

## **Burnout and Depression Among Catholic Priests in India**

**Antony Raj<sup>1,3</sup> and Karol E. Dean<sup>2</sup>**

---

*This study examined burnout and depression among Catholic priests in Southern India using the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression scale (Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991). Additionally, a demographic survey assessing four predictor variables was administered. Participants were 50 secular priests and 51 religious priests randomly selected from two dioceses. The study found that diocesan/secular priests experienced significantly more burnout and depression than did religious order priests. This indicates that structural and administrative systems can lead to burnout and depression. The findings of this investigation would be of help for priests in both the United States and in India to identify problems, to encourage reorientation of their lives towards the spiritual, and to promote emotional maturity.*

---

**KEY WORDS:** burnout; depression; ministry and priestly vocation.

---

Depression and depressive symptoms are on the increase as the most common psychological disorders and health complaints in the general population. Depression is ubiquitous as nearly 330 million people throughout the world are likely to suffer from depression at any given time (Smith, McCullough, & Poll, 2003). Its prevalence estimates range from 10% to 25% for women and from 5% to 12% for men, and it is unrelated to ethnicity, education, income, or marital status (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The phenomenon of burnout occurs most often in the helping professions such as teachers, police officers, doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, and clergy (Cherniss, 1980; Freudemberger,

<sup>1</sup>Fr. Antony Raj is currently a graduate student in Pastoral Counseling at Claremont College in Claremont. He is an Associate Pastor at All Souls Catholic Church in Alhambra, CA.

<sup>2</sup>Karol E. Dean is Associate Professor of Psychology at Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles, CA.

<sup>3</sup>Address correspondence to Fr. Raj at: frtonyraj@yahoo.com.

1980; Jenkins & Maslach, 1994; Maslach, 1982). Sanford (1982) agrees that the experience of burnout is more prevalent in the ministering professions. This is because the ministering person is involved day by day in people's problems in very personal and intense ways; clergy members are not motivated so much by desire for status or monetary gain but for satisfaction of spiritual rewards. Ministers utilize their talents in human relationships to promote spiritual values, to heal the brokenness of society and to re-create the spirit-filled community.

One potential positive impact on depression can be religiousness. Smith, McCullough, and Poll (2003) investigated the association between religiousness and depressive symptoms by using the meta-analytic method in studying 147 independent investigations. The participants were of different ethnic groups, from different nations and different religions. The researchers found that the degree of spirituality is modestly, but reliably, associated with depressive symptoms, that is, greater religiousness is associated with fewer symptoms of depression. This applied across all ethnic, gender, and age groups. Another study on spirituality and burnout among United Methodist clergy showed that less spirituality led to greater likelihood of burnout (Golden, Piedmont, Ciarrocchi, & Rodgers, 2004). The present study examined burnout and depression among Catholic priests in Southern India; the professional lives of priests and their experience with burnout and depression were explored.

## **THE CAUSES OF BURNOUT AND DEPRESSION IN MINISTRY**

It is not uncommon for Catholic priests to develop depressive symptoms and to experience burnout as they are confronted daily with issues integral to their vocation, such as: celibacy, lay participation in parish leadership, loneliness, and the pressure of too little time for multiple activities (Sanford, 1982; Olsen & Grosch, 1991; Rausch, 1992; Weaver, Larson, Flannelly, Stapleton, & Koenig, 2002). Sanford (1982) clearly delineates a number of special circumstances unique to the priestly ministry that can lead to burnout. Some of these include: the job of the ministering person is never finished; the priest cannot always tell if his work is having any results; the work of ministry is repetitive; the minister is constantly confronted with people's expectations about priests; and the ministering person must serve the same people year in and year out.

## **RESEARCH ON BURNOUT AND DEPRESSION IN PRIESTS**

Much of the literature addresses the integrative perspective of burnout. It suggests that the problem is systemic; that is, people burnout because they work

in systems that cause burnout. However, tendency for burnout is also within the person. People who are more likely to burnout are idealists, perfectionists, and compulsives (Freudenberger, 1980; Minirth, Hawkins, Meier, & Flournoy, 1986). Because most priests enter into their ministry with high ideals, enormous optimism, and a strong commitment to help people, they are especially susceptible to disillusionment and despair.

A number of studies have been done in an effort to identify causes of burnout and depression among Catholic priests in the United States. The analysis done by the Center for Human Development (1990) reported that 62% of priests denied negative emotions like anger and aggression, but 42% had lack of self-esteem and 47% felt negativity toward themselves. A research study by Jackson (1983) showed that among 239 priests, 10.46% reported high burnout, 54.39% had moderate burnout and 35.15% showed low burnout. This study found that the priest, who is subject to overload in his pastoral ministry and also is introverted, tends to experience greater burnout and depression than do other priests. Priests who are more involved in spiritual reading and prayerful solitude reported a greater sense of personal accomplishment and less depression than did other priests. Jackson discovered that the most frequent symptoms of burnout among priests were: internal and external overload, reduced attention span, impulsiveness, obsessiveness, and negative-affect expression.

In addition, a study of 203 priests of the diocese of Albany, New York, showed that younger priests who were 10 years in the priesthood or less, experienced stronger, more intense feelings of emotional exhaustion than did older priests. Priests who worked in urban areas had a greater sense of personal accomplishment than those who worked in rural areas. The study also found that deficiency of self-actualization correlated highly with burnout among Catholic priests, and resistance to intimacy was a significant predictor of burnout (Chiamonte, 1983). Another study on burnout among Dutch reformed pastors showed that majority of pastors (11%) were emotionally exhausted due to the organizational, administrative, and management tasks of their ministry (Evers & Tomic, 2003).

Hoge, Shield, and Griffin (1995) found that the main sources of stress as reported by priests were loneliness, lack of support, and encouragement from fellow priests, as well as a lack of leadership from those in authority. Nationwide surveys of Catholic priests conducted in 1970, 1985, and in 1993, which used identical questions, showed that increasingly priests reported a greater stress level arising from difficulty in coping with authority as exercised in the Church, from satisfying the rising demands of lay people, from overwork, and from loneliness (Scanlon & McHugh, 2001). They found that younger secular priests (36 years old on average) reported a greater degree of stress than did their counterparts due to lack of access to bishops, time pressures, and poor interpersonal relationships with pastors.

## SECULAR/DIOCESAN PRIESTS VERSUS RELIGIOUS ORDER PRIESTS

In the Roman Catholic Church, both “diocesan/secular” priests and “religious order” priests have the same priestly faculties acquired through ordination by a bishop. However, the differences lie in their way of life and type of service. Diocesan priests commit their lives to sharing with a bishop the role of serving the people of a diocese; particularly, serving in parishes as assigned by the bishop. Religious Order priests belong to established communities such as the Jesuits, Dominicans, or Franciscans. In addition to the vows of celibacy and obedience, they take a vow of poverty and live in a community. Religious superiors determine the assignments of their order priests.

Research by Virginia (1998) on burnout and depression among Roman Catholic secular, religious, and monastic clergy explored the hypothesis that the Roman Catholic clergy, while all sharing the same ordination and priesthood, do not live out their ministerial life in the same manner; so secular priests are likely to experience greater depression. The independent variables for this study were the grouping of priests in relation to their work and living environments as well as four categories of predictor variables which were, vocational satisfaction, social support, spiritual activities, and physical environments. The study revealed that secular priests experienced a greater degree of depression (72%) than both religious order and monastic priests (40.8% and 39.5%, respectively). Virginia also discovered that secular priests were found to have less support than both monastic and religious priests.

Knox, Virginia, and Lombardo (2002) conducted a study on depression and anxiety in Roman Catholic clergy using the four predictor variables used in Virginia’s 1998 study. The authors explored the hypothesis that in the United States, depression and anxiety are more common in the Roman Catholic secular clergy than in priests who live in community. Appropriate assessment scales were employed such as Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale, the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, and the Self-Report Inventory Scale. The study revealed that secular priests were significantly more depressed than priests in religious orders. Vocational satisfaction was most predictive of depression; that is, clergy who are vocationally satisfied were less likely to experience depression. The study also showed that healthy relationships with superiors and peers ameliorate depression and anxiety.

## RESEARCH RATIONALE, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

The research described above addressed Catholic priests in the United States. This construct has not been applied to Catholic priests in India. The present study is a replication of Virginia’s 1998 study. However it is conducted in a completely

different population, with a very different culture, life style, religious perspective, and socio-economic system. If a similar pattern were found in this population as in Virginia's U. S. sample, this would suggest a structural cause (rather than a personal or situational cause) for burnout and depression in priests. The present study sought to investigate the hypothesis that secular priests are more likely to experience a greater level of burnout and depression than those in religious orders. It is expected that priests with higher vocational satisfaction will have lower levels of burnout and depression than priests with low vocational satisfaction; priests with higher social support will have lower levels of burnout and depression than priests with little social support; priests with higher spiritual activities will have lower levels of burnout and depression than priests with few spiritual activities; and priests with more relevant physical environment will have lower levels of burnout and depression than priests with a less relevant physical environment. In addition to this, four-predictor variables (i.e., vocational satisfaction, social support, spiritual activities and physical environment, and religious order priests and diocesan priests on independent variables) will be used.

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

A sample of 101 Catholic priests ranging in age from 30 to 93 years, with a mean age of 45 years took part in the study. Most participants were from the same ethnic group in Tamilnadu in the southern part of India. The number of years in the priesthood ranged from 1 year to 58 years, with a mean of 17.16 years in the priesthood. The participants were 50 secular priests who served in parishes and diocesan offices and institutions, in three different dioceses. In addition, 51 religious order priests who lived in their respective religious communities participated. The religious order priests were from the communities of Jesuits, Carmelites, Dominicans, Redemptorists, Salesians of Don Bosco, Norbertines, Rosminians, and Franciscans in six different dioceses. In this sample, 35.4% of priests lived in rural areas.

### **Design and Materials**

A quasi-experimental design was employed. One independent variable was type of priests, that is, diocesan or secular priests, and religious order priests. Four predictor variables were: vocational satisfaction pertaining to personal degree of vocational satisfaction as a priest in the present assignment; quality and quantity of social support from superiors and peers; the depth of spiritual life; and the importance that physical environment has upon the vocational satisfaction of priests. The dependent variables were depression and burnout.

The survey used the same measures employed by Virginia (1998). The Maslach Burnout Inventory was developed to assess the experience of burnout (Maslach, 1982). The MBI is a 21-item self-report instrument for assessing burnout among human service professionals. It consists of three subscales: The Emotional Exhaustion (EE), the Depersonalization (DP), and the Personal Accomplishment. All 21 items use a seven-point Likert scale indicating the frequency of a feeling or perception. In the first two subscales (EE & DP) the higher scores indicate greater levels of burnout; where as, the third subscale (PA) lower scores indicate greater levels of burnout. In the present study the reliability coefficients were: .73 for Emotional Exhaustion, .63 for Depersonalization, and .78 for Personal Accomplishment.

The Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D) is a 20-item scale for epidemiological research that was developed by The National Institute of Mental Health. The CES-D's 20 items represent the major components of symptomatology that Radloff identified in both the clinical literature and factor analytic study of existing measures (Radloff, 1977 as cited in Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991). The CES-D used a four-point Likert scale in this study, alpha was .73.

The Self-Report Inventory (Virginia, 1998) consists of 16 questions, the first three questions deal with basic demographic information such as age, the number of years in the priesthood, and number of clergy and religious with whom participants currently live. Among the remaining questions, one addresses vocational satisfaction, four address social support, four address spiritual life and four address physical environment. These items are scored on a seven-point Likert scale, where the lowest number (i.e., "1") indicates absence/lack of the construct and the highest number (i.e., "7") indicates the total or extreme presence of the construct.

## Procedure

The data from the secular/diocesan priests were collected during the time they met for their monthly day of recollection. A brief description of the research study, the rights of the individual to decline participation as well as the assurance of confidentiality were introduced prior to filling out the questionnaire. The survey questionnaires required 15 to 20 minutes to complete, and were collected subsequently. At the end, debriefing was employed to facilitate a better understanding of the research study.

As religious communities are scattered throughout many different dioceses, the data from the religious order priests were collected by a personal visit to their respective communities within a two-week time frame. The same procedure was employed for recruiting and collecting data from the religious order priests as from secular priests.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variable and Independent Variables

Dependent Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness
Depression	1.76	.39	.75
Burnout			
EE	2.77	1.06	.68
DP	2.24	.92	.66
PA	5.55	1.02	.24
Independent Variables			
Vocational Satisfaction	6.09	.94	1.07
Social Support	5.08	3.95	.31
Spiritual Activity	3.63	2.84	.12
Physical Environment	5.59	1.98	.39

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics

The CES-D has an established cutoff score of 20 to indicate significant depression. Using these criteria 36.8% priests had high depressive symptoms. For the MBI scale, the study found that 15% of priests had high emotional exhaustion, 12% of priests had high depersonalization and 14% had low personal accomplishment. The descriptive statistics for the independent and dependent variables can be found in Table 1.

### Vocation of Priests and Burnout

It was hypothesized that diocesan priests would experience more burnout than religious order priests; this hypothesis was supported by the research findings. On the Emotional Exhaustion subscale, diocesan priests ( $M = 3.25, SD = 1.10$ ) had significantly higher scores than religious order priests ( $M = 2.27, SD = .75$ ),  $t(97) = 5.10, p < .05$ . For the Personal Accomplishment subscale, diocesan priests ( $M = 5.22, SD = 1.13$ ) had significantly lower scores than religious order priests ( $M = 5.90, SD = .76$ ),  $t(96) = 3.42, p < .05$ . On the Depersonalization subscale, diocesan priests ( $M = 2.54, SD = .98$ ) had significantly higher scores than religious order priests ( $M = 1.90, SD = .71$ ),  $t(96) = 3.58, p < .05$ .

### Vocation of Priests and Depression

It was hypothesized that diocesan priests would experience more depression than religious order priests; this hypothesis was supported. Diocesan priests ( $M = 1.91, SD = .42$ ) had significantly higher depression scores than religious order priests ( $M = 1.60, SD = .28$ ),  $t(93) = 4.20, p < .05$ .

### Vocation of Priests and Elements of Priestly Life

The elements of priestly life were examined to investigate their influence on the lives of diocesan priests and religious order priests. In particular, vocational satisfaction, social support, spiritual activities, and physical environment were studied. The study revealed that there was not a significant difference in vocational satisfaction between diocesan priests ( $M = 5.98, SD = 1.029$ ) and religious order priests ( $M = 6.22, SD = .84$ ) for vocational satisfaction,  $t(99) = 1.28, p > .05$ . There was a significant difference between diocesan priests and religious order priests in social support. The religious order priests ( $M = 21.72, SD = 3.77$ ) had significantly higher social support than diocesan priests ( $M = 18.96, SD = 3.66$ ),  $t(99) = 3.72, p < .05$ . There was not a significant difference in participation in spiritual activities between diocesan priests ( $M = 14.12, SD = 2.63$ ) and religious order priests ( $M = 14.92, SD = 3.03$ ),  $t(96) = 1.39, p > .05$ . There was a significant difference between diocesan priests and religious order priests in physical environment. The religious order priests ( $M = 11.66, SD = 1.76$ ) had more relevant physical environment than diocesan priests ( $M = 10.67, SD = 2.08$ ),  $t(97) = 2.54, p < .05$ .

### Vocational Satisfaction, Burnout, and Depression

It was predicted that priests with higher vocational satisfaction would have lower levels of burnout than priests with low vocational satisfaction. This hypothesis was largely supported. The correlation between vocational satisfaction and personal accomplishment was significant,  $r = .29, p < .05$ . The correlation between vocational satisfaction and depersonalization was also significant, and in the predicted direction,  $r = -.34, p < .05$ . However, the correlation between vocational satisfaction and emotional exhaustion was not significant,  $r = -.17, p > .05$ . It was predicted that priests with higher vocational satisfaction would have lower levels of depression than priests with low vocational satisfaction. This prediction was supported. The correlation between vocational satisfaction and depression was significant,  $r = -.40, p < .05$ .

### Social Support, Burnout, and Depression

It was hypothesized that priests with higher social support would have lower levels of burnout than priests with low social support. This hypothesis was supported for the personal accomplishment scale but not the other burnout scales. The correlation between social support and personal accomplishment was significant,  $r = .29, p < .05$ ; the correlation between social support and emotional exhaustion was not significant,  $r = -.19, p > .05$ . The correlation between social support



and depersonalization was not significant,  $r = -.11$ ,  $p > .05$ . It was hypothesized that priests with higher social support would have lower levels of depression than priests with low levels of social support. This hypothesis was not supported. The correlation between social support and depression was not significant,  $r = -.12$ ,  $p > .05$ .

### **Spiritual Activities, Burnout, and Depression**

It was hypothesized that priests with more spiritual activities would have lower levels of burnout than priests with less spiritual activities. This hypothesis was supported by the personal accomplishment scale, but not by other scales. The correlation between spiritual activity and personal accomplishment was significant,  $r = .21$ ,  $p < .05$ . The correlation between spiritual activities and emotional exhaustion was not significant,  $r = -.09$ ,  $p > .05$ . The correlation between spiritual activity and depersonalization was not significant,  $r = -.04$ ,  $p > .05$ . It was predicted that priests with more spiritual activities would have lower levels of depression than priests with less spiritual activities. This hypothesis was not supported. The correlation between spiritual activities and depression was not significant,  $r = -.09$ ,  $p > .05$ .

### **Physical Environment, Burnout, and Depression**

It was hypothesized that priests with more relevant physical environment would have lower levels of burnout than priests with less relevant physical environment. This hypothesis was partially supported. The correlation between relevant physical environment and personal accomplishment was significant,  $r = .29$ ,  $p < .05$ ; the correlation between relevant physical environment and depersonalization was significant,  $r = -.22$ ,  $p < .05$ . Nonetheless, the correlation between physical environment and emotional exhaustion was not significant,  $r = -.19$ ,  $p > .05$ . It was hypothesized that priests with more relevant physical environment would have lower levels of depression than priests with less relevant physical environment. This hypothesis was not supported. The correlation between physical environment and depression was not significant,  $r = -.17$ ,  $p > .05$ .

## **DISCUSSION**

This study found that diocesan/secular priests experienced significantly more burnout than did religious order priests. In particular, the former group had higher scores on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization sub-scales than the latter. Nonetheless, diocesan priests experienced a higher sense of personal

accomplishment than did their counterparts. The current study also revealed that diocesan priests had a greater degree of depression than did the religious order priests. This study found that in general, priests with higher vocational satisfaction had a lower level of burnout and depression than did the priests with lower vocational satisfaction. Priests with higher social support did not experience less depression and burnout than those with lower social support. Involvement in spiritual activities did not reduce depression and burnout. Finally, priests with a relevant physical environment experienced less depersonalization and more personal accomplishment than those not in a relevant physical environment.

The findings revealed that diocesan/secular priests experienced significantly more burnout and depression than religious order priests. These findings are consistent with Virginia (1998), who discovered a significant difference between these two groups in the United States. In addition to reasons previously discussed (e.g., the job of priests is never finished, priests are confronted with people's expectations) the diocesan priests have multiple responsibilities and feel pulled in many directions to perform everything equally well, without being able to set priorities. This tends to lead to more burnout and depression. Diocesan priests are not encouraged to specialize in the field of their interest, like music, youth ministry, and mass media communication. However, religious order priests primarily minister in non-pastoral activities such as education, social work, and youth formation depending on the unique charism and/or apostolate of the religious order. They are also encouraged to specialize in the field of their interest. As previously discussed, diocesan priests are involved in parishioners' problems in very personal and intense ways each day. Priests are crisis people; they are involved in the unanticipated emotional, physical, and spiritual crises of parishioners. These challenges may lead the diocesan priests to more burnout and depression. In contrast, religious order priests are not actively involved in these challenges of the pastoral ministry.

Diocesan priests are likely to have a conventional approach to the priestly life, centered on time-honored orthodox doctrines. However, religious order priests have a semi-conventional approach to the priestly life. The diocesan priests are not encouraged to practice freedom of expression in the seminary formative program; such a lack of expression leads to a rigid adherence to tradition. This may cause more burnout and depression. Religious order priests have more opportunities to express their voice and are constantly exposed to different environments because their ministry is not confined to a particular geographical area. The religious order priests also have access to a change of the roles in their ministry. Whereas diocesan priests usually serve in the role of parish priests until retirement. The term of religious superiors is flexible; which provides an opportunity for personal change as well as renewal in the structural level. However, the term of diocesan bishop are unpredictable, often diocesan priests do not have opportunity for a change on the personal or structural level. This may lead to greater burnout and depression.

The study showed that priests with higher vocational satisfaction had lower levels of burnout and depression than did priests with lower vocational satisfaction. Priests with a higher level of vocational satisfaction appeared able to cope with stress and to meet their daily challenges with a more effective, optimistic, and religious perspective. There was no significant difference in vocational satisfaction between diocesan priests and religious order priests. The study revealed that there is no significant correlation between social support and burnout and depression. However, the study showed that religious order priests had higher social support, which includes support from superiors and peers, than did the diocesan priests. This difference can be closely related to their lifestyle. As mentioned earlier, religious order priests usually live in a community of three or more persons. These priests, by the very nature of their community life, have the opportunity to be with other priests and their immediate superiors, and thus are able to obtain support to meet their individual needs. However, diocesan priests, although they may have adequate support from their peers and family, have direct and consuming involvement in pastoral activities; their ministry is one of multiple demands made by the parishioners and the parish.

Overall, the findings revealed that there is no correlation between spiritual activities and burnout and depression. Nonetheless, the priests with more spiritual activities experienced a greater sense of personal accomplishment. Diocesan/secular priests while engaging in some spiritual reading, praying the Divine Office, and a minimal use of spiritual director, spend extensive time and energy in activities in the secular world. For instance, in India it is not uncommon for a parish to be without a rectory staff, therefore the priest is the only person to deal with the multiple activities of the parish as well as of the secular world. These multiple demands are likely to lead to the deterioration of the priest's emotional health and effective functioning in the pastoral ministry despite his spiritual activities.

There is no significant correlation between the physical environment and burnout and depression. However, religious order priests significantly differed from diocesan priests in their perception of the importance of the physical environment in prayer. The former group had more relevant physical environment than did the latter group, since religious houses usually are established in areas conducive to prayer, and create an atmosphere of calm. Even in locations where such retreat is not possible, the physical dwelling of religious priests attempts to ensure a quiet atmosphere. Diocesan priests living in the secular world are not likely to perceive the physical environment as important, as do their counterparts.

### Study Limitations

There are potential limitations to the study that should be considered. For instance, the samples for this study were from geographically diverse backgrounds within India. The diocesan/secular priests were mostly from one geographical

region, where as religious order priests were from six different dioceses and from different regions. This fact may affect the generalizability of the results of the study. Another potential limitation is that although the MBI has undergone extensive empirical research among other helping professions in the United States, it may not reflect the specific population of Indian priests utilized in this study. Although the participants are English speaking, the scales assessing burnout and depression may reflect Western concepts, not found in the Indian culture. For example, the concepts of depression and burnout may not be perceived the same way in India as in the Western world.

### **Implications of the Study for the Lives of Priests**

This study revealed the same results as in the U.S. sample collected by Virginia (1998), despite the fact that participants were from two different cultures, life styles, religious perspectives, and socio-economic systems. Therefore, it may be assumed that structural and administrative systems can lead to burnout and depression. The priestly ministry is faced with many challenges today as we live in a time of great transition. As Bacik (1999) describes, over the past 50 years, societal, cultural, and religious factors have challenged the traditional model of priesthood, in which the priest's main task was to provide or administer the sacraments. His life was subsumed in the sacred ritual action. However, in the contemporary church, the Second Vatican Council has enlarged the theology of priesthood considerably in terms of ministry and service, developing a new model of ministerial priesthood (Rausch, 1992). This represents a shift in the role of priests from pedestal, to participation with the people of God as servant-leader or leader companion (Cozzens, 2000).

It is crucial to deal with the stress and fatigue induced by priests' ministerial activities more effectively. The challenge of our time is to make emotional tensions energizing and fruitful rather than debilitating. To achieve this, it is important to be aware that the seminary formation program is designed to give more emphasis to academic performance than to emotional intelligence. It is important in the pastoral ministry to understand individual emotions, relationships, strengths, weakness, and goals. As pastoral ministers, priests do not simply relate as counseling professionals, rather priests relate to the whole person, including the feelings of the people being ministered. Therefore it is crucial to give emphasis to emotional intelligence in the seminary formative program.

Cozzens (2000) also suggests that priests' loyalty and obedience to the Church are to be mature and fostered by their own integrity. Their challenge is to be true men of the Church and at the same time their own persons. The task of achieving and maintaining integrity is closely related to priests' family of origin. Therefore it is crucial that a psychological screening be employed when recruiting

the candidates for the seminary; psychological tests for Emotional Intelligence, depression, and other personality tests can be employed to see what causes burnout and depression. McKenna (1963) suggests, while quoting the words of Pius XI, that rejection should take place immediately, as procrastination and delays are both an error and an injury.

Hulme (1985) suggests that achieving balance in ministry will help overcome stress in the lives of priests. He speaks of prioritizing the needs of one's ministry. This is gained by sorting out the meaningful and essential values from nonessential ones. This will reduce work overload and will enhance emotional growth. Priests must learn to spend time in spiritual development, including retreats, workshops, and religious seminars in order to deepen their spirituality in the pastoral context. Priests may be involved in spiritual activities just out of routine or habit, but may not really develop as a religious or spiritual person without deep reflection. There is a difference between spiritual activity and spiritual development. What is needed for a healthy priestly life is the spiritual development.

Minirth, Hawkins, Meier, and Flournoy (1986) offer direction in the light of Sacred Scripture. In the Gospel of Mark, after the return of the disciples of Jesus from their ministry, Jesus said, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while," Mark 6:31 (Revised Standard Version). In this brief statement, there are three key elements that can relieve the stressors that lead to burnout. These are: (a) a change in location (i.e., regular vacations with a change of locations are an important part of preventing burnout); (b) a change in activity (e.g., instead of focusing on one specific ministry for a great length of time, it is important to channel energy into other activities); and (c) a change for a time (i.e., planning time for activities unrelated to priestly work). Taking time off for hobbies and other activities will help priests to focus on ministry without being emotionally drained. A balanced life must include time for the body; regular physical exercise may help alleviate emotional disturbances.

Maslach and Leiter (1999) have come up with some guidelines to assist helping professionals alleviate symptoms of burnout. It is important to have positive thinking and to take pride in ministry because the priest's service is incredibly valuable to others. This will lead to a greater sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. It is crucial to establish a support group to see whether it can lead to happiness. Discussion with peers will lead to greater cohesiveness and support, which will help create a new vision in one's life. Open communications with parishioners regarding goals and expectations can foster greater understanding between priest and parishioners. Finally cognitive restructuring is an important element which can ameliorate one's growth. This can be achieved in improving self-attitudes and healthy assertiveness.

The findings of this investigation would be of help for priests in both the United States and in India to identify problems, to encourage reorientation of their lives towards the spiritual, and to promote emotional maturity. The study

may also have implications for seminary formation programs. Prioritizing emotional maturity and freedom of expression would afford seminarians more time for developing a genuine religious foundation and thus, produce a harvest of psychologically healthy priests.

### Future Research

The empirical research on psychological issues of Catholic priests is not widespread. It is vital to have more scientific studies in this field to help priests grow stronger in their spiritual and emotional maturity. Another research study can be focused on older priests as opposed to younger priests, and the impact of seminary formation on them. The discipline of the pre-Vatican seminary adhered to a strict monastic approach; critical thinking and probing questions were seldom encouraged while virtues such as docility and deference were affirmed and reinforced. However, the post-Vatican seminary formation is different in its understandings of the dynamics that foster holistic growth. The scope of the investigation in this study primarily focused on burnout and depression. This can be used as a basis upon which issues like sexuality, attachment styles, celibacy, and addiction can be studied, as these are factors which also may cause burnout and depression in Catholic priests.

In conclusion, the study has found that diocesan priests experience more burnout and depression than the religious order priests. According to Jung (as cited in Perri, 2002) depression can be helpful and it can direct one to experience salvation. Perri (2002) candidly states: that depression is a valuable sign, an indelible mark or archetype, of priesthood; it is seen as *decensus ad infernos* which implies a deepening, a journey into the inner self. He states that the priest as mediator can make use of the experience of this dark night with its religious value, in order to mediate and help others extricate from similar descents. Depression can be spiritually productive; that is, asking philosophical questions can help one to discover the true vocation to priesthood and to understand that being down is a part of life. However, depression can be spiritually destructive if it is caused by the multiple demands of the ministry and job itself. The term "vocation" is perceived as the place where one's deep gladness meets the world's deep need. Therefore, the vocation to priesthood is more than a career choice, it is a call based on the conscious motivation to serve as an anointed priest. This vocation is nurtured by the concept of grace building on nature. However, the factors that contribute to depression and burnout should be addressed by seminary formation programs and by Church authorities. This will help priests to use their talents in human relationships to promote spiritual values, to heal the brokenness of society and to re-create the Spirit-filled community. It is crucial to protect and encourage priests so that they may achieve peace and success in witnessing Christ and His Good News.

## REFERENCES

- American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed., text revision). Washington, DC: Author.
- Bacik, J. J. (1999). The practice of priesthood: Working through today's tensions. In P. J. Murnion & K. S. Smith (Eds.), *Priesthood in the modern world* (pp. 51–65). Franklin, WI: Sheed and Ward.
- Center for Human Development. (1990). *Formation of priests: The challenge of the 1990s*. Washington, DC: The Center for Human Development.
- Chiaromonte, A. J. (1983). Psychological correlates of burnout in clergymen. (Doctoral dissertation, Boston College, 1983). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 44, 44/05.
- Cherniss, C. (1980). *Staff burnout*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Cozzens, D. B. (2000). *The changing face of the priesthood*. Collegeville, MI: The Liturgical Press.
- Evers, W., & Tomic, W. (2003). Burnout among Dutch reformed pastors. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 31, 329–338.
- Freudenberger, H. J. (1980). *Burnout: The high cost of high achievement*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Press.
- Golden, J., Piedmint, R. L., Ciarrocchi, J. W., & Rodgerson, T. (2004). Spirituality and burnout: An incremental validity. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 32, 115–125.
- Hoge, D. R., Shield, J. J., & Griffin, D. L. (1995). Changes in satisfaction and institutional attitudes of Catholic priests, 1970–1993. *Sociology of Religion*, 56, 195–214.
- Hulme, W. E. (1985). *Managing stress in ministry*. San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, Publishers.
- Jackson, R. (1983). Burnout among Catholic priests. (Doctoral dissertation, California School of Professional Psychology, San Diego). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 44, 1595B.
- Jenkins, S. R., & Maslach, C. (1994). Psychological health and involvement in interpersonally demanding occupations: A longitudinal perspective. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 15, 101–127.
- Knox, S., Virginia, S., & Lombardo, P. J. (2002). Depression and anxiety in Roman Catholic clergy. *Pastoral Psychology*, 50, 345–359.
- Maslach, C. (1982). *Burnout- the cost of caring*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (1999). Take this job and . . . love it! (6 ways to beat burnout). *Psychology Today*, 32, 50–53.
- McKenna, J. (1963). Normal personality development. In E. F. O'Doherty & S. D. McGrath (Eds.), *The priest and mental health* (pp. 32–40). Staten Island, NY: Society of St. Paul.
- Minirth, F., Hawkins, D., Meier, P., & Flournoy, R. (1986). *How to beat burnout*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Olsen, D. C., & Grosch, W. N. (1991). Clergy burnout: A self psychology and systems perspective. *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 65, 297–304.
- Perri, W. D. (2002). *A radical challenge for priesthood today*. Mystic, CT: Twenty- Third Publications.
- Rausch, T. P. (1992). *Priesthood today*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Robinson, J. P., Shaver, P. R., & Wrightsman, L. S. (1991). *Measures of personality and social psychological attitudes*. San Diego: Academic Press, Inc.
- Sanford, J. A. (1982). *Ministry burnout*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- Scanlon, T. J., & McHugh, D. (2001). *Clergy under stress: A reassessment of stress research in ministerial work*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Central Lancashire.
- Smith, T. B., McCullough, M. E., & Poll, J. (2003). Religiousness and depression: Evidence for a main effect and the moderating influence of stressful life events. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 614–636.
- Virginia, S. (1998). Burnout and depression among Roman Catholic secular, religious, and monastic clergy. *Pastoral Psychology*, 47, 49–67.
- Weaver, A. J., Larson, D. B., Flannely, K. J., Stapleton, C. L., & Koenig, H. G. (2002). Mental health issues among clergy and other religious professional: A review of research. *The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 56, 393–403.