

The Political Involvement of the Catholic Clergy in Enugu State, Nigeria, in the 2023 General Elections: An Emerging New Culture

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Abstract

The Catholic Church in Nigeria, which is the largest Christian denomination in the country, has a political culture that is characteristically passive. Many Catholics shy away from active involvement in politics because they perceive it as unhealthy for their spiritual life and salvation. The Catholic clergy are forbidden by Church law from assuming public offices that entail the exercise of civil power or playing active roles in politics. The 2023 Nigerian general elections witnessed a new way of thinking, talking, and behaving by the Catholic clergy in Enugu State concerning their involvement in politics. This study examines the political involvement of the Catholic clergy in Enugu State in the 2023 general election, and the circumstances that prompted them. The nature of the study is qualitative, and the method is descriptive, historical, and phenomenological. The investigation established that in the 2023 general elections, the Catholic clergy in Enugu State participated in politics in ways that shifted remarkably from the traditional Catholic style of political participation, that their new conducts were prompted by identifiable circumstances, and their actions contributed significantly to the outcome of the elections in the state. These affirmations demonstrate the influence of religion on politics, and announce a new direction of relationship between the Catholic Church and the government in Enugu state. Further investigations are required to highlight possible implications of the shift for the future of the relationship between the Church and politics in the state.

Keywords: Religion, Politics, Catholicism, Church, Clergy, Elections, Enugu State, Nigeria

Introduction

Religion is a strong force in the politics of Nigeria because it affects many key decisions and actions of governments at all levels of the polity. There are three major religions in the country, namely African Traditional Religion, Islam, and Christianity, and each of them has different perspectives on the relationship between religion and politics. Christianity is itself a multi-confessional religion with different denominations that have and practice differing models of how religion relate with politics particularly in terms of political participation. The Catholic Church is the oldest of all the Christian denominations in history, and the largest in terms of population in Nigeria. However, the Nigerian Catholic Church is one

of the least of all the constituencies in the nation's political history in terms of active political participation. Of all the heads of state and presidents that have so far ruled Nigeria from its Independence, none is a Catholic. Facts like this support the view that "the Nigerian Catholic Church is one of the most marginalized of all the marginalized religio-political groups in Nigeria" (Ezeogu, 2011, p. 37). This marginalization owes largely to the political culture of the Catholic Church which bespeaks of apathy and indifference to active involvement in the politics of the country

The culture of apathy towards active political involvement by the Catholic Church is traceable to a combination of factors and circumstances. The primary factor is the Catholic interpretation and understanding of certain actions and sayings of Jesus Christ in the Bible. Jesus' rejection of being crowned king by the people (John 6:15), and his sayings: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22: 21), and "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18: 36) are traditionally interpreted by some Catholics to mean that one has to make a choice either for Christ or politics. From this understanding, there grew among many Catholics a spirituality that is pessimistic of this world as well as a perception of politics as dangerous, risky, and dirty. Moreover, the clergy, which is one of the principal pillars on which the organizational structure of the Catholic Church rests, are strictly forbidden by Canon Law from active involvement in politics (Canon 1983, no. 285.3; 287.2). Consequently, political education is not a major item in the curriculum of studies for the training of the Catholic clergy. With leaders that are politically deficient, the Catholic Church is left with a big disadvantage as far as political education and motivation are concerned, which make for its culture of apathy to politics.

Before, during, and after the general elections of 2023 (February 25 and March 18), there were outcries from a number of politicians and other people in Enugu State about what they perceived as the clergy becoming partisan or getting too involved in politics (Udeh, 2023). The complaint was that the clergy in the state were showing unprecedented interests in politics and acting in ways that were not typical of the Catholic political culture. After the elections, the politicians who lost, particularly those in the ruling party, accused the clergy of the Catholic Church of being responsible for their loss. Those who were victorious at the polls expressed gratitude in different ways to the Catholic Church and its clergy for their victory. Indications are that the conducts of the clergy in the Nigerian general elections of 2023 shifted significantly from their traditional style of participation in politics, and that this impacted on the outcome of the process. The understanding that conclusions based on casual observations and reactions are highly unreliable provoked the urge for an inquiry. The urge came with the desire to carry out the investigation when the conducts and the processes in question have not diminished much in the memory of the actors and their observers.

This study sheds light on the conducts of the Catholic clergy in Enugu State in the 2023 Nigerian general elections and on the circumstances that prompted and promoted them. The relevance of the study is epitomized in its demonstration of how religion impacts on politics and how it is an agent of social change. It also provides better understanding of the relationship of the Church and politics in society. Information for the study were obtained through reviews of relevant literature, participant observations and personal communications in the form of conversations and unstructured oral interviews. The presentation of the study is under the following headings: Introduction, Theoretical Survey, Highlights of the Conducts, Extrapolations from the Highlights, and Conclusion.

Theoretical Survey

The Catholic Church has a long history of relationship with politics. A brief survey of this history is presented here as it provides the wider context in which the actions of the clergy in Enugu State are examined. Christianity began and lasted for a period of over one thousand years before it split into denominations. Prior to the split, there was just the Catholic Church. Thus, everything that happened in relation to Christianity and politics from its inception through the ages to the time of the splitting is considered Catholic in this survey.

Christianity and Politics in History

At its inception, Christianity had a cordial relationship with the political powers of the day, which was the Roman Empire. The Roman government took no interest in interfering with the activities of the new movement founded by Jesus Christ insofar as it did not constitute an obstruction to the civil authority or the social order. The Roman Governor, Pontus

Pilate, made several attempts to set Jesus free from the plans which the Jewish elders and chief priest had to kill him (Luke 23: 14-16). The overriding positive attitude of the early Christian Church towards the political authority is reflected in many biblical passages such as Romans 13: 1-3 and 1 Peter 2; 13-17. However, as Christianity began to grow and spread to other territories of the Roman Empire, particularly Rome, its relationship with the political order changed. Christians refused to worship the Roman gods and the images of the emperor, or to offer sacrifices to them as was the custom of all who lived in the empire. Being thus seen as subversive to the cult that was believed to hold the Roman empire politically intact, Christianity became intolerable in the empire (Considine, 2022). The persecution of Christians started under Emperor Nero (reigned AD 54-68), and many of them were murdered by him and subsequent emperors. The persecution continued until Emperor Constantine (reigned AD 306-337), who got converted to Christianity and granted legitimacy to the religion in the Roman Empire by the Edict of Milan (AD 313). Emperor Theodosius I (reigned AD 379-395) carried this further by declaring Christianity the official religion of the empire such that it became a crime to practice any other religion.

With the christianization of the empire, a new era of relationship between the Church and politics dawned. As the empire was being christianized, Christianity was also Romanized. It was a two-way process (Scott, "The Christianization..."). Christians began to hold political positions in the empire and the clergy became major stakeholders of political power and authority. The involvement of the Christian Church in politics grew to a point when "the Pope effectively served as the political leader of the region (*Wikipedia*, "Christianity and Politics"). For many years, the Italian civil state and the Church struggled over political power in the country. This dispute continued until on February 11, 1929 when the Church and the State had a treaty, the Lateran Treaty, which spelt out the terms of their relationship. The Church recognized Italy as a state with Rome as its capital, and the Vatican was granted the status of a sovereign state with the Pope as its head (Ray, "Lateran Treaty"). It became clear that there was need for a new paradigm of relationship between the church and the state.

The Separation of Church and State

The principle and practice of the separation of church and state represents a paradigm shift in the relationship between the Church and politics. Here, the church refers to religion in general, while State refers to the government. This separation denotes "the idea that government should remain neutral towards all religions and not officially recognize or favor any one religion" (*Dictionary.com*, "Separation of..."). The government is forbidden to establish a national religion or to recognize one as such and it cannot force its citizens to adopt any particular religion. This separation does not mean that religion has no relationship with the state, that nothing religious is permitted in government circles or the suppression of all forms of religious expressions in public affairs and services.

The modern practice of the separation of church and state is traced to the American and French revolutions of the end of the 18th century and the Enlightenment. From the Americans and the French, many other nations in the world, including Nigeria, adopted the principle of the separation of religion and state and have it enshrined in their constitutions. However, "It is important to recognize that the separation of the realms of state and church has operated since the beginning of Christianity. It is not the invention of modernity, although in modern times this separation has been given a new and to some degree perverse form" (D'Souza, 2011, p. 50). The foundation for the separation is embedded in the distinction that Jesus makes between what belong to God and Caesar (Matthew 22: 21) and the kingdom of this world and his own kingdom (John 18: 36). The contemporary political culture of the Catholic Church is largely shaped by its understanding of the principle of separation as well as its accumulated experiences of engagements in politics over time.

The Catholic Clergy and Politics in Nigeria

The religio-political culture of Catholics in Nigeria is a reflection of the universal laws, practices and experiences of the Church concerning politics. The Church's laws regarding the involvement of its members in politics vary according to the different categories of its membership. The Catholic Church categorizes its members in three broad groups, namely, the clergy, the consecrated religious, and the laity. The clergy embraces all the ordained which includes deacons, priests and bishops. The consecrated religious are those who take vow to bear special witness to the evangelical counsels of poverty,

chastity and obedience of Jesus Christ. The laity refers to all the men and women in the Church who are neither clergy nor religious (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, Ch 3,4,5). Lay Catholics are permitted and encouraged to play active roles in politics, but on the contrary, the law categorically prohibits the clergy and the consecrated religious from active political involvement. According to Canon Law, "Clerics are forbidden to assume public offices which entail a participation in the exercise of civil power" (Canon 285 para. 3). Again, "They are not to have an active part in political parties and in governing labour unions unless, in the judgement of competent ecclesiastical authority, the protection of the rights of the Church or the promotion of the common good requires it" (Canon 287, para. 2). The latter canon provides room for the possibility of the clergy getting involved in partisan politics with the permission of competent authorities. Such authorities refer to bishops in relation to priests, and the Pope if the permission is required by a bishop.

In line with the universal laws and traditions of the Catholic Church, the Nigerian Catholic Bishops continuously direct the clergy and the religious to steer clear of partisan politics and active political involvement (Vatican News. "Nigerian Bishops direct priests..."). However, there appears to be a growing consciousness among the clergy in Nigeria about the need for them to participate actively in politics. This consciousness indicates a feeling of dissatisfaction by the clergy with the prevailing paradigm of no political participation. In 1992, a priest of the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi, Benue State, Reverend Father Moses Orshio Adasu, contested an election on the platform of a political party (the Social Democratic Party), won, and became the executive governor of Benue State, Nigeria (*Wikipedia*, "Moses Adasu"). On January 14, 2007, then Catholic Bishop of Nsukka Diocese, Most Rev Dr Francis E. O. Okobo, issued a directive, that all Catholics within his ecclesiastical jurisdiction must produce their voter's registration cards within a period of three weeks or be denied of the spiritual services of the Church (Ezeogu, 2011, p. 15). In 2020, another Catholic clergyman from Benue State, Reverend Father Hyacinth Alia of the Catholic Diocese of Gboko, indicated overt interest in active politics. He registered in a political party, All Progressives Congress (APC), for the general elections of 2023, ran for the seat of the executive governor of the state and won the election and was sworn in. His bishop came out with outright sanction on him (*La Croix International*, "Bishop in Nigeria suspends priest...").

Alongside the cases of these two clergymen, Reverend Fathers Adasu and Alia, there are indications that more members of the Catholic clergy in Nigeria are not comfortable with the culture of their non-involvement in active politics. In a petition addressed to the Apostolic Nuncio to Nigeria, Archbishop Antonio Guido Filipazzi, a civil society group by name, Patriotic Front of Nigeria, "accused the Catholic priests in Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province of interfering in partisan politics and displaying their involvement in the just-concluded 2023 Presidential and State House of Assembly elections in Anambra State" (*The Sun Nigeria*, March 12, 2023. "Civil Society Group..."). These apparent deviations from traditions and laid down policies of the Catholic Church indicate the emergence of a new way of conduct by the clergy concerning their involvement in politics. Observable conducts of the Catholic clergy in Enugu State during the 2023 general elections appear to depart from the traditional ways and fit into the emerging new way. In what follows, the investigation focuses on these conducts.

Highlights of the Conducts of the Clergy

A descriptive presentation is made here of the activities of the Catholic clergy in Enugu State at the 2023 general elections, noting what happened before, during and after the votes were cast. A back ground to this presentation is a brief survey of the relationship between the Catholic Church and its clergy and the government of Enugu State.

The State and the Catholic Church in Enugu

Enugu State is one of the 36 states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and it is located in the Southeastern part of the country. It is one of the main strongholds of Catholicism in Nigeria. There are three Catholic dioceses in the state, namely, Awgu, Enugu, and Nsukka, and each of them has a high population of both lay people and the clergy. There is one bishop and one hundred and eighteen priests in Awgu diocese (*Diocesan Directory*, 2023), three bishops and approximately four hundred and seventy priests in Enugu diocese (*Diocesan Directory*, 2023), and two bishops and three hundred and seventy-one priests in Nsukka diocese (*Diocesan Diary and Directory*, 2023). The dioceses do not have permanent deacons, but transitional deacons who at the time of the elections were closed in their various places of training for the

priesthood. They are not included as part of the group in the investigations because it is presumed that their enclosure did not allow them free participation in the election processes. So, for this study, the Catholic clergy in Enugu State consist of six bishops and nine hundred and fifty-nine priests. All these together did not always act in the same manner concerning the elections, but observations and reviews reveal patterns of conducts that cut across the political participation of the majority of the clergy in the state. This is the focus of this investigation.

The Actions of the Clergy During the 2023 Elections

A few months to the 2023 elections, the bishops of the three Catholic dioceses in Enugu State had a meeting in which they adopted a presidential candidate and a gubernatorial candidate as the consensus choice of the Catholic Church in the state. Each bishop left the meeting with the responsibility of getting back to his diocese to get this goal realized. Such a meeting of the Catholic bishops in the state with a political agenda which implies a united action on the part of the Church regarding political involvement was unprecedented.

In the various dioceses in the state, the bishops had meetings with their priests for the purpose of realizing common political goals and strategies. In the past, political mobilization and sensitization were agendas in normal meetings of the diocesan clergy, but for the 2023 elections, assemblies of the clergy were held for a productive impact on the outcome of the votes. In some instances, specific candidates were adopted by the diocesan administration and presented to the clergy for their compliance (Ezechime, 2023). Measures were taken to communicate the outcome of the meetings of the clergy to the leaders of different groups in the diocese for onward dissemination to their individual members. Messages about where the Church stands and concerning the candidates to vote for were circulated in the social media forums of priests, religious and lay people (Nwadinikpa, personal communication, February 2, 2023)

Many priests took to writing articles, short messages, and reviews and disseminating them through the social media and sometimes, by print. The content of the writings ranged from reviews of the activities of the state government, critiques of their stewardship, to why the clergy should play an active role in the election. Helped by their high levels of training particularly in the study of philosophy, the priests were able to make deep impressions on the people through their writings. Thus, they shaped the minds of people in favour of their positions on current political choices.

There were notable reports of priests openly campaigning for candidates of their choice using the pulpits and other faith forums. Some of them used ballot paper in the Church during homilies to educate the people how to vote and who to vote for in the elections (Udeh, 2023). Catholics have a tradition that the clergy who officiates a public worship (liturgy) preaches a homily after the scriptures have been read. A homily is "a commentary ...on some parts of Sacred Scripture, the aim being to explain the literal, and evolve the spiritual, meaning of the Sacred Text" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Homily"). Customarily, while the clergy-homilist carries out this function, nobody interrupts or challenges him. A number of priests in Enugu State saw the times of homily as opportunities to communicate their political opinions to their listeners.

The clergy synergized with the lay people in the Church through meetings and sharing common social media groups with them. The youth and women organizations in the Church were the most readily available collaborators with the clergy in this regard (Onyeke, personal communication, April 14, 2023). With these groups, the clergy established prayer support groups to pray not merely for the success of the elections but for the victory of particular candidates and political parties. Daily prayers and fasting were observed by members of some forums in support of designated political contestants.

The clergy did not register with political parties or attend their meetings, but a number of them worked closely with party members. They formed part of the think-tanks of the parties and contributed significantly to formulating plans and strategies for effective political actions. They took part in crucial decision-making concerning the parties of their affiliations and were consulted when such needs arose. Some of the funds disbursed by parties and their members to influence people's opinions and buy their votes were done through the clergy (Agbo, personal conversation, May 3, 2023).

The Justice, Development, and Peace Commission (JDPC) was maximally used to execute the Church's political agenda in the 2023 elections. The political sub-group in the commission organized political debates, seminars and interactive sessions, aimed at bringing prospective candidates from different parties to meet themselves and the people, with their

manifestos (Ibeh, personal communication, May 3, 2023). There are claims that the commissions were biased in favour of some political parties and their candidates and negatively against others (Udeh, 2023).

During the election, most of the clergy went beyond their civic duties of casting their votes to serve as voluntary observers in different polling centres. They positioned themselves to monitor the votes cast and collated, and the results announced. Some priests organized the youth in their parishes and allocated them to various polling stations, charged with the responsibility of monitoring the election processes and ensuring that the votes were not tampered with (Nwaogaidu, personal communication, February 22, 2023). The presence of the youth at the voting places contributed to deterring people from disrupting the election process. When the elections were over, many clergy appreciated their congregations in the churches for complying with the directives given to them.

These conducts of the clergy at the 2023 elections deviate significantly from the traditional political culture of the Catholic Church in Enugu State, and indicate a shift in their style of political participation. Next is a highlight of the circumstances that encouraged the shift in the clergy's style of political participation.

Circumstances that Encouraged the Conducts of the Clergy

Between 1999, when Nigeria began democratic system of government anew, and 2023, the relationship between the government and the Catholic Church in Enugu State was both cordial and collaborative. The two institutions partner in handling many projects in the state, particularly, in the areas of education, health, and poverty alleviation. During elections, the Catholic Church helps in conscientizing, sensitizing, mobilizing, and motivating the people to carry out their civic and political duties. The Justice, Development, and Peace Commission (JDPC), a non-governmental agency affiliated to the Church, which operates in all the dioceses in the state, undertakes this responsibility (Ani, 2011, pp. 193-194). Therefore, the relationship between the state and the Church in Enugu State does not provide immediate grounds for explaining the conducts of the clergy in the 2023 elections.

The socio-economic situation of Nigeria and Enugu State is one of the circumstances that impelled the Catholic clergy to adopt a new style of political involvement in the 2023 elections. The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, the big fall in the prices of crude oil in the world market, and high inflation rate hit Nigeria very hard by their impact on the nation's economy. The federal government allocations to the states, which is the major source of income for most state governments, decreased greatly. This left the government with insufficient funds to work for a better condition of living for the people. This resulted in a high degree of hardship in the land. The situation was worsened by insecurity, fuel scarcity, and poor electricity in the state. The clergy felt the impact of what the people suffered as it also reflected in their income and the number of those who turned to them for help. Faced with these challenges, the clergy started thinking differently. Their thinking is reflected in this text,

...watching the present political topography of Nigeria, where the ruling parties have grossly failed the generality of Nigerians in terms of economy, free and fair primary elections, public education, security, etc, it is mandatory for Catholic priests to wade in to use their special positions and privileges, in conscience, to let the Nigerian electorates (many of their parishioners who are ignorant) understand who they should vote or not vote for come 2023 (Agbo, 2022).

Many priests started to question and adjust their positions on the traditions and legislations of the Church about their participation in politics. They started to tinker with the meaning of being partisan and how it applies to them (Agbo, 2022, "The Partisan..."), and to reconcile their roles as prophets and shepherds with taking active roles in politics. They quickly observed that the law that forbids the clergy from playing active roles in political parties, allows it if it is required "to promote the common good" (Canon 287.2). The conclusion of many of them was that the condition of living of people in the state and nation necessitates the active involvement of the clergy in politics under the exception status recognized by the law.

Occurrences in other states in Nigeria and in the world contributed to awakening the Catholic clergy in Enugu State to a new consciousness of how they can be agents of change in society. In Benue State, which is situated next to Enugu, a Catholic priest, Reverend Father Hyacinth Alia contested the 2023 election for the post of the executive governor under a

political party, and won (*Wikipedia*. "Hyacinth Alia"). Such event as this, opened the eyes of the clergy in Enugu to begin to consider active involvement in politics as one of the ways of working for the good of the people.

Through their study of "Liberation theology" in the seminaries, the clergy are aware of how the Catholic clergy helped to bring about a radical shift in the socio-political situation of Latin America. There, after many years of identifying with the status quo, the clergy chose the path which "encouraged a break from an elitist notion of the Church and the return of the control to the people" (Singer, "Liberation Theology"). With this, a new way of being Church emerged in the area, which created a new culture of ecclesiastical engagement in politics. Finding themselves in a situation similar to what obtained in Latin America, the clergy in Enugu State readily put their knowledge to action; they shifted from the erstwhile cautious admonitions of their members to "vote wisely", to proposing candidates and political parties to the people to vote for (Okoye, personal communication, April 8, 2023).

The political conducts of the clergy in Enugu State during the 2023 elections is connected with the "Obidient Movement". This movement started with the yearnings of the Nigerian youth over time which found an anchor in the presidential candidate of the Labour Party, Peter Obi. Years before the elections, many people in Nigeria, particularly the youth were dissatisfied with the state of the nation and looked forward to a change. In the context of the 2023 elections, Peter Obi emerged and gave expression to the dreams of the youth for a new Nigeria. His manifesto, charismatic nature, and past records in public office raised the hope of the average Nigerian, and many people responded to his call irrespective of ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, and age (*The Sun*. "Obidient Movement..."). People were captivated by the movement because they perceived it "as a vehicle to channel their frustration with the Nigerian system" (*Financial Times*. "Peter Obi's Obidient Movement"). Many Catholic clergy in Enugu State found in the "Obidient Movement" a credible opportunity to bring about the desired change for a better Nigeria (Ikeude. personal communication, April 14, 2023). However, aligning with the Movement demanded from them a new way of political involvement.

There are some claims that the actions of the Catholic clergy in Enugu State in the elections were influenced principally by the huge amounts of money that politicians doled out to them. Money was distributed but it did not condition the clergy (Ibeh, personal communication, April 14, 2023). The ruling party, the People's Democratic Party, which purportedly dispensed more money than the rest of the parties put together suffered terrible defeats at the polls. Since victory did not go to the highest bidder, the claim of money as the determining factor behind the political conducts of the clergy in the elections is not sustainable.

Extrapolations from the Highlights

The results of the elections in Enugu State show a dramatic shift from the pattern of the past years. The ruling party in the state, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which had since 1999 garnered virtually all the seats at both the federal and state houses of legislature, lost many seats to become the minority in the state legislative house, in the federal house of representative and in the senate. The ruling governor of the state contested for the senatorial seat but lost. Except for some polling centres where there were infringements on the electoral process, the people's votes counted in deciding who won or lost the elections. This largely unprecedented outcomes of the 2023 election in the state are connected to the conducts of the Catholic clergy.

There is a clear shift from passivity to a strong commitment to active involvement in the political processes that determine the government of the state. This shift signals a new political orientation by the clergy in Enugu State. The clergy were not interested in political parties but candidates; they assessed the candidates using the measure of 5cs: character, competence, capacity, commitment and compassion (Ibeh, personal communications, April 14, 2023).

The long years of apathy which left the Catholic clergy with many political deficiencies require time, education and practice to change. The clergy do not become politically informed, experienced, and mature simply because of their conducts during a single election in the country. Time is needed to create a culture. An enduring fruitful engagement of the clergy in politics requires more enlightenment, information and experience built on solid theoretical and theological foundations.

Conclusion

The 2023 general elections awakened the people of Enugu State to a new style of political involvement by the Catholic clergy. The impact of the new Catholic clergy style of participation on the outcome of the elections was attested to by many observers and political contestants, including those who lost and won at the polls. The circumstances that combined to prompt and promote the new style of actions of the clergy include the deplorable socio-economic situation in the country, influences from outside the state and country, and the "Obidient Movement". Concern for the common good and a better nation more than personal or religious interests are the overriding goal of the clergy for their active involvement in politics during the elections.

With the emerging shift of political involvement, the relationship between the Catholic Church and state in Enugu State takes new shape. The clergy have realized that their actions can impact remarkably on political processes, and they are not likely going back to their traditional culture of indifference to politics. The politicians too, having experienced that the Catholic clergy are no longer mere observers or casual players, but active stakeholders in the politics of the state, and that their conducts have serious impacts on politics, are bound to adjust their ways of relating with them or face the consequences. If the shift in the style of political involvement by the clergy is sustained and well-structured, it will give rise to a new political culture in the Catholic Church in Enugu State.

In sum, the findings of this study affirm religion as an agent of social change particularly through its relationship with politics. To the people of Enugu State and Nigeria, this study is relevant for understanding the interplay between religion and politics in society, and the significance of the political participation of the clergy for nation building. Africans are notoriously religious and it is high time religion started contributing more productively towards societal transformations in the continent. Further investigations are required to delineate more ways that the clergy in Enugu State can contribute to stabilizing the political system in the state and country.

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