



Lecture C: *Dialogue of life between chaplains, soldiers and their families (African Perspective)*
Lieut. Colonel Very Rev Fr Charles C. Iroegbu, Nigerian Army Roman Catholic Chaplaincy

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Lecture Highlights

Lieut. Colonel Very Rev Fr Charles C. Iroegbu provided an African perspective on the dialogue between chaplains, soldiers and their families. The African, whose world view comprises of the Spiritual, Animate and Inanimate beings, is conscious of the influence of each category of these beings in the universe. In other words to be an African is to be in a religious world where everything in the world is created by God. The cultural values of Africa include a sense of respect for authority, the sacredness of life, a sense of hospitality even to outsiders. In addition, the family and community live as one or as an extended family that also extends to nations in Africa and the whole continent itself. As for African Cosmology, God created and rules a universe consisting of the unborn, the living and the ancestors. This is complemented with Christian cosmology where how a person lives his life on earth will determine whether he will go to heaven or hell. In effect, the earth serves a connecting link and determining factor.

The above idea of the world helps him to define and explain intelligently the rationale behind all that he does, wants to do, as well as what he can or expected to do in life. Such understanding of African cosmology as well African cultural values of the Sacredness of life, Sense of Hospitality, Sense of the Sacred and Religious, Sense of Respect for Authority and Elders and Sense of good human relations to mention a few is the overarching principle that runs through the military life in relation to religious observations both in peace time and at the theater of war.

The profession of arms is considered by Africans as one of the noblest in the world since it involves sacrifice even with life if need be. This characteristics has issues and challenges in relation to his family and to God and in recognition, the Church is tasked to attend to the needs of soldiers. As for the Chaplain Service in Africa they have two characteristics: they do not have their own ministry but are seconded by the diocese to the military; it is accountable to both the Church and the military authorities. A chaplain is a religious leader and a staff officer providing religious and moral tasks. Another important role of the chaplain is an intensive internal look together with chaplains of other religious groups in the military) to check current climate of hostility towards religious expression or conviction. For their part, commanders also play a role in the dialogue by affirming, upholding and valuing personnel religious conviction and expression without defining it. Commanders also collaborate with chaplains should collaborate to ensure the religious issues are identified. Given the stress of military deployments and attendant psychological problems, the chaplaincy in Nigeria and Africa work with three organizations to help soldiers' families: Catholic Men Soldiers; Catholic Women Soldiers; and, Catholic Youth.

To summarize, for effective dialogue, the values, missions and responsibilities of chaplains should be carefully noted. For his part, the Chaplain must live up to challenges by diligent and faithful exercise of his vocation, cultivating an attitude of closeness to the local Ordinary and the presbyterium, and recognize his The dialogue of life between chaplains, soldiers and families from an African perspective therefore reflects on some of the aspects of religious obligations, responsibilities as well as benefits and rights of the Military personnel, families and chaplains as they play their constitutional role as children of God in the Military. This is embodied by the soldiers, chaplains and their families adhering to the values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage.

Open Forum

In Africa, since chaplains are regarded by their rank, what was the speaker's preference? Father Iroegbu replied that chaplains should be seen both as priests and as officers as they work in a military environment on the one hand but sill have to attend to the personal needs of soldiers and their families on the other.