AOSIS

The 'persona' lives of Roman Catholic priests

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This study aimed to provide an in-depth description and interpretation of African Roman Catholic Church priests' experiences integrating African and Western worldviews into their lives and works as Roman Catholic Church priests through the lens of Jungian constructs. Fifteen African priests were purposely selected and interviewed in depth. Additional sources of data were reflexive notes and observation notes. Data were subjected to various iterative cycles of analysis. Most participants (80%) indicated that, in one way or another, they were experiencing conflict in terms of the cultural values of manhood and Roman Catholic Church prescription. Findings suggest that a more concerted and serious effort should be undertaken by the Roman Catholic Church to support and guide its priests on a path of healing, which includes the priests risking cultural openness and being true to themselves and God.

Introduction

According to the Study of Global Christianity's report (2013), Roman Catholics form the largest bloc of Christians in Africa and thus, the need for dedicated, integrated, mature African priests is clear. It is acknowledged that all priests need to continuously grow spiritually in order to truly live according to their vows of poverty, celibacy and obedience, and thus avoid lives of hypocrisy and self-deception (Holmes 1996:132–133). This article focuses on a group of African Roman Catholic Church (RCC) priests' lives and experiences as they try to integrate their original African cultural practices and philosophical traditions (thus the male pronoun will be used throughout the article). The African worldview is distinct from that of the predominantly Western worldviews represented by the RCC (Long 2016; Mkabela 2015). The process of integrating two distinct worldviews involves 'a dual process of cultural and psychological change' (Berry 2005:698). Although priests from all cultures experience challenges in living their lives according to their vows, we argue that African clergy have distinct challenges related to their cultural and philosophical roots. Not only do they have to remain faithful to their vows, they also have to position themselves philosophically in terms of their African worldview's specific beliefs and traditions, which may be in conflict with those of the RCC.

African cultural practices and beliefs that may contradict RCC teachings are inter alia veneration of ancestors, the consultation of traditional healers and the centrality of fatherhood (Francis 2014:39–62). This could result in some priests living double lives. The first author (a RCC priest) is aware of certain African priests who ostensibly live celibate lives, but also more or less secretly have 'wives' and children. If a priest is not able to integrate his African and RCC philosophical beliefs, he could find it difficult to manage the resulting cognitive dissonance. This could result in him finding it difficult to appropriately and authentically serve members of his congregation.

Deep-seated, unresolved conflicts are associated with unconscious reactions to defend the ego 'that functions both externally and internally' (Jung 1960b:323), and thus this study is grounded in Jungian depth psychology. The aim of the study was to describe and interpret the experiences of African RCC priests from a Jungian perspective, with a specific focus on the expressions of archetypical patterns in the lives of priests. Another reason for choosing Jung's theory was his emphasis on integration. According to the Jungian approach, personal integration (maturity) starts with awareness (Hollis 2001). Thus, personal maturity and integration means bringing into awareness cognitive conflicts and unconscious behavioural patterns (archetypes). Awareness refers to accepting one's external and internal reality as is, including seemingly contradicting expectations and forces in one's world, as well as personal and very intimate internal processes, including reactions towards contradicting demands. If a priest does not face the contradicting forces that cause him discomfort and anxiety, he will employ defences such as denial, rationalisation and suppression to manage this dissonance (Kalsched 1996), even though these defence strategies

are mostly unconscious. If not dealt with, suppressed unconscious material lives on in the priest's unconscious and may affect his life and reactions in destructive ways (Kalsched 1996). The integrated person is less likely to employ such defence strategies.

If a priest is unaware and non-integrated, he may delude himself into believing his own outwardly lived pretences. Jung (1968) called the self that is presented to the outside world the persona, loosely translated, a mask. Unaware, non-integrated priests, like all other human beings, tend to believe themselves to be their personas. The 'persona lifestyle of priests' has been described (Holmes 1996; Nicole 2010).

Similar to the personal unconscious described above, Jung (1968) also postulates a collective unconscious. The collective unconscious contains unconscious patterns that all human beings have in common, as well as material suppressed and denied by a group or culture. Jung (1968) calls these collective unconscious patterns archetypes, and they will be discussed in the subsection focusing on Jungian constructs.

Salient struggles of African Roman Catholic Church priests

Unhealthy expressions of the non-integrated personal and collective unconscious could lead to a persona lifestyle (living double a life). One of the lives is usually denied because the different lives are not, and often cannot be, integrated. Sipe (2003:43–56) sampled 2776 RCC multicultural priests and found that 28% of his sample were sexually active with adult women, 11% with adult men, and 6% with minors. The RCC's insistence on celibacy is probably the major reason why priests generally live double lives (Holmes 1996).

Another noticeable challenge experienced by African priests relates to the vow of poverty. Most Africans are customarily expected to make financial contributions to their families. These expectations are deeply rooted in the African understanding of the social structure in terms of the Ubuntu philosophy (Tambudzai & Ugwuanyi 2011:74). Because of the vow of poverty, RCC priests are unable to support their next of kin financially. If the RCC's demands are not fundamentally accepted and integrated into the priest's personal philosophy of life, but only superficially accepted as an expectation adjunct to his position, his inability to provide financially for his family members may become a source of guilt and shame. This may be the reason why priests engage in business activities concurrently to performing their priestly duties, because it helps them to support their extended families financially. Such practices are contrary to the RCC's vow of poverty.

In the following section, the Jungian constructs important in this study will be discussed in more detail. Some of the constructs have been used in the previous section, but will be clarified in this section. The full complexity of Jung's theory will not be reflected; however, the authors will endeavour to apply Jungian constructs in accordance with Jung's theory to RCC priests.

Jung's constructs

Jung (1968) differentiated between the conscious and the unconscious parts of the human mind. The conscious part is that part of himself that a person is aware of, whilst the unconscious refers to that part of himself that a person is not, or only partially, aware of. Jung (1968) found that human behaviour is mostly motivated by unconscious forces, rather than by conscious decisions.

Jung (1968) differentiated between the personal and the collective consciousness. The personal conscious is constituted by what is known by the individual, whilst the collective consciousness refers to accepted, shared, socially constructed understandings that effectively regulate human functioning (Bar-Tal 2000). Collective consciousness can also be viewed as society's conditioning of the individual. This process forms and shapes the person's personal and social identity and explains how an autonomous individual comes to identify with a larger group or structure (Jung 1968).

Jung (1960, 1968) describes the unconscious as having a personal and collective component. The personal unconscious is the 'sum of those things that have transpired since our birth' (Hollis 1994:29) and contains complexes (Jung 1960a). Complexes are formed by repressed impulses, desires, memories, images and wishes that are too anxiety-provoking to be accepted in the conscious mind (Jung 1968). A complex can be described as a cluster of emotionally laden, repressed memories organised around a common theme, such as power or status (Jung 1960b; 1968). Because the personal unconscious is built from the individual's life experiences, it is expected to be influenced by the person's cultural experiences.

The collective unconscious also contains material that the individual is not aware of. The content of the collective unconscious is similar for all human beings, and 'exerts an influence that comprises the freedom of consciousness' (Jung 1960b:112). Thus, a person who is unaware is controlled by his inner forces over which he has no or little control as long as they remain unconscious. The collective unconscious represents the inherited potential and experiences that have been passed on from generation to generation, and the contents of the collective unconscious are known as the archetypes (Jung 1953; 1959).

Archetypes

An archetype is a universal form or predisposition that influences thoughts and feelings. Archetypes are inherited and represent remnants of memories passed on from ancestors (Jung 1964a) and are thus ancestral psychic patterns, shared across cultures that are deeply buried in the collective unconscious and can be activated by external events. They shape and influence people's worldviews (Jung 1960b), and although they have universal content, their manifestation is culturally coloured. Archetypes common to all human beings are persona, shadow, and anima or animus. Archetypes are thus unconscious aspects in every person. They are activated by external events (Kalsched 1996), such

as demands which are perceived to be contradicting cultural beliefs. Because an archetype is primal and coming from the unconscious, it does not consider external realities or even cognitive reasoning. It is a powerful source from within, operating from instinctive realities.

Persona

Jung (1953) describes the persona as a mask designed to fit the expectations of society; it is the image of himself that an individual presents to others. The individual's choice of clothes can be seen as part of the visual symbols' persona. The persona is functionally useful as it facilitates some adaptation to the social context and therefore has a survival function (Jung 1971).

Like all individuals, priests have different personas. In the church and in other aspects of their lives, different personas enable priests to adjust to the social contexts of their lives and work. The persona becomes dangerous if a person believes that it represents his full personality or allows the persona to shape the personality instead of the other way around.

Shadow

Shadow can include everything outside the light of consciousness and may be positive or negative. 'Everyone carries a shadow' and 'the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is' (Jung 1959:20ff). The shadow is a collective term for personal psychic content that the individual is not in touch with. It comprises 'the denied aspects of the self' (Jung 1959:20) which include positive but unknown aspects of the self and not-owned, repressed and denied weaknesses, shortcomings and instincts (Jung 1967), thus characteristics which the individual's self-esteem will not allow to be recognised and accommodated. People often experience the shadow as the shameful, dark side of themselves. Paradoxically, the more conscious a person is of these shameful and dark sides of himself, and the more he accepts these parts, the less power they have over him. When these aspects are denied and repressed, they gain power and seek expression, often in destructive ways (Jung 1968; Kalsched 1996).

In the African context, the personal dark side is mostly carried by the collective (Jung 1959). For example, a criminal may attribute his crimes to external forces, such as a spell cast by jealous others. A number of traditional Africans would probably not own their shadow, because unacceptable characteristics and actions are believed to be prompted by forces beyond their control.

Generally, Africans are more conscious of their shadow aspects and openly acknowledge them, as opposed to those who typically deny their shadow aspects.

Anima/animus

Originally, Jung (1954) described the anima as representing the feminine aspect of the male gender: 'every man carries within him the eternal image of woman, not the image of this or that particular woman, but a definite feminine image' (Jung 1954:198). The anima stems from an archetypal deposit of all the impressions ever made by women on men's ancestors, represents a man's internalised experience of the feminine and is influenced by his experiences with his mother and other women (Hollis 1993:58; Jung 1969). A man with an integrated anima could be capable of having good balanced relationships with both men and women. During their period of extended training, young seminarians have minimal openly intimate relationships with women, which, arguably, could lead to insufficient internalised experiences of the feminine and may compromise their ability to form moral, responsible relationships with women (Doyle 2006:195). Thus, RCC priests may thus run the risk of being ill-prepared to relate comfortably to girls and women in their parishes.

Both the anima and animus are at a deeper level of the unconscious than the shadow (Jung 1968). Given that the anima or animus is unconscious, the unaware, non-integrated person may unconsciously project the anima or animus upon a person of the opposite gender (Jung 1968). Men with inadequate anima development may at some stage in their lives project their immature anima by having affairs with young women or girls whilst women with immature animus may tend to gravitate to men with status (Hollis 1993:58). Priests with intimacy failures may have difficulty establishing close platonic relationships. Establishing and maintaining the boundaries in intimate and potentially sexualised relationships is difficult for priests (Sipe 2003) and has resulted in priests being brought to 'overdue meetings with their anima' (Holmes 1996:132). A close, familiar and affectionate or loving personal relationship with a woman could be beneficial to priests' human growth (Sipe 2003). Intimacy could be a gateway to the anima in the collective unconscious, enabling mature and responsible relationships. In the absence of such integration, some priests become involved in improper relationships (Holmes 1996; Nicole 2010; Schnabel & Koval 2014; Sipe 2003).

Essentially, RCC priests' life and work is empathic comforting grounded in tenderness and nurturing. In traditional patriarchal cultural practices, these characteristics are viewed as feminine (Hollis 1994:103). Thus, African RCC priests need to become aware of some aspects of their own anima-related unconscious assumptions to be comfortable with their feminine sides and to authentically fulfil the caring duties required by their vocation. The process of integrating the discussed archetypes (persona, shadow, and anima or animus) and creating personal awareness is called individuation.

Individuation

Individuation is the process of personal growth (Jung 1953:173–175) and is distinct from individualism, which emphasises the rights and independence of the individual (Cross & Markus 1999:35–54). It is also the process of transforming one's psyche through awareness and owning the different parts of the psyche, bringing these into dialogue

(Jung 1953). Thus, individuation involves the integration of various psychic aspects, such as the shadow and anima or animus. This dialogue between the various parts of the psyche progressively enables personal wholeness, resulting in the person becoming 'a separate, indivisible unity or whole' (Jung 1953:173). The process of individuation entails a person becoming aware of his limitations and strengths and accepting both. This integration and differentiation marks the acquisition of true self-realisation or selfhood (Jung 1971).

Individuation is marked by an individual's differentiation from the collective, and his becoming a unique person. This differentiation does not exclude meaningful connectedness to the collective (Jung 1969). Individuation 'leads to a great respect and admiration for collective norm' (Jung 1971:449) and is thus not in opposition to the collective. By his very existence, the individual presupposes a relationship with the collective, and thus, the process of individuation is towards 'more intense and broader collective relationships and not to isolation' (Jung 1971:448). Individuation is achieved when the wrappings of false personas are peeled off, and although it cannot be fully attained, it is the ongoing objective of the developmental process (Jung 1953). An individuated individual is able to choose to live a certain lifestyle based on their inner conviction and commitment.

It could be argued that the RCC's values of religious community life, poverty and celibacy are not necessarily conducive to the individuation of African priests. The training and dogmatic prescriptions socialise the individual – who is considered to be an 'unformed person' – into the collective definition of RCC priesthood (Hollis 1994:108).

The question we sought to answer in the study was: How do African RCC parish priests integrate their African worldviews with the worldview encapsulated in RCC dogma and prescriptions of priestly life. Given the potential for various unconscious expressions of cognitive dissonance if priests have not achieved some level of psychic maturity or individuation, Jung's theory was used as a frame for interpretation.

Methodology
Study design

A qualitative interpretive descriptive study aimed to provide an in-depth description and interpretation of African RCC priests' experiences integrating African and Western world views into their personal lives, and in their functioning as RCC priests through the lens of Jungian constructs. This design aimed to transcend simple description (Thorne, Kirkham & MacDonald-Emes 1997). Thorne, Kirkham and O'Flynn-Magee (2004:3) state that this design 'borrow[s] heavily from some aspects of grounded theory … drawing on values associated with phenomenological approaches'. Based on Heidegger's interpretive philosophy, the study interpreted participants' descriptions of their experiences, tensions and struggles of being African RCC priests in the light of the Jungian constructs of the persona, shadow, anima or animus, and individuation.

Sampling and data gathering

The sampling strategy was purposive, and inclusion criteria for voluntary participation were that the priests had to be of African descent, fluent in English, serving in predominantly African rural parishes, a graduate of an RCC theological college and willing to share their views openly and honestly. The sample comprised one Cameroonian priest, five Kenyans, two Nigerians, five South Africans, one Tanzanian and one Ugandan. Of the 15 participants, five priests had been ordained for less than 10 years, five had been ordained for between 10 and 24 years, and five priests had been ordained for 25 or more years.

The first author, being an African RCC priest, had the unique opportunity of establishing a rapport with the participants. However, his intuitive understanding of the participants' experiences also posed a challenge, of which the researcher was acutely aware. Therefore, he meticulously made reflective notes in an attempt to continuously be aware of his own thoughts, needs, emotions and past experiences relating to the research phenomenon, and thus to achieve what Ricoeur (1971) terms distancing. This reflective journal became a valuable source of data. An additional source of data was the researcher's research journal in which observations on the participants' contexts and their circumstances were noted.

Analysis

Data collection and analysis was an iterative process spanning a period of nine months. Two follow-up interviews to probe Jungian constructs more deeply were conducted to enrich and confirm preliminary findings. The researcher and a co-coder transcribed and meticulously analysed the recorded interviews. After listening to the recorded interviews, reading and re-reading the transcripts, units of meaning were identified and were then coded and combined into categories (Lincoln & Guba 1985:321; Thorne et al. 2004). Indications of the manifestation of Jungian archetypes were sought in the initial inductively identified meanings and themes. This inductive process was complimented by deductively applying Jungian theory to identify and describe the expressions of archetypes.

Quality assurance

An extended period of time (nine months) was spent in the field to acquire rich data that were meticulously analysed by two independent coders to ensure trustworthiness (Guba 1981). All findings were grounded in the data, thus ensuring credibility (Guba 1981:75–91). The interpretations were supported by direct quotes from the transcripts. Transferability was enhanced by rich contextual descriptions. Dependability was ensured by adhering to scientific standards regarding motivated research decisions regarding research design and its implementation, the operational details of data gathering, collaboration between the authors and triangulation with literature (Seale 1999:465–478).

Findings

Persona-living

> Jesus warned against the scribes and the Pharisees: … do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practise. (Mt 23:3–4, 5, 33)

Persona refers to the part of the personality that is shown to the world. Most participants (80%) in this study indicated that they were, in one way or another, caught up in the conflict between cultural values of manhood and the RCC's prescriptions, namely being married, having children and being able to support their extended family members versus the prescriptions of the RCC's dogmas and values of celibacy and poverty. Most participants seemed aware of the necessity of living according to the RCC's prescribed roles and described their persona graphically in terms of the outer trappings of their office and their vestments. They seemed to have adopted a chameleon-like life of adapting to their pastoral roles without experiencing any inner conviction. Many spontaneously referred to the 'masks' that they were wearing:

> … 'my life sometimes is wearing clergy clothes outside, but inside is a real Mosotho (an African tribe).' (P1)

> 'I live ... a life of pretence and wearing masks.' (P14)

It is noteworthy that participants spontaneously referred to masks, because Jung called the persona a mask. The mask should be part of a person's social adaptation, but the person should feel comfortable and authentic in what he chooses to show or hide. Most priests in this study reported not owning their social masks, but wearing them to follow RCC prescriptions. In spite of the expressed awareness of persona expressions, participants seemed to be resigned to the fact that the status quo would persist and that nothing could be done about it:

> 'In this life, if you ignore the future, then life is simple. The reality is that you have to live two lives, one for the priest and one for being an African.' (P7)

Most priests in the sample did not feel that they were true to themselves whilst fulfilling their duties, nor did they experience personal fulfilment. They expressed having to go through the motions of priesthood:

> 'It was not me doing this, just because I was in formation and had to simply fulfil the requirements.' (P1)

This is congruent with an unconscious avoidance or denial of their personal truths. As one participant said:

> 'In the seminary my experience is that students are not true to themselves, and when we are ordained, you see [their] true colours. It is a life of putting on [a] mask, so to say.' (P12)

Priests seem to accept their roles as prescribed by the RCC, even where those roles conflict with their African worldviews, and they adopt persona lifestyles to balance being a RCC priest who is an African. They suppress the need to address their internal conflicts.

Most participants indicated that they uncritically accept the behaviour and lifestyle the RCC prescribes without internalising it. Thus, they do not 'own' the RCC priestly life beyond the externalised persona. Their personas are not expressions of deeply held beliefs. The conflicts between their deeply held beliefs and the behaviour prescribed by the RCC are not acknowledged, and thus not addressed and resolved. Participants explained powerful internal conflicts and feeling tormented, despite their cognitive choices to become RC priests. Higher levels of awareness could potentially contravene such an archetypal grip by a deeper understanding of and acceptance of larger universal spiritual truths.

An important reason for the prominent expression of the persona in the lifestyles of priests is rooted in the unease resulting from their suppressed cultural views, values and beliefs as a result of the pressure to conform to the alternative values and beliefs of the RCC (Juma, Van der Merwe & Du Toit 2017:5).

Holmes (1996) found that 50% of RCC priests live double lives. Our findings indicate that this percentage might be higher amongst African priests, partly because of Africans' strong communal values. The personal lifestyles of priests is summarised by the following quote from an interview:

> 'Sometimes just give to the church what belongs to it, you know. Just smile even though you are not honestly smiling.' (P1)

Shadow – The inferior, unacknowledged, rejected aspects of self

> The willing is ready at hand, but doing the good is not. For I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want. (Rm 7:14–15)

The shadow comprises 'the denied aspects of the self' (Jung 1959:20). The participants described these aspects in markedly similar ways to Jung and post-Jungians. Todd (1985:41) describes the shadow as 'the remnants of the beast, that which is inferior to them and that which they deny and condemn', and these aspects are then projected onto others. Thus, one judges in others what is not fully accepted in oneself. A judgemental attitude often stems from shadow aspects.

Most participants seemed to live in denial of a number of issues that were real in their lives. The inability to discuss something may be indicative of denied aspects (Kalsched 1996). Sexuality, celibacy and financial aspects were denied:

> '... at home ... people would ask about not getting married. The issue of marriage is difficult to explain to people.' (P14)

The same participant stated the following in respect of the vow of poverty:

> '... this is a difficult issue to talk about. People, including my family, look up to me. It becomes very challenging and frustrating where you see the need to help but cannot afford [to]. This impacts

on me in many ways – spiritually, psychologically and physically. When I go home and come back to the parish knowing that I have left a problem back home unsolved, I become physically sick.' (P14)

The inability to at least discuss issues to arrive at mutual understanding results in these issues being suppressed into the shadow, which could lead to feelings of guilt and even to a person becoming physically sick (Kalsched 1996). Family members also refrain from involving priests in activities and challenges experienced in the home:

'I see things that I feel I should participate in, they (the family) on their side do not even tell me about it because they do not want to disturb me .... I want to look away but I know that it is there.' (P2)

Thus, in spite of their good intentions, families contribute to deepening shadow issues by not encouraging open discussions.

An unexamined and unacknowledged shadow may predispose a person to being sensitive and to overreacting when shadow aspects are involved (Jung 1959:20). To administer to his parish, a priest needs to forge warm, genuine relationships, but if a priest is sensitive about shadow aspects and overreacts, it might cause barriers in his pastoral relationships with his parishioners. One participant explained his overreaction when he feels unappreciated:

'Yes I have a feeling that sometimes [*what*] people see in me is not exactly what I am. If they see me in a negative away, I get angry.' (P1)

When different aspects of the self are not integrated or aligned, one part of the self inevitably becomes 'not me' and thus becomes the shadow:

'[*You*] find yourself in between two cultures. You are half here and half the other side; European and African. You end up being a scandal because you belong nowhere. Whatever life you are living, no one can tell exactly what life you are living.' (P7)

Unacceptable, shameful shadow aspects left some participants feeling fragmented and estranged from themselves. The majority of the participants (87%) felt fragmented, and as a result, one would expect their levels of individuation to be low because integration is an important constituent of individuation.

Coming from extended families, some priests found the pressure and expectation to provide for their families' needs unbearable. This internal conflict is mostly hidden and unexpressed, and such suppression further feeds the shadow. In extreme cases, priests cut themselves off or are distanced from their families:

'My father disowned me for three years in the seminary, never spoke with me.' (P5)

This distancing seems easier to bear than to not being able to fulfil the expectations of their next of kin. As one participant stated:

'I know I should be able to help them... I want to look away... [*I am*] not able to do what I feel I should do ... [*It*] make[*s*] me feel a sense of separation from my family. I do not feel that whole connectedness ... like I am isolated and I feel disconnected.' (P2)

Many feel angry; for example, one participant said:

'I would then be angry with myself after doing things the way they wanted.' (P1)

Also experiencing guilt, another participant said:

'Our status, driving cars belong[*ing*] to Dioceses and the kind of houses we live in make it difficult for people, especially our families to believe that we cannot afford (to) help ... it makes priests live a double live.' (P14)

Some participants felt incapable of fulfilling expectations:

'... people have high expectations from you and people are looking up to you ... the fear of being ridiculed and being mocked and seen as a failure kept me going.' (P6)

Thus, they feel that they cannot authentically live the life of an RCC priest, and thus shadows remain unintegrated.

Anima/animus – Balancing the internal masculine and feminine

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. (Colossians 3:12 ESV)

The anima represents the feminine aspect of the male gender and the internalised experience of the feminine. Anima 'incarnated anew in every male child' (Jung 1951:14) represents the soul of man. African society expects men to be strong and show little emotion (Ladson 2011:7–15). Thus, African RCC priests seem to struggle with the implications of feminine traits such as compassion, empathy, comforting others and mercy:

'… even [*the*] feeling of being a [*like*] woman has not come to my mind, but when it comes to doing things for myself, like house cleaning, laundry etc., then yes, I become aware.' (P3)

Individuation – Becoming true to God and oneself

So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. (Eph 4:14–15 ESV)

This process of individual growth – individuation – entails the transformation of the psyche by bringing the unconscious and consciousness into dialogue with each other (Jung 1953), leading to the integration of various aspects of the psyche, such as the persona, shadow, and anima or animus.

This process aims at personal wholeness, of becoming 'a separate, indivisible unity or whole' (Jung 1953:173).

There was little evidence of feelings of integration, wholeness and meaning. Most participants were externally motivated by fear:

'Yes the fear of being ridiculed, mocked and seen as a failure kept me going on in the seminary and somehow now [*also*].' (P6)

'… if a priest goes back home, he is a failure. I find that fear of going back to society, being looked at as a failure affected a bit the process of my discernment.'(P2)

Priests' feelings of being fragmented, of experiencing a lack of a sense of coherence and feelings of not being connected to themselves, God, the Church and community were expressed. Psychologically, this could be linked to a limited sense of their own identity as African RCC priests. The lives of most of the participants (93%) seemed not to be marked by high levels of integration.

Most participants' were initially motivated to become priests by 'hero images', individual priests they had contact with. After years as priests, some were still trying to find their own 'images' and self-ideals. As one participant stated:

'After 38 years, the motivation to serve sacramental church is still being realised, but not to be like Fr X (hero image). With time I have realised that I cannot be like him, more so [*him*] being a European.' (P12)

With regard to living meaningful lives, some participants did not see their lives as making sense. One participant summarised his un-individuated life as a priest as:

'I am not living a fulfilled life but a searching life.' (P8)

The African priest who loses himself as an African man in his becoming an RCC priest is impeded in his individuation process. However, some participants did indicate that they were motivated by their work itself:

'Happiness in my life keeps me going. Happiness that comes from doing what I want to do and doing it well. Not regretting what I have done.' (P10)

This participant experiences integration, which indicates a high level of individuation. Such responses were rare in the study. The outer myth of a persona priestly life (a man of the cloth) and the inner truth of the collective unconscious (particularly cultural forces of African traditions and beliefs) appear to cause conflict in many African priests. These are manifested as follows:

Disillusionment

For most of the participants, early in their lives, they were impressed by a hero figure, another priest who influenced their decisions to become priests. Eight priests mentioned the disillusionment of knowing that they would not become the archetypal hero figures they admired. These hero figures were often Western priests. Disillusionment is an early part of individuation. The hero figure can play an important role early on in individuation, encouraging them to leave the safety of their home (Hollis 1994:100). After disillusionment, the person needs to start finding their own path. Most priests in the study have not done so, and are thus still in the early stages of individuation.

African and Roman Catholic Church values unintegrated

RCC practices, such as the vows of poverty and celibacy, were not internalised, and thus priests in the study were neither authentic nor committed to the values that they were expected to live by. Integration is a key element of individuation (Jung 1971:448). This lack of integration indicates low levels of individuation. One participant said:

'African priests should be encouraged to be true to self, to God and have the courage to embrace and integrate values of African world views and their priesthood and ministerial work.' (P9)

External motivation

Participants who experienced their work as meaningful reported that their satisfaction was mostly linked to being supported by their colleagues or being appreciated by their congregations.

'… if the people ... appreciate you and value you then you feel fulfilled.' (P7)

'The way people respond to my work, the appreciations etc. keep me going.' (P13)

Stein (2006) named three stages of individuation:

- **Stage 1:** Nurturing stage: During this stage, the person needs to be cared for and to feel accepted.
- **Stage 2:** Adaptation stage: During this stage, the person takes on the challenges of the world and is achievement-driven.
- **Stage 3:** Integration: During this stage, meaning and purpose become important.

From participants' interviews, it appears that most participants were in the nurturing stage, where the main issues are being taken care of by the RCC, and they feel appreciated and accepted by their congregations. A few were at Stage 2, where they were focussed on power, position and achieving results. Very few indicated that meaning and purpose (Stage 3) were central in their lives. Many also indicated a lack of integration with other people, including their families of origin:

'... keep people at a distance.' (P7)

'… have artificial relationships.' (P14)

'Socially there is some emptiness.' (P12)

Conclusion

In conclusion, Jung (1954) noted that underneath an individual's wounds lie the new shape of a healed individual.

The individuated priests will be like a sage, who, refined through suffering, is at peace with and true to himself (Hollis 2001:88). However, indications are that many African RCC priests who have been 'formed' into the collective definition of RCC priesthood, and who might be successful in the priesthood, may have 'lost their souls' (Hollis 1994:100). The new, healed individuated person has not yet emerged. In Jungian terms, the ego is a person's connection to the outside world. The ego is thus governed by external realities (Jung 1960b) whilst archetypes are manifestations from the unconscious, inner realities (Jung 1968). Most participants expressed their struggles as unintegrated, thus less individuated individuals. Thus, for them their egos and archetypes were mostly in conflict. They experienced a choice between their cultural roots and the prescriptions of the RCC instead of an integration at a higher, symbolic level. For example, though they are called 'father', many were unable to see that they could be fathers without having biological children. Priests with higher levels of individuation would not necessarily experience that they need to betray either themselves and their cultural roots, or their vocation.

Findings suggest the need for the RCC to support and guide priests on a path of healing, which includes the priests risking openness, and not 'l[ying], deceiv[ing], and juggl[ing] false alibis even as they sit in the confessional each week and absolve others of the same sins' (Holmes 1996:132). An accepting, open culture would enable frank and open discussions about difficulties and clashing expectations and values. Understanding without shaming and blaming would go a long way to helping priests to individuate.

Mentorship by experienced and individuated (African) priests would greatly assist in guiding less experienced priests and providing nurturing, acceptance and understanding of their struggles. The need for the congregation's acceptance and recognition is significantly high, probably as the congregation is a substitute for the priests' own communities of origin. Counselling should be available to priests to assist them to balance their need for acceptance and other aspects of their duties and being true to themselves.

A compromise regarding some financial compensation for priests would eliminate the burden that affects the African priests' self-image. Being able to make a financial contribution to their families might restore breakdowns and misunderstanding in families. Not receiving salaries, or money to utilise at their own discretion, is a major problem for African priests in this study. Salaries will go a long way to eliminating their perception that their communities of origin see them as failures and equal to beggars but also bringing them closer to their more privileged priest colleagues from the West.

Whereas participants in this study clearly indicated persona and shadow aspects of themselves, much less evidence could be found of anima or animus issues. The reason could be either that participants do not have such issues or that they were not revealed. The latter is more probable, as anima or animus are deeper layers of the psyche and are thus less accessible. As a method of uncovering deeper layers of the unconscious, interviews are less successful than projective techniques.

One limitation of this study is that more pointed interview questions could possibly have revealed more unconscious content. Jungian unconscious constructs would probably be better explored with projective techniques such as drawings and dream analysis. Therefore, it is suggested that studies that aim at penetrating unconscious content employ a variety of projective techniques.

The main conclusion from the study is that priests (and probably other clergy) would on a personal and professional level be able to function better if more support is provided to nurture higher levels of maturity and awareness. Most participants betrayed their wholeness in the interest of some aspect or themselves, either their 'Africaness' of their 'priestlyness', or both. Participants expressed the undifferentiated incompleteness of their personalities that manifest in the form of symptoms, dissatisfaction, unhappiness, tension, anxiety, anger and obsessions. A greater level of maturity and thus integration could assist them in finding more meaning in their choices to become priests and to integrate the seemingly conflicting aspects of their lives in meaningful ways.

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Competing interests

Authors' contributions
J.O.J. was responsible for conceptualising, data gathering and analysis, and final write-up of the article. D.d.T. was responsible for literature integration, data analysis and final write-up of the article. K.v.d.M. was responsible for conceptualising, integration of data and literature, and final write-up of the article.

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