discuss a topic of great interest to me. (An opportunity is given to the participants to introduce themselves also).

With due respect our people, elders, men and women of this great Nandi County, I am carrying out a study on the NANDI PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVES OF CELIBACY (a short explanation of celibacy is highlighted by the researcher). The study aims to establish how celibacy was and is viewed in the Nandi culture. Is it acceptable for one to remain celibate? If so for what reasons, and if it was not, were there any exceptions? The expected end result of this study, my dear participants. is new knowledge that would be crucial to unravelling the issue of priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church from the indigenous Nandi cultural viewpoint. It will also help the general public to engage in positive and beneficial discussions on this topic.

My dear Participants, I don't anticipate any risk especially on your part as an individual, or as Nandi community in participating in this study because what we are doing here is only interview or discussions. The information you will provide shall be treated with

utmost confidentiality and purely for the purposes of this study. However, should you feel that you are not comfortable to answer some particular questions during this interview/ discussions, you are obliged to raise objection. You are also free to withdraw participation in this interview/ discussions at any stage if you wish. Participant(s), so as not to miss important points, I request that you allow me to tape this discussion/ interview.

(Pause for participants to ask for any clarifications). If you accept to participate in this focus group discussions (FGD) / interviews, may I kindly request you to append your signatures in on the space provided. In case you have any issue you would like me to further clarify, I will oblige.

By signing this consent form, I have not given up my legal rights as a participant in this research study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study:

Yes/No

Signature: _____ Date _____

Researcher's statement

I, the undersigned, have fully explained the relevant details of this research study to the participant named above and believe that the participant has understood and has knowingly given his/her consent.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Role in the study: _____ [i.e. who explained informed consent form.]

Please feel free to contact me:

Michael K. Rop. Mobile Tel. No. 0721-211180 email: -kiplagatmr@gmail.com

-ropmichael@yahoo.com

Appendix II: Interview Schedule

SECTION I: THE NANDI VIEW OF CELIBACY.

- i. Greetings/Introductions begin with interviewer then interviewee. Permission for audio- recording is sought.
- ii. Tell me about yourself
- iii. Tell me more about your understanding of the Nandi culture with particular emphasis on the social norms that govern their cultural life.
- iv. Comment on sexuality issues within African societies and in particular among the Nandi.
- v. Tell me about celibacy among the indigenous Nandi?
- vi. Was celibacy acceptable among the indigenous Nandi. If they answer yes, then follow up with the question: what was the role of celibates?
- vii. Tell me about someone that you know who has lived or is living a celibate life according to Nandi indigenous traditions?
- viii. What are your personal feelings with regard to celibate life?
- ix. Supposing your son were to tell you today that he would like to take up celibacy for religious life, what would be your response?
- x. What purpose do you think celibacy still serves in our African societies?
- xi. What would you say about the priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church?
- xii. What kind of advice would you give to the celibate priests in the Catholic Church on this issue of celibacy?

Thank you very much sir/madam for your time and cooperation.

SECTION II: AFRICAN'S PERCEPTION OF CELIBACY (TO BE USED FOR CLERGY)

1. Greetings/ Introductions begin with interviewer then interviewee. Permission for audio-recording is sort.
2. Rev Father/ Pastor tell me in brief about yourself and where you minister.
3. As a priest/ pastor you are better placed to discuss your Church's Doctrine with regard to sexuality issues. What is the Church's stand on this issue?
4. For Catholic Priest: Since you are a Catholic priest could you comment on the doctrine of celibacy as practiced in the Catholic Church? As an African priest, what is your experience of priestly celibacy?
5. Tell me about the practise of celibacy from your Christian religious background?
6. From your personal view, how does the doctrine of celibacy work within the religious framework?
7. Based on your understanding, in which circumstances was celibacy acceptable among the indigenous Africans?
8. Considering the controversies and challenges surrounding the priestly celibacy, what would you propose as a solution or way forward?
9. Is there any other point that you like to add as we conclude?

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Appendix III: Moi University Approval



MOI UNIVERSITY

(ISO 9001:2015 CERTIFIED INSTITUTION)

Office of the Dean, School of Arts and Social Sciences

Tel. Eldoret (053) 43620/43093

Fax No. (053) 43047

E-mail: deanarts@mu.ac.ke

P.O. Box 3900,

Eldoret,

KENYA

REF: SASS/DPHIL/REL/01/13

11th September, 2023

ROP MICHAEL KIPLAGAT – SASS/DPHIL/REL/01/13

Department of Philosophy, Religion & Theology

Moi University

P.O. Box 3900-30100

ELDORET

Dear Mr. Rop,

RE: CONGRATULATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENCE OF YOUR PROPOSAL OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN RELIGION

On behalf of the Board, School of Arts and Social Sciences, I congratulate you for having successfully defended your Doctor of Philosophy proposal entitled: **“Priestly Celibacy in the Catholic Church: The African Perspectives with Special Focus on Nandi Community- Nandi County, Kenya.”**

The Board of Examiners awarded your Proposal Grade B (66%)

However, before you proceed to the field, the Board of Examiners has made the condition that you carry out the corrections as instructed during the oral presentation on the Proposal under the supervision of your supervisors.

You should complete the corrections and your supervisor(s) MUST certify that you have made the corrections.

Yours faithfully,

**SCHOOL OF ARTS
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
MOI UNIVERSITY**

PROF. MARY N. WATHOME

DEAN, SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

c.c. Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic, Research & Extension)

Chair, Department of Philosophy, Religion & Theology

Appendix IV: Moi University Authorization



MOI UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Tel: (053) 43093
 (053) 43620 Ext 2515
 Fax: (053) 43047
 E-mail: deanarts@mu.ac.ke

P.O. Box 4999
 ELDORET
 KENYA

11th September, 2023

NACOSTI (National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation),
 P.O. Box 30623,
 Utalii Hse,
NAIROBI.

Dear Sir/Madam,

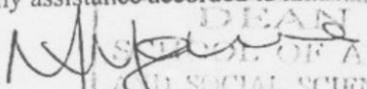
RE: ROP MICHAEL KIPLAGAT – SASS/DPHIL/REL/01/13

This is to certify that the above named is a bonafide student at Moi University, School of Arts and Social Sciences. He is pursuing a Degree in Doctor of Philosophy in Religion.

He has completed his coursework component and proposal and has now embarked on Thesis writing.

His Thesis is entitled: **“Priestly Celibacy in the Catholic Church: The African Perspectives with Special Focus on Nandi Community- Nandi County, Kenya.”**

Any assistance accorded to him will be appreciated.



DEAN
SCHOOL OF ARTS
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
MOI UNIVERSITY

PROF. MARY WAIHOME
DEAN, SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

(ISO 9001:2015 Certified Institution)

Appendix V: NACOSTI Permit

Republic of Kenya
REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **922492** Date of Issue: **26/September/2023**

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Mr., Michael Kiplagat Rop of Moi University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nandi on the topic: PRIESTLY CELIBACY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: THE AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON NANDI COMMUNITY - NANDI COUNTY, KENYA for the period ending : 26/September/2024.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/23/29669**

922492
Applicant Identification Number

Walter Mwangi
Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Verification QR Code



NOTE: This is a computer-generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

See overleaf for conditions

Appendix VI: Approval County Commissioner's Office, Nandi**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION**

Tel: 053 5252621, 5252003, Kapsabet
Fax No. 053 – 5252503
E-mail:
nandicountycommissioner@gmail.com
When replying, please quote



County Commissioner's Office,
Nandi County
P.O. Box 30,
KAPSABET.

Ref: No. NC.EDU. 4/3 VOL.III/(46)

2nd October, 2023

Mr. Michael Kiplagat Rop,
Moi University,
P.O. Box 3900-30100,
ELDORET.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

This is in reference to letter No. NACOSTI/P/23/29669 dated 26th September, 2023 from the Director General, National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation on the above subject matter.

You are hereby authorized to conduct research on **“Priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church: The African perspectives with special focus on Nandi Community”** for the period ending **26th September, 2024.**

Wishing you all the best.

CAROLINE M. NZWILI,
COUNTY COMMISSIONER,
NANDI.

Appendix VII: Approval County Administration, Nandi

COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF NANDI

TELEPHONE 0535252355
Email: info@nandi.go.ke
Website: www.nandi.go.ke



P.O. BOX 802-30300
KAPSABET.

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY SECRETARY

REF: CG/NDI/ADM/1/14(b) VOL.1/15

4th October, 2023

Mr. Michael Kiplangat Rop
Mt Kenya University
P O BOX 3900
ELDORET.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

This is in reference to your letter dated 26th September, 2023 requesting to conduct research in Nandi County as per NACOSTIC license No. NACOSTI/P/23/29669.

The purpose of this letter therefore is to grant you permission to carry out research in our county as guided by the relevant laws and regulations. The research is themed "Priestly Celibacy in the Catholic Church: The African perspective with special focus on Nandi Community - Nandi County, Kenya" for the period ending 26th September, 2024.

We wish you the best as you carry out your research.

Thank you.

Dr. Francis K. Sang, MBS
County Secretary & Head of County Public Service

Appendix VIII: Approval County Education Office, Nandi



**REPUBLIC OF KENYA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
STATE DEPARTMENT FOR BASIC EDUCATION**

Email: cdenandicounty@yahoo.com
Telephone: 0773044624
When replying please quote

**County Director of Education
NANDI COUNTY,
P. O. Box 36-30300,
KAPSABET.**

Ref: NDI/CDE/RESEARCH/1/VOL.111/96

Date 2/10/2023

Mr. Michael Kiplangat Rop
Moi University
P.O Box 3900
ELDORET

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORISATION.

Reference is made to the letter Ref: No. NACOSTI/P/23/29669 dated 26th September, 2023 on the above subject.

The above named person has been granted permission by the County Director of Education to carry out research on ***“PRIESTLY CELIBACY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: THE AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON NANDI COMMUNITY- NANDI COUNTY, KENYA*** for the period ending 26th September, 2024.

Kindly provide him all necessary support he requires.

Mathew sum

For: **County Director
of Education
NANDI COUNTY**

For: County Director of Education,
NANDI COUNTY.

Appendix IX: Plagiarism Awareness Certificate

SR731

ISO 9001:2019 Certified Institution

THESIS WRITING COURSE***PLAGIARISM AWARENESS CERTIFICATE***

This certificate is awarded to

ROP, MICHAEL KIPLAGAT

SASS/DPHIL/REL/01/13

In recognition for passing the University's plagiarism

Awareness test for Thesis **entitled: PRIESTLY CELIBACY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON NANDI COMMUNITY - NANDI COUNTY, KENYA** with a similarity index of 2% and striving to maintain academic integrity.

Word count:61696

Awarded by

Prof. Anne Syomwene Kisilu
CERM-ESA Project Leader
Date:25/10/2024