

VERITAS UNIVERSITY, ABUJA
(The Catholic University of Nigeria)
OBEHIE CAMPUS

A POSITION PAPER ON CHAPLAINCY

Catholic Universities world-wide are academic communities which, in a rigorous and critical fashion, assist in the protection and advancement of human dignity and cultural heritage through research, teaching as well as service offered to the local, national and international communities. The main objective of these institutions is to infuse Christian presence into the University world, thus ensuring effective confrontation of the problems of our modern society. To be in a position to grapple with such problems, Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic constitution (Ex Corde Ecclesiae), clearly established four features that are basic to all Catholic Universities. These include:

1. “A Catholic inspiration not only of individuals but of the university community;
2. A continuing reflection in the light of the catholic faith upon the growing treasury of human knowledge, to which it seeks to contribute by its own research;
3. Fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church;
4. An institutional commitment to the transcendent goal which gives meaning to life”. (Ex Corde Ecclesiae No. 13)

The acquisition of the characteristics enumerated above and the eventual realization of the objective(s) of any catholic university, depend on the effectiveness, efficiency and viability of its chaplaincy. For this reason ‘Veritas’ as catholic university requires such a chaplaincy which should function in the following manner.

1. ORGANIZATION

As a matter of convention, the chaplaincy is organized and coordinated by a chaplain. Such a chaplain is nominated by the local ordinary and appointed by the Council. The office of the chaplain is saddled with the responsibility of articulating a vision as well as the acquisition and development of necessary resources for implementing such vision. Other responsibilities include:

- I. Convening the community for prayer and worships;
- II. Providing a pastoral presences on campus;
- III. Facilitating social justice, community service and outreach activities.
- IV. Offering catechetical instructions for faith building
- V. Providing pastoral counseling, spiritual direction and retreat opportunities.

2. PRIESTS ON CAMPUS

In discharging these responsibilities as outlined i-v above, every priest serving on campus is a part of the chaplaincy and has spiritual responsibilities to the university community. The implication therefore, is that they shall be available for:

- I. Eucharistic celebration (masses)
- II. Confessions
- III. Celebration of other sacraments; etc.

3. CHAPLAINCY COMMITTEE

The chaplaincy requires the assistance of the entire university community if it must function optimally. The need for a chaplaincy committee cannot therefore, be over emphasized. Such a chaplaincy committee is a parochial structure which will consist of representative members of the university community. The members are primarily concerned with offering special assistance to the chaplain with whom they constitute one body which sees to the realization of the aim and objectives of the church's ministry on campus.

4. UNIVERSITY STRUCTURE AND THE CHAPLAINCY

The chaplaincy is the hub of spiritual life of any catholic university. It is therefore part and parcel of the university structure. To this end, there must be a high degree of mutual consultation between the management of the university and the chaplaincy and full awareness on both sides of the chaplaincy programmes alongside University programmes. Against this backdrop, financial and every support to the chaplaincy should form part of the university budget. It is good to note, both Sunday and daily Masses are compulsory for all students.

5. SPIRITUAL LIFE AND FAITH FORMATION

Evangelization no doubt, is the primary task of the chaplaincy. This is why the chaplaincy endeavours to offer many opportunities for spiritual development and faith formation. The Catechetical instructions are provided for those who are seeking initiation into the Catholic Church. Opportunities for faith sharing and prayers are available. There are classes and discussion groups on religious topics, etc. Management had recently decided that Masses would be available every first Friday at 12noon, compulsorily for students and works as from the beginning of the next semester. We believe that the members of this community (Veritas) will continue to take advantage of these opportunities. Council is invited to note that the chaplaincy intends among other things, to begin each semester with a three day retreat for all.

6. ACHIEVEMENTS

The following achievements have also been recorded:

a. N.F.C.S

The chaplaincy considered the formation of the Nigeria Federation of Catholic Students a necessity in the student catholic community. This is because other pious societies and organizations are expected to evolve from it.

Some other pious societies have already been formed, including:

- Legion of Mary
- Block Rosary
- Lectors
- CCRN
- Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary
- Divine Mercy

b. THE CHOIR.

A vibrant choir was put in place shortly after the students resumed. It has continued to play a prominent part in the liturgy.

7. MONTHLY/WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

The chaplaincy has put in place, a number of monthly/weekly activities which include daily/ Sunday Masses, confession, benediction, catechetical instructions, choir practices etc. presently the aforementioned activities have successfully taken effect, the low population of students notwithstanding. The chaplaincy will articulate, in due course, more relevant exercises for the spiritual and moral good of the university community.

8. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY CHAPLAINCY AND THE DIOCESE OF ABA.

Chaplaincies in most civil Universities function as parishes and therefore, contribute a certain percentage of their income to the Diocese. In the case of the University chaplaincy, the university had built the chapel and continues to provide for the running costs, including the payment of a stipend to the chaplain. There is therefore, a need to clearly define the relationship between the university chaplaincy and the catholic Diocese of Aba.

CONCLUSION

We thank God that the chaplaincy has successfully taken its rightful position in the life of the University and is serving as a focal point in the promotion of the spiritual life of the community. Appreciation goes to the Catholic Bishop Conference of Nigeria, the

Management of the University for making the chaplaincy the centre of the university activities and has individually and collectively supported its programmes.