

ETHICS IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

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Abstract

The role of the pastor is to help the faithful to make communion with God. In order to attain this goal, a pastor proclaims the word of God and celebrates the sacraments, and he also needs a good relationship with people. The Catholic Church has a deep theological and practical vision for pastoral ministry. However, during the course of the pastoral ministry, the pastor faces many moral issues. Consequently, there arises problems related to relationship, confidentiality, use of finance, respecting others, organization of church institutions, and execution of power. We propose Christian care ethics in pastoral ministry where Jesus Christ is the model who touched people psychically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually at a deep level. This may help to provide the best approach in the pastoral ministry. Moreover, continual spiritual formation is necessary that directs and empowers an ethical pastoral life. Similarly, theological and psychological competence may support the pastor to form an excellent pastoral ministry.

Keywords: Care Ethics; Emotional Maturity; Jesus the Pastor; Kerygmatic Model; Models of Pastoral Ministry; Moral Boundaries; Therapeutic Model

Introduction

Due to the increased secularism, globalism, and relativism in the 21st century pastors face challenges in leading their parishes in

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Christian moral witnessing in the Church and the world. The ethical and moral anchor of the life of the people rests upon the character and quality of pastors. Ethics in pastoral ministry is rooted in the good life of the pastors guided by a deep faith in God, moral principles, dispositions, virtues, and mature relationships. There are many ethical issues related to pastoral ministry that gives rise to an ethical evaluation of current pastoral ministry. This paper is developed in two sections. The first part describes the characteristics of a good pastor, while the second part analyses the challenge in pastoral ministry today. This paper emphasizes that pastors have to follow Christian moral principles of personal conduct and Christian care ethics that may help to guide Christian pastoral ministry at present and in the future.

1. Pastoral Ministry in Light of Jesus the Pastor

A pastor represents Christ, and as a prophet, he has to preach the word of God. A pastor needs sound theological knowledge. The pastor has to bring people (back) to Church and prepare for the kingdom of God.¹ His role is that of a shepherd (Ezek 34:16).² As such, he speaks about healing, leading the sheep and trusting the shepherd. A chief executive officer model of a pastoral ministry focuses on the business type of ministry that fails in “tending to the lame or wounded sheep.”³ According to Pope Francis, priests “are neither philanthropists nor officials.” He adds “priests are fathers and brothers. The fatherhood of a priest does so much good.”⁴ Pastoral ministry has both the characteristics of vocation and profession. R. Gula suggests that “just as a doctor is professionally obligated to help heal a sick patient, a minister is expected to show the way to salvation for the lost.”⁵ The life of Jesus is the ethical frame for pastoral ministry. In his Second Oration, Gregory of Nazianzus states, “pastors are called to ‘feed God’s flock with knowledge, not with the instruments of a foolish shepherd.’”⁶

¹John Olu Adetoyese, “The Marks of a Successful Pastor,” *The American Journal of Biblical Theology* 1, 1 (2018) 120.

²Deron J. Biles, ed., *Pastoral Ministry: The Ministry of a Shepherd*, Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017.

³Biles, ed., *Pastoral Ministry: The Ministry of a Shepherd*, 85.

⁴Michael R. Heinlein, “Two New Blessed from America in Many Ways, Stanley Rother and Solanus Casey Lived Pope Francis’ Vision of Priesthood,” *Our Sunday Visitor*, <https://www.osv.com/Magazines/ThePriest/ByIssue/Article/TabId/818/ArtMID/13723/ArticleID/23342/Two-New-Blesseds-from-America.aspx>.

⁵Richard M. Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*, New York: Paulist Press, 1996.

⁶Gregory, *Oration* 2.117, as quoted in Greg Jones, “On the Priesthood,” *Anglican Theological Review* 91, 1 (2009) 60.

Pope Francis proposes a new vocabulary for pastoral ministry that includes mercy, dialogue, devil, encounter, accompaniment, discernment, field hospital, and periphery (*Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), 24, 33, 173).⁷ According to Pope Francis, a priest needs a deep relationship with Christ (EG 3).⁸ He has to be very close to the people as in the case of a merciful shepherd. He should always be available to the faithful which will help him lead a modest lifestyle. A pastor has to admit his limitations. For Francis, “the mercy of God is always greater than our consciousness of our sinfulness.”⁹ He has to radiate joy to those who approach him. Through his homilies, he has to touch the heart of the faithful. He also has to evaluate critically the position and power that he possesses. Many diseases can attack the pastor such as disease of thinking (above others), Martha complex (business), disease of mental and spiritual petrification, disease of excessive planning and functionalism. Other diseases include the disease of poor coordination, disease of Spiritual Alzheimer (losing the memory of our salvation history, love with God), the disease of rivalry and vainglory, the disease of schizophrenia (living a double life), the disease of gossiping (grumbling and backbiting), the disease of idolizing superiors in the hope of gaining their favour, the disease of indifference to others, the disease of the mournful or gloomy face (face of melancholy), the disease of void in the heart by accumulating material advantages,¹⁰ the disease of closed circles, and the disease of worldly profit (self-exhibition).¹¹ A pastor has to be vigilant not to contract these diseases. Moreover, a pastor has to be genuinely sensitive to those on the fringes and margins.¹² Above all, he should be a genuine missionary disciple.

2. Ethics in Pastoral Ministry

A pastor faces a myriad of ethical challenges in life. There may be moral lapses in the life of a pastor. In 2010 an article in the *New York Times* reports that “members of the clergy now suffer from obesity, hypertension and depression at rates higher than most Americans. In the last decade, their use of antidepressants has risen, while their life expectancy has fallen.”¹³ Also, it is noted that “pastoral identity and

⁷Heinlein, “Two New Blessed from America in Many Ways, Stanley Rother and Solanus Casey Lived Pope Francis’ Vision of Priesthood,” 31.

⁸James H. Kroeger, “Pope Francis on Living the Priesthood,” *Vidyajyothi Journal of Theological Reflection* 81 (2017) 10.

⁹Kroeger, “Pope Francis on Living the Priesthood,” 16.

¹⁰Kroeger, “Pope Francis on Living the Priesthood,” 21.

¹¹Kroeger, “Pope Francis on Living the Priesthood,” 22.

¹²Kroeger, “Pope Francis on Living the Priesthood,” 24.

¹³Paul Vitello, “Taking a Break from the Lord’s Work,” *New York Times*, August 1, <http://www.nvtimes.com/2010/08/02/m^regioffi02hurnout.html>

mission have created clericalism that borrows the worst features of secrecy, prerogative, asserted expertise, vested status, and paternalism familiar to the secular professions"¹⁴ Besides, they are prone to sexual misconduct, chronic interpersonal problems, depression, internet problems, alcohol abuse, and money issues. Pastors may also experience problems related to compulsive overeating, isolation, chronic anger, dysfunctional background, superficial spirituality, sexual confusion, sexual innuendo and sexualized speech, emotionally immature behaviour, excessive intellectualization and rationalization, personally controlling, and judgmentalism and inflexibility.

Some pastors believe that they are spiritually above the faithful and like special recognition. Every so often, pastors lack empathy and compassion for others. Therefore, they no longer pay attention to others, no longer take criticism, and do not communicate nicely. Eventually, they no longer operate appropriately as a team member.¹⁵

Pastors may also experience different types of conflict that include frustration with ecclesiastical and Episcopal policies, and conflict with leadership.¹⁶ It is clearly observed that "training in conflict management is inadequate at the seminary level, and this leaves clergy ill-prepared to deal with conflict situations, difficult personalities and communication problems."¹⁷

2.1. Ethics in Relationship

2.1.1. Different Types of Relationship

Quarrelling or looking down on another person does not help to establish a relationship with others. McCoury elucidates that "relationship building occurs as we spend time with people, getting to know them in their world because we want to. Building requires time and commitment, but the benefits are worth the effort. Being able to build the care and trust that bind a relationship together is one of the joys of serving as a Pastor."¹⁸

A pastor experiences different types of relationships in the parish. Many of the people will be *strangers* to pastors in a big parish. Pastors will not miss them when his ministry is over in that parish. The

¹⁴Jones, "On the Priesthood," 49.

¹⁵ George B. Wilson, *Clericalism: The Death of Priesthood*, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008.

¹⁶Shaun Joynt, "Exodus of Clergy: 'When the Fight is Just not Worth it Anymore' - The Role of Conflict in Responding to the Call," *In die Skriflig* 52(1) 2018, a2331. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v52i1.2331>, P.2

¹⁷Joynt, "Exodus of Clergy...," 9.

¹⁸Manasseh H. Panpe, "Relationship: A Necessity for Pastoral Ministry," *Baptist Theological Seminary Kaduna Insight* (2016) 113.

absence and attendance of such people do not have any impact on the pastors. The next circle of friendship is made up of *social contacts*. These are people who come to the Church, but pastors may not have spoken with them, nor know their names, but they vaguely identify them. The third type of friendship is *acquaintances*. Priests know their names and know some things about them. They may talk with them. Many of their communications are casual or work-based. Lastly, the priest has *friends* in the parish. Friendship means someone loves another person, and he/she loves him. Mutual affection is the characteristic of friendship. A unique, intense form of friendship is *intimacy*. A priest has hundreds of friends, but only a few intimate friends. Trust and transparency are the backbones of intimacy.¹⁹ There must be no physical or sexual involvement in the friendship or intimacy of a pastor. A pastor can deeply share his life—he can share his love, not his body. When pastors are not giving selflessly, they become self-absorbed bachelors and spinsters. This substantiates that without heart-to-heart contact, celibacy would not make sense.²⁰

2.1.2. Relationship with Women and Children

It is reported that some pastors have misused women and children.²¹ Many incidents point out the relational problems of a pastor. However, it is observed that deliberately excluding love and relationships is a risky business to the celibate. M. Svoboda notes that “You can fail against celibacy by going too far in relationships or by not going far enough. The first way makes headlines, but the second way is probably more common and more deadly.”²² J. Mannath has a similar opinion about the relationship of pastors. For him,

the greatest danger in celibate life is not sexual misbehaviour; very few are guilty of it. It will cause scandal, but it is not the failure most celibates are guilty of. The much greater danger lies in the opposite direction—to lead an unloving life and take it as normal. I may live side by side with others, without loving them.²³

¹⁹Cf. Joe Mannath, “Intimacy and Joyful Celibacy in International Seminar on Affective Maturity Celibate Life—Challenges in Formation,” February 21-22, 2018, PVP Vadavathoor, Kottayam, Kerala.

²⁰Cf. Mannath, “Intimacy and Joyful Celibacy.”

²¹ <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/kerala-priest-fr-robin-found-guilty-raping-and-impregnating-16-yr-old-girl-96819>; <https://theprint.in/india/governance/these-are-the-christian-priests-accused-of-rape-across-kerala-churches/120982/>; <https://www.ndtv.com/kerala-news/kerala-catholic-priest-accused-of-sexually-abusing-boys-arrested-2065605>; “Priest Accused of Abuse, at Large,” *The Hindu*, September 22, 2019, 1.

²²Cf. Svoboda, Melanie. “Consecrated Celibacy as Means, Peril, and Delight,” *Review for Religious* 56, 1 (1997) 69.

²³Mannath, “Intimacy and Joyful Celibacy.”

Pastors do a lot of work in the parish. However, the main issue is that sometimes they do not have a good relationship with people. There are many reasons for it. Sometimes the parish is too big, and due to the heavy schedule of sacramental services, the pastors do not get time to make personal contacts with the people. Pastoral ministry cannot be effective without proper relationship with the people.

2.2 Emotional Maturity

By all means, pastors need emotional maturity. To be psycho-sexually mature means “to become free (I am doing something, not because others are making me do it, but because this is what I want to do), loving (caring in active and meaningful ways), joyful (a result of a life of love), responsible (for my decisions and for the way I use time, talents, money and opportunities), faithful (to love rather to a set of rules), life-giving (in different ways in marriage and celibacy) man or woman.” On the contrary to be immature would mean “ending up at the opposite side of the spectrum, namely, to be a cold, manipulative, self-centred, pleasure-seeking, power-hungry, cruel or superficial person.” However, people with psycho-sexual maturity have the following signs: they are marked by “joy, warmth, capacity for different levels of relationships (intimacy, friendship, kindness, courtesy), commitment to something larger than oneself, objectivity and humour, and being comfortable while alone.”²⁴

2.3. Moral Boundaries

Pastors need certain boundaries in their relationship. There are many moral borderlines in the life of a priest. Pastors have to understand what is ethical and unethical in their life. They need appropriate boundaries concerning relationships with women and children. Developing emotional relationships and attachment with minors and women, spending time alone with a minor or woman in a closed area and the use of pornography are some of the areas where a pastor may break the boundaries of his ministry. There may be different attitudes toward those potential moral violations.²⁵ However, the boundaries have to be fixed based on Christian moral norms.

2.4. Confidentiality

The secret is a hidden fact which may not be revealed. A pastor has to keep many confidential things that he knows about the faithful,

²⁴Cf. Mannath, “Intimacy and Joyful Celibacy”; Antony Raj and Karol E. Dean, “Burnout and Depression Among Catholic Priests in India,” *Pastoral Psychology* 54, 2 (2005) 157.

²⁵Dylan Selterman, “Moral Boundaries in Relationships,” <https://www.luvze.com/moral-boundaries-in-relationships-relationship-matters-podca/> (accessed Sept 12, 2019).

and he has no right to tell others. Individual files should be locked and secured. There are two ethical issues related to confidentiality. First, revealing secrets is not morally justified without sufficient reason. Second, after understanding the secrets of others, there can be positive or negative attitudes towards others.

A pastor has to know that there can be personal secrets, family secrets, ecclesiastical or national secrets. One can classify secrets into natural, promised, committed, and pontifical. Each category demands different kinds of obligations.

1) *Natural secrets* are the ones whose revelation will naturally hurt or displease others. Usually, they would be information about awkward facts which one does not like to be divulged; for example, the fact of one being an illegitimate child, one's financial crisis, etc. They are called natural secrets because we are absolutely bound by natural law not to divulge such things. It is a demand of charity, not of strict justice. But if there is sufficient reason, one can reveal them. Disclosure of natural secrets without sufficient reason may be grave or venial according to the harm done by the revelation. For example, if a revelation of a natural secret causes the breaking up of a marital relationship, it is obviously grave.²⁶

2) *Promised secrets*: They are in which one makes a promise of secrecy after gaining the information. Usually, promised secrets are not allowed to be disclosed. But disclosure may be done if it is allowed by the concerned person; if it has ceased to be a secret (already everyone knows it); if a grave reason justified the revelation. If a rightful superior interrogates, natural and promised secrets could be divulged.²⁷

3) *Committed secrets*: They are the information one gets after promising secrecy. There are explicit and implicit forms of committed secrets and to the latter belongs professional secrets. Professional secrets are of people like the political office holders, soldiers, physicians, lawyers, counsellors and above all the confessors. In the case of explicit secrets, the receiver of the secret makes a commitment that he/she would not reveal to anyone. Committed secrets cannot be revealed even to a rightful superior except for one of the following reasons. First, it is to avert grave danger to the common good. Second, it is to avert grave danger to an innocent, third party. For example, a physician will be justified revealing to the concerned person that his patient is terminally ill if s/he tries to get married despite repeated warning from the physician. Thirdly, it is to avert a

²⁶Thomas Srampickal & Joji Chirayil, *To Act Justly and Deal Honestly*, Thrissur: Marymatha Publications, 2008, 307-308.

²⁷Srampickal & Chirayil, *To Act Justly and Deal Honestly*, 306.

serious danger to secret giver himself or the secret holder. For example, if it is information that s/he is going to commit suicide or the client is seriously plotting to murder the counsellor.²⁸

4) *Pontifical Secret*: It is the highest and most binding form of secrecy that may be imposed on Catholics in handling church affairs. Pontifical secrecy is so-called because it covers material or instances related to the activities of the Pope or of the Vatican offices that act within the Pope's name. Common good sometimes requires that certain records be saved secret, or be made known at times or in ways which are established, now not by way of individuals arbitrarily, however by way of legitimately constituted authority. Preparation and editing of pontifical documents, office information within the Papal Secretariat of state, statistics concerning the creation of cardinals and information on deciding on bishops, etc. come under the title of Pontifical secrets.

Manifestation secret: Superiors to whom a subject has opened his/her conscience in order to obtain counsel cannot reveal to others the secrets thus obtained, neither can they make use of such knowledge to the disadvantage of the subject against his/her will, e.g., to exclude one from the reception of holy orders or not to admit to the profession. In the matter of conscience, every person is free. No one can be forced to manifest the innermost secrets of his/her conscience. If on one's own accord one manifests them, these must be absolutely kept secret.

The pastor has to keep in mind that there are situations when secret may be revealed: "i) if the party concerned has permitted disclosure; ii) if the matter has become sufficiently public; iii) if there is a justifying reason. A natural and promised secret may be revealed in order to avert a proportionate injury to a third person, to anybody else or the community."²⁹

2.5 Respecting Others

Getting respect from others is salient because we feel that we are safe. When you respect someone you accept somebody for who they are, even though they are different from your view. Both pastors and people have to show respect for each other in words and deeds.

One may lose good name through harmful lies, detraction, calumny, contumely, defamation and many others. Reputation or fame is a good estimation which others have about a person. Honour is the external recognition of a person's excellence. It is externally

²⁸Srampickal & Chirayil, *To Act Justly and Deal Honestly*, 308.

²⁹Srampickal & Chirayil, *To Act Justly and Deal Honestly*, 308.

manifested recognition of another's praiseworthy quality. In these cases, restitution of the good name must be executed in an efficient way, and additional compensation is due for material damage ensued and one way or the other expected. For example, if one detracts to any other's repute by means of public collecting, newspaper, television and many others, in justice he is obliged to restore the damage inside the same way; as for ensuing material damage or lose, compensation is due after a judicial sentence.³⁰

The obligation of reparation for defamation ceases underneath any of the subsequent conditions: while unwell reputation did no longer take place (hearers did now not believe); when the crime attributed to another becomes public; when the one offended has also detracted the offender; when the offended person forgives the detractor; when reparation becomes impossible (physically or morally). The reason is that one desires highly disproportionate means for reimbursement.³¹ However, both the pastor and the people have to evaluate sincerely and make adequate reparation for defamation. Truthfulness demands us to respect the reputation of others (CCC 2477).³²

Respect in our relationships may help to build feelings of trust, safety, and wellbeing. Sometimes pastors do not greet or show gentle gestures to others. Pastors should respect all the faithful who are entrusted to them, especially the children, women, elderly, and vulnerable people.

2.6 Ethical Management of Church Institutions

Pastors are not only the spiritual leaders but also administrators of parishes and institutions. In general, many administer the institutions well. However, administration mismanagement is an allegation that the priest faces daily.³³ Thus mismanagement, fraud, and scandals have happened in the parishes and Church institutes. It is high time to evaluate critically whether our Social Service societies and business operations are in line with the social doctrine of the Church.³⁴ Likewise, pastors have to follow the legal guidelines of the nation

³⁰Srampickal & Chirayil, *To Act Justly and Deal Honestly*, 310-311.

³¹Srampickal & Chirayil, *To Act Justly and Deal Honestly*, 315.

³²CCC deals with questions related to theft and truthfulness in its discussion on the seventh and eighth commandments (2401-2513). For a critical commentary on this section see, Joseph A. Selling, "You Shall Love Your Neighbour: Commandments 4-10," Michael J. Walsh, ed., *Commentary on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994, 381-388.

³³ <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/kerala-priest-fr-thomas-peelianickal-arrested-kuttanad-agri-loan-scam-83340>

³⁴Domènec Melé and Joan Fontrodona, "Christian Ethics and Spirituality in Leading Business Organizations: Editorial Introduction," *Journal of Business Ethics* 145 (2017) 674.

and the ecclesiastical laws on buying and selling of the lands, and all business transactions. It is a fact that every now and then pastors do not revise the legal guidelines and regulations of both the state and the central government. Proper documentation and consultation will assist just deal for the transactions. Transparency and accountability could be very important for a pastor so that others can find him truthful and this will assist him to do an amazing pastoral ministry.

2.7 The Concept of Power in Pastoral Ministry

There is a distinct difference between the ministry of a pastor and the secular notion of authority. Jesus Christ exercised his authority as an individual, not institutional. He exercised his authority as God's son. He taught "as one that had authority" (Mk 1:22), and his deeds – healing illnesses, raising the dead, and miraculously controlling physical matter – strengthened people's perception of the authority he claimed.³⁵ He selected "twelve apostles (or emissaries – those who were sent forth), gave them authority (not ever identified in the Bible as priesthood) to act in his name (primarily to preach and to heal), and commissioned seventy others as missionaries to teach his doctrine. However, we read nothing, for instance, of Jesus establishing congregations of believers or erecting any formal power structure." Indeed his "instructions to the apostles recorded in Matthew 20:20-28 suggest the exact opposite of a power structure. If he established any formal organization, it should probably be described as a service structure."³⁶ He argued that even though the "princes of the Gentiles" exercised dominion and authority over their subjects, it was not to be so among his disciples. His kingdom was different. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mt 20:26-28).³⁷ Thus the ultimate work of a pastor is to unify spiritual leadership.³⁸ This spiritual leadership includes "recognizing, encouraging, forming, and affirming services and ministries on behalf of the community, as well as ensuring unity within the Eucharistic community."³⁹

³⁵Roger Terry, *Authority and Priesthood in the LDS Church, Part 1: Definitions and Development*, "Dialogue" 51, 1 (Spring 20018) 6-7.

³⁶Terry, "Authority and Priesthood in the LDS Church," 7-8.

³⁷Terry, "Authority and Priesthood in the LDS Church," 10.

³⁸"Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church: Conclusions," in *Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences I*, 103, 1977, 86.

³⁹Jeffrey G.L. Chang, "Priesthood for Communion Ministry for the Church in Asia," *Landas* 25 (2011) 201.

3. Care Ethics in Pastoral Ministry

A pastor has to follow Jesus, the great shepherd. A pastor has to help a person establish a relationship with God. Pastoral care includes healing, sustaining, and guiding. There are different models of pastoral care that include the kerygmatic, therapeutic, and hermeneutical model. In the kerygmatic model, pastoral care is not dealing with words of human beings; instead, it is dealing with the Word of God. In this method, pastoral counselling is found as a type of preaching, that is, it can be considered as a private/personal homily.⁴⁰ Here the pastor is seen as preacher and prophet. From the theological perspective, this model focuses on the image of God as the father. Thus the pastor has to always to announce the gospel, “to place the person’s life under God.”⁴¹

The second type of pastoral care is the therapeutic model. S. Hiltner argues, “it became difficult to distinguish the pastor’s identity from the identity of the psychotherapist.”⁴² This model formulated from the point of practical theology, and psychology is the central point in it. The pastor becomes a counsellor who has to practice client-centred therapy.⁴³

The third type of model is known as the hermeneutical model. The term “hermeneutics” literally means interpretation. Formerly, the term was only used for texts. According to Paul Ricoeur, “hermeneutics” is known for the “interpretation of action as well as for the interpretation of the human being.”⁴⁴ In this model, pastoral care is not focused on the proclamation of the gospel and counselling. It has to turn out to be a process wherein pastor and faithful are both concerned in the process of interpretation, a method of giving meaning. Pastoral care can be defined as working with the life tales of humans.⁴⁵ The search for meaning is not only situated on a cognitive level. It is also a manner at the emotional, the practical and the spiritual level. Meaning has to be accepted rationally. However, it additionally must be lived and felt; it needs to be acted out, and it must be observed in spirituality.⁴⁶

⁴⁰Karlijn Demasure, Seminar Paper on “Three Ways of Interaction,” Faculteit Godgeleerdheid Afdeling Pastoraaltheologie, K.U. Leuven, 2003, 2.

⁴¹Demasure, “Three Ways of Interaction,” 3.

⁴²S. Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1958, as quoted in Demasure, “Three Ways of Interaction,” 5.

⁴³Demasure, “Three Ways of Interaction,” 9.

⁴⁴Paul Ricoeur, “What is a Text? Explanation and Interpretation,” in Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, John B. Thompson (ed. and transl.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1981, 135–151 as quoted in Karlijn Demasure, Three Ways of Interaction, 10; K. Demasure & J. Müller, “Perspectives in Support of the Narrative turn in Pastoral Care,” *Ned Geref Teologiese Tydskrif* 47, 3 (2006) 410-419.

⁴⁵Karlijn Demasure, “Three Ways of Interaction,” 10

⁴⁶Karlijn Demasure, “Three Ways of Interaction,” 10

Basing on the background of the hermeneutic model, we propose Christian care ethics as one of the best methods for pastoral ministry. Carol Gilligan, the psychologist, proposes care ethics. According to Gilligan, ethics of care leads the moral responsibility emerging from the specific needs of others in the context of particular relationships. Gilligan lists five aspects in an Ethics of Care: i) *Moral attention*: it is the attention to the context in all its complexity. I should be aware of all the details of the problem; ii) *Sympathetic understanding*: when I sympathetically understand the situation, I am open to sympathizing and even identifying with the persons in that situation; iii) *Relationship awareness*: there should be a special relationship awareness that characterizes the ethics of care. I recognize that the other is in a relationship with me; iv) *Accommodation*: I try to accommodate the needs of all, including myself. v) *Response*: an ethics of care points to a response on my part. Gilligan describes care ethics from a secular point of view.⁴⁷ In this paper, we propose Christian care ethics where Jesus Christ is the model. Jesus touched the people psychically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually at a deep level. It is understandable in the gospel that Jesus follows Christian care ethics, specifically taking moral attention, sympathetic understanding, relationship awareness, accommodation, and moral response as the criteria for decision making. Jesus' attitudes towards the adulterous woman (Jn 8:1-11), a Samaritan woman (Jn 4:1-24), and healing ministries display the approach of Christian care ethics. A pastor has to follow Jesus' attitudes with regard to the pastoral problems of the people.

Conclusion

This paper highlighted that Jesus Christ is the model for pastoral ministry. While there is a myriad of ethical challenges in pastoral ministry, many failures happen due to the immature behaviour and spiritual erosion of a priest. A pastor has to check his relationship with others and to develop good relationships in the community. He has to respect others and keep confidentiality. This paper proposes that continual spiritual, ecclesial, human and intellectual formation is necessary to empower an ethical pastoral life. Theological and psychological competence may support the pastor to form an excellent pastoral ministry. Above all, Christian ethics of care may help to provide the best approach in the pastoral ministry.

⁴⁷ Cf. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.