

## **Training of Spiritual Directors for Effective Spiritual Development of Candidates to the Priesthood in St. Paul's Major Seminary Juba, South Sudan**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examined the training of spiritual directors for the effective spiritual development of candidates for the priesthood at St. Paul's Major Seminary, Juba-South Sudan. The objectives of the study are: To explain how the current spiritual directors in St. Paul's Major Seminary acquire interpersonal skills for facilitating spiritual development of candidates to priesthood; to state what guides the current spiritual directors in St. Paul's Major Seminary in Juba, to arriving at right discernment that promotes the spiritual development of candidates to priesthood; to expose the personal experiences of spiritual life of current spiritual directors which promotes spiritual development of candidates to priesthood; and to suggest approaches that could promote training of spiritual directors for effective spiritual development of candidates to the priesthood. The study was anchored on James Fowler's theory of faith development 2005 Convergent parallel mixed method research design was used in this study. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively and presented using tables and figures. Qualitative data was analyzed and presented in narrative form. The main findings suggest that it is important to train spiritual directors before their assignment. In the formation houses, in order to equip them with the needed skills to help the candidates. In*

*conclusion, the spiritual development of candidates to priesthood does not only depend on the training of spiritual directors, but also on the personality and experience of directors.*

**Keywords:** Training, Spiritual Directors, Effective Spiritual Development, Candidates, Priesthood, spiritual direction, Directees

## **Introduction**

The study was prompted by the continual appointments of Ordained Catholic Priests as spiritual directors in St. Paul's Major Seminary in Juba, South Sudan without formal training in the field of spirituality. The Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education in its Directives Concerning the Preparation of Seminary Educators says that the World's Catholic Seminaries currently face a shortage of educators, the responsibilities of seminary formation have become more difficult and for that same reason the criteria for selection of educators are very demanding. The directives examine the qualities seminary educators need, the specific roles of the rectors and spiritual directors.<sup>2</sup> This implies that the need for a qualified spiritual director who is able to guide the candidates effectively along their path of spiritual development to the priesthood is timely.

Vatican II Decree on the Training of Priests *Optatam Totius* declares that major seminaries are necessary for priestly formation. In them the entire training of the students (candidates) should be oriented to the formation of true shepherds of souls after the model of our Lord Jesus Christ as teacher, priest and shepherd.<sup>3</sup> According to this document, religious formation of candidates to the priesthood should cover the three-fold functions of Christ as king, priest and prophet. That means that candidates should be trained in the ministry of the word as the basis for their prophetic function, to the ministry of worship and

sanctification, in signifying their priestly function and to the ministry of shepherd which symbolizes their kingly function. Further, the same document asserts that, educators (spiritual directors) in seminaries be prepared in sound doctrine, suitable pastoral experience, and special training in spirituality and teaching methods.

The researcher strongly believes that such training and formation of candidates could only be actualized if the spiritual directors in charge of spiritual formation are trained on what spiritual direction is, and how they can assist candidates grow spiritually in their vocations to the priesthood. John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* states that specific preparation of seminary educators holds the first place. Seminary educators occupy the key position that determines the spirit and efficacy of the work of formation. It points out clearly that, “The bishops, therefore, as those responsible for the progress of seminaries, should bear the grave responsibility for the formation of those who have been given the task of educating the future priests.”<sup>4</sup> This suggests that assignment of Ordained Catholic Priests as spiritual directors without training in spirituality is against the spirit and efficacy of the spiritual development of candidates to priesthood.

Pope Francis while addressing the religious people of the Diocese of Rome underscored the importance of training spiritual directors within religious communities. Francis encourages religious superiors of both men and women to identify members of their congregations who are good, wise, and patient, to get them training in spiritual direction. The Holy Father also acknowledges that training to become a priest, a nun or a monk is not sufficient to assume the important role of a spiritual director.<sup>5</sup> The same is true for bishops in charge of St. Paul's Major Seminary they needs to follow the instructions of the Holy Father on the training of the spiritual directors prior to their assignments.

Still on the training of spiritual directors, St. Theresa of Avila, one of the greatest spiritual masters of all times, once remarked that “a person

who aspires to be a spiritual director should be well-trained. He or she needs not necessarily to be a priest, or religious but nevertheless ought to possess a thorough grounding in theology, especially Christian spirituality and scripture. Besides that, some knowledge of basic counselling techniques as well as familiarity with some of the more common mental problems should be present. This comes as the result of what she experienced in the hand of her directors who were not trained.<sup>6</sup> The same is true of the candidates in the formation houses today whose spiritual directors are not qualified.

In his article *Priestly Formation in Nigeria in the Face of Contemporary Challenges: Lesson for consideration in Auchi Diocese*, Anselm argues that staffing the seminary goes beyond just sending priests to join the seminary staff; seminaries should be staffed with priests who are trained in specific academic disciplines required in the seminary and above all, priests who in the judgment of their bishops are tested and trusted.<sup>7</sup> A rector of a diocesan seminary in Burma exclaims “I’m appointed as formator in the seminary, but I have no training for it!” Hoare. We are expected to help young men to become spiritual leaders, but we do not know how to go about it”<sup>8</sup> The researcher hypothesized that many priests who are assigned roles as spiritual directors in formation houses, without formal training encounter severe challenges in accompanying the candidates effectively.

St. Paul's Major Seminary was founded in 1956 by the Comboni Missionaries in River Touré in the Catholic Diocese of Yei in Sudan. It is the only major seminary which the Catholic dioceses in Sudan and South Sudan depend on for the priestly formation of their candidates to the priesthood. The seminary is divided into philosophy and theology sections, each with its own administrative structures. In the year 1964, this seminary was closed after the expulsion of the foreign missionaries by the Sudan government. Consequently, it has been moving from one

place to another within and outside the country, specifically to Uganda due to the first and second civil wars that occurred in Sudan: 1953-1972, and 1983-2005 respectively.

After the separation of South Sudan from Sudan in 2011, the Sudan Catholic Bishops Conference (SCBC) in consultation with the Vatican authorities moved the seminary from Khartoum to Juba the new capital city of South Sudan in 2012. With growing harassment and repression of southerners and Christians in the mostly Islamic North, the church leaders decided to move the students to Juba. Most of the seminarians were from South Sudan, and seminary staffs were worried whether they would be granted visas if the seminary continued to operate in Khartoum. From the time it was transferred until now, the spiritual formation of the candidates to priesthood in this seminary has been under the care of priests who are not formally trained as spiritual directors. These priests are assigned by their ordinaries based on the belief that they are already spiritual directors by virtue of their priestly ordinations.

Taking into considerations, the above findings from the literature reviews on the training of spiritual directors and its importance for the spiritual growth of candidates to the priesthood, the researcher is of the view that assignments of Ordained Catholic Priests as spiritual directors without formal training in the field of spiritual direction affects spiritual growth of candidates to the priesthood. Therefore, there is an urgent need for the training of spiritual directors before their assignments to the formation houses, especially to St. Paul's Major Seminary in Juba, South Sudan. This needs to be done if effective spiritual development of candidates to the priesthood will be attained in South Sudan.

### **Literature Review on Training of the Spiritual Directors**

Although training does not give all the qualities that one needs in order to be an effective spiritual director, it is absolutely important for one to

become an effective spiritual director. Several authors underscore the importance of formal training of spiritual directors and its implications on the spiritual development of candidates to the priesthood in the formation houses. On the characteristics of trained spiritual directors, Demos summarizes the qualities of trained formators (*spiritual directors*) in the following three points: the technical qualities, the intellectual and human qualities.<sup>9</sup> In the same line of thought, Pope Paul strongly appeals for proper training of those appointed to formation houses saying:

It is evident that much of the effectiveness of the training offered depends on the maturity and strength of personality of those entrusted with formation, both from the human and from the Gospel points of views. The synod fathers were very aware that the future of the preparation of candidates for the priesthood depends on the choice and formation of those entrusted with the work of formation.<sup>10</sup>

To be a spiritual director in a formation house requires having essential qualifications. This is equivalent to saying that no one is born a spiritual director, implying that a person becomes a spiritual director through training in the field of spiritual direction. According to Maestro, training is necessary for a person who wants to pursue any career. Unfortunately, up to now, many priests are appointed to be spiritual directors in formation houses without formal training in spiritual direction. As a result of this, they are unable to help the candidates effectively. He recommends that formators (*spiritual directors*) need to have a solid pedagogical knowledge in order to be able to manage different personalities and deal with the difficult situations that occur in formation.<sup>11</sup>

De Souza said that a well-trained formator is someone who seeks to develop the wisdom and understanding of different aspects of human life and who has an open mind on all dimensions of human life.

Knowledge is regarded as a major component among the qualities of a good spiritual director.<sup>12</sup> This can be applicable to spiritual directors in the seminary in South Sudan, in the sense that having a profound insight about spiritual direction is fundamental for their professional qualification as directors, and this can best be done through attending formal training the ministry of spiritual direction.

Namuddu maintained that the qualifications of formators in the religious life. She says that they need to be trained and that a well-trained formator is a person who knows himself through self-awareness, self-esteem and self-love which helps the formator to better understand the candidate in formation.<sup>13</sup> This means that spiritual directors must be holistically prepared to be able to effectively assist the candidate's holistic development.

UcDavis a well-trained formators/ directors demonstrates self-esteem through the characteristics listed by confidence, self-direction, non-blaming behaviors, an awareness of personal strengths, an ability to make mistakes and learn from them, an ability to accept mistakes from others, optimism, an ability to solve problems, an independent and cooperative attitude, feeling comfortable with a range of emotions, an ability to trust others, a good sense of personal limitations, and self-care. Self –knowledge implies the acceptance of oneself before ministering to others.<sup>14</sup>

This enables trained formators/directors to minister objectively as fully functioning persons. This implies that, in order to demonstrate competence in the spiritual accompaniment of candidates to the priesthood, spiritual directors need to receive formal training in the field of spiritual direction before being sent to formation houses. Those who have not been trained before being sent encounter various difficulties. Personal issues as well as issues pertaining to interpersonal relationships at times clog their ministry, which is a sign of professional incompetence. Therefore, the researcher agrees with the

authors who are proponents of the idea of training of spiritual directors prior to their assignments as the best way for enhancing the spiritual growth of candidates to the priesthood.

Lespinay attests that formation is a ministry and a task which requires holistic preparation of formators (spiritual directors).<sup>15</sup> The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life through the instruction *Inter-Institute Collaboration for Formation* sees formation as an aspect of Church Ministry that requires special training because it is an art. Religious Congregations warn that spiritual formation of candidates to the priesthood requires proper training of spiritual directors.<sup>16</sup>

The Directory for the Ministry and the life of Priests asserts that “no formation is possible without both the person who is to be formed and the person who forms. The quality and effectiveness of a plan of formation depend in part on the relative structures, but mainly on the quality of the formators”<sup>17</sup>. Thus, it is necessary that spiritual directors be given a chance for formal training. It is not possible to give what one does not have.

This implies that, the spiritual director who guides candidates on their journey of spiritual development must be adequately trained and experienced, and thus competent in the art of spiritual direction. The aim of the training of spiritual directors, apart from guiding the candidates appropriately, is also to help them know themselves and equip them with necessary knowledge and skills for administering spiritual direction confidently.

Ciallanza suggests that it is important for formators to be professionally prepared for the ministry of religious formation. Even though the Church has consistently given primary importance to the ministry of formation, it is not uncommon to hear formators comment on their lack of personal and professional preparation for the ministry.



Even those who were informed well in advance of their appointment often note that whatever preparation they had was self-initiated or minimal. For many, the appointment to the formation ministry comes as a surprise.<sup>18</sup> This highlights the importance of training of spiritual directors in the formation house in order to be able to carry out the ministry of spiritual growth of the candidates to the priesthood more effectively.

Therefore, discussions from the reviewed literature have shown several studies and suggestions supporting the training of spiritual directors for effective spiritual development of candidates to priesthood. For instance, Finney indicates that, the Archdiocese of New Orleans, has established training requirements for those interested in the serving as spiritual directors within the archdiocese. It is important that spiritual directors are properly formed so that they can lead people and serve them with genuine faith and integrity.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, through this study the researcher seeks to remind the leadership of the Catholic Church in Sudan and South Sudan on the urgency of training of spiritual directors for the effective spiritual development of candidates to priesthood in St. Paul's Major Seminary, Juba South Sudan.

## **Research Design and Methodology**

This research proposes a mixed method model, with a convergent parallel design. The design is chosen because it enables the researcher obtain quantitative and qualitative data which provide a comprehensive examination of the research problem. According to Creswell, the main purpose of using a mixed method research design is to make research findings reliable and valid, and reduce the level of inherent bias by comparing some sets of data.<sup>20</sup>

The targeted population for this study was 146 selected from spiritual coordinator, spiritual directors, formators and candidates from

philosophy and theology in St. Paul's major seminary in Juba, South Sudan. Candidates from both sections were included in this study because, the population in one section was not sufficient to conduct this study to provide reliable information for this discovery. Spiritual coordinator was included, because of his role in the spiritual affairs of the candidates is critical. Spiritual directors were chosen because of their important roles in the spiritual accompaniment of the candidates to the priesthood.

Formators were involved because they have deliberate authority of the spiritual formation of the candidates in the formation house. The researcher selected appropriate participants who participated in the study. The sample size of 110 participants was used in this study and they were stratified into four namely one spiritual coordinator, 13 spiritual directors, 15 formators from philosophy and theology sections and 45 candidates from theology were purposively selected. Meanwhile, 36 candidates from philosophy was selected through simple random sampling. The description of sample and sampling procedures is summarized in the Table 1.

**Table 1. Sample and sampling procedure**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Population Target</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Percentage of population in strata</b>	<b>Sampling procedure</b>
Spiritual coordinator	1	1	100%	Purposive sampling
Spiritual directors	13	13	100%	Purposive sampling
Formators (Phil Theo)	15	15	100%	Purposive sampling
Candidates in Philosophy	36	36	100%	Simple random sampling
Candidates in Theology	81	45	56%	Purposive sampling
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>75%</b>	

The researcher used both interview guide and questionnaires as research instruments in this study. Interview guides are used to gather qualitative data from spiritual coordinator and formators. Questionnaires with close-ended and open-ended questions were used to obtain quantitative data from and spiritual directors and candidates.

The research instruments for this study was validated using face and content validity. According to Kumar this type of validity ensures that every question on the research instrument has a rational connection with the objectives of the study, and that it also checks that items and questions incorporate all the aspects of the topic under study.<sup>21</sup> The validity of the research instruments was assured by the evaluation of two supervisors and research experts who validated the content and construct of the research instruments. This ensured that the content of the questions responded to the objectives of the study.

Before proceeding to collect data in the field, the researcher obtained a permission letter from the Rector of St. Paul's Major Seminary in Juba, South Sudan. After the data collection, the researcher separated the material based on the qualitative and quantitative data separately according to the research questions. The quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using tables and bar figures. The qualitative data will be analyzed in a narrative form and discussed.

The researcher made use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches for data analysis. This was presented in tables and figures. Mugenda and Mugenda, affirm that qualitative analysis involves systematically analysing information collected so as to establish patterns, trends and relationships.<sup>22</sup> In this study, qualitative data collected from open-ended questions was transcribed, coded and categorized into themes informed by the research objectives.

The researcher ensured that appropriate ethical considerations were obtained for administering the research instruments. This included, obtaining clearance permit from Tangaza University College Research Committee (TUCREC) and Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, of The Republic of South Sudan (MOHERST) R.S.S.

### **Analysis, Presentation and Discussion of the Findings**

The results of the findings from the collected data for this study were analyzed, discussed and presented according to the researcher objectives and its sequences. The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the participants

through the administration of questionnaires and interview guide are discussed using a convergent parallel design. The quantitative data is analyzed descriptively and presented using tables and figures. Meanwhile, the qualitative data is coded, categorized and discussed in narrative form.

### **Coding of the Participants Interviewed**

This section presents a coding matrix of sixteenth participants that were interviewed as indicated in the (Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1: Matrix of Participants Interviewed**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Code of Participants</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>	<b>Ministry/Apostolate</b>	<b>Gender</b>
1	Participant A	4 Years	Spiritual Coordinator	Male
2	Participant B	4 Years	Formator	Male
3	Participant C	3 Years	Formator	Male
4	Participant D	7 Years	Formator	Male
5	Participant E	4 Years	Formator	Male
6	Participant F	6 Years	Formator	Male
7	Participant G	5 Years	Formator	Male
8	Participant H	5 Years	Formator	Male
9	Participant I	4 Years	Formator	Male
10	Participant J	3 Years	Formator	Male
11	Participant K	7 Years	Formator	Male
12	Participant L	3 Years	Formator	Male
13	Participant M	3 Years	Formator	Male
14	Participant N	3 Years	Formator	Male
15	Participant O	4 Years	Formator	Male
16	Participant P	1 Year	Formator	Male

Table 1.1: displays that, the researcher interviewed sixteen participants, which includes one spiritual coordinator and 15 formators as the sampled numbered targeted for this study

## **Facilitation of Spiritual Direction by Spiritual Directors**

The result of the findings on how interpersonal skills could be used to facilitate spiritual direction by the spiritual directors indicate that interpersonal skills are indispensable and could use to facilitate effective communication between spiritual directors and candidates during spiritual direction sessions. It is evident from the results of the findings below (Table 2.2) that majority of the participants are of the views that usage of interpersonal skills by spiritual directors during spiritual directions sessions would enhances the spiritual development of the candidates to the priesthood.

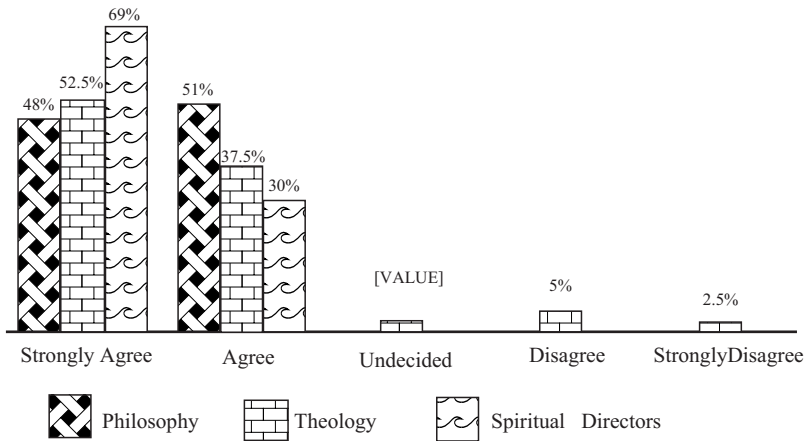
**Table 2.2: Interpersonal Skills for Facilitation of Spiritual Direction**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
Candidates in Philosophy	18 (55%)	14 (42%)	1(3%)
Candidates in Theology	25 (62.5%)	14 (35%)	1(2.5%)
Spiritual Directors	8 (61%)	5 (39%)	00(00%)

Thus, the results of the findings in above (Table 2:2) reveal that spiritual directors could undergo formal training in the field of spirituality and spiritual formation in order to acquire interpersonal skills for effective communication during spiritual direction sessions.

## **Interpersonal Skills are Foundational for Effective Spiritual Direction**

The results of the findings on whether interpersonal skills are foundational for effective spiritual directions shows that majority of the participants are of the opinions that interpersonal skills are foundational for effective spiritual direction and this is apparent from below (Figure 1.1).



**Figure 1.1: Interpersonal Skills Foundational for Spiritual Direction**

The views of participants are in line with the qualitative responses from the interviewed spiritual coordinator and formators. Participant 2B puts it in the following manner:

It is very important skills; the bishops should ensure that the candidates (*priests*) for spiritual directors should be able to communicate well. I refer to my own experience in the seminary, some of our spiritual directors were unable to communicate. Communication is not only talking, but bodily contacts. For example, spiritual directors need to pay close attention to the candidates by smiling encouragingly, positively conveying messages and making eye contact etc. However, non-verbal communication is subject to customs and traditions to a large extent, therefore care must be taken by the spiritual directors to conduct themselves appropriately, especially when dealing with the opposite sex. For instance, physical contact in some cultures may be deemed appropriate and is also considered to be a sign of affection, but some might consider it to be highly improper. Effective use of verbal

and non-verbal communication should be employed, so that the candidate and the spiritual directors can convey their points across. Words express a message partially only; therefore, the tone, gestures and attitude form an important part of interpersonal skills as well (August 13, 2019).

Rungapadiachy underlines that interpersonal skills are those skills which one needs in order to communicate effectively with another person or a group of people. This has direct implication on the art of spiritual direction because the director is expected to interact effectively with the candidate during spiritual direction session.<sup>23</sup> This implies that the bishops and seminary administrations should ensure that spiritual directors should be people are able to communicate effectively with candidates during spiritual direction sessions verbally and non-verbally.

### **Communication with Spiritual Directors with Good Interpersonal Skills**

The results of findings on communication with spiritual directors with good interpersonal skills displays that good interpersonal skills have a positive consequences on the candidates in terms of their feelings and comfortabilities during spiritual direction sessions as it is reflected in the below (Table 3:3).

Participant 16P expressed that:

Spiritual director who has good interpersonal is able to help and guide the candidates spiritually. This can create in the candidates the spirit of trust to share with him whatever they have without reservations and fear. These skills are connected with the character of Christ who is the first spiritual director. The presence of these skills in the person of director as well as his personality can moved directee towards communication with him in the direction (August 22, 2019).

Jackson remarks that good interpersonal skill is, by definition, a two-way street where both speak and are listened to without interruption, can ask relevant questions, express their thoughts and exchange information after they are able to comprehend the message the other party is trying to relay.<sup>24</sup> The outcome of these findings seems to indicate that good interpersonal can help spiritual directors communicate with candidates in a friendly manner.

**Table 3.3: Good Interpersonal Skills**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
Candidates in Philosophy	18 (55%)	15 (45%)	00 (00%)
Candidates in Theology	29 (72.5%)	10 (25%)	1 (2.5%)
Spiritual Directors	10 (77.5%)	2 (15%)	1 (7.5%)

### **Spiritual Discernment requires training**

The results of findings on whether spiritual discernment requires training indicates that discernment as the art of discovering God's will requires training. The views of the participants was held by Hardon, who declares that, since discernment is called an art, like prayer, it is learned by doing and not just by reading about it. It is a skill resulting from study and practice. Ordination and religious vows do not necessarily guarantee competence in spiritual discernment<sup>25</sup>. The ability to discern spirits is both a gift and a training, and the training should ideally elicit the gift that lies unrecognized. In support of this opinion, participant 1A warn that:

We are not born with these skills, even if they are potentially within us, we need to develop them through formal training in order to be able to help candidates (August 12, 2019).

This suggests that even though discernment is a gift as stated by St. Paul (1 Cor. 12: 4-11), it is also subject to formal training for the acquiring of necessary skills and techniques.



**Table 4.4: Discernment Requires Training**

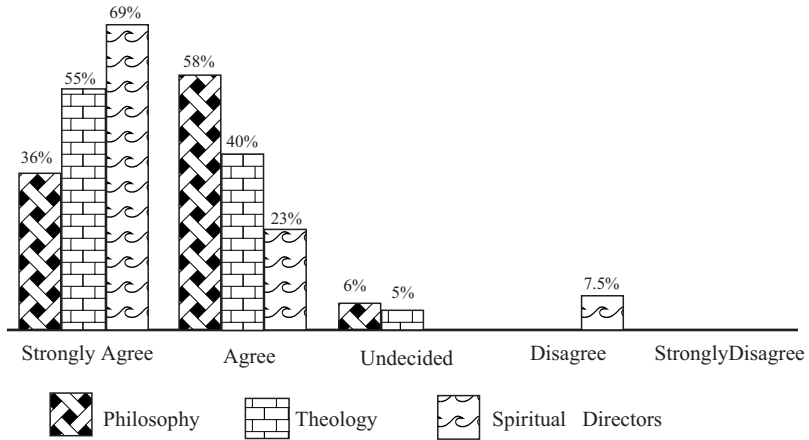
<b>Participants</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Candidates in Philosophy	8 (24%)	18(55%)	1(3%)	4 (12%)	2 (6%)
Candidates in Theology	20 (50%)	16(40%)	4(10%)	00 (00%)	00 (00%)
Spiritual Directors	7 (53.5%)	4(31.5%)	1(7.5%)	1(7.5%)	00 (00%)

### **Trained Spiritual Directors Help Candidates Discern their Vocations**

The results of findings on how trained spiritual directors could help candidates discern their vocations discloses that in comparisons to untrained, trained spiritual directors are capable of helping the candidates to discern their vocations spiritually as it is demonstrated in the below (Figure2.2). Maestro underscores that training is necessary for a person who wants to pursue any vocation. Unfortunately, today many priests are appointed to be spiritual directors in the formation house without formal training.<sup>26</sup> Participant 150 revealed that:

Naturally there are those who are gifted, but fundamentally speaking trained directors are much effective when it comes to the assisting and guiding the candidates discern their calls to priestly life. They have skills and techniques, there is an urgent need for on how to discern. Our spiritual life style is in constant change both outside and in the formation house as well, but natural or divine gift should not be taken for granted” (August 18, 2019).

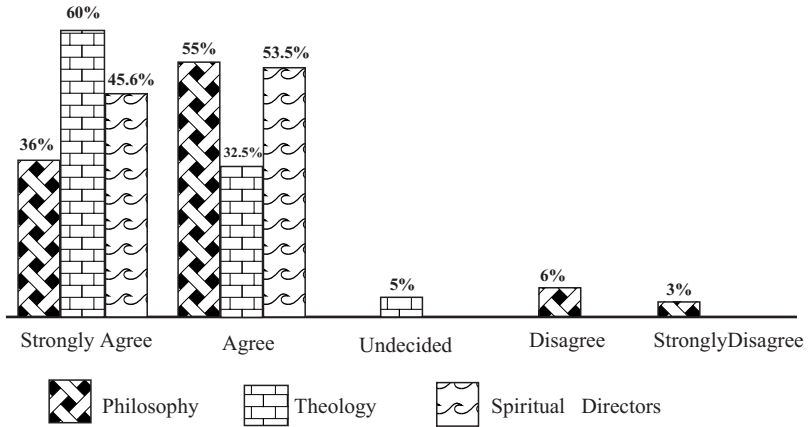
The findings suggests although spiritual discernment is a divine gift there is a pressing need for training of spiritual directors in order to help the candidates discern their vocation to the priesthood.



**Figure 2.2: Help Candidates Discern their Vocations**

### **Trained Spiritual directors Examine Spiritual Life of Candidates**

The results of the findings on how trained spiritual directors examine the spiritual life of candidates to the priesthood reveal that trained spiritual directors are capable and able to examine the nature of spiritual life of candidates better than untrained as indicated in the below (Figure 3:3). This was supported by Walsh, who confirmed that training of spiritual directors involves the pursuit of the truth amidst ideologies and personal prejudices that rationalize sinful conduct. Beyond a knowledge of religious beliefs and doctrine, it requires a sufficient critical grasp of theological and spiritual life issues.<sup>27</sup> This indicates that the seminary authorities should train the priests who are selected to be spiritual directors prior to the assignments in the seminary in order to acquire necessary skills and knowledge for examining the spiritual life of candidates to the priesthood in the formation house.



**Figure 3.3: Examination of Spiritual Life of Candidates**

### **Spiritual directors in formation houses should be well-experienced and trained**

Participants were requested to air out their opinions on whether spiritual director in formation houses should be priests who are well-experienced and trained. The result of the findings in the below (Table 5.5) shows that the presence of well-experienced and trained spiritual directors in the formation is absolutely important. Its presence and participation in community spiritual activities set good examples for the candidates to imitate. Well-experienced and trained spiritual directors are mirrors in formation house and spiritual formation of the candidates. Their commitments and love for the spiritual activities such as prayers word of God will probably help the candidates grow spiritually.

**Table 5.5: Well-Experienced and Trained Spiritual Directors**

Participants	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
Candidates in Philosophy	23 (70%)	8 (24%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)
Candidates in Theology	32 (80%)	8 (20%)	00 (00%)	00 (00%)
Spiritual Directors	12 (92.3%)	1(7.5%)	00 (00%)	00 (00%)

The Congregation for Catholic Education Directives Concerning the Preparation of Seminary Formators once again underlines that those who are chosen for the service of formation in seminaries are distinguished for a certain experience of life, human maturity, balanced spirit, ability to listen and dialogue, positive opinion, but at the same time, critical of modern culture, secure in their own vocation, with knowledge.<sup>28</sup> Still on the presence of well-experienced and trained spiritual directors participant 2B stressed that:

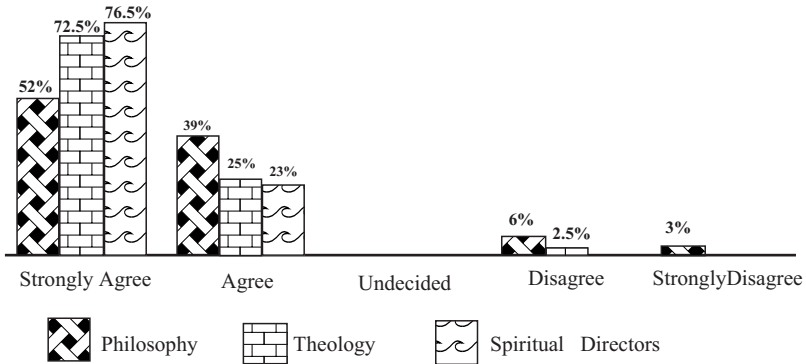
Being a well experienced and trained spiritual director is at the heart of the matter. He explained that, a potential priest may get the training in all sincerity but cannot be a very good spiritual director. Being helpful spiritual director is a talent that needs to be developed through ministerial experience of one's own growth in and through spiritual direction. Experienced and trained director is capable of demonstrating what spiritual direction is all about. First to the seminary communities that he knows or have certain level of knowledge. Secondly through the way he organizes his own prayer life in the seminary, thirdly his readiness to help candidates on their spiritual life, building up of good relationship with them and entire formation communities (August 12, 2019).

This implies that appointments of well-experienced and trained spiritual directors in the formation house is important and has positive impacts on the spiritual development of the candidates to the priesthood.

### **Experienced and Trained Spiritual Directors Foster the Spiritual Growth**

The results of the findings on whether well-experienced and trained spiritual directors can foster the spiritual growth of candidates to the

priesthood showed that well-experienced and trained spiritual directors can likely foster the spiritual growth of the candidates to priesthood. The results in the below (Figure 4.4) affirm that a good number of the participants are in support of the views that, well-experienced and trained spiritual directors can foster the spiritual growth of candidates.



**Figure 4.4: Fostering of Spiritual Growth of Candidates**

Sandra explains that, it should be evident that the organizing principle is experience. The theoretical knowledge helps to illuminate one's and other's experiences. Skills are the ability to relate to creatively one's experience to someone else's.<sup>29</sup> This were backed by participant 14N who said that:

It is extremely important that spiritual directors and formators in the seminary should be the best experienced and trained people, because the young people we are preparing are the future of the Church. This should be seen in terms of his methodology which he has learned from through spiritual direction and his experience involving others qualities which we have mentioned about the directors previously. Like listening, patience, communication, confidentiality,

friendship and appreciation. If these elements are presence in the life of director he can be of greatest help to the candidates in the formation (August 19, 2019).

### **Possible Strategies for Promoting Training of Spiritual Directors**

The findings on the investigation of various possible strategies for promoting training of spiritual directors for the effective spiritual development were explored and results indicated that majority of the participants were in support of the possible intervention strategies of: motivations and provisions of basic needs for directors, trainings should be holistic in nature, selection of more interested priests for training by bishops' conference, additional courses like, psychology African spirituality and anthropology and ongoing formation for updating directors' skills & experiences already in the field.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study, it is evident that spiritual development of the candidates to the priesthood in the formation house depends on the spiritual specialization or training of spiritual directors. Formations houses that lack qualified spiritual directors face challenges of achieving effective and quality spiritual formation for its candidates to the priesthood. Appointments of untrained spiritual directors and the type of spiritual accompaniments received by candidates from them may affect the spiritual development of the candidates.

Results from questionnaires, interview guide and literature review revealed that appointment of ordained Catholic priests to be spiritual directors without formal training or preparation had a negative influence on the spiritual development of the candidates to the priesthood. The affectivity of spiritual growth of candidates often depends on the prior preparations of spiritual directors by those

responsible for the formation house in this modern time. The study reveals that majority of the participants adequately understand the ideals of training of spiritual directors as contained in the Church's teachings.

This could be attributed to the fact that there is an urgent need for trained spiritual directors in the formation house. This is because formal training in the field of spirituality provides directors with skills, techniques, abilities and knowledge on spiritual direction. However, the study also reveals that formal training without experience does not necessarily qualified person to be good spiritual director in the formation. However, it is evident from the findings that effective spiritual development of candidates to the priesthood in St. Paul's Major Seminary Juba, South house does not depend solidly on the training of spiritual directors.

There are other factors that contribute to the spiritual growth, such as the personality of the spiritual director, level of education and own spiritual and moral life plays greater role in his spiritual career in the formation house. Thus, the findings reveal that besides formal training of spiritual director ones' personal experience of spiritual life or testimony is absolutely essential and it has direct effect on the spiritual development of candidates to the priesthood in the formation house.

### **Recommendations**

This study recommends the followings first, the Bishops and those in charge of appointing spiritual directors in St. Paul's Major Seminary should ensure that the appointees are trained before their appointments in order to help and guide the candidates for priesthood grow spiritually. Second, the authorities responsible for the appointment of spiritual directors need to consider their ministerial experience in spiritual direction and academic qualifications.

Third, the leaders of Catholic Church in Sudan and South Sudan should ensure that all the priests selected to be trained as spiritual directors are good listeners. Fourth, spiritual directors in the formation house should not forget to create an atmosphere of trust and confidence which will enhance the spiritual accompaniment of the candidates to priesthood. Fifth, spiritual directors in the formation house should be an exemplar spiritual person for the candidates to follow and imitate, people who are committed to help the candidates discover the importance of spiritual direction and its needs in their life.

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## **Endnotes**

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