

Media, Gender and Religion: The Emergence of a Proliferation of Female Pastors in Nigeria

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Abstract

Religion has always been part and parcel of every society and Christianity per se, has become an established religion worldwide. More so is that Nigeria is home of several church denominations, including some of the most established and renowned Pentecostal Christian ministries of the world. One unique aspect of the Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria is the increased prominence of women pastors, either as overseers of churches or as power-wielding wives of overseers. There are even calls for the ordination of female priests by the orthodox churches; but the school of thought is divided over whether women should be allowed as much involvement in evangelism and ministerial duties. This paper examines the involvement of the media in providing a platform that allows female pastors to successfully advance their ministries like their male counterparts. This paper concludes that the media have greatly actually influenced the proliferation of the female pastors in Nigeria and calls for an understanding in the Nigerian Catholic and Anglican Churches; and the need for their women to join their female colleagues in other denominations in using the media in matters of evangelism and salvation.

Keywords: Media, Gender, Religion, Emergence, Proliferation

1. Introduction

In the last decade, there has emerged in scholarly circuits a growing discourse on the interplay between media, gender and religion. Basically, these discourses centre on how the mass media can help bridge the gap of inequality as it concerns gender issues in religion and the larger society. Connectedly, the crux of this paper is to take a cursory look at the emerging trend of the proliferation of female pastors in Nigeria as a contribution to the current debate on media, gender and religion. The paper looks at the Catholic Church who opposes female ordination worldwide and the Anglican Church whose headquarter in London accepts and practices female ordination but its branch in Nigeria opposes it. Copies of a questionnaire were distributed to adult members of both Catholic and Anglican Churches in an area in Nigeria and reasonable copies, sufficient for the research, were retrieved.

This paper adopts an approach that utilizes secondary data gathered from different sources. The author retrieved and reviewed literature from relevant authorities that relate to the topic of inquiry. The goal is to see the position of scholars that have taken previously on gender, religion and media, with a view to juxtaposing their positions with the contemporary situation in Nigeria. A descriptive approach is deployed in the review of extant literature, while conclusions are drawn on the basis of the author's observations and findings.

2. Media, Religion and the Recurrent Gender Issue in Nigeria and the World

In 2000, the 189 member states of the United Nations came to a consensus that in areas of development, poverty eradication, peace, security, protection of the environment, human rights and democracy, the key was advancing women's right to equality (Amobi, 2016). The 8th key among the Millennium Development Goals formulated by the United Nations was to promote gender equality and empower women (Amobi, 2016).

According to a 2001 UNSN report, 50% of Nigerians is female. Yet, the disparity between men and women in Nigeria is vast. This discrimination and marginalization is fuelled and tolerated by the media and encouraged by the African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam (Amobi, 2016). Today, the belief that the woman's role is relegated to the kitchen is still popular but more and more people are beginning to jettison such an anachronistic creed especially with the array of successful career women the country has produced in public life, including the likes of Dr, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Mrs. Obiageli Ezekwesili and the late Professor Dora Akinyuli. This development has led Nigerians to push for gender equality even in churches. This is one of the root causes of the emerging proliferation of female pastors in Nigeria!

3. Definition of Terms

The following terms are used herein only in the context of this research report; such terms are operationally defined as follows:

Media: the term media refers to all the various forms and means of mass communication considered as a whole; television, radio, Internet, magazines, newspapers, bulletins, together with the people involved in the production of information related via these means, all fall under this definition.

Gender: as with general usage, refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men (as against

sex which connotes those biologically determined characteristics), including but not exclusive to norms, roles and relationships; and between groups of women and men in society.

Religion: In this context, religion means a specific fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a number of persons and which involve devotional and ritual observances, often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs among followers.

Emergence: The process of something(s) or someone (people) gaining prominence and public recognition - in this case, female church leaders.

Proliferation: A rapid quantity increase of a phenomenon. Put differently, the rapid rise in the number of female church leaders.

4. Literature Review

5. The Female Pastors: The Global Trend

A study by Hartford Seminary in the USA uncovered the fact that between 1977 and 1997, the number of female pastors in the States has increased from 157-712 in the American Baptist Church, 94-1394 amongst the Episcopalian Church and 319-3003 in the United Methodist Church (The Guardian, 2001). Besides that, the ordination of women has been taking place in increasing number of Protestant Churches in the 20th century (Wikipedia, 2016). Many Protestant denominations across Europe and America including Baptist, Mennonites, Presbyterian or Reformed Church, Church of Scotland, Lutheran Church, Pentecostal and Anglican Churches have been ordaining women as pastors and bishops since that time (Wikipedia, 2016).

Furthermore, after decades of no growth in the number of senior female pastors serving in Protestant Churches, a new Burna study has tracked the ratio of male-female pastors in the USA and it indicates that women have made substantial gains in the past 10 years (Burna Group, 2016). From the early 1990's through 1999, just 5% of senior pastors of Protestant Churches were female (Burna Group, 2016). Since then, the proportion has slowly but steadily risen, doubling to 10% in 2009 (Burna Group, 2016).

In addition, a Ranker study uncovered 10 of the most famous female Pastors in the world including Paula White, Juanita Bynum, late Bimbo Odukoya, late Ida.B.Robinson, Darlene Zschech, Nicole Larmache, Advent Bangun, Victoria Osteen, AsaWaldau and Bobbie Houston (Ranker website, 2016).

6. The Emerging Proliferation of Female Pastors in Nigeria

Like in most African societies, the Nigerian society is a male-dominant one in which men mostly call the shots while the women are at the background. This patriarchal mindset permeates every sector of life including religion but scholars like Professor HauwaIman, Director Centre for Gender Security Studies and Youth Advancement, University of Abuja, postulated that the gender issue in Nigeria is more rooted in culture than religion (The Guardian, 2016). For instance, in the Northern part of Nigeria, parents go out of their way to incur huge debts in the marriage of their female children while in the East, in some communities, women are made to shave their hair when their husbands die and they can be inherited by their brothers-in-law: these are not religious practices! (The Guardian, 2016).

Another female scholar, Ifeoma Amobi, however argues that the gender agenda in the country is tolerated and encouraged by religion (The Guardian, 2016). She accused the three major religions in Nigeria, namely, African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam of complicity in this matter (The Guardian, 2016). In spite of this allegation, there is growing evidence, despite the fact that mainstream conservative churches like the Catholic and Anglican (though the Anglican Church has since joined in the ordination of women) who object to the ordination of women as pastors and bishops, that there is a proliferation of female pastors in Nigeria alongside the rest of the world.

The first proof is that some Pentecostal churches like Christ Embassy overtly ordain women as pastors. The second and all the more obvious reason is that most frontline Pentecostal pastors in Nigeria actually function with their wives as co-pastors in their ministry. The Nigerian Bulletin, an on-line portal, compiled a list of 10 most powerful female pastors who are in active ministry with their husbands (Nigerian Bulletin, 2016). They include Pastor Folu Adeboye of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Pastor Faith Oyedepo of Winners' Chapel, Pastor Helen Oritsejafor of the Word of Life Bible Church, Pastor Ifeyinwa Adefarasin of the House on the Rock, Pastor Ibidun Igbodalo, Pastor Nike Adeyemi of Daystar Christian Centre, Pastor Nkoyo Rapu, Rev. Funke Felix Adeyemo, Pastor Rosemary Odukoya of the Fountain of Life Ministry and Pastor Evelyn Temitope Joshua of the Synagogue Church of All Nations (Nigerian Bulletin, 2016). Some of these women also run other organizations like NGO's and other corporate organizations related to their hubby's ministry (Nigerian Bulletin, 2016).

The last proof the emerging proliferation of female pastors in Nigeria is that some female pastors in the country have got to the zenith of the ministry where they run their churches as overall head. A very good example is Apostle Helen Akpabio whom Yes International, an on-line portal, calls the richest female pastor in Nigeria and who runs 250 branches of her church as its General Overseer (Yes International, 2016). Another

good example is Archbishop Margret Idahosa who took over the running of her late husband's church after the demise of the charismatic Archbishop Benson Idahosa.

7. The Role of the Media in the Proliferation of Female Pastors in Nigeria Today

No doubt, the media have played a huge and significant role in the proliferation of female pastors in Nigeria today especially by way of generating publicity for their work. Through both the print and electronic media, female pastors have gained great popularity just like their male counterparts. The media have helped in no small measure to help state a case for the effectiveness of women as pastors by showcasing their work not only here in Nigeria but in the rest of the world.

It is an intrinsic responsibility of the media to deliver to the audience what is relevant to their survival and active participation in society. This is perhaps why the church and the mass media are both considered as tools for development. For the survival of the persons that make up society, their basic rights must be protected, and the issue of human rights is central to both the media and the church.

However, the two institutions use communication in different ways. While the church is spiritual in approach and appeals to people's sense of morality, the media use the essence of news; of information to assist people make informed choices (Nyamjoh, 2005). But the denominator is the shared interest in promoting and bettering the lot of society.

This, perhaps, explains the growing relationship between media houses and churches. The place of the media in the increase of female pastors in Nigeria cannot be overstated. In the first instance, one force that drives ministries headed by female clerics or ministries who have females at key and strategic leadership positions within the church is the amount of publicity they get. What better way to receive publicity than through the media of television, radio, the Internet, newspapers and magazines?

In any case, the media responsible for this publicity are not (and should not) be restricted to the traditional media mentioned above – the print medium which includes all printed material of communication (tracts, fliers, posters etc.) as well the broadcast media have both given way to new media of communication. The great influence of the social media has not only increased the popularity of churches but has also been utilized to build a steady acceptance of *women-pastored* churches.

The slow but steady progress from analogue to digital broadcast, as well as the graduation from domestic/terrestrial television to satellite TV is also significant to the proliferation of female pastors in Nigeria. The Synagogue Church of All Nations (Emmanuel TV), The Redeemed Christian Church of God (Dove TV), Living Faith Ministries (Breakthrough Broadcasting Network), Omega Fire Ministries (Celebration TV) and Believers Loveworld (Loveworld Television) are some churches that operate satellite television channels in Nigeria, and which serve as a platform for the wives of the proprietors (pastors in their own right) to serve in one capacity or the other. With the exception of the wife of Emmanuel TV's proprietor who seldom features on the channel, the wives of the other pastors are regular faces on the television stations performing a religious function – preaching, praying and other pastoral duties.

For those who do not own such dedicated platforms, terrestrial stations serve the same purpose. Several churches including Church of God Mission, Christ Chosen Church of God and Spirit and Life Bible Church, all in Benin City, Edo State, have television programmes that prominently feature the women in the churches. In the case of the former and the latter churches, female pastors (Archbishop Margaret Benson Idahosa and Bishop Eunice Osagiede) are the heads of the church, while the wife of any of the substantive General Overseer of Christ Chosen Church of God is a prominent part of the church's media package. The reality of the situation is that televangelism has given unprecedented prominence to female church leaders.

Apart from radio and television programmes, many churches and their female pastors engage in the production of music cassettes CDs and DVDs. Streaming and e-publishing are new media that support these church leaders in their ministries. The late pastor Bimbo Odukoya, for instance, will be remembered for her messages forever preserved in digital formats and print media. The wives of Oyedepo, Kumuyi, Adeboye, Oyakhilome and Odukoya are also rooted in the application of the print media to grow their ministries, sometimes in conjunction with their husbands. For instance, the publication *Christian Women Mirror* is associated with the pastor wife of Pastor Kumuyi, while *Rhapsody of Reality* was a joint publication of pastors Chris and Anita Oyakhilome before their divorce.

8. In Support of the Media-Church Relationship

Kizito argues that as both the church and the media can be adjudged to be advocates and lobbyists for peace and the right of all people to freedom and to security with a common claim to speak for the voiceless, the both institutions share a common characteristic, which is mobilizing citizens for a common purpose (Kizito, 1992).

Naturally, the woman, in contrast to the man, is more empathetic to causes that relate with peace, security and human rights. This implies that while the media are concerned with addressing these issues with a view to protecting the individual, the church shepherded by a female would most likely forge a strong partnership to

address such a cause.

Characterizing the current religious and media situation in Nigeria, there are two obvious phenomena that cannot be overlooked; the proliferation of the churches belonging to the Pentecostal Christian denomination, and the dominant presence of their religious leaders in both the print and electronic media in the country.

The use of the electronic media for evangelism in Nigeria began in 1974 when Bishop Benson Idahosa of the Church of God Mission began television broadcasts on the then Mid-West Television. Idahosa's pioneering effort was followed by Rev. Ayo Oritsejafor's *Hour of Deliverance*. Pastor W.F. Kumuyi of the Deeper Life Bible Church also used a tape ministry as an evangelistic tool in these early stages of media and evangelism. It was in the 1990s, that the Pentecostal application of the electronic media in Nigeria reached its full flowering, with many preachers buying air time on radio and television (Ihejirika, 2010).

The media cannot be divorced from religion and religious institutions. The relationship between both is symbiotic – the media need the religious institutions to survive while the religious institutions also need the media for the propagation of its mission. As part of its intrinsic capabilities, the broadcast and new media can be used to propagate morals, ethics and godliness and in many societies, these are the basic principles for nation building.

8. Theoretical Perspectives

Agenda Setting: This theory suggests that the media are capable of taking advantage of the dependence of audiences on them to make issues topic for discussions. Thus in times of uncertainty and controversy, it is highly probable that people are more dependent on media as a source of information and guidance thereby setting an agenda (McQuail, 2015). The mass media have been shown to be influential on matters outside the audiences' immediate personal experience. The media therefore set the agenda for the masses in such matters. It is more so today that people still want the media to testify to whatever they might have heard elsewhere before they can believe. This means that people will judge as important what the media deem to be important and true.

In the case of proliferation of female pastors, audiences become more and more accustomed to the phenomenon as the media continue to promote them and their ministries. If the media say it is good enough, it has become an agenda of sorts to get the audience to accept it. In the same vein, critics of the proliferation of female pastors also have a place in the media. But the reality is that the amount of airtime and space given to women-led Christian ministries are significantly more than that given to the critics. The implication, therefore, is that audiences are exposed more to suggestions for the rise of female pastors; hence there is the tendency to accept it than reject it.

9. Data Presentation and Analysis of Nigerian Anglicans' Responses to Women ordination

This work goes further to present, analyse and interpret the data obtained with reference to the view of people on women ordination; taking the Nigerian Anglican Church and the Catholic Church members as a case study. This is further enhanced by providing frequency tables and bar charts when necessary to explain the data obtained. Forty three (43) copies out of the fifty (50) copies of the questionnaire administered were retrieved.

Table 1: Gender distribution of the respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	22	51.2
Female	21	48.8
Total	43	100

Source: Field survey, 2017

Table 1 above reveals that 22 respondents representing 51.2% are male while 21 respondents representing 48.8% are female. This shows that majority of the respondents are male.

Table 2: Views about ordaining female religious ministers?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
It is a welcome development	8	18
It is not biblical, after all there is no record of a female apostle in the bible	11	25
It goes against tradition, so i disagree with it	15	35
Women should be allowed to become ministers; after all, they are part of the church.	4	10
Ordination of female ministers is not a big deal, in Gods house, we are all equal.	3	7
None	2	5
Total	43	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 2 above, (as regards views about ordaining female ministers), shows 8 respondents representing 18%

sees ordaining female religious ministers as a welcome development. 11 respondents representing 25% view ordaining female religious ministers as not biblical because there is no record of a female apostle in the bible. 15 respondents representing 35% say ordaining female ministers goes against the tradition. 4 respondents representing 10% say ordaining female religious ministers should be allowed because women are part of the church. 3 respondents representing 7% view ordaining female religious ministers as not being a big deal as everyone is equal in God's house. 2 respondents representing 5% however left the question unanswered. It can therefore be deduced that majority of the respondents view ordaining female religious ministers as being against tradition.

Table 3: What role should women play in the church?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
There should be no restriction of roles to women	14	32.56
Women should play the role solely as worshippers	16	37.21
None	13	30.23
Total	43	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 3: Showing respondents views about roles women should play in the church. This table shows that 14 respondents representing 32.56% think there should be no restriction of roles to women. 16 respondents representing 37.21% think women should play the role solely as worshippers. 13 respondents representing 30.23% however left the question unanswered. The majority therefore is of the view that women should participate solely as worshippers in the church.

Table 4: Should gender equality not extend to equal religious ministerial rights for men and women?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender equality should cut across all areas of life, including ministerial responsibilities	6	14
Religious ministries are doctrinal, so secular movements like gender equality should not interfere	21	49
Woman was created from man, so there is no equality in the first place	6	14
None	10	23
Total	43	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4 above shows that 6 respondents representing 14% think gender equality should cut across all areas of life, including ministerial responsibilities. 21 respondents on the other hand, representing 49% think religious ministries are doctrinal, thus secular movements like gender equality should not interfere. 6 respondents representing 14% think woman was created from man, so there's no equality in the first place. 10 respondents representing 23% however left the question unanswered. The majority therefore is of the opinion that gender equality should not be introduced into religious setting.

Table 5: To what extent should women be allowed to minister in churches?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Women group coordinators	6	14
Prayer leaders	5	12
Counsellors	2	5
Assistant Pastors	3	7
Pastors	1	2
Branch/Regional/Zonal heads	0	0
Priests	1	2
Bishops	1	2
None	24	56
Total	43	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Figure 1: Respondents' views about the extent to which women should be allowed to minister in churches

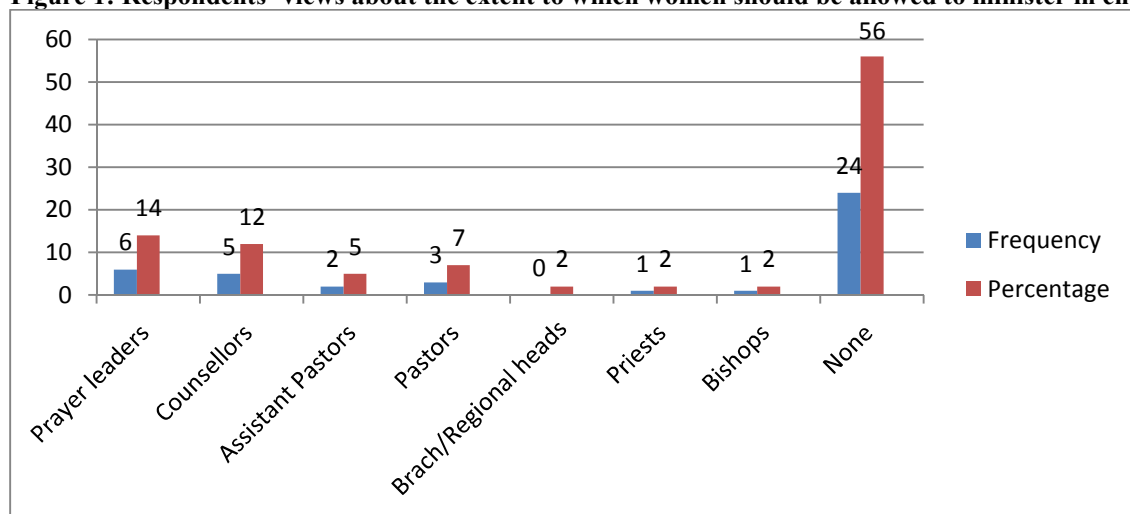


Table 6 and figure 1: Showing respondents' views about the extent to which women be allowed to minister in churches. Here 6 respondents representing 14% want women as group coordinators. 5 respondents representing 12% want women as prayer leaders. 2 respondents representing 5% want women as counsellors. 3 respondents representing 7% want women as assistant pastors. Only 1 respondent representing 2% want women as pastors. None of the respondents selected branch/regional/zonal heads. Another 1 respondent representing 2% want women as priests and another 1 respondent representing 2% want women bishops. 24 respondents representing 56% however do not want women to leaders in any of the positions given as options. This is a clear indication that the majority does not want any important position given to women in church activities.

Table 7: Are there any advantages to female ordination?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No	22	51
Yes	15	35
Nil	6	14
Total	43	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 7: shows that 22 respondents representing 51% think there are no advantages to female ordination while 15 respondents representing 35% think there are advantages to female ordination; and 6 respondents representing 14% however left the question unanswered. The majority here does not see advantages in the ordination of women.

Nigerian Catholics' Responses to Women Ordination

Table 8: Gender distribution of the respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	102	62.6
Female	61	37.4
Total	163	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

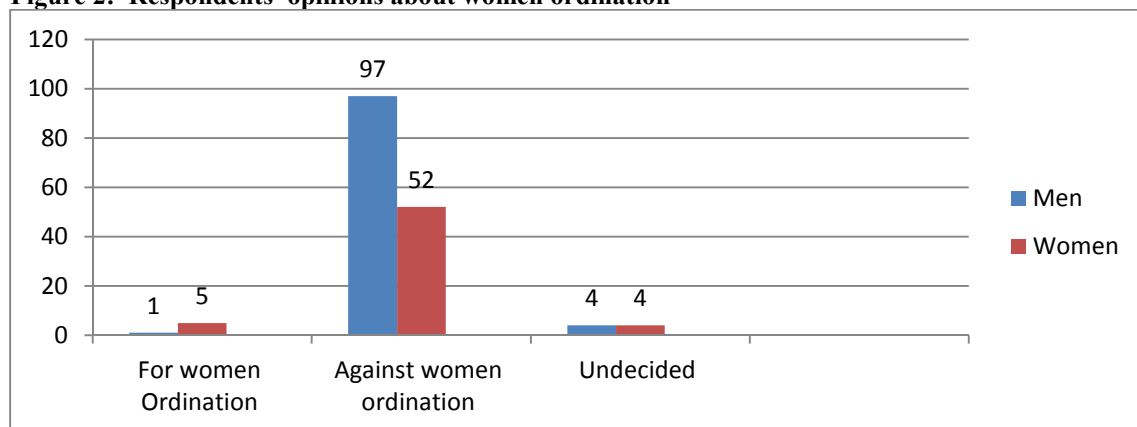
Table 8 above reveals that 102 respondents representing 62.6% are male while 61 respondents representing 37.84 are female. This shows that majority of the respondents are male.

Table 9: Respondents' opinions about women ordination

Responses	Men	Percentage	Women	Percentage
For Women Ordination	01	0.98%	05	8.19
Against Women Ordination	97	95.09	52	85.25
Undecided	04	3.93	04	6.56
Total	102	100	61	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Figure 2: Respondents' opinions about women ordination



The immediate table and figure of Catholic respondents to women ordination show 1 respondent representing 16.7% is a single male (out of 102 male respondents) that supports women ordination due to reality of change. 5 respondents out of 61 representing 83.3% are females that support women ordination due to reality of change. This shows that a meagre number of female respondents support women ordination due to reality of change. In the same table and figure, 97 out of 102 respondents representing 65.1% which are males are against women ordination due to little respect that may be accorded to women as a result of their menstrual period and that some women themselves feel inferior to men. Again, 52 out of 61 respondents representing 34.9% females are against women ordination due to the same reasons.

Furthermore, the table and figure above reveal that 4 out of 102 respondents representing 3.93% are undecided males as regards women ordination just as 4 out of 61 representing 6.56% of female respondents are also undecided with reference to women ordination. In all, it shows that the majority in both genders is against women ordination and that women ordination is just a mere desire but not totally accepted by the same people who desire it. In other words, findings show that the agitation for women ordination among Nigerian Catholics and Anglicans is relatively low and in fact unacceptable by both men and women, compared to their counterparts in America and Europe; though Nigerian Catholics and Anglicans still wish that women be given more roles in liturgical celebrations and activities of the Church.

10. Conclusion

There had always been clamour for women ordination in the past, but 20th and 21st centuries have been witnessing it more than ever; with the rise of more Catholic feminists who want to be loyal to the Catholic Church and at the same time want their wish to be met. The ordination of women in the Catholic Church has always been a topic that every Pontiff in the past never wanted brought up for discussion. However, on 12th May 2016, Pope Francis promised in front of an audience of 900 nuns that he would create a commission to study the role of women deacons in the dawn of Christianity and the possibility to apply it today (McElwee, 2016). The Pope has the idea that it was a bit obscure and so needed to be clarified.

History has it that over 50,000 women deacons in the Eastern part (Greek speaking) of the Catholic Church in the first millennium. Some of the women are Eusebia of Constantinople 340 AD, Amproukla 404 AD, Saint Olympias (a friend to St. John Chrysostom), 5th Cet. AD, Elisanthia, Martria and Palladia 395-419 AD to mention but a few (Monumenta, 2010). The main reason for female deacon was practical. Only women deacons could enter women's quarters to anoint the sick and immerse women at baptism, for female catechumens had to strip totally. It is with certainty that these women received a fully sacrament of ordination like their male counterparts in line with six features recognized by contemporaries at the time; including receiving the distinctive diaconate stole and the power to hold the chalice with consecrated body and blood of Jesus Christ (Wingaards, 2016).

Thus the current trend of the proliferation of female pastors in Nigeria is a thing of interest; for it has come to stay and may even grow further in future. In spite of my catholic heritage, I do not see this trend as a dangerous one; but necessary steps, including critical debates should be put forward on how women can equally play leading roles in liturgical celebrations. While I am not sitting on the fence on this debate I try to offer arguments for opponents and proponents of women ordination.

Those who oppose female ordination would argue that scripturally, the role of pastors was reserved for men alone as Jesus chose only 12 men as apostles and the Acts of the Apostles (4:32-35) made a clear distinction between the apostles and other believers. On the other hand the proponents of female ordination would be quick to argue that Jesus only acted like that because he (Jesus) grew up in a male-dominated Jewish culture; and that if Jesus, called the Christ had grown up in this present epoch, he would have acted like Pope Francis who saw

nothing wrong in washing the feet of a woman on Holy Thursday, 2015 - a privilege traditionally reserved for men alone. Proponents of female ordination thus argue that Female pastors and bishops should be encouraged and not scorned because the female perspective is potent, necessary and important even in the church and even Scripture supports the use of women as effective instruments in the propagation of the gospel. Notwithstanding, those who argue against female ministers with reference to Pope Francis's washing the feet of a female Muslim prisoner in 2015 in Rome, argue that such gesture is simply a special gesture of love to the whole humanity and not necessarily an approval of female ordination. Besides, in Catholicism, washing of feet is not a sacrament.

Critics against female ordination would also argue that there are roles that are naturally designated to each gender (for example, conception is naturally the duty of women while men are only to fertilise the female eggs in the womb). In the same vein, they believe that the furtherance of the gospel, especially in public places like the church or in the mass media, is exclusively reserved for men. The belief is that the role of the women in ministries is purely supportive through subtle interventions. They would argue that even Mary (Jesus' mother), never participated in the ministerial priesthood. Despite her obvious powerful link to Jesus, she restricted her participation to background roles such as at the wedding in Cana. At that event, Mary deferred to the authority of her son, Jesus, and did nothing to take away the glory of the miracle from him.

Those who oppose female ordination would also point to the Order of Melchizedek as stated in the Bible (Gen. 14:18; Ps. 110:4). Melchizedek was a male and Abraham paid homage to him, and the interpretation is that the line of ministerial priesthood comes from him. Where then is the lineage of women pastors?

Beyond the obvious reasons espoused above, it is obvious that there are more arguments against the ordination of women. However, it does not necessarily nullify the possibility of having female ministers in the Catholic Church. In the first instance, there is no rule that is necessarily static. The fact that a practice or a phenomenon has not always been so, does not mean it never should be. Present situations may change an existing other. Pope Francis washing the feet of a female Muslim prisoner in 2015 is an instance of this.

Even, many cultural and practical roles ascribed to men are not natural but nurtured by the culture of inequality between men and women and as such transferred to religion. Religion does not promote a distinction between man and woman in the teaching of the gospel. If souls can be saved through man or woman, then so be it.

Apart from the role of reproduction, women can practically do all that men do and in some cases far better. The axiom that "what a man can do, a woman can do better" holds true in many regards. While many pastors are popular for their preaching prowess or their deliverance ministries, many female pastors have formed ministries that focus on women. Although not necessarily sexist, such ministries allow the Word to be imparted especially to women. As a woman, the attraction of hearing messages of salvation from a woman is sure to be attractive on certain levels.

The media have been playing and will continue to play a key role in the promotion of these unique breed of religious leaders and there is no slowing down in sight. In other words, the debate on female ordination will continue and so will the proliferation of female pastors in Nigeria and the rest of the world to the collective emancipation of the female folks worldwide

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John Ayodele OYEWOLE, born on 19th November 1966, is a Catholic priest. He had his first degree in Philosophy from the University of Ibadan in 1992 before bagging a Bachelor's degree in Theology from the Urbanian University, Rome in 1999. He later went on a new terrain in his academic career where he obtained another Bachelor's degree in Social Science at the Gregorian University, Rome in 2006 and consequently his Licence in Social Communication, from the same university in 2007. In 2010 he obtained his doctoral degree in Social Science at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas, Rome. He is presently a lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication at Adekunle Ajasin University where he has been teaching since 2011. He enjoys carrying out researches on humanity.