

An Analysis of the Lay Participation to Vocation Promotion in Vietnam

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Abstract – *From the dawn of Vatican Council II, lay Catholics have been encouraged to actively participate to the life and mission of the Church. Many lay faithful have responded to this call and dispensed their service in various church ministries. However, many other lay men and women have not demonstrated a visible participation, especially in the mission of promoting priestly and religious vocations. In its attempt to advocate for a more active collaboration of Vietnamese lay people in vocation promotion, this paper will accomplish three goals. It will stress once again that lay Christians in Vietnam need to share the responsibility entrusted to each by the Church in encouraging vocations. The paper then argues that lay presence in this ministry enhances its dynamic and effectiveness. It finally explores ways lay faithful can employ to raise awareness in youth of the call to priesthood and religious life in their context and culture. As such, the study hopes to inspire all baptized to extend their participatory presence in vocation promotion with zeal and confidence.*

Keywords – *Context of Vietnam, lay participation, multi-level approach. Responsibility, vocation promotion*

INTRODUCTION

Since the Vatican II Council, many Church's Encyclicals, Decrees, Apostolic Exhortations and Teachings of the church leaders have focused on the vocation, mission and dignity of all the lay faithful. The predominant idea is that every baptized person is called to participate in the life and mission of the Church, which continues to live out the life and mission of the one Lord Jesus Christ. Responding to this initiative of the Church, numerous lay women and men have made an effort to rediscover their baptismal call and to extend their presence and collaboration to various ministries in the Church; which has enhanced the vitalization and dynamic of both local and universal churches.

In Europe and America, the late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed an active engagement of lay people in local churches' pastoral ministries [1]. In Asia, the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) promoted a decentralization of the current hierarchical structures of Catholicism and a reconstruction towards a more participatory one, where lay people were empowered to share leadership roles and to have their multiple and unique gifts recognized and utilized in the life and mission of the Church [2]. The eight movements in the Asian church since the birth of FABC in 1970 have yielded transformative fruits in the life of Asian churches, as in [2]. In Vietnam, adopting the

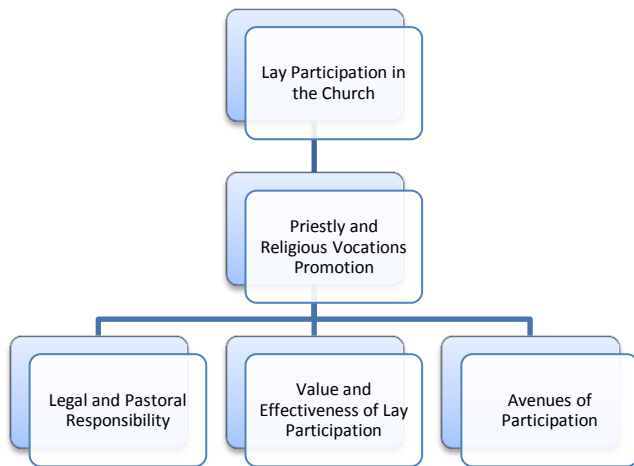
spirit and vision of the Vatican II Council of a lay-centered church, Vietnamese Christians have become more enthusiastic in participating to local church councils, Christian movements and groups in parishes as well as in dioceses. They are undertaking their apostolate with creativity and in partnership with their pastors [3]. Many places have witnessed a responsible participation of lay people in diverse ministries such as in areas of catechism, pastoral care for families and for youth. Parish management responsibilities in many areas have been primarily entrusted to lay faithful men and women.

Vatican II Council identifies the diverse ministries and mission areas that the laity could take part in [4], while living in their very "ordinary circumstances of family and social life" [5]. Saint John Paul II [6] in "Christifideles Laici" categorizes this diverse participation into eight fields of action to promote the dignity of person and life, defend legitimate freedom, protect family life, and participate in charity and public life [7]. Hai [8] terms this participation as numerous roles and responsibilities of lay people. However, as observed by Thao Nguyen, as in [2], deep in the tradition of Vietnamese church, Christian leadership has been done by clergy and religious people. The recentralization of the church missions and ministries around laity has not yet reached the vast majority of the

lay faithful, as in [3]. Thus, a lot more remains to be done so that all Christ's faithful in Vietnam can position themselves away from what Hunt [9] terms as dependent children who are submissive to and receivers of the hierarchy. Especially in the mission of promoting priestly and religious vocations, laypeople are encouraged to step up and to be more visible in fulfilling the responsibility entrusted to them by the Church: "It is the duty of the whole Christian community to foster vocations so that the needs of the sacred ministry are sufficiently met in the entire Church" (Canon Law, 233 §1).

Lay Participation In The Church

In order for Christ's faithful to become more participatory in the ministry of promoting priestly and religious vocations they first need to be aware that they have a responsibility to do so. Secondly, lay people will be more motivated to fulfill their responsibility when they know that what they do is worthwhile and effective. Thirdly, they will be able to take initiative in carrying out their duty if they have a direction of how they can do it. Therefore, the paper will focus on exploring these three interrelating areas.



With a zealous endeavor of helping the lay faithful to be more mindful of and more actively involved in their duty of promoting vocations, this paper aims at accomplishing three things. First is to reemphasize that every lay person has a legitimate and pastoral role in promoting vocations to priesthood and religious life. Second is to demonstrate that lay participation in this area will enhance the dynamic and effectiveness in vocation promotion activities. Thirdly, the paper will explore possible strategies that the lay faithful can adopt in fulfilling this duty. These three goals will be

addressed upon the background of Vietnamese context and culture.

METHOD

In looking for an answer to the question: "What is the responsibility of Christian lay people in promoting priestly and religious vocations, and how can they fulfill it?" A literature review was undertaken into documents from the churches and other publications concerning religious vocations. The access ranged from electronic databases, namely Ebscohost, JSTOR, Philippine e-Journals, ProQuest Digital Dissertations, ProQuest online, PsycArticles, and Taylor & Francis, to printed materials. Search terms included religious vocations, priestly vocations, lay Christian people and religious vocations, religious vocation in Vietnam, how to promote religious vocation, vocation promotion, raising awareness of religious vocation, lay ministries, lay participation in the church, empower lay faithful and so on. The search limited itself to materials produced within the timeframe of 2010-2016 to ensure its relevance and updating. The data were collected from chiefly 16 studies and literature with selection criteria of authoritativeness, balanced discussions, and topic relevance. Selected information were then organized into themes of: 1- What lay people's responsibility is in promoting vocation, 2- Who assign them this responsibility, 3- How they can fulfill this responsibility, and 4- How effective their participation will be.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Every Lay Person Has the Duty to Promote Vocation

Having deep compassion for the harassed and helpless crowd, like sheep without a shepherd, Jesus said to his disciples: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (Matthew 9:36-38). This plead is resounded more insistently today than ever in some places as there are less and less people interested in priesthood and religious life, especially in European countries [10]. According to an observation by Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Asia is welcoming a significant rise in the number of vocations, Africa has a continuous increase, and Latin America is seeing a recovery in number; while North America is experiencing difficulties and Europe and Australia are undergoing a crisis in the number of vocations [11]. Asia is so privileged that cultures, social conditions and

other factors are still holding some elements that encourage priestly and religious vocations.

The increasing number of young people in Vietnam dedicating their lives to God through vocations is thought to result from the seed of faith nourished by blood of the Vietnamese Martyrs, the faith traditions and nurturing environment from parishes and families [12]. However, as observed by the superiors general of religious congregations above, the flourish of religious vocations in Vietnam currently relies heavily on existing supportive factors in cultures and faith traditions, as in [12]. As the country going through numerous fast changes in value systems, family structure and reproductive choices, faith practices, and social alternatives, those supportive factors will easily be minimized in a near future [13]. Therefore, each Vietnamese Christian needs to start showing a proactive contribution to promoting priesthood and religious life among the young, a responsibility assigned to each one by the Church (Canon Law 233 §1) but might have long been forgotten. Much more than the general lay people, lay Christian leaders such as catechists, religious educators, youth leaders and those who hold a leadership position in parishes should step up to this call. Indeed, in Vietnam, much more can be done by lay Christian leaders in order to fulfill this duty, as in Le [13]. There should not be any delay in this because as Gallagher [14] puts it: "If we can plant a seed now, that's what counts".

Pope Paul VI in his papal decree *Optatam Totius* (no. 2) in 1965 [15] reemphasizes Canon Law 233 §1: "The duty of fostering vocations pertains to the whole Christian community, which should exercise it above all by a fully Christian life". In this Decree on Priestly Training, the pope asserts that a unanimous effort of the whole people of God through constant prayers, Christian penance and training of the faithful is a proper means that the people of God beseeches God to show Divine Providence about whom God wants to choose (no.2). The special gifts that God grants the chosen ones are not only to benefit themselves but also, by large, for the benefit of all Christ's faithful, and to contribute to the Church's saving mission (Canon Law §2).

About religious vocations, Pope Paul VI [16] in *Decree on The Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life - Perfectae Caritatis* makes clear that serious effort should be made in fostering vocations in order that the Church is strengthened and has its needs meet. By this, the pope emphasizes the significance and importance of religious life in the Church. In professing the three evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience,

religious people proclaim that God is their only one true love which frees their heart to be inflamed with love for God and for all; that God is their only true possession; and that their lives are but to submit to the salvific will of God. Because the state of religious life is for the common good of Christ's body- the Church, every baptized namely priests, Christian educators and parents should instill Christian values and virtues in young people to nurture and protect religious vocations.

Addressing the bishops, clergy and faithful in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* Saint Pope John Paul II [17] again insists that all are responsible for priestly vocations. As priestly vocations are not only a special gift for recipients themselves but also for the life and mission of the whole church, every part of the People of God is to share the duty of safeguarding this gift. Every part of the People of God is to accommodate the birth and development of vocations (no. 41). The pope specifies unique contribution that each part of the faithful has to make. The Christian family, as a domestic church, should continue offering favorable conditions for the birth of vocation. The school, as educating community, is to help students to understand that vocation is a fundamental value of a human person. The parish community in offering pastoral care to youth can supplement family's role in midwifing vocations (no.68). The lay faithful on a whole, particularly catechists, teachers, educators and youth ministers, can foster vocations by showing appreciation and recognition of the uniqueness of vocations.

In *Starting Afresh From Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in The Third Millennium*, saint John Paul II [18] calls upon the entire Church to assume responsibility for vocations (no. 16). The powerful tool that each can use is offering prayers to God to ask God the master of harvest to send more laborers into his harvests. According to the pope, the world of globalization, of moral and material sufferings, and of complex social relations today is most in need of people who are messengers of peace and hope, and who manifest the salvific mission of Christ. That is how significant vocations are for the Church.

Lay Participation in Vocation Promotion Will Enhance the Dynamic and Effectiveness in Vocation Promotion Current State of Lay Participation in Vocation Promotion in Vietnam

The argument being put forward above affirms that each and every one in the Church is responsible for promoting and fostering vocations. Yet the manifestation of this responsibility is not so visible in

the church of Vietnam. Vocation promotion has been largely left to the clergy and religious orders. Each religious congregation has its own website with one part dedicated to introduction and recruitment of vocations, consisting of photos and video clips of advertisement activities, selection criteria, and contact details. Each parish priest forms a small group of those youth who are interested in priestly and religious vocations for occasional meeting and formation. Lay participation has still been restricted to domestic spheres of prayers and setting good examples in family and parish groups.

In *Priestly and Religious Vocations, Things You Need to Know*, father Giuse Le Anh Tuan, as in Le [13], portrays a picture that every Vietnamese Catholic can relate to. He argues that though Vietnamese church is currently a fertile land for vocations, this will hardly be the case in a few years' time due to changes in the country: families reduce the number of children to only one or two, as opposed to five to eight or even ten before; for many reasons, clergy and religious people do not any more enjoy the same level of respect and affection from others as previously; and the contemporary cultural and social factors no longer create favorable conditions to foster vocations. Therefore, Le advocates for a more active participation of everyone in the church to promoting vocation. However, his call is still restricts lay contribution at a traditional level of praying for vocations, providing good education of Christian values and faith, and occasional encouragement of youth to consider choosing priestly or religious vocation by catechists. The development and running of vocation centers, where the presence of lay people can be impressive, are still reserved for clergy and religious people.

Similarly, Luke Quang in *What Should The Family Do To Encourage Priestly And Religious Vocation?*[19] focuses the demonstration of vocation promotion duty of laity on family environment. He suggests that parents can foster vocation by their faithful observance of Catholics liturgy and reception of sacraments, by taking part in charity and setting good examples, and by encouraging their children to lead healthy lifestyles and to be participatory in parish activities. These are undeniably crucial and effective means, yet the lay faithful can be empowered to do more than that and to extend their zeal, knowledge and skills well beyond individual actions in family spheres. Lay partnership should also be expanded to reach a collective level of committees or diocesan administration. Achieving this will motivate laity to fulfill Pope Francis' invitation to them to mark their Christian presence not only in the

Church but also in the world (*Evangeli Gaudium*, no. 102) [20]. Indeed, many theories have proved that a ministry will be far more effective with lay active presence.

Contribution of the Laity Enhances the Dynamics and Effectiveness

Pastor Donald McGavran [21] after many years of mission in India has noticed that some churches grew considerably while some others did not. Using survey questionnaire, interview, observation, and historical analysis, he did a systematic field research to find out supportive factors of church growth, barriers to church growth, and principles of growing church that can be reproduced and applied to other churches. McGavran's study shows that growing patterns of churches can be classified into four dimensions: internal growth, expansion growth, extension growth, and bridging growth. A church grows internally when it has more and more subgroups, and they practice Christian faith and show active commitment to Christ. The expansion growth of a church is manifested in increasing of new members. A church is growing extensionally when it continues giving birth to its daughter churches in its surrounding. The bridging growth of a church is expressed though it reaching out to the other side and to other part of the population [22]. Hunter [23] finds out two other characteristics of growing churches: "catalytic growth" and "proliferation growth". Catalytic growth is shown in the enlargement of the number of members and Christianity movements, in a contagious dynamic of the church; while proliferation growth is ignited by the structural innovations in the church. Supporting McGavran's position on motivating factors of church growth, Wagner [24], maintains that the underlying force for church growth, in any sense, is the level and extent to which lay faithful are trained and equipped for ministry, for mission, and for leadership. He insists that the role of church leaders should include facilitating lay people to take ownership of responsibility and motivation to attain set goals of their congregation or local church. In other words, lay women and men need to be sufficiently empowered and equipped so that they can actualize their calling in the life and mission of the Church. The same principle applies in area of promoting vocation, lay people should be encouraged and facilitated to take their share and fulfill their role. Moreover, their presence and cooperation will undeniably enhance the effectiveness of the work.

Applying principles of managing human and physical resources in business, missionary George

Hunter, as in Hwang [21], argues that a church will grow and be more effective in ministry when it employs “Delegation and Deployment Principles”. It is the principles by which leaders recognize talents and skills of each employee and delegate the person with suitable responsibility. It also requires leaders to know how to dispense available human forces and resources. His field study finds that growing churches hire more lay people, recruit and deploy more volunteers for various ministries than stagnating and declining churches do. Hunter then comes to the conclusion that growing churches are characterized by five elements in terms of delegating and deploying people for ministries: 1- identifying each member’s aptitudes or spiritual gifts and then assigning suitable task or role to the person, 2- providing training and coaching for new positions, 3- orienting each person towards specifically expected outcomes and the overarching goal and mission of the whole church, 4- acknowledging, positively reinforcing, and giving public modeling and recognition to the person’s contribution, and 5- defining functions, authority and relationships the person has in relating to assigned role, as in Hwang [21]. Based on these delegation and deployment principles, it can be expected that lay people should also be encouraged to utilize their suitable aptitudes and spiritual gifts in vocation promotion ministry. The various but unique talents, skills and knowledge of the laity will be valuable contributions to the dynamic and effectiveness of vocation promotion activities and strategies in their local church, as well as in broader settings of dioceses or global Church. Lay participation will bring fresh ideas and innovation to the ministry.

Psychologists McMillan and Chavis [25] in investigating a person’s perception of and investment in the life and dynamic of his or her community found that a person’s sense of community influences the level of individual’s involvement in the community. Understanding a person’s sense of community will help community leadership strategize appropriate encouragement of its members’ participation. This sense of community consists of four elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. A member establishes membership in a community by defining boundaries, emotional safety, sense of belonging and identification the person feels while being in that community. These elements together with using the common symbol system will motivate personal investment of the person into the life of the community. The second factor – influence- should be nurtured by:

The member has the power to influence the community and member is open to be influenced by other community members; this reciprocal influence is consolidated by members have a need for consensual validation from the community and the community needs its members to conform to community norms. The third characteristic is integration and fulfillment of needs: Sense of community in members will be enhanced when the community can meet their needs by successfully facilitating person-environment fit. The fourth factor is shared emotional connection: Members become more closely knitted to one another through frequent contact and quality interaction among them in events through which members are given honor and acknowledgement. This theory of McMillan and Chavis can be applied to explain the reciprocal enhancement and influence between lay people and their local church. When their aptitudes and spiritual gifts are utilized and maximized in suitable roles and responsibilities in church ministries, lay people will feel more strongly belonged as members of the church; they can then exert more influence on the church community and the be driven more strongly by the community overall vision and goals; members thus can fulfill their needs of self-actualization and self-efficacy through their unique contributions to the various church ministries, and the church numerous ministries can be accomplished with the support of needed skills and gifts of the laity. This whole process of mutual interaction will undoubtedly deepen emotional connection of members to their church. Both are benefitted by each other and facilitate each other to grow.

Questions may arise concerning how to make the mutual interaction between laity and the church one that benefits both, promotes growth for both, and facilitates both to self-actualize. The holistic Wellbeing Framework proposed by Nelson and Prilleltensky [26] asserts that a person’s wellbeing is influenced by a combination of various factors. It recognizes that human responses to numerous contexts are influenced by multiple determinants: personal factors of psychology and biology, the context of parenting and upbringing, and influences of the social circle, community, cultures and political situations as well as legislative systems. This framework of holistic wellbeing can function as a reminder that how a lay person dispenses his or her service in the church’s mission depends on three levels of influence: 1- talents, skills, spiritual gifts, knowledge and motivation the person has, 2- encouragement, habit and examples or viewpoint of family members, peers and relatives about

lay service, the extent to which the local church empowers and facilitates lay participation, and 3- the degree of accommodation the universal church offers as well as particular characteristics of culture, political system and other social factors of a relevant country where lay people live. Thus, encouragement of lay contribution should be demonstrated on those three scales: personal, relational and collective level.

The above discussion from a multidisciplinary perspective lays a foundation for the claim that each lay person is assigned the responsibility to promote priestly and religious vocations and so each should be accommodated to fulfill it. On the one hand, lay active presence in this mission is necessary for the success and effectiveness of vocation promotion in young people. On the other hand, faithful men and women need to be equipped and empowered on three levels in order to be proactive and efficient in this mission field. To encourage laity to carry out their task in vocation promotion with enthusiasm and confidence, the following part of the paper will focus on exploring possible ways that Christ's baptized may employ to fulfill their assignment.

Means to Promote Priestly and Religious Vocations

Depending on each person's situation, skills, resources and personal orientation, each Christ's baptized can contribute to vocation promotion in a unique manner. Lay participation can be dispensed individually, in groups, associations; in concrete and practical actions, material, spiritual and other forms of support. As being implied in the Wellbeing model of Nelson and Prilleltensky, as in [26], vocation promotion needs to be undertaken on three levels of personal, relational, and collective. Promotion strategies have to aim at persons, local church in each parish, and wider community; and promotion has to be an effort of each person, each local community, as well as the collective community.

Praying for vocations

Religious and priestly vocations are rooted from God and are a special gift from God, as pope Benedict [27] affirms: Religious life itself comes from Jesus who has chosen to take up the call to a chaste, poor and obedient life, which makes religious life indispensable and impossible to die out in the church. Because vocations are from God, human beings have to pray to God to have them granted on earth and in the world. Jesus while living among people stated clearly: "the harvest is rich but the laborers are few, so ask the Lord

of the harvest to send out laborers to his harvest" (Matthew 9:37). Human beings have to pray so that God will call and choose whom God wants, because humans are not the one who decides but God: "You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last." (John 15:16). Thus, each of Christ's baptized has to pray and also teaches their young to pray for vocations. Each person can either pray privately or in groups with others. It is quite common in some parishes to make special petition for vocations every Thursday, or once a week. If one's parish is doing that, let it be done with more intention, concentration and sincerity. One can start praying if the person has not been doing that. A petition will be powerful when one expresses it and really means it, especially when a petition is accompanied by sacrifice and charity. As Christians, it is inherent that each person is both a spiritual entity and a humane entity with psychological, physiological, emotional characteristics, avocation for vocation should also be affecting on other aspects of attitudes, cognition and emotion beside spiritual aspect of praying for God's will.

Setting good examples

Social cognitive theories have proved that human beings learn a good deal of new behaviors and attitudes through observing others, especially when the learning process involves vicarious reinforcements such as rewards or good outcomes [28]. Setting good examples is recommended as an influential way of inspiring and nurturing intentions to pursue consecrated life and priesthood in youth [19]. Parents and adults are asked to create a pious atmosphere through family prayers, active practice of faith, expression of love and care for others. Parents and adults' frequent presence in parish activities and parish groups will make a good participatory pattern for their young to follow.

Education and Formation

In agreement with many other thinkers, Quang [19] asserts that education is one of the first steps to prepare children and young people for vocation. He specifies that parents play an essential role of teaching their children Christian faith, morality, values and a healthy lifestyle, so that they can start following the way of Jesus in their age- appropriate ways. The same task of education should also be shared by teachers, catechists and others in the community, as in Le [13]. Training the young to be at service of others and to voluntarily dedicate themselves to the good cause is also

commendable [29], as the call to priestly and religious vocations is that to services. When accompanied by good examples as mention above, education will become more effective and tangible to the learners. Pope Francis [30] dedicates 31 paragraphs in chapter seven of *Amoris Laetitia* to discuss and affirm the importance of education on children and young people. He asserts that family life is an educational context where children are taught good conduct, sexuality, ethical and moral values, the appreciation of life and nature, and most importantly Christian faith. Above all, in an age where individualism makes a person reluctant to give oneself generously to another, the Pope stresses that family life has to be a process of shepherding in mercy (no. 322) to enable its members to reach out for others, and to be capable of love, generosity and commitment (no.20).

Communication

Lessons and good examples are to be followed by listening hearts and minds in order to make an impact. Father Le Anh Tuan, as in Le [13], advises that parents should listen to, communicate with children in order to understand their wishes, intentions, and plans for future. A listening heart and mind will enable adults to accompany children in their quest for and the realization of God' will. Thus, according to Olivia Spears [31] Catholic parents have to talk to their children about every vocation and encourage them to consider each so that they will be able to come up with a well-informed choice of their vocation. As for Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio [32], extending an invitation to young people to explore vocation can be a powerful form of communication. He points out that in a study about obstacles for responding to vocations, a significant reason is found to be lacking of invitation: "No one ever asked me". The task of all baptized here is to invite, talk about, and encourage youth to consider vocation. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [33] suggests that vocations can be promoted by encouraging youth to have interaction with clergy and religious, invite them to come and talk to young people, plan a visit of youth to seminaries and invite them to come to vocation awareness events. Other ways include showing films with religious themes or films about the life of the saints, suggesting reading materials about spirituality, modern-day heroes in the Church, showing respect and love of priests and religious, host exhibitions about religious life, or introducing vocations in the form of bulletin boards [34].

Establishing centers and associations for vocations

A collective effort can be put into establishing centers for vocations, where people can come for information, guidance and assistance if they feel that they are or may be interested in priestly or religious vocation. Setting up a youth center where young people can come and take part in not only its activities, educational programs, information and counseling for various areas of concern, but also for guidance about priestly and religious vocations, can be a useful avenue of ministry. The presence of lay people in these centers will speak volume of encouragement and inspiration for not only youth but also the parents in being generous to offer their children to God and the Church. Lay faithful can establish groups for vocation promotion, as in [29], create and maintain groups of "come and see" people through regular meetings for prayer, retreats, accompaniment, and faith formation. There are existing centers for vocation promotion, but the vast majority of them are run by clergy or religious. Therefore, an active presence and collaboration of lay men and women will bring a fresh dynamic to the cause. Lay people can also show their support to vocation by providing scholarships or financial assistance to those who wish to pursue vocations ad those in formation [35].

Vocational psychologists, teachers and parents as main stakeholders in the education industry need to have an understanding of the cognitive, psychological and social needs of students; become aware of the fact that it is important to communicate, show support, set firm boundaries for behavior, respect their need for space and privacy within reason, and provides praise for successes in the classroom; thus boosting their self-esteem, enhancing effective teaching and learning process and improving students' academic achievement. Educational psychologists, teachers and other stakeholders should note what students are capable of in order to be effective in helping them learn and achieve; ensure inclusion of contents that would prepare students for later achievement since prior academic achievement had been believed to be a determinant of future academic achievement in respect to the recent development and deliberation between the Federal Government and National Universities Commission (NUC) concerning the scraping of Post UTME, the finding of this study hereby recommend that Post UTME should be retained due to the fact that it appears to be void of examination malpractice and ensures further screening of eligible students into higher institutions; thus, serving as a true test of knowledge. This study covered pre-service teachers in the second

year of study. In this wise, the sample scope was limited and thus the generalization of the results to all pre-service teachers in University of Ilorin. Future studies could remedy this limitation by increasing the sample scope to cover all pre-service teachers in University of Ilorin. Similarly, this study focused on only self-esteem as a psychosocial variable. Future studies could focus on how other psycho-social variables such as locus of control, emotional intelligence and host of others predict the academic performance of pre-service teachers in University of Ilorin.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Position itself in the lens of a lay-centered Church and a multidisciplinary perspective, this paper has argued that each lay faithful in the Church of Vietnam has to do more to accomplish the assigned responsibility of promoting priestly and religious vocations. More importantly, both the local community and the universal Church should accommodate and equip laity to fulfill this duty. There are effective and doable ways the lay faithful can employ to encourage young people to consider vocation. However, in the context of Vietnam, more need to be done so that lay people become more aware of this particular responsibility. As clergy and religious brothers and sisters are still the main source of faith education and ministry instruction, the primarily effort in including laity in vocation promotion should be initiated by clergy and religious. It is a common practice in Vietnamese church that religious orders come to parishes once in a while to give talks and introduction about their congregations, but when the vocation animators leave, there is no continuity or follow-up of the work they have started. It is recommendable that lay faithful in parishes set up a center or some form of association to become a bridge between visitor vocation animators and vocation shoots in their local communities. Researching into sources from various disciplines enables the paper to assert that many more of spiritual gifts, talents, skills and expertise are yet to be explored in the Vietnamese laity; and the exploration and utilization of these will benefit enormously the growth of the Church and the fulfillment of its mission. The lay faithful are vested with multiple gifts by the Holy Spirit to live out to the full their calling. Each of Christ's baptized, local community and the universal church are to reciprocally foster and empower one another's maturation and actualization. Thus each is called to step up and act accordingly to their particular calling with zeal, humbleness and confidence that the faith in God brings.

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