

**THE CALLING AND ROLE OF CATHOLIC
NUNS IN KENYA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO KISII AND NAIROBI DIOCESES**

by

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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS OF THE
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DECLARATION

I, Margaret Moraa Atuma, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study on the calling and role of Catholic Nuns in Kenya, with a particular reference to Kisii and Nairobi Diocese. It analyses the participation of nuns in the Church, in health, in education and in social work.

This study was carried out mainly because of the increased awareness of the importance of nuns in the development process throughout the world. Since independence there have been varied congregations of nuns operating in Kenya. Nearly everyone has witnessed the good services rendered to Kenya by nuns as viable projects have been noticed even in the most isolated, remote areas and also in slums, but with very little publicity.

This study was also necessitated by the scarcity of literature on the subject. Most books seem intended for the knowledgeable insider. They have been written by theologians, by nuns for the other nuns, or by former nuns seeking to justify themselves.

The basic objectives of the study was mainly to find out why some women become nuns, what vows they take and how they understand them, the services they render both to the Church and to the community at large and finally the difficulties they encounter, if any, in rendering their services.

The field research for this study was carried out in the Kisii and Nairobi dioceses, as they both have a wide variety of congregations working there. Questionnaires formed the key methodological technique for primary data collection. Three categories of people were interviewed: the Mother Superiors or Novice Mistresses, the Sisters and three Priests. Some church documents and periodicals on the subject were also studied. All this together with the literature studied led to the findings of this study.

The findings are basically three. The first is that in order for one to become a fully professed member of a congregation, one really has to receive God's call into this type of life. It is a calling heard only in the heart, a need to do something. This aspect is clearly dealt with in chapter two of this study.

The second finding is that nuns take three vows namely poverty, chastity and obedience. These vows are extensively looked at in the third chapter. The vows are a sign of total and perpetual dedication of one's entire being to the service of God and of one's fellow men.

Thirdly, nuns in the Kenyan society are in one sense very powerful women. They occupy (to some people) prestigious position in society, command respect which is almost universal and are free to devote themselves to work without familial responsibilities. This is given great importance in chapter five which deals with the role of nuns in the church, in health, in education and in social work.

Others might like to research in greater detail certain aspects of nuns' lives at this time, for instance, the influence upon the teaching and nursing profession, or the difference, if any, between a native congregation and a foreign one. The opportunities for further research are limitless, and it is hoped that somebody will avail of them.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. **CANON LAW:** The term Canon Law is used to designate the body of law constituted by legitimate ecclesiastical authority for the proper organisation and government of the church as a visible society.
2. **CELIBACY:** It is the canonical state of abstinence from marriage freely undertaken for the purpose of dedicating one's life totally to God's service.
3. **CHASTITY:** It is one of the vows taken by nuns. It is the promise to forego human experiences in the sexual order, and a complete consecration to serve and love God.
4. **CLOISTER:** From the Latin claustrum meaning bar, signifies that part of a religious house, as well as gardens and recreational areas, reserved for the exclusive use of the religious.
5. **CONVENT:** It is a term derived from the Latin, convention, an assembly or meeting, in current popular usage, designate a residence of religious women.
6. **SISTER:** RELIGIOUS - a religious woman professed of simple vows, temporary or perpetual, in a religious congregation.
7. **SUPERIOR:** One who has the right to command subjects in virtue of their vow of obedience and who in exempt clerical institution also possesses jurisdiction in both external and internal forum.
8. **NOVITIATE:** May be defined as the period of time during which candidates for religious life study and live the rule of the religious institute they wish to join and during which the superiors of the institute judge the candidate's suitability for membership.
9. **NUN:** A term commonly used to designate any professed religious woman. Throughout this thesis the word 'nun' is commonly used to refer to

religious women. We are aware that this is canonically inaccurate. A nun, properly speaking, is a strictly 'enclosed' religious.

10. VOCATION: It refers to a divine call to undertake a particular activity or embrace a particular stage of life on behalf of God or the community.
11. VOW: Canon Law states that a vow is a deliberate, free, solemn promise and oath (choice) made to God.
12. COUNSEL: A divine gift which the church received from the Lord and which by His grace it preserves always.

ABBREVIATIONS

1. A.O.S.K.: Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya.
2. F.M.S.J.: Franciscan Missionary Sisters of St. Joseph.
3. I.B.V.M.: The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
4. M.S.O.L.A.: Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa.
5. P.C.: Perfectae Caritatis. It is a Vatican II Document on Religious Life.
6. R.C.: Renovacionis Causam.
7. S.C.R.S.I.: Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institute.
8. L.G.: Lumen Gentium.
9. E.N.: Evangelii Nuntiandi; Evangelization in the Modern World, 1975.
10. E.T.: Evangelica Testificati; Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious Life, 1971.
11. M.R.: Mutuae Relationes, Relation between Bishops and Religious, 1978.12.
12. M.M.M.: Medical Missionaries of Mary.
13. A.A.S.: Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 1971.
14. C.: Canon Law Code.
15. L.S.E.: Le Scelte Evangeliche, SCRSI, Religious Life and Human Development, January, 1981.

All abbreviations of the books of the Bible used in this thesis are those given in the RSV Bible.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

"Nuns", declared a sister at a recent convention, "have remained a mystery for far too long".¹ This research is an attempt to unravel that mystery, which for more than a thousand years has fascinated many people in different spheres of life.

Nuns far outnumber men in the religious life, but in a system which legally classes women with children, they are forced to remain a silent majority. The Catholic Church is still dominated by men who see women as subordinate by necessity. The church has taken a few steps to give convent women greater participation in the governing of religious this life, but it lags far behind the secular community in responding to women's demands for equality. By talking to these women, even when they are in enclosed Orders and recording their frank opinions on every aspect of their lives, we hope to find out more about them.

In this study, we also have to explore and analyse the answers to the following questions: Why do some women become nuns?; What vows do they take and how do they understand them?; Which services do they render both to the Church and to the community?; And finally, what difficulties do they encounter in rendering their services?.

1.2. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESEARCH

There has not been much research done on the calling and service of Catholic nuns in Kenya, let alone Africa. Surprisingly, most books on the subject seem intended for the knowledgeable insider. They have been written by theologians, by nuns for other nuns, or by ex-nuns seeking to justify themselves. Few of them answer the questions we want to ask. We have therefore decided that the best way to learn what we want to know is to write a thesis on the subject.

Since independence, there have been varied congregations of nuns operating in Kenya. Nearly everyone has witnessed the good services rendered to Kenyans by nuns. Viable projects have been noticed in the most isolated, remote areas and slums in our country, but with very little publicity. To get a correct idea of the enormous work of our Catholic sisterhoods in Kenya, one must add to the thousands of teaching sisters, the tens of thousands more who devote themselves to the many and varied works of Christian Charity, or who have consecrated themselves to the great work of Catholic missions, or finally, who have buried themselves in their convents to live lives of holiest contemplation and atonement.

There has also been an attempt at Africanisation of the Church in Kenya since independence. The nuns in Kenya have set such an example. Formerly, congregations of nuns were run and headed by European nuns, but at present, it is not uncommon to find Catholic Sisterhoods in Kenya run and headed by African nuns.

This study is undertaken with the firm conviction that there will be correct understanding in the mind of the layman about nuns and no longer base their views on speculation. Moreover, nuns hold a place of honour and every encouragement should be given to any effort which will enable the spiritual treasures they possess to be placed more directly at the service of the Apostolate.

1.3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The bulk of literary information on the nuns is found in the books reviewed below. Other works consulted are given in the bibliography at the end of the study.

According to Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens (1963)², the nun is called to play a leading role in the church. In putting the emphasis on the part she has to play, the author has at the same time brought to light the chief problems that concern the whole field of pastoral work. The author is concerned only with the nuns belonging to congregations dedicated to apostolic work and thus the contemplative life, which is on a different plane and has different goals is not the object of his direct consideration. Of much interest in this book is part II which talks on the inner meaning of the religious vocation, the place of the nun in pastoral work, and requirements for adequate training. In this book, the author also intends to help nuns deploy on a global scale the inexhaustible treasure of their devotion and the wealth of their spirituality. Just like many other books read, the author is more concerned here to see the religious through the eyes of a believer, who he says regards the former with sympathy and gratitude. But not everyone regards the nun so, some see her as one who has ran away from responsibility to get an easy way out in the convent. Therefore, the author is only one-sided in his study.

Concerning some of the problems of nuns in the world today, Sister Bertrande Meyers (1964)³, fills a tremendous need for the present moment. There are criticisms which have been lodged against women religious over many years. Whatever their purpose many nuns and Sisters, precisely because of the own sense of fairness and humility, have come to doubt their usefulness in and to the church. Young girls, possibly the religious of tomorrow, influenced by these criticisms have mistrusted their own sense of vocation; and many others have been advised that a more effective apostolate is open to them in the lay state.

Sister Bertrande's book leaves no doubt about the need for women religious in the church. While it does not pretend that christian perfection can be found only in the religious

life, it does succeed in showing that the religious life is the most effective means of achieving perfection in charity and loving service towards God and the Neighbour. The preparation of the young religious for the apostolate has been stressed throughout this book because the directives of the Church and the experiences of major superiors make such preparations of primary importance.

Batelli MCCj (1990)⁴, has in his book written a short summary of the history of religious life and a short but complete presentation of Church legislation on religious life intertwined with its spiritual, missionary and social aspects. This book is intended to the many young African men and women who are getting ready to be sent and to share the salvific mission of "Christ in the contemplation on the mountains, or proclaiming the kingdom of God to the multitudes, or healing the sick and converting sinners to a good life, or blessing children and doing good to all, always in obedience to the Father who sent him." (L.G. 46). The author goes on to talk of religious life as a gift of the spirit to the church and to the world. This book is useful in helping one understand the meaning of the doctrine and the way of the church concerning consecrated life.

Elinor Tong Deehey (1930)⁵, has a comprehensive account of the current activities of the religious communities of women in the USA. The author intended the book to be for greater popular knowledge of the work of nuns in the US. He hoped also that it may prove helpful to the young Catholic woman who aspires to the religious life. That she may be especially informed and directed to the particular religious community and work which her aptitudes fit her, is the most earnest wish of the author of this volume. Included in this book are the Orders and their foundresses.

Marcelle Bernstein (1976)⁶, concentrates principally on the Anglican and Roman Catholic Orders in England and America, but she has cast her net widely among them. However, she at no one time talks about the foundresses of the Orders.

Sister Rosemaries Hudson (1967)⁷, after a splendid theological exposition on the meaning of pattern, surveys the forms, schedules and patterns which developed in convent life through the centuries. She continues to say that what suited yesterday's needs may be out of

joint today, what was customary and sacrosanct yesterday may conflict with the liturgical and biblical renewal which is revitalising the people of God today. Change, flexibility and experimentation in the prayer life of the sister are essential, but this, she says cannot be imposed from above or from outside. Only those who live the life can speak with personal experience and competence. This book may be a useful guide in helping to give suggestions as to how some of the problems in the convent may be alleviated. However, it tends to concentrate more on the prayer life of the nun, leaving the secular life largely untouched.

While wondering whether nuns feel oppressed by men, Sister Albertus Magnus Micgrath's book (1972)⁸, was of some help. The author's interest is in the movement for liberation and equality for women, especially in the churches.

Caitriona Clear in her book (1987), makes a vital contribution to the understanding of Irish society at that time. For instance, the religious life which has traditionally been seen as a means of escape from the 'real world', is presented as the only area in which there was the possibility of a career open to talented Irish women. Is this the case for Kenyan women? The author goes further to trace the establishment of many Irish female congregations. She examines the social background of Irish nuns and analyses the work they did and in particular the enormous contribution they made to the teaching and nursing professions. Finally, it attempts to locate the position of women religious in the overall context of women's roles in 19th century Irish life.⁹

Felix M. Podimattam (1976)¹⁰, has tried to gather together the best contemporary thinking on the virginity subject. The author has no doubt that seminaries and juniorates of religious will find in this book a useful manual on the theology of consecrated celibacy.

Speyer Von Adrenne's work (1978)¹¹, opens the reader to our Lord's need for man's total surrender to this call of love. As a remarkable and contemporary woman teacher of the church, she pointed out the many ways in which people flee from the demands of their vocation. She presents a unique vision of the peace, joy and fruitfulness people could

experience if they respond to the poignant call of the crucified saviour to participate in the mystery to the fullest.

Still on 'calling' Richard Butler (1961)¹², casts out the 'unnecessary vocation, and restores in its place the valid interpretation of Christ's call. This he says is a general invitation to all to practice the higher life through the Councils. His forthright discussion of topics ranging from the psychological and supernatural aspects of religious vocation to the 'lost vocation' and the qualifications and impediments to religious life, will guide a reader to a more comprehensive understanding of the real meaning of religious vocation as seen in the area of salvation.

Leigh Rulla, Sr. Joyce Ridick and Franco Imoda (1976)¹³, intend to offer some help to all the priests and religious of both sexes who want to grow in their vocational commitment. It hopes to contribute somehow to the difficult tasks related to such a growth. People in charge of formation, vocational directors, spiritual fathers, teachers, superiors, may find some help in the efforts for the good of their brethren.

The notions of vocation, both general and specific are examined from a theological point of view by Charles A. Schleck (1963)¹⁴. Many factors in the vast field of vocation which have been lost to our contemporary vision are here presented in such a way that a thorough and balanced interpretation of each can be more easily and rewardingly realised. This is, indeed, an important book for all engaged in one way or another in vocation work.

In Mary Ewens¹⁵ book several authors present various reasons why aspirants join the convent. In it, Smith quotes Robert Bellarmine, an Italian Jesuit Cardinal who died in 1621; claiming that upon occasion the poor enter religious life in order to improve their financial condition. Murray suggests that young ladies are induced to enter religion by romantic tales of beautiful noblewomen with exquisite taste, and a life that is heaven on earth. Disappointment in love is another motive cited by Hogan, while in a general disappointment with life is favoured by Chaplin, M'Garvin and Murray. Hawthorne uses the theme of the convent as a refuge for those who are disappointed in life and love in. Some who enter are fleeing domestic

tyranny. One of Mrs. Chaplin's characters sees the economic security, the certainty of being taken care of for the rest of one's life, as a reason why some women enter the convent.

The theme of the unwilling nun, so popular in European literature in earlier centuries, is repeated in several books read in the U.S.A. Culbertson tells of two hundred daughters of the first families of Cuba who were induced to enter the convent even though they were not willing. Murray says that in Europe, he found orphans and illegitimate children compelled to be nuns. Miss Bunkley's editor quotes Alphonsus Liguori's advice to nuns imprisoned against their will: "Make a virtue of necessity", he says. Chaplin¹⁶ tells of a nun who entered the convent because her confessor told her to.

Other reasons suggested in some books for entering the convent are an unhappy love affair which impels one to put herself beyond the reach of similar sufferings forever, or obedience to an all-powerful father. Edith O'Gorman tells of a fellow nun who entered the convent after her fiancé's death and other girls enter because of some heart distress.¹⁷

Kitty Ellison hears in her dreams the slim, pale nun crying out, in a lamentable accent, that all men were false and there was no shelter save the convent or the grave.¹⁸

In the American, Henry James bases his use of the convent as a dusky old-world expedient.¹⁹ Claire de Cintre obeys her mother's command to break her engagement to Christopher Newman, and then chooses to enter the convent rather than live in the world, beside him but not with him. This decision ends the attempts of her mother and brother to improve the family fortunes by marrying her to a wealthy nobleman. In dealing with Claire's decision, James repeats many of the stereotypes which were the standard clinches of convent fiction. Claire sees the convent as a refuge from the hateful, miserable world from where she will find peace and safety.²⁰

Various historical records have obscured the leadership roles assumed by women in the church. In 1973 Joan Morris, a British scholar, published a fascinating study entitled "Against Nature and God" (the American edition bears the title, "The Lady Was a Bishop"). "History may be hidden in many ways", Morris writes. He says sometimes this is due to a "purposeful

malicious hiding of events".²¹ He illustrated this by showing how the practice of appointing women overseers of churches, a common practice from apostolic times onward for many centuries, was slowly suppressed. In some cases attempts were even made to obscure the records which witnessed to their work. The author records, for example, that in the Church of St. Praxedis in Rome there is a mosaic dating from the 5th century or earlier. It depicts the head of a veiled woman over which is inscribed the title episcopa (overseer, bishop). Through careful research, Morris uncovered evidence which demonstrated that for many centuries women were active in the leadership of churches and of religious communities comprised of both men and women. In the 4th century Asia Minor, for example, a deaconess named Marthana served within a community of men and women which grew up in Seleucia around the shrine of St. Thecla. The document containing an eyewitness account of this community has been translated and annotated by John Wilkinson of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, under the title *Egeria's Travels*. Egeria writes:

Round the holy church there is a tremendous number of cells for men and women. And that was where I found one of my dearest friends, a holy deaconess called Marthana. I had come to know her in Jerusalem when she was up there on pilgrimage. She was the Superior of some cells of apotactites or virgins. ... I stayed there, visiting all the holy monks and apotactites the men as well as the women.²²

Even though as late as the 18th century women were still accepted in leadership positions in the church in England, France, Germany, Italy and Spain, the history of their involvement has been treated lightly. Morris comments, "The Christian tradition is presented as an all-male right of authority as though it had been so always."²³

1.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To find out why some women become nuns
- To find out what vows they take and how they understand them.
- To find out what services they render both to the church and to the community at large.
- To find out the difficulties they encounter in rendering their services.

1.5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework utilised included biblical, theological and canonical. A few examples of biblical and theological aspects have been given. A nun is a woman who, after taking religious vows, lives with other women in a convent, a life in the service of God. Of the million young women down the centuries who have heard the call of Christ, "Come, follow me," (Lk. 18:22) and have answered it, not one could honestly attribute the call to any merit of her own. A religious vocation is a mystery. It will always remain a mystery, and perhaps to no one will it remain so deep a mystery than to the one favoured with it.

The sacred Scriptures reveal how constantly and consistently God seeks to unveil the face of his Fatherhood to all, inviting them to form a people truly his own in particular, they show how he freely chooses certain persons, both men and women, who by their total belonging to Him, may walk with Him in His loving and saving action (Eph. 5:2). Both the Old and New Testaments tell of personalities chosen by God and their response to His call. Personalities called by God in the Old Testament include Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, to name but a few. God, in calling men to his service, acts in sovereign freedom, but with the respect of the freedom of the person he chooses. Whoever is called is indeed a man touched by God and endowed with a capacity to fulfil God's purpose. Whatever

the age, background or circumstances of the biblical personalities in question, all were men who had in some way met God, and who were indelibly marked, moved and changed by that contact.

The New Testament also shows God's freedom and initiative in electing, choosing, summoning to a form of life which implies a special relationship with the Master, with a view to the proliferation of his mission. For instance everywhere Jesus went, He approached men in a variety of ways, in their own environment, in the company of their own relatives and friends. As He 'passed by', 'moved on', 'turned round' and 'looked at them', as He addressed them by the lakeside, or spoke to them as they were 'following' Him; as He surprised one of them by saying that he 'knew' him, astonished another by calling him by name; or revealing His intentions for him, He created in each of them a compelling need to join 'his way', to go towards him, or more explicitly, 'to go and see'!

At the same time, the Lord, in other instances which do not refer to the group of the twelve, openly says that not everyone can enter into this relationship of loving union with Him, but only those to whom it has been given (Mt. 19:11). It is significant that this is explicitly stated in the context of a choice between the married state and virginity or celibacy for the sake of the kingdom. It is through the strength of their union with Him that they turn with that fire which Christ came to cast on earth (Lk. 12:49), urging them to spend themselves for others, sharing their sorrows, lightening their burdens, caring for them in all possible ways, and thus enabling them to experience the goodness of God, source for all goodness; contributing to their development and growth in the ways of justice, peace and love.

Under the theological aspects, it is worth noting that consecrated life is to be considered a charismatic fact in the Church, due to a particular inspiration of the Holy Spirit, based on the Gospel, on Revelation, and therefore a theological fact. As a consequence, the legislation of the church on this matter must be theological, it must have reference to the Gospel and to God. Canons 573-575, in fact, repeating the teaching of the Vatican Council, affirm the evangelical counsels, grounded on the words and the examples of the Lord Jesus, to the gifts the Church had received from the Lord.

The nature and purpose of consecrated life in the Church are clearly expressed in the documents Lumen Gentium and Perfectae Caritatis of Vatican Council II. Religious life is presented as a special service to God. They accept the word and the example of Christ. Religious, moreover, leave all things for Christ's sake and follow Him, regarding this as the one thing that is necessary, solicitous for all that is His.

1.6. THE HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses being tested in this study are:

- i) Some nuns leave the convent because the call changes.
- ii) Some, due to internal problems such as oppression by superiors or novitiate mistresses.
- iii) Others leave because the vows are too strict.
- iv) Others due to external problems such as parents' demand that they leave the convent, or problems at home which can be solved by their help.

1.7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Questionnaires formed the key technique for our primary data collection. We had two main types of questionnaires; one for the Superiors in the convent or the Novitiate Mistresses; and the other for the Sisters in the convent. Oral interviews were conducted of as many informants as possible. There were two research assistants; one in Kisii diocese, and the other in Nairobi archdiocese. In this endeavour, several visits were made to various convents. Respondents were contacted directly by the researcher, who either interviewed the respondent with a questionnaire guide or left a questionnaire for the respondent to fill in at a later time. In case of the latter, the researcher went back to collect the questionnaire. Fifty nuns were interviewed in which case the Mother Superiors, the Sisters in general and those still in their postulancy stages were contacted.

Another method used in supplementing questionnaire techniques was that of in-depth interview, using key informants who are well informed of what the Catholic nuns are involved in, in their areas of work.

In gathering the secondary data, libraries such as Hekima College library and the Jomo Kenyatta Memorial (University of Nairobi) were of great help. Several books, church documents and periodicals on the subject were 'fished' through.

1.8. SCOPE OF STUDY

The areas of study chosen were Nairobi and Kisii dioceses. Several reasons made us concentrate in these two geographical areas. First and foremost, both dioceses have a wide variety of congregations working there. In Nairobi, for instance, there is a growing number of Sisters' Houses. There are more than 90 Sisters' communities in Kenya and almost all these have been registered in Nairobi, hence, making it the area with the largest number of existing religious orders of Sisters in Kenya. Kisii diocese also has several congregations of Sisters which are to be found in eight well-known Catholic missions; with Nyabururu being one of the busiest.

Further still, Nairobi city has developed a double face. One is directed towards the sun, the daylight face of a religious Christian city, dotted with some 800 churches or chapels of which 100 are Catholic. The other face of the city is directed towards the moon, the people groping in the dim light or in the very darkness of the night; the hundreds of thousands of slum dwellers, the unemployed and under-employed, the frustrated youth, the desperate prostitutes, the disappointed migrants from the countryside who got lost in the jungle of the city and have not found the way to the church any more; and also the 'new rich' whose religious feelings have become suffocated in the pitiless race for money and whose only joy is in the bar or in the night club.²⁴ In this two-faced city, Sisters are found trying to make life comfortable for the miserable people who have no hope for tomorrow.

Since most of the church's programmes are directed toward developing the rural areas, Kisii diocese was selected as an example of a rural area. Further still, Kisii diocese was quite convenient, being the researcher's home area.

Due to the existence of many congregations in Kenya, we realised that we could not study all the congregations of Sisters partly because time could not allow us and also because this would make the study superficial. So we selected a few congregations and gave case studies of some for illustration.

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CHAPTER II

THE CALLING OF NUNS IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The reality which is called vocation is not a new discovery. It is a historical fact which has occurred since the creation of the world; a fact which is continuing now and will continue until God's eternal plan for the universe is brought to a conclusion.

The world today is experiencing a decline in number of those ready to consecrate themselves to Christ. This shows the need for an increasing commitment to prayer and for initiatives which might prevent this crisis from having grave consequences for the people of God. In Kenya, however, many young girls are particularly joining the Religious life. This is probably because Christianity is in its infant stage; hence the enthusiasm.

The Second Vatican Council recognised that vocation is a special gift which is also a sign of election. This is because it allows those who welcome it to conform themselves more deeply to "that kind of poor and virginal life which Christ the Lord chose for himself and which His Virgin Mother embraced also."

Pope John Paul VI affirmed that the consecrated life is a privileged testimony of a constant seeking for God, of an undivided love of Christ alone, and of an absolute dedication to the growth of His Kingdom. Without this concrete sign charity would run the risk of becoming cold, the salvific paradox of the Gospel would be blunted, and the 'salt' of faith would lose its savour in a world undergoing secularisation".¹

The Catholic church recognises the vital place of vocations that it annually celebrates the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. This is traditionally celebrated on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, "Good Shepherd Sunday".

2.1. VOCATION IN SCRIPTURES

The words for 'call and calling' (sometimes translated 'vocation' occur frequently in both Old and New Testaments; often with Hebraic overtones such that a call, and certainly a call by name, can have the effect of bringing to pass what the caller intends. Especially to call someone by name is frequently to invest them with the qualities which the name connotes. The notion of God's calling, in particular, is inherent in the whole of biblical religion. God's calling is supremely effective in the fulfilment of His purpose through those whom He calls.

The Sacred Scriptures reveal how constantly and how consistently God seeks to unveil the face of His Fatherhood to all, inviting them to form a people truly His own; in particular they show how He freely chooses certain persons both men and women who, by their total belonging to him may walk with him in his loving and saving action.²

2.2. SPECIAL CALLS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is replete with the stories of individuals whom God called upon to fulfil the divine plan. For instance, the nomad Abraham was told to leave his country and kindred to the land which God would show him. God promised to bless him. God would found on him a multitude, a nation, a people. For Abraham it meant above all the radical surrender of self-determination in order to follow the leading of his God. The change of Abram's and Sarai's names is also indicative. Abram's name was changed to Abraham while Sarai became Sarah. Abraham was to become the Father while Sarah the Mother of all nations. The call was for a special mission.

In the book of Exodus we read of Moses who was also called by God. It was in the wilderness, more precisely on Horeb, the mountain of God, that his life took a new turn. God sent him to Pharaoh so that he would bring forth His people out of Egypt.

The first book of Samuel provides a familiar instance of God choosing a human instrument to be His messenger. Samuel, the answer to the prayer of the barren Hannah, who promised to the Lord "all the days of his life",⁵ was brought to the Temple as a child. God's choice fell on this young boy who responded with an open heart and prompt spontaneity.⁶

When God does make a call, it is always ultimately for the benefit of others, although the ultimate goal is actually salvation. This call has to be heard, recognised, received with an open heart. How often in the biblical context, the wilderness, the desert, the temple, the mountain of God, silence, are the setting for that encounter between God and His creature which results in call and response. A suitable environment facilitates that inner attentiveness necessary for awareness of the call. Nonetheless, once God has chosen, made known His choice and extended His invitation, He also awaits the response - a response which in turn flows from God-given freedom.⁷

2.3. SPECIAL CALLS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament calls mainly concentrate on those called by Jesus Christ during His earthly life. He invited all those He came into contact to live according to the Beatitudes and to accomplish the Father's will. There are innumerable examples in the Gospels themselves, in the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of St. Paul. As Christ travelled the length and breadth of Galilee, His journeys sometimes led him to the adjoining countries. Everywhere he went, He approached people in a variety of ways, in their own environment, in the midst of their every-day occupations, and in the company of their own relatives and friends.

All the Gospel passages describe how Jesus approached those He called, as they were occupied in mending or washing their nets, fishing together with their father, sitting at the customs house or under a fig tree.⁸ The message is that God calls those who are humble and simple in life.

From the episode which might be called "the vocation on the mountain", there is a moving scene of the Lord in the midst of the suffering multitude. Jesus drew the attention of the disciples to the painful scene, to the people that surrounded him, lamenting, crying, imploring, begging... He shared with them His own inner feeling: "I feel sorry for them..."⁹ Then He pointed out to them that "the harvest is rich... but the labourers are few..."¹⁰, those that is, who are willing to share His life of loving concern and of total giving to alleviate the miseries of others and to bring them life.

2.4. CHARISMS IN THE CHURCH

The word charism is the English counter-part of the Greek *Charisma* which means "free gift" and is connected with the same root as charis, "grace".¹¹ In the New Testament, the word does not always have a technical sense. It can denote all the gifts of God, which He bestows without changing His mind (Rom. 11:29), especially this "gift of grace" which comes to us through Christ (Rom. 11:29), and opens out in to eternal life (Rom. 5:15ff). It is Paul who introduced the term into religious language, the word means a free gift of grace. To be more precise, it is a supernatural gift bestowed by the Holy Spirit for building up the body of Christ. A charism is a gift which has its source in the charism - grace or favour of God and which is destined for "the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7). This being so, charisms are many and are related to various services and functions. The words "charism" and "charismatic" are in such common use among Catholics today that it is hard to realise that they were so unfamiliar to most people less than twenty years ago.

The early Church continued to experience certain individuals, notably Paul and Barnabas, as divinely called to particular ministries.¹² It also interpreted conversion to Christ as a call, whereby God joined Christians to His Son,¹³ destined them for peace and liberty; holiness and eternal life; and made the live out amongst all "the Saints", so they might share

the glory of the Kingdom (1 Thes. 2:12). The New Testament attributes that to God's own light (1 Pt.2:9) and so the Christians must live lives worthy of their call.

The early Christians put a lot of personal and communal effort in putting into practice their charism. They did works of mercy such as nursing, alms giving, administration, fraternal help of every kind and also did preaching, teaching and discernment of Spirits.

The History of the religious life teaches us that God's variety of charisms (gifts) is the Good News that at any time of history He bestows upon founders of orders and foundresses of congregations the specific gift that is needed for that particular time. For instance, we think of the Dominicans in the days of Heresies, of the Franciscans in the days of clerical riches and abuses in the church, of the teaching congregations in the times of religious indifference and child labour, of charitable congregations in the days of discrimination of all sorts.

In the beginning of his treatment of the charismatic gifts St. Thomas points out that one of the historical actualities which differentiated christians in the early church was the presence or absence in individuals of one or more gifts. They were given not for the sanctification of the individual as for habitual or sanctifying grace, but for the good of the community in which the individual lived.

The early Church thought of the Apostolate as the first of the Spiritual gifts entrusted to her by Christ. It was itself a charism. The apostle and the prophetic Spirit was, for Paul, the foundation of the Church, with Christ as its cornerstone.¹⁴ The apostolate was a spiritual gift he treasured much, and that is why he so frequently referred to it.

The gifts of the Spirit are as diverse as the ministries in the church and the operation of men. The profound unity between them lies in the fact that they come from one spirit, as the ministries came from one Lord, and the forms of work from one God.¹⁵ Men, each following his own charism, are the administrators of a divine grace which is one and multiple. The function of each charism, rather than manifesting conflict with one another within the totality of the body or tearing it apart, tend toward its unity. The distribution of the gifts is the Spirit's doing (1 Cor 12:11) and, at the same time Christ's who give divine grace as He sees fit.¹⁶ But in the use of these gifts each one should think first of all of the common good.

The basic Scripture passage in which these gifts are presented to us is found in St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians even though they are spoken of elsewhere.¹⁷ The reason for this seems to be that although these gifts were distributed throughout the other churches during this period, still they were present in the church of Corinth to such an extent that their presence was having a detrimental effect on the doctrine which Paul had preached to the members, namely their intimate union with one another as members of the one Body of Christ. The widespread diffusion of these gifts was threatening the collective life of the church which was one of the favourite themes of Paul. Consequently, in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul thought it necessary to point out to them the true value which they were to place on these gifts, finally contrasting them with charity which, in the hymn that followed, stands out as the real core and essence of the perfection of one's life in Christ.

Vatican II Council describes charisms as "special graces by which He makes people able and willing to undertake various tasks or services. Such gifts are not a privilege of any class of people in the church, but are distributed among the faithful of every rank."

Their purpose, as described by the Council is to make people able and willing to undertake various tasks or services advantageous for the renewal and upbuilding of the church. In other words, they are specific gifts of grace which equip people for specific kinds of service. Obviously, love is the basic gift which is the indispensable motive force behind any and every genuine service to others. Without love, as St. Paul reminded the Corinthians, even the apparently most generous and heroic gestures of service would be worthless. Therefore, one can say that every charism presupposes the gift of love, which moves the person to employ his or her gift in loving service to others. But a charism is a "special grace," in the sense that it equips a person in a particular way for a particular kind of service. As the Conciliar text says, it makes people both "able and willing". A charism, then, as understood from Vatican II, can be described as a grace-given capacity and willingness for some kind of service that contributes to the renewal and upbuilding of the church.

For some time before Vatican II, theology was reluctant to teach that charism belong to the contemporary church. Theology wanted to confine the charism to the primitive church and to limit them characteristically to the miraculous or extraordinary. Vatican II changed all that theological opinion. Little and great charism have existed throughout the history of the church. As we read in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, the Holy Spirit distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. These charismatic gifts, whether they be the most outstanding or the most simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation, for they are exceedingly suitable and useful for the needs of the Church.

Yet Vatican II admitted that it was by divine plan that a wonderful variety of religious communities grew up with the diversity of their spiritual Spirit of Christ communicated directly and not necessarily or always through hierarchical channels. By their initiative and creativity, in accordance with their special gifts, religious communities initiate movements which only later may be taken up by authority. Their apostolate lie at the frontiers of the church, supported by the gifts, small and great, of the Holy Spirit.

Various gifts of the Spirit should enable Christians to work together harmoniously in the Church, for though the gifts are many they are one in the Spirit. Since no one can claim all the gifts, their very diversity can do service in many apostolate and fit together into a fine pattern of apostolic activity. St Paul wrote about this unity because he himself was faced with the Corinthians quarrelling over gifts as though they were held in contention or competition;

There is a variety of gifts but always the same spirit, there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sort of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. ¹⁸

It is not surprising then that the Christian mission is a privileged area of Charisms. The gift strengthens the apostle to proclaim boldly the good news of the glorified Lord. Since the characteristic of Christian life is (ought to be) agape, one would expect to find charism in the service of love. The Spirit gives the grace of diakonia, of loving service (Rom. 12:7). The charismatic gift of assistance is present at the birth of every notable charitable work of the church. In general the gift inspires and makes fruitful the love and labour of Christian men and women who courageously and generously spend themselves for others.

One may sum up the New Testament data as follows: because a charism is a gift of the Spirit for the building up of the Church it is always meant for the common good; it has upon it the stamp of service. Needs vary and charisms are many and varied. Broadly speaking, we may specify the areas of teaching, of mission and of fraternal love. Accordingly, these are gifts of diakonia. And there are those who have received the gifts: apostles, prophets, speakers in tongues.¹⁹

It is worth noting that charisms are never opposed to one another. Rather, they complement one another. There is a common finality for which they are given, and this is attained only when each one is faithful to the gift which he has or may have received from God. Among these gifts there is one that is most important for those engaged in vocational work, the discernment of Spirits. It holds a place analogous to that of prudence in the order of the virtues, and to the Gift of counsel among the gifts of the Holy Ghost. It is also helpful for the one who is called since it permits him to determine the course of action to be followed among the many which exist in the Mystical Body. Moreover, it enables him to place his entire life under the control and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The authenticity of these various charisms can be recognised especially by the docility of the one possessing them to the Holy Ghost, by his respect for authority, and by a lively feeling of desire to bring about the common good to which the exercise of these gifts is always subordinated. One who has received one or other of these gifts has a vocation of mission in the Church. Yet this mission must be exercised according to the norms and the good of the entire society and not independently of these.

2.4.1. A GENERAL CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF VOCATION

In the New Testament "vocation" (Greek *Kesis*) always refers to God's call to men through Christ to the life of faith within the body of the "called" (*ekkletoi*). The Church is the *ekklesia*, called out of the "world". All the "called" were expected to serve God in their daily lives (cf the so-called "house-tables" Col 3:22-41; Epl. 6:5-9; 1 Tim.6:1; Titus 2:9; 1 Pt. 2:18-25). They were to work unto their master in heaven. Thus, daily work is sanctified, but it is not to be confused with God's calling in to the fellowship of the Saints.²⁰

In traditional Christian usage, vocation refers to a divine call to undertake a particular activity or embrace a particular "stage of life" on behalf of God or the community. Popularly, the term often became attached more or less exclusively to a calling to Priesthood or Religious life, although theologians were careful to treat marriage and the single state outside the religious community also as genuine vocations.

The Second Vatican Council describes consecrated life as

a gift of God which the Church has received from her Lord and which by His grace she always safeguards.²¹

Theologically, this term can have a wide variety of meanings, as is ably shown by Father William R. O'Connor in "The layman's call." In its primary meaning, vocation can be defined as a divine call to embrace a definite state of life. In its secondary meaning, vocation can be defined as a divine call to a definite work.²²

Many Christians see vocation as God's gift to mankind and His call to accept Him as their Supreme God, the fulfilment of their deepest desires. Hence their first attitude toward vocation is one of humble and reverent and trustful acceptance and expectation.

A vocation is a mysterious call which has its origin from the Father's love, who predestines, creates, calls. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, a glowing testimony of the Spirit's charismatic action within the church. It inserts those who are called more deeply in to creation, as called by God to Him and especially into the people of God as Body of Christ.²³

The christian understanding of vocation has been seen from different perspective; a divine call, an eternal call, a call of God the Father and a call of Christ.²⁴

The Religious Sisters and Contemplative nuns who are part of the Christian community understand that their consecrated life comes from baptismal consecration and express it with greater fullness. With a free response to the call of the Holy Spirit they decide to follow Christ, consecrating themselves to Him completely. The Council says: "The more stable and firm this bond is (the bond of union that exists between Christ and His Church), the more perfect will the Christian religious consecration be."²⁵

They are called by Christ, made members of His body, consecrated in a life of the evangelical counsels and destined by Him to have a share in the mission that Christ has entrusted to the church; His own mission of salvation. It is a call to walk towards perfection along the way of the evangelical counsels, professed with generous totality of commitment. They are, in fact, fully religious.

Fundamentally, He who calls man and woman is God the Father, the Vinedresser, and He draws people from the one whom he sent."²⁶ His call continues in Christians the work of love that began in creation. The vocation of each individual merges with his very being; it can be said that vocation and person become one. This means that vocation and person become one. This means that in God's creative initiative there enters a particular act of love for those called not only to salvation but also to the ministry of salvation. Therefore from all eternity, from the moment we came into existence in the plan of the creator, He also "called" us, pre-disposing in us the gifts and favourable conditions for our personal and conscious response to the call of Christ and the Church. God who loves us, who is love, is also, "He who calls".²⁷

A vocation is a call without coercion. This is so because the response depends on generosity of heart of the one called, because He always allows the freedom of choice:

"If you would..." (cf Mt. 19:21). It is a special call. Those called have their life hidden with Christ in God (cf.Col. 3:3). It is a call to a total gift. It is a complete gift of themselves in witness to love Him and serve Him.

A vocation means dedication to Christ. When, by means of an interior light and through the words of the Church the Lord calls an individual to serve Him as a priest, a religious, or a member of a secular Institute, He stirs up in that individual, and requires of him an unconditional dedication to his person and the work of the Gospel: "Follow Me!" Such a dedication is an immensely attractive choice, it can really fill the human heart.

A vocation means detachment and great determination to break not only with sin such as lying, impurity, egoism, vindictiveness, but also with certain human values which are means to our ultimate end: the satisfaction of human love, wealth, professional advancement, pleasure, success, power, to name a few.

2.4.2. SIGNS OF VOCATION IN CATHOLIC TEACHING

To start from the end as the Rev. Br. Aidan M. Michael says, "the surest sign of vocation is one's admission by a bishop to ordination or by the Religion Superior, to the religious profession."²⁸

A person can feel even more sure that he has a vocation to the religious life if he aims at avoiding the many moral dangers found in ordinary life. This is because religious life offers safeguards that are known to be very good. Other persons want to exchange earthly for heavenly goods as indicated in LK.18:28-30. More generous ones, having read 1 cor.7:32-40, decide that it is in religious life that they will serve God with an undivided heart! All these have a good reason for going to the seminary or the Novitiate.²⁹

A religious vocation is recognised not so much by the call in the heart or by a sensible attraction, which can at times be lacking, but rather by the upright intentions of the aspirant along with the possession of all those qualities of mind, soul and body which make her suitable for the religious state. Aptitude alone is not enough; there must be as well, and above all, the personal and free desire of the aspirant.³⁰

The upright intention, according to Paul VI, is the

"clear and firm will to concentrate oneself entirely to the service of God, and from a super natural motive."³¹

The question of whether to enter religious life is too important to be faced alone. God speaks through His church. One may feel an attraction towards the religious life, but it is important to make sure that this desire is inspired by God. Under the guidance of priests or religions, one is usually helped to discover if she really has the qualities needed to join religious life.³²

God speaks through signs. It is worthwhile considering whether these signs exist in one's life:

- i) Human Qualities.
 - Good judgement and spirit of initiation
 - Self-control and spirit of renunciation
 - Happiness
 - Health
- ii) Personal love for prayers to God. Do you feel the need for prayer?
- iii) Community spirit. Can you share with others discuss and collaborate with them? Can you accept differences of character and mix with everybody?

To know a vocation in life, one must observe and interpret the 'signs' that are written in the heart of life itself. This sign or indications through which God reveals a vocation are mainly first of all the needs of the world and of the church and secondly the religious women's own qualities and aptitudes for certain areas of work. God's will is sought looking at the 'signs' through God's eyes with much reflection and prayers.

Instructions from the sacred scriptures can help one know she had a vocation in life. For instance, Acts 6:1-6 talks of the vocation of the seven deacons. The apostles saw that there was need for extra workers. They realised that it is God's way of indicating to them that deacons must be found. Ex.3:1-10 talks of the call of Moses. Moses, like other leaders in the

Old Testament, was called and sent when there was need for a leader. If there was no need he would not have been called. The need determined what had to be done.

These signs are not expected to be found in sensational events or in some extraordinary intervention of God. These signs are in the heart of life. It is not sufficient to discover the needs of the world and those of the Church; it is also important for mankind to make them his and see how he can answer them, considering his aptitude. It is worth-noting that the Priesthood and Religion Life of Sisters and nuns or even brothers should not appear to be the only type of vocation. Even marriage is a vocation.

2.4.3. VOCATION AND THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

The early Church Fathers furnish ample testimony to the vocations which are common and almost certain today. In one of his letters, St Antony (250-356), points out the presence of a divine or interior call or inspiration to the monastic life, without which one should not attempt it. The exact nature of this call is not described but the Saint states that God also furnishes certain external stimuli or helps to enable one to hear this call. These include the hearing of the Gospel, the reading of Scripture, and the divine punishments. Nevertheless, the idea of an internal call is clearly insisted upon. On this point he is closely followed by Cassian who clearly distinguishes between ecclesiastical and divine vocation: "God moves one interiorly to embrace the monastic life which, however, must be approved by the monastic authorities", in order to be authenticated.

St. Gregory the Great (504-604), in speaking of priests who have been really called to the ministry, indicates that ordination alone is not sufficient to constitute a complete vocation; "They are really priests who have been ordained, but this ordination is merely permissive or one that is tolerated by God. By themselves they rule and not by the will of the Supreme Rector, those who do not have virtue and who are in no wise divinely called." This sense of his thought seems to be that even though one may have been validly ordained, he has

nonetheless received the order illicitly since he has in no way received from God the interior vocation which the external rite of ordination presupposes in the ordination.

An idea very similar to this can be found in St. Bede's commentary on St. Mark. There he mentions that "the Lord in calling exteriorly by means of the human word, enkindles the desire to follow Him promptly by means of a divine inspiration interiorly put into one's heart."³³

2.4.4. THE SCHOLASTIC PERIOD

During this period, we will cite merely three of the greater authors this time. St. Bernard (1090-1153), in one of his letters touching on the question of impending a vocation, teaches that this would be to interfere with something that comes from God: "The Angel of Great Council calls. Why do you offer any counsel that would be foreign to this? It is God who works in the hearts of men in order to incline their wills wherever He wishes."³⁴ A century or so later, St. Bonaventure (1221-1274), in an exposition of the Rule of the Order of Friars Mirror, mentions that to enter the order one must have received some inspiration, and such inspiration cannot be had unless it shall have been given from above.

It is perhaps St. Thomas (1227-1274) who has given the most lengthy treatment of this. Almost the whole of Chapters 8 and 9 of the *Contra Retralentes Homines* - "Against those who would Prevent Men from Entering Religion" - deals with this subject of the interior and exterior vocation or call. He writes in part:

There is another manner in which God speaks to man interiorly, which is to be preferred to all exterior calls. Since therefore a person is moved to enter religion by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he is not to be put off in order that he might seek human counsel; rather he ought to follow this inspiration immediately. Whence it is not praise worthy but rather worthy of censure that one after having received an interior or exterior vocation given either by word of mouth or writing, should put it off or seek counsel. Either one is ignorant of or tries to resist the power of the Holy Ghost who attempts to delay the movement of the Spirit by seeking counsel.³⁵

What Thomas is arguing against is the tendency to delay answering God's call when a person is certain of its presence, under the pretext of seeking counsel. Thus if one were not certain that the inspiration was there and truly present, he would not be forbidden to seek counsel; in fact, in this case he would have to seek it in order to come to a correct evaluation of the inspiration. How often such a situation would occur is very difficult to say. What is noteworthy for us is that Thomas does speak of there being a special internal inspiration in the case of one truly called by God.³⁶

2.4.5. AFTER THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

This position of the early Church Fathers writes and the Scholastic theologians was continued after the council of Trent also, and perhaps even more strongly, as the reaction of the early part of the 17th century would seem to indicate. Two of the outstanding writers of this period, St. Francis de Sales and St. Alphonsus Liguori, are brought forward as witnesses to this continued tradition. The former in speaking of the vocation to the religious life writes:

A good vocation is simply a firm and constant will which the called person has to serve God in the way and in the places that the Almighty God has called him to that is the best work that such a soul should do from the beginning all that it must do in its vocation with so great a firmness and constancy as to be exempt from all repugnance, difficulty, or disgust in the matter of this vocation.... To know whether God wills one to be a religious man or woman, one is not to wait for Him sensibly to speak to us or to send us an angel from heaven to signify to us His will, nor is there any need to have revelations on the subject. Neither is the need of an examination by ten or twelve doctors of the Sorbonne to try whether the inspiration is good or bad, to be followed or not, but one must properly cultivate and correspond with the first movement and then not be troubled if disrelish or coldness supervene.³⁷

The position of the other writer, St. Alphonsus, can be found expressed in several places in his works. The following passages, however, will suffice since they seem best to represent his thought on the matter. "To enter any state of life, a divine vocation is necessary. For without this, it is if not impossible, at least most difficult to fulfil the obligation of our state, and obtain salvation. That is why the Church has called any one who assumes or takes to a thief and a robber." after having laid down the signs of this vocation which are practically the

same as those given in Canon Law. The presence of these signs indicate the call of God. Consequently, it would seem that for St. Alphonsus as well as for others this secret voice refers not to some extraordinary revelation or illumination which one receives from God but rather to a special internal grace or gift which those whom God calls receive from Him.³⁸

Ecclesiastical writers from the very earliest days have insisted upon the necessity of some interior call before one should advance to assume the duties of either the religious life or the priesthood. This need not be something that is in the realm of the miraculous, but merely a conviction that one is called by God to embrace this or that state of life or a firm will to serve God in one or other of these ways of life. This interior call is not something emotional but rather something of the will of the volitional faculty of man. What tradition has never demanded is the necessity for an extraordinary grace or special revelation made by God to one called to the religious life or to the priesthood.³⁹

2.4.6. THE DOCUMENTS OF THE CHURCH

In considering the documentation of the church with regard to our purpose, it will be sufficient to indicate the thought of Pius XI (1857-1939) and Pius XII (1857-1939).

Pope Pius XI In his encyclical on the Catholic priesthood which can very well refer also to the nuns, points out three things in regard to our present consideration. First of all, he indicates that an extraordinary grace is not required of one to enter upon sacred ministry to priesthood. Second, he does require that a man be called interiorly, or by a special call or grace from God before he embarks on this way of life. Otherwise he exposes himself to the risk of becoming a stumbling block to himself and to others, with peril of eternal ruin. Third, this interior call can be known only with moral certitude by reason of the presence of certain positive signs of fitness, those which are listed in canon law. The following excerpts from the encyclical will substantiate these claims:

His [the rector of the seminary] watchful and experienced eye will perceive without difficulty whether one or other has or has not a true priestly vocation. This as you well know venerable Brethren is nature established so much by inner feeling or devout attraction, which may sometimes be absent or hardly perceptible; but rather by a right intention in the aspirant, together with a combination of physical, intellectual and moral quantities which make him fitted for such a state of life. He must look to the priesthood solely from the noble motive of consecrating himself to the service of God the salvation of souls....⁴⁰

Such false mercy would be a real cruelty, not only towards the Church, to whom would be given an unfitted minister, but also towards the youth himself; for thus embarked on upon a false course, he would find himself exposed to the risk of becoming a stumbling block to himself and to others, with peril of eternal ruin.⁴¹

It is God Himself who liberally sows in the generous heart of many young men this precious seed of vocation; but human means of cultivating this seed must not be neglected.⁴² Yet it must be conferred with sadness that only too often parents seem to be resign themselves to the priestly or religious vocation of their children. Such parents have no scruple in opposing the divine call with objections of all kinds; they even have recourse to means which imperil not only the vocation to a more perfect state, but also the very conscience and eternal salvation of those souls they ought to hold so dear."⁴³

Pope Pius XII, also restated this same teaching on many occasions. For example in the encyclical letter Mediator Dei, in distinguishing between the character of Baptism and that of Holy Orders he wrote:

In the same way that Baptism is the distinctive mark of all Christians and serves to differentiate them from those who have not been cleansed in this purifying stream and consequently are not members of Christ, the sacrament of Orders sets the priest apart from the rest of the faithful who have not received this consecration. For they alone in answer to and inward supernatural call have entered the August ministry, where they are assigned to service in the sanctuary and become as it were the instrument God uses to communicate supernatural life from on high to the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.⁴⁴

A similar note is struck in the two documents dealing with the secular institutes, the 'provida Mater' and the 'Primo Feliciter'. In the former he states:

While remaining in the world, they are able through a special vocation from God to devise new and unrivalled forms of confederation which particularly answer the needs to the and in which many can lead a life wholly conducive to the attainment of Christian Perfection.⁴⁵

And in the later he points out the special activity of the Holy Spirit in these vocations:

The Holy Spirit who unceasingly re-creates and renews the face of the earth which in these days has been made desolate by a great and special grace has called to Himself many dear sons and daughters.⁴⁶

In his apostolic exhortation to the clergy of the world this same Pontiff, having spoken of the priest as having been admitted to the sublime ministry of the altar by a call from heaven, later on takes up the question of vocations recruiting. On this he writes,

"But it is also necessary that the souls of those called by God be prepared for the impulse and the invisible action of the Holy Ghost. To succeed more efficaciously in this (the recruiting of vocations) every priest must make an effort to be and to show himself an example of the priestly life which for the young men whom he approaches and among whom he looks for signs of the divine call can constitute an ideal for invitation."⁴⁷

The Seder Saprintiave, date May 31, 1956, is perhaps the most important document that takes up our present problem in a most clear and forthright fashion. Since it is so vital to the understanding of the mind of the Church on our question, it is worth quoting at length,

"First of all we want all to be aware that the foundation of the entire religious, priestly and apostolic life, namely, the divine vocation, consists of two essential elements, the one divine, the other ecclesiastical. As to the first element, God's call to embrace the religious or priestly life, this must be considered so necessary that in its absence the foundation upon which the whole structure is to rest is absent. A man whom God has not called is not moved or aided by His grace. In as much as God is the principle author of every state of life and of every natural and supernatural gift and disposition, a real vocation to any state, must in a sense, be called divine. If this be so, how much more must one call the religious and priestly vocation divine, since it is invested with a sublime dignity and adorned with so many natural and supernatural gifts that could be bestowed only by the Father of Lights, from whom comes every good and perfect gift."⁴⁸

But now let us pass on to the second element of the religious and priestly vocation. The Roman Catechism teaches that they are said to be called by God who are called by the lawful ministers of the church. For from contradicting what we have said concerning God's call, this position is actually in close agreement with it. For by a divine vocation to the clerical and religious state, a person undertakes publicly to lead a life of holiness in the Church, a

visible and hierarchical society and to exercise this hierarchical ministry. Such a person ought to be authoritatively tested, approved, and directed by the hierarchical rulers to whom God has entrusted the administration of the Church.

It is also evident that when the seed of a divine vocation and the endowments this requires are present, it needs education and formation if it is to develop and mature. For a thing is not instantly perfect at birth, but only acquires perfection by a process of gradual growth. And the desired external circumstances must be considered in the guidance of this development; the persons whom God has called, the times, and the place.

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CHAPTER III

THE NUNS' VOWS

3.1.1. THE VOWS TAKEN

There are promises made in public by all Religious Sisters, namely: Obedience, Poverty and Celibacy. The only congregation which has four vows in addition to the already named three is the Missionaries of Charity Sisters. They include whole-hearted and free service to the poorest of the poor as their fourth vow.¹

3.1.2. WHY THE VOWS ARE THREE

It is very important to establish the reasons for the three vows. This is because any curious person may ask: why three evangelical counsels? The evangelical counsels are three because there are only three ways of pledging oneself to live as Christ lived in areas which cover the whole of life, these are affections, possessions and autonomy.

- The first tendency is that of the pleasure of the body summed up in the dominant aspiration for human love and the setting up of an earthly home.

- The second tendency is that of possessing things. It urges one to acquire things which enrich one externally. It is summed up in the instinct of ownership.

- The third tendency is autonomy. It is summed up in the independent exercise of one's liberty.

Owing to original sin, these tendencies can lead man astray. St. John writes: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world". (1 Jn. 2:15-16).

By consecrated chastity, the religious overcomes the lust of the flesh. By the vow of poverty, they overcome the lust of the eyes, and by the vow of obedience they overcome the pride of life. When one consecrates positively to God the three vital tendencies, one consecrates one's whole person to God.

There is a connection between the vows. A person gives himself entirely to God by the vow of chastity. If a person gives himself entirely to God he relies solely on God for his life. This is poverty. If a person gives himself entirely to God and relies solely on God, he does God's will. This is obedience.

3.1.3. WHY NUNS TAKE VOWS

It is now important to concentrate on the reasons why nuns take the three vows; of chastity, poverty and obedience.

Vows are a sign of dedication to God and they free the religious to serve God's people.² Nuns take vows because it is the accepted way the Church receives the candidate. It is a form of complete dedication.³ The Evangelical counsels are a means to follow Christ more closely for the code says:

"Life consecrated through profession of the evangelical counsels is a stable form of living, in which the faithful follow Christ more closely"⁴

Through profession of the evangelical counsels one's life is consecrated to God.⁵ The opening words of C.573,1 are: "Life consecrated through the profession of the evangelical counsels is a stable form of living" Vatican II says: The Christian who pledges himself to this kind of life (the life of the evangelical counsels) binds himself to the practice of the three evangelical counsels by vows or by other sacred ties of a similar nature. He consecrates himself wholly to God, his supreme love. In a new and special way he makes himself over to God, to serve and honour Him.... He makes profession in the church of the evangelical counsels in order to consecrate himself in a more thorough way to the service of God The more stable and firm these bonds are, then, the more perfect will the Christian's

religious consecration.⁶ Religious life without vows can be compared to married life without a ring! Vows are a sign of total commitment and dedication to God.⁷ The counsels are, as it were, the main support of the religious life, since they express in a significant and complete way the evangelical radicalism which characterises it. In effect, through the profession of the evangelical counsels made in the church, the religious, as already mentioned, wishes "to be set free from hindrances that could hold her back from loving God ardently and worshipping Him perfectly and ... to consecrate herself in a more thorough going way to the service of God".⁸

The faithful who profess the evangelical counsels are a splendid sign in the church.⁹ Vatican II says: "All the members of the church should unflinchingly fulfil the duties of their Christian calling. The profession of the evangelical counsels shines before them as a sign which can and should effectively inspire them to do so. For the people of God has here no lasting city but seeks the city which is to come, and the religious state of life, in bestowing greater freedom from the cares of earthly existence on those who follow it, simultaneously reveals more clearly to all believers the heavenly goods which are already present in this age, witnessing to the new and eternal life which we have acquired through the redemptive work of Christ and precluding our future resurrection and the glory of the heavenly kingdom.

Indeed the evangelical counsel of chastity observed by the religious should help the people of God to bear the hardships of married life. It is worth noting that the renunciation implied in the counsels does not diminish the human person; rather it is a way of fulfilment. As Vatican II affirms:

For the counsels, voluntarily undertaken according to each one's personal vocation, contributes greatly to purification of heart and spiritual liberty. They continually kindle the fervour of charity. As the example of so many saintly founders shows, the counsels are especially able to pattern the Christian man after that manner of virginal and humble life which Christ the Lord elected for Himself, and which His Virgin Mother also chose.¹⁰

This is because true fulfilment implies transcendence in radical openness to the absolute and overcoming of the limits of one's urges and needs. Thus, the counsels are ways to liberation.

Moreover, the counsels contribute to the development of society. As LSE put it,

"By their response religious enlarge the Christian and profoundly human meaning of all things and of history. This meaning has its origin in the programme set by the Beatitudes, which became a norm for everyday life. Religious, thus make clear the close connection between the Gospel and the development of the person in society.¹¹

The counsels lived in as authentic a manner as possible have a great significance for all people,¹² for each vow gives a specific response to the great temptation of our time. Through them, the church continues to show the world the ways for its transfiguration into the Kingdom of God.

It is also worth noting that the evangelical counsels that the consecrated person professes are, according to church tradition, chastity, poverty and obedience, which summarise the evangelical beatitudes which in their turn express the best imitation of Christ. Therefore attentive care is usually taken to initiate candidates for the religious life theoretically and practically into the concrete exigencies of the three vows.

3.2. THE VOW OF CHASTITY

In relation to chastity, we shall make a generous use of other terms such as virginity, celibacy, consecrated celibacy, virginal chastity, celibate chastity, religious chastity.

Virginity is, first and foremost, a mystery of the love of Christ. Indeed, the vow of virginity saw the light of day with the dawn of Christianity or, more exactly, Christianity confers on consecrated virginity its special characteristic excellence.¹³ Here and there in the Old Testament times there were fore-runners of this state of consecration. The state itself, however, is nowhere directly mentioned for, until the coming of Christ, woman's fruitfulness was so much her glory that it was a cause for reproach, a sign of God's malediction, if she did not bear children. Moreover, the supreme fecundity to which all Israelite women aspired was the possibility of becoming the mother of the Messiah.¹⁴

3.2.1. CHASTITY IN THE BIBLE

Chastity is ordered and directed to the kingdom of God, which means friendship and union with God. Celibacy, in fact, is a charism, that is, a special gift which the Holy Spirit gives to certain individuals for the benefit of the entire people of God. The Bible has Jesus's words that only those who can make themselves "eunuchs" for the Kingdom of Heaven, to whom it is granted".¹⁵ The special union with God which develops becomes an eschatological sign, a sign of the perfect friendship with God that will occur in heaven. It becomes also a sign of the love of God, for it shows that God is able to fill the human heart and that love of God is to be the first, the priority of every human being on earth and in heaven.¹⁶ Celibacy is therefore an invitation to deep intimacy with Christ. While one surrenders one's sexual secret to God, one is able to love others in Christ in a deeper and more universal way.

St. Paul in 1 Corinthians, also says that Christian celibacy is a charism in the strict sense of the word.¹⁷ St. Paul writes:

Virginité is love of service. He continues; "The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. The affairs of the Lord, that is, the interests of Christ's kingdom become the interests of the religious. Celibacy is therefore an invitation to deep intimacy with Christ. While one surrenders one's sexual secret to God, one is able to love others in Christ in a deeper and more universal way."¹⁸

In the Gospels, virginity is not presented as an abstract ideal, nor as a requisite imposed from without, but as a fact of religious psychology. Overjoyed at finding the "hidden pearl"¹⁹, some cannot but abstain from marriage. This religious experience itself makes them unmarriageable or actually incapable of marriage. Their heart is where their treasure is. At the centre of true virginity there is then, an experience which surpasses mere theoretical consideration.²⁰

3.2.2. THE THEOLOGY OF CHASTITY

Today, there is a more positive theological approach to the vow of chastity or chastity in general. One sister believes that chastity is a solemn promise by which the nun clears the decks for action and her soul for union with God. It frees her, makes it possible for more than one person to have a claim on her love; it is a means to an end. It is a reminder, too, that before God, man is alone, and that in eternity, there will be neither female nor male. She does not consider that through her vow of chastity she is depriving herself of a necessary human experience.²¹

Vatican II says:

... the church's holiness is fostered in a special way by the manifold counsels which the Lord proposes to His disciples in the Gospel for them to observe. Towering among these counsels is that precious gift of divine grace given to some by the Father to devote themselves to God alone more easily with an undivided heart in virginity or celibacy. This perfect continence for love of the kingdom of heaven has always been held in high esteem by the church as a sign and stimulus of love, and as singular source of spiritual fertility in the world.²²

Of the three evangelical counsels, virginity is the most outstanding. Ever since the Gospel was first preached, the church as its authoritative interpreter has always taught, that virginity and consecrated celibacy were ways of life which made possible the closest following of the example and teaching of our Lord, even as one old writer expressed it, the imitation of His bodily life.²³

During the first centuries of the church's history, even before the beginnings of monasticism in the fourth century, celibacy accepted for the kingdom of God appeared as the perfection of Christian holiness, second only to martyrdom. This is borne out in the pseudo-Clementine letters to virgins, in Clement of Alexandria, in the "Banquet" of Methodium of Olympus, and especially in the doctrines already worked out by Tertullian and Origen. The ideal was even more generally accepted when the church began to live in peace.²⁴

The exaltation of continence was inspired by the constant conviction that it was a gift from God. Althenagoras who lived in the second century wrote:

... you would find many among us, both men and women, growing old unmarried, in hope of living in closer communion with God. But if the remaining in virginity and in the state of an eunuch brings nearer to God, while the indulgence of carnal thought and desire leads away from Him, in those cases in which we shun the thoughts, much more do we reject the deeds.²⁵

St. Athanasius (295-373) exclaims:

O continence, beloved of God and praised by the Saints! Hated by the common run of men and entrusted only to those who are worthy of it! O continence that steals us from death and mortality and which is taken up into immortality! O continence the joy of prophets and the glory of apostles! O continence the condition of life like the angels and crown of glory of the saints!²⁶

It is this virtue that really consecrates a person to God. As a matter of fact, in liturgy, there is a special rite called consecration of virgins. It is an act by which one gives oneself entirely to God. A virgin out of love of God refrains from the physical expression of love. In marriage a person gives himself wholly to the other. When one renounces marriage for the love of God, one totally gives oneself to God.

The vow of chastity is not merely the promise to forego certain human experiences in the sexual order but the complete consecration to God of one's entire power to love. Moreover, of all the elements of religious life, in their concrete realisation in the numerous congregations, virginity is the element that is most stable and it is the element that is the same for all. It is the basic element in all the different varieties of monastic and religious life that flourished in the church. For the world, virginity is the most transparent sign, the most astonishing sign of the following of Christ. It is this sign that signifies the mystery of the church in her eschatological dimensions.

The fundamental motive of virginity must be the kingdom of heaven. To preserve virginity one must cultivate an ardent love of Christ. A virgin has a capacity and an availability of profound love. She is made available to love all and to love deeply. She places all her forces, spiritual, affective, intellectual, at the disposal of her neighbour, not in order that she be loved in return as in the case of married person, but for Christ's sake. Her love is universal. She is at the disposal of the church, ready to give herself to love anyone. Not being tied down

to one, she is able to give herself to all. The love of the church, and a total dedication to her is a characteristic mark of virginity chosen for the kingdom of God.

Celibacy is a virtue. A virtue is something positive, not negative. It is an acquired disposition which inclines one to behave in a particular way. In what does the virtue of celibacy lie? The virtue of celibacy cannot be simply the absence of unchaste acts. What is it then? It is a form of loving, a way of loving. It is a virtue which inclines one to love another, without seeking gratification or possessiveness by the loved one. Lack of gratification and possessiveness is characteristic of the love of the celibate person. A husband's love of the wife is gratifying. It is possessive. Since the virgin's love is not possessive, it embraces all. This however does not exclude human affection.

Virginity allows one to create communities of charity. It permits one to live as brothers and sisters with all. Virginity has never dried up the sources of affection, motherhood, fatherhood, etc. On the contrary it enables one to be a mother, father, in the real and universal sense of the word.

In Christianity, virginity is seen as the consummation of love between God and the soul. The idea is that a woman, by forgoing any physical expression of sex, is achieving 'spiritual motherhood', and thus belonging not to one family but to all. Virginity is seen very much as a positive thing, 'a shining sword', one Sister calls it.²⁷

3.2.3. MEANING AND PRACTICE OF CHASTITY

The Canon recognises the counsels as a divine gift based in the very life, as well as in the teachings of Jesus. The texts treating each of the three counsels rely heavily on *Perfectae Caritatis* 12, 13 and 14.

C.599 says: "The evangelical counsel of chastity embraced for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, is a sign of the world to come, and a source of greater fruitfulness in an undivided heart. It involves the obligation of perfect continence observed in celibacy."

This brief canon states both the motivation and the effect of observing this counsel's judicial obligation - perfect continence in celibacy. Distinct from the chastity required of all Christians, this is lived out in celibacy; hence the religious bind themselves to a life of celibacy. Distinct from other motivations and life-styles of remaining unmarried, this style is chosen for the kingdom of God and is lived out in perfect continence.

Canon 599 deliberately employed these three terms, chastity, perfect continence, and celibacy, in order to identify more clearly the object of a sacred bond to live the evangelical counsel which has traditionally been called chastity.

The inter-relatedness of the concepts of chastity, its sign value, and its fruitfulness are found more clearly in the conciliar text than in the synthetic form of the canon:

Chastity "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven"²⁸ ... uniquely frees the heart of man, so that he becomes more fervent in love for God and all men. For this reason it is a special symbol of heavenly benefits, and ... a most effective means of dedicating themselves wholeheartedly to the divine service and the works of the apostolate.²⁹

The proper law of institutes further develops the way of living and preserving the counsel of chastity. There is direction given in the conciliar text when it refers to the value of prayer, mortification, health care, and sincere love between the members. Recognising the challenges of fidelity, the council also speaks of the careful selection and preparation of candidates.

As already mentioned, consecrated chastity, involves the obligation of perfect continence in celibacy. Here, celibacy directly means the renunciation of marriage. For the

purpose of keeping the observance of perfect continence, the code itself proposed a few exterior means. Hence the code asks:

In using the means of social communication, a necessary discretion is to be observed. Members are to avoid whatever is harmful to their vocation and dangerous to the chastity of a consecrated person.³⁰

Canon 277 advises clerics to behave with due prudence in relation to persons whose company can be a danger to their obligation of preserving continence or can lead to scandal of the faithful. At the same time the diocesan bishop is said to have authority to establish more detailed rules concerning this matter and to pass judgement on the observance of the obligation in particular cases.

There is another Canon whose provision may also be taken as referring to chastity. It says:

In accordance with the institute's own law, there is to be in all houses an enclosure appropriate to the character and mission of the institute.³¹

The Code also proposes two qualified ways of living one's chastity namely: community life and the exercise of the ministry of one's vocation. It says:

The fraternal life proper of each institute ... is to be so defined that for all it proves of mutual assistance to fulfil their vocations to consecrated celibacy and virginity.³²

The Code sees in celibacy a means to work better for the kingdom of God and to a better service of the people of God. At the same time, the work of one's vocation, becomes a means to safeguard chastity. The religious who wholly give themselves to ministerial work find personal fulfilment, peace and contentment of heart. Moreover, apostolic work, because of its interpersonal relationship with all kinds of community groups, provides for the religious a channel for their psycho-sexual energies.

The Vatican Council II documents, which are the main source and the best commentary of the new church law, allude to the natural and supernatural means for the observance of chastity. First and foremost it is worth noting that virginity is a gift of God. It is

a gift of divine grace. On one's own singular strength one cannot be a virgin. It is a fruit of the grace of God. Virginitly cannot be preserved except in the climate of grace and prayer. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Of all the means, supernatural means come first. The Second Vatican Council says:

Religious, therefore, at pains to be faithful to what they have professed, should believe our Lord's words, and, relying on God's help, they should not presume on their own strength.³³

They should first of all believe the Lord's words. Faith, confidence in God, help of God obtained through prayer and the reception of the sacraments are the important means to preserve chastity. The insistence is not so much on flight from the world as on faith, grace of God, word of God, etc.

Religious must not be too rigid or too free in their dealings with others. The Council states:

The observance of perfect continence touches intimately the deeper inclinations of human nature. For this reason, candidates ought not to go forward, nor should they be admitted, to the profession of chastity except after really adequate testing, and unless they are sufficiently mature, psychologically and affectively. Not only should they be warned against the dangers of chastity which they may encounter, they should be taught to see that the celibacy they have dedicated to God is beneficial to their whole personality.³⁴

Virginitly has its trials just as married life has its own. The sexual instinct could be experienced more or less forcefully at certain periods of life. There will arise the temptation: Why not settle down nicely in the world? Why not found a family? All this can help the religious to know themselves better and to answer the call of God more conscientiously, deliberately and more generously. It is therefore true to say that probably it is in middle age that one really makes one's perpetual profession.

Robert J. McAllister says "religious celibates who disclose sexual difficulty are often dismissed too casually." He states it is common for the religious to ask the spiritual adviser the question: "Is this behaviour morally wrong?" and suggests that a 'yes' or 'no' answer to that question may provide moral guidance but deny psychological assurance. He adds that other questions need considerations. What are the emotional components of this behaviour? What

are the psychological and interpersonal components of this behaviour? Are elements of justice involved? For instance, Spiritual advisers sometimes too readily dismiss masturbation as an area of concern. McAllister thus advises concerning this area, "Sometimes it is important to help individuals understand the dynamics of their sexual behaviour. This is not the province of spiritual direction but belongs instead to psychotherapy. Unless a spiritual director has adequate training in psychotherapeutic techniques, he or she should refrain from attempting to treat the psycho dynamic aspects of sexual behaviour. These include distortions in psycho sexual development as well as compulsions, anxieties and other emotional disturbances that may contribute to sexual problems. If a spiritual director chooses to become a therapist for a person with sexual difficulties and is fully competent in the role, perhaps that director should ask someone else to take the role of spiritual director for therapy is not spiritual direction, nor is spiritual direction therapy³⁶.

McAllister gives a very good example of Sister Elizabeth, a forty-five year old religious who reported the problem of daily masturbation. It soon became evident that this problem represented considerable emotional pathology. It proved to be symbolic of much of her psycho-sexual development. When she was a child her father worked out of town most of the time. She regarded him as a kind, gentle man but absent from the home and therefore unable to demonstrate his caring in any regular manner. Her mother drank excessively and in episodes of rage, verbally and psychologically abused her two children, especially Elizabeth, probably because she was her father's favourite. To assuage her loneliness, the mother frequently brought men home to spend the night with her. The two children went to Catholic schools; the more Elizabeth leaned about religion, the less she understood her family. She had little opportunity to talk with her father. She became terrified of her mother, and not without reason. She could not talk to the Sisters at school, because her shame about her home life overwhelmed her. The Sisters seemed to assume that everyone came from an ideal Catholic home. It seemed to Elizabeth that everyone did, except herself. She became withdrawn and guarded carefully all the things she thought.

In religious life Elizabeth became increasingly aware of her own sexual desires and was simultaneously more ashamed of them. She confused sexual feelings with sexual decisions and sexual behaviour. The attention of men attracted but frightened her. She felt safe with priests who showed her some special attention, but over a period of several years, she had become erotically involved with three of them. All the while the masturbation continued. The masturbation represented the loneliness she had experienced so keenly in her father's absence. It represented the violence she had experienced in her mother's presence. Her masturbation depicted the emotional component of her psycho sexual history: loneliness, fear, violence, shame, doubt, secrecy, unworthiness, ugliness. It gave her nothing but a line to the past.

There is a great need for constant growth in affective and sexual maturity. Marc Oraison defines psycho sexual maturity as a certain degree of affective relational possibility. It refers to the ability of the individual to enter into harmonious dialogue with anything and anybody, without obscure anxieties, incoherent aggressiveness and exclusive possessiveness in an increasing and fruitful rhythm of exchanges.³⁷ When social relationships are at play, a mature person is the one who treats others as persons rather than as objects.

In the practice of the vow of chastity, Felix Podimattam cites need for a healthy community life. Community life which is nourished by fraternal love is one of the most important aids to celibacy.³⁸ In this regard, Vatican II says: "Chastity is more securely guarded when true fraternal love flourishes among the brethren in the common life."³⁹ The reasons why the Council insists on fraternal love in community as highly conducive to celibate living are outlined by the same author.⁴⁰

To illustrate the significance of communal living among the nuns, there is a story of an ex-nun from one book entitled, "Our Secret Lives: An Anthology of Poems and Short Stories by Kenyan women writers. This study has its heading as, "ALONE IN THE MIDST OF A CROWD".

Dorothy, the ex-nun entered the convent with the hope of going to know her God better and serve Him with more zeal. She expected that she would leave the world behind and concentrate on the things of God. Indeed, she tried her best to do this.

But as early as her training years, she realised she carried herself and all her womanly feelings with her. She entered at the age of twenty and at twenty-three she started to have very strong sexual desires. In the convent, particularly where she was, nobody seemed to address herself to this issue. If it surfaced, it was quickly hushed and then put into the sub-conscious. Nobody had told her about the sexual awakening which was inevitable and how she could handle it. She continued her struggle to cope until she finished training.

She started to have very painful monthly periods all of a sudden. Once, she was cleaning the Chapel and ... her abdomen was aching horribly. She felt terrible. She managed to drag herself quietly to bed, where she lay for the next two hours, in agony. All of a sudden, she heard the Novice-Mistress coming. "What is it, Dorothy? How come you are in bed?" Dorothy tried to explain how bad she felt, but all she got was a long lecture about how she should not be too lenient with herself. "Get up and go back to work!" This was a direct order. As Dorothy dragged herself back to the Chapel, she wondered, "How can a woman, like myself be so unfeeling?" In the years that followed, Dorothy had to decide whether she would stay in the convent, where she felt so lonely despite being surrounded by her fellow nuns.

Nobody seemed to open up, "I thought I was living this life all alone", she said.

She then had to go abroad to study. Her pains during menstruation intensified and she felt she could not stand it any more. She finally managed to see a doctor for something else. He discovered that her uterus was covered with fibroids and she needed an immediate hysterectomy. This had become worse because due to the conditions in the convent where she was, she was left with her problems alone, to die her own death!

When abroad also, she fell in love with a Nigerian priest who used to go to their convent to offer Mass. She realised she had fallen in love with him. She wondered whether to reveal it to the other nuns. She decided to keep quiet, but it got worse. Whenever he celebrated Mass, she would sit there and just stare at him. When he lifted the bread and the chalice, she would just be there, looking, wishing she could tell him how she felt, or just hug him. Then at night, she would try to sleep and could not. It was during that time that she discovered masturbation.

It seemed to be the only release she had. But as a nun, she also believed it to be a sin. So every time she masturbated, she would end up feeling very guilty. This continued for months

until she finally had the courage to talk it over with a young nun who fortunately understood her very well, and was able to help her to gradually overcome her reluctance."⁴¹

Deep union with Christ through contemplative prayer is very vital for a celibate. Prayer is the essential condition for the flourishing of consecrated celibacy. Even an ardent desire to spend oneself in the service of others is not sufficient. It might be useful to quote the testimony of Charles Davis on this point. In an interview which took place shortly after his own marriage he stated that an intense prayer life must accompany a life of consecrated virginity. These are his words "... celibacy can only be really met by a love of God that is really mystic. There has to be the kind of intimacy with God that is not simply a commitment and an endeavour to love God effectively and to meet Him in prayer, but a mystical quality which can psychologically replace the intimacy that is found with another human being"⁴²

Many moderns believe that a celibate life is an anachronism and totally irrelevant; others might criticise the celibate life as fraudulent and impossible to achieve in reality. Some may argue that the case histories in this chapter prove the impossibility to a life of vowed chastity. But failure on the part of some to achieve a goal does not make the goal unattainable. Incidences of conjugal infidelity do not establish the impossibility of fidelity. Nor does the difficulty of preserving marital fidelity in our culture provide any argument for suggesting it is impossible. Celibacy, like marital fidelity, is preserved only by working at it.⁴³

There is only one good way to be a faithful spouse or a faithful celibate, and that is totally, constantly and wholeheartedly. Cutting corners detracts from the complete picture. Looking over one's shoulder decreases one's motivation. Investigating other possibilities diminishes one's focus. If a married person is cutting corners, reconsidering the involvement, and wondering about others, something is missing in the marriage. The celibate who is determined to sustain the integrity of commitment by not cutting corners, by not walking the problematic paths of risky relationships, by not watching for some better alternative, that authentic celibate will find chastity a possible and rewarding goal.⁴⁴

Reports about the defections of nuns have become a regular feature of our times. Many people are understandably upset and they wonder what is happening to the precious gem of virginity. Is it going to fade away from the church? The relevance of virginity itself is

called into question. However, the supreme relevance of virginity, even in the contemporary world, should be unequivocally affirmed. The church needs the testimony of virginity today more than ever because she is faced with a sex-ridden and secularised world. The fact that some 'moderns' do not see the value of virginity does not in any way detract its perennial merit.

3.3. THE VOW OF POVERTY

This vow is taken by nuns in the hope of imitating Jesus Christ who, "for mankind's sake, made Himself poor though He was rich". (2 Cor. 8:9). While poverty is not new in the life of the church, today it is posed for everyone in an especially acute way.

Poverty is notoriously difficult to define, which should not be a surprise since it is a purely relative term, existing in a real way on a variety of levels. In a political sense, poverty is the lack of power or ability to influence the political processes. At another level, one can be psychologically or spiritually poor in the sense of lacking psychic, emotional, or spiritual resources for coping with problems of everyday living. Most often, poverty is viewed in its economic sense: the lack of money or material possessions. Socio-economic situations vary considerably from place to place and from time to time, and when we get beyond the minimum level of starving to death, what is "poor" in one slum may be relative comfort in another.

To avoid any ambiguity, let us be precise: we understand the word poverty in its modern sense,

the state of a person who lacks material resources, money, insufficiency of resources.⁴⁵

3.3.1. POVERTY IN THE BIBLE

The Old Testament speaks less of poverty and more often of the poor. From the time of Moses and down through the New Testament period, Israel always knew the poor, the small and humble; and shifting political situations and social structures profoundly marked its thinking on this topic.⁴⁶

The causes of poverty referred to in the Old Testament, apart from those due to individual folly, are especially (a) bad seasons, involving failure of crops, loss of cattle, etc. (2 Kings 8:1-7; Nehemiah 5:3); (b) raids and invasions; (c) land-grabbing (Isaiah 5:8); (d) over-taxation and forced labour (Jeremiah 22:13f); (e) extortionate usury, the opportunity for which was provided by the necessity for meeting high taxation, and the losses arising from bad harvests (Nehemiah 5:1-6).

In the earlier period of Israel's history, when the tribal system flourished, there was accordingly little distinction between rich and poor. But as a settled society developed, this distinction became more pronounced. Nathan's parable (2 Sam. 12:1-6) implies that in the time of David, there were rich men capable of oppressing the poor, though there was little permanent poverty. During the period of the later monarchy, however, commerce, city-life and luxury grew apace, and the greed and heartless oppression of the rich, the corrugation and perversion of justice which this state of things brought in its train, were constantly denounced, especially by the great prophets of the 8th century (cf. Isaiah 1:23; Amos 4:1; 6:1ff; Micah 2:1ff).

The Deuteronomic legislation (7th century) bears eloquent testimony to the prevalence of poverty under the later monarchy (cf. Dt. 10:17-19; Dt. 14:28-29; Dt. 15; Dt. 23:19-20; Dt. 24:10-21; Dt. 26:12-15), and in one famous sentence predicts its permanence ('the poor shall never cease out of the land') Dt. 15:11.

The classes of the poor more particularly mentioned are widows, orphans, and the sojourners, or resident strangers, who possessed no land rights. The Levites also are specially referred to in Deuteronomy as an impoverished class (cf. Dt. 12:12-19; Dt. 18), a result of the

centralisation of worship in the one sanctuary at Jerusalem. All classes of the poor are the objects of special solicitude and consideration in the Mosaic Legislation, particularly in the Priestly Code (cf. Lev. 3:7; Lev. 11; Lev. 19:9-15).

The attitude of the Old Testament toward poverty is well reflected in Proverbs 30:8f: "keep me from lying, and let me be neither rich nor poor. So give me only as much food as I need. If I have more, I might say that I do not need you. But if I am poor, I might steal and bring disgrace on my God". From this it appears that both poverty and riches were referred to the Lord as their ultimate source (cf. 1 Sam. 2:7; Sir. 11:14). Poverty was a relative idea, to be viewed in the light of its correlative, riches, and not so much as a social factor, but rather in connection with the moral life of man.

However, texts are not lacking in the Old Testament in which poverty is considered from a more absolute standpoint (Prov. 14:20; 19: 4-7; Sir. 13:3-21; Jb. 24:4-12; 30:2-8). Hence, it appears that from the 'natural' point of view riches are preferred to poverty and poverty is looked on as a comparative evil, wealth a comparative good.

The Old Testament is full of sympathy for the poor. The Lord does not abandon them (Jb. 5:15; Ps. 72:12-14; Sir. 35:13-24). The prophets repeatedly take up defence of the poor (Is. 5:8-22ff; Amos 2:6ff; 5:11f), and the Mosaic Law endeavours to improve their lot (Ex. 21:1-6; Lev. 19:10; 23:22; 27:8; Dt. 23:25f; 24: 17-22). The poor can find happiness if they fear God and keep His commandments (Prov. 28:6; Sir. 10:29). But voluntary poverty is unknown in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament period, conditions were not essentially altered. The exaction of tax-collectors seems to have been acutely felt, but almsgiving was strongly inculcated as a religious duty, the early Christians following in this respect the example set by the synagogue (cf. Rom. 12:13). Jesus Himself reinforced the Jewish insistence on almsgiving (Lk. 12:33), which presupposes private property. He nowhere taught the absolute renunciation of property, but frequently stressed the importance of indifference to possessions. The term 'poor' is found

prominently in His teaching with the religious connotation characteristic of the Psalms. "Blessed are the poor" (Lk. 6:20) is correctly paraphrased in Mt. 5:3 as "poor in spirit".

The New Testament passes no explicit judgement on the value of property. It does, however, show a pronounced sympathy toward the poor; (Lk. 1:53); the parable of the rich miser and the poor Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31) and the episode of the widow's mite (Mk. 12:41-44; Lk. 18:22; Jn. 13:29) (which implies our Lord's habitual solicitude for the poor) Acts 6:1 being examples. A considerable part of St. Paul's apostolic activity is devoted to his care for the poor of the community at Jerusalem, and he refers with special emphasis to the poverty of Jesus (2 Cor. 9:9; cf. Mt. 8:20). The poor to whom the good news of the gospel is announced (Mt. 11:5; Lk. 4:18; cf. Is. 29:18 f), the poor (Lk. 6:20) or the poor of Spirit (Mt. 5:3), to whom the kingdom of God (Lk) or the kingdom of heaven (Mt.) belongs, are not to be considered as such from a social but from a religious view point. They are, as in Isaiah and Psalms, the humble who, conscious of their own insufficiency, look for nothing from the world, but everything from God; cf. Apoc. 2:9, where the community at Smyrna is said to be poor yet rich, and Apoc. 3:17, where the opposite is said of the community at Laodcea. Voluntary poverty is presented in the New Testament not only as a counsel (Mt. 19:21) but also in actual practice (Acts 2:44 f; 4:32).

Jesus was poor in fact. He was born, lived and died poor. In His own words: "The foxes have dens, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Lk. 9:38), the extent of His poverty is clearly seen. Christ was poor especially in heart and spirit. Nothing belonged to Him, neither His friends nor His projects, neither His work nor His future: "Of myself I can do nothing ... I seek not my own will; I do not seek my own glory; my teaching is not my own: I am not of this world; I have not spoken of my own authority" (Jn. 5:30; 8:50; 7:16; 8:28; 12:49). His disciples were given Him by the Father (Jn. 6:37-44). In this context the words of St. Paul are especially meaningful: "Christ Jesus, though He was by nature God, did not consider being equal to God, a thing to be clung to, but emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave" (Phil. 2:6-7).

The biblical meaning of poverty, is first of all dependence on God, accompanied by an unconditional preferential trust in Divine Providence with regard to all matters that concern them. Poverty in fact derives from poverty in spirit and becomes an integral part of one's total donation to Christ with the tendency to give back all that has been received, in order to be wholly similar to Christ the poor. Being poor, therefore, means freedom from any attachment, even to self. It means being a person for others, not having a home of one's own, being always on the move to spread everywhere the salvific mission of Christ.⁴⁷

3.3.2. THE THEOLOGY OF POVERTY

From the Concise Dictionary of Theology, poverty is defined as the state of being without such essential goods and services as food, clothing and shelter, and by analogy, the state of those who in various ways are spiritually poor.⁴⁸ As an evangelical Council, poverty means the voluntary renunciation of private property, so as to follow Christ more clearly to the absolute value of God's final kingdom.⁴⁹

At the time when Israel was still a child, that is during the transition from semi-nomadic to sedentary existence, poverty as a theological problem was wholly unknown. The closely knit unity of the tribes and family ensured that at least nobody starved while another had more than he needed.⁵⁰ With the advent of the monarchy it was quite otherwise. As a result of commerce and trade, money made its appearance in the land, and with its social differences too.⁵¹ The poor man is the oppressed, the humiliated, the one reduced to servitude. Hence in almost all cases the mighty, the rich and the powerful are the guilty and have brought about this moral evil. Only in the rational speculation of the proverbial literature do we find instances here and there of a man becoming poor through his own fault (Prov. 6: 6-11). Mainly it is presented that it is the duty of those who are well off to come to the help of their poor brethren, to whom they are bound by ties of blood.⁵²

Yahweh was in a special sense the friend of the poor. The prophets intervened on behalf of the people of God.⁵³ In Proverbs 30:8, when the modest Agur prays, 'give me neither poverty nor riches', this is far from representing a solution to the theological problem as seen in the Old Testament. For in the course of the exilic and post-exilic period the concept of poverty underwent a significant transformation. Thenceforward, poverty came to be the equivalent of humility and submission to God. When we read in Zephaniah: "Seek Yahweh, all you humble of the land, who do His commands; seek righteousness, seek humility ..."⁵⁴ or: "I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly, they shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord",⁵⁵ there seem to be instances in which post-exilic supplements have been added on to the pre-exilic text of Zephaniah. The poor are now equated with the pious, who are contrasted with the wicked holders of power and wealth. During their exilic and post-exilic period Israel herself came to be regarded as the poor one whose fate had been foretold in the prophetic descriptions of Jeremiah, and who was actually present to view in figures of the servant of the Lord and Job. The poor man is presented as the opposite of the rich and powerful (Wis. 2:10-14) and at the last judgement, once he himself has survived the test, he is to sit in judgement upon his enemies (Wis. 3:6-9) and to exercise kingly power (Dan. 7:22).

Right at the beginning of the New Testament, continuity with this ancient theological theme of the poor is assured. What Is. 61:1 regarded as the prime task of the Messiah, Jesus deemed to be fulfilled in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk. 4:18). Again when Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mountain with the words: "Blessed are the poor in Spirit", He is speaking in the Spirit of the Old Testament. By poverty He understands here an attitude which is totally oriented to God. Certainly lack of possessions is included in this, for possessions represent an obstacle between God and those who are religiously disposed. Because the poor are thus committed to God they are expected to be persecuted, tortured and oppressed by society.

Jesus regarded riches as an obstacle to the way of life required for the kingdom of God. (Mtt. 6:24; 10:9 f; 19. 12-6, Mk. 10: 23-31; Lk. 12:15-21; 14:33; 18:22-30). At no time, however, did He demand a revolution in social and economic relationships. In Acts 4:32 we

are presented with an ideal of Christian living which was certainly never imposed as of obligation. The disciple of Jesus had to commit himself to it freely and voluntarily.

Care for the poor is one of the principal themes in the preaching and apostolic activity of the Apostle Paul. But it is the Epistle of James which appears expressly to favour the poor, and that not without a certain hostility towards the rich (see 1:9-11; 2: 1-13; 5: 1-6). It may be that in this Epistle, representative as it is of Jewish Christianity, we are encountering the after-effects of the late Old Testament idea that only those who are bereft of possessions can truly be devoted to God.

3.3.3. MEANING AND PRACTICE OF POVERTY

As regards the vow of poverty, the Code states:

The evangelical counsel of poverty in imitation of Christ, who although He was rich became poor for us, entails besides a life which is poor in fact and in spirit, a life of labour lived in moderation and foreign to earthly riches, a dependence and a limitation in the use and disposition of goods according to the norm of the proper law of each institute.⁵⁶

As in the case of chastity, the Canon on the counsel of poverty gives a gospel motivation. This is followed by a sort of description of what is involved and the judicial obligation. The counsel is taken up in imitation of Christ with the example from His life being the supreme act of divestiture: the Incarnation. The Canon alludes to a part of the scripture text which the council cited more fully:

Remember how generous the Lord Jesus was: He was rich, but He became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of His poverty.⁵⁷

The conciliar text also gives fuller explanation to the Canon's statement that the counsel is not merely "poverty of spirit". It is not enough to be dependent on superiors in the use of things; there must be a poverty in fact as well as the essential spirit of detachment".⁵⁸

On the other hand, as the conciliar text continues to state, while the term simplicity of life, which has come into popular use, expresses much of the same ideal in the following of Christ, it does not coincide perfectly with the concept of the counsel. The key differentiating factor in institutes of consecrated life lies in the principle of dependency or limitation. This, it must be noted, varies significantly from the common life of religious to the more individualised life-style but often demanding accountability of secular institutions.⁵⁹

Other Canons dealing with the vow of poverty include that dealing with the specifics of religious dependence such as session papers, wills, earnings, acts of renunciation, and changes in legal documents.⁶⁰ Another Canon calls upon religious institutes to use or administer communal goods in a way consonant with, and expressive of their poverty. A part of this expression is to be through contribution to the needs of the Church and care for the poor.⁶¹

Sensitivity to poverty is nothing new, either in the church or in the religious life. What is perhaps new, is a particular sensibility for the poor and for the poverty which exists in the world, which characterises religious life today. There exist today types of poverty on a large scale that are either experienced by individuals or endured by entire groups, such as hunger, ignorance, sickness, unemployment, the repression of basic liberties, economic and political dependence, corruption in the carrying out of offices; especially the fact that human society appears organised in a way which produces and reproduces these different kinds of poverty.⁶²

In these conditions, religious are thrust into a closer proximity to the most needy and impoverished, the same who were always preferred by Jesus and to whom He said He had been sent (cf. Lk. 4:6-21) and with whom He identified (cf. Lk. 7: 18-23). This proximity leads them to adopt a personal and communitarian style of life more in keeping with their commitment to follow more closely the poor and humble Christ.

Vatican II declared that although dependence on the use of possession was necessary, "members of the community ought to be poor in both fact and spirit".⁶³ It reminds religious that each one should regard himself as "subject to the common law of labour". Moreover, it asks:

"While making necessary provisions for their livelihood and undertakings, religious should brush aside all undue concern and entrust themselves to the providence of the Heavenly Father".⁶⁴

The Code wants not only "dependence" on Superiors, but intrinsic limitations in the use of goods. It is clear that religious should live a simple life and identify themselves with the poor, and share their life as Jesus did.⁶⁵

An expression of poverty is to be found in labour, first of all in the work demanded by one's vocation. "Whatever a religious acquires by personal labour, or on behalf of the institute, belongs to the institute. Whatever comes to a religious in any way through pension, grant or insurance also passes to the institute unless the institute's own law decrees otherwise.

If the religious should refuse a gift which would, if accepted, become property of the institute, he would not violate his vow of poverty, nor would he go against the virtue of justice, though he might be going against charity and even against obedience if the Superior had commanded the gifts to be accepted. The violation of the virtue of charity would be aggravated in the degree in which the house or the institute is in need.⁶⁷

The religious who is poor, having got rid of any attachment to material possessions and having put on the wealth of Christ, works to enrich others with the riches of Christ. A combination of poverty in fact and in spirit is moderation in the use of material things, that is simplicity, frugality, avoidance of having and using expensive things.

Stewardship has become the term associated with the vow of poverty as a re-evaluation of this vow takes place throughout religious life. Religious communities examine their stewardship of material goods, and individual religious reflect on their personal interpretation of poverty in response to changes in living styles and money management.⁶⁸

For some people, knowing how to spend money can be more difficult than knowing how to get along without it. The author gives an example of Sister Florence as an example of the personal struggle some religious have with the possessions and use of money. Florence, the author writes, campaigned for every respectable cause that came along. She espoused the rights of the poor, the underprivileged, the minorities. She attempted to justify all her demands

in the name of those whom she served, but as time passed it became increasingly obvious that a portion of what she requested served her own needs. She travelled in style. She wined and dined rather sumptuously. She regularly spent several days away from her assigned duties, inaccessible to everyone. Her unwillingness to account for the use of funds as well as for the use of her time increased. Florence practised a self-deception that occurs among some of the Lord's labourers. They believe that those who do the Lord's work deserve special privileges and those who care for the undesirables of the world need to care for their own desires in special ways. Some who know poverty intimately in their daily tasks exempt themselves from the rules of poverty that bind other religious. Perhaps their discomfort with the ugliness and pain of extreme poverty makes them excessively fearful of encountering it in their personal lives.⁶⁹

The author also says that though some religious struggle with poverty in their temptation to have wealth and to use money, ... religious have difficulty with this vow in their temptation to know the wealthy and to use them and their money. The majority of religious conscientiously and prudently administer the money and material goods assigned to them.⁷⁰

Poverty in fact and in spirit will always entail self-denial, but at the same time it will involve an aspect of freedom. It will be touched by the Cross of Christ and graced by the freedom of His Spirit. Poverty will be a blend of sincere personal abrogation in the use of created things, and of true freedom in the use of all necessary and useful temporal goods for the building up of the kingdom of God.⁷¹

Poverty is a personal affair with a communitarian expression. It is to be expressed and lived according to the nature and the spirit of one's institute, which is to reflect, in the mind of the church, the poverty of Christ.

It is therefore, worth-noting that the practice of the vow of poverty is done with the intent of centring one's life on the poor Jesus, who is contemplated, loved and followed. Without this, religious poverty, under this form of solidarity and sharing, easily becomes ideological and political. Only one who is poor of heart, who strives to follow the poor Christ, can be the source of an authentic solidarity and a true detachment.

3.4. THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE

In Hebrew obedience literally means "hear", "listen". For the Hebrew, to hear is to hearken, to be persuaded.⁷³

The term is used to show man's relationship to his fellow, children to parents (Dt. 21:18; Eph. 6:1), wives to husbands (1 P. 3:16) slaves to masters (Eph. 6:5); subjects to rulers (Gen. 49:10; Rom. 13); and in the New Testament Christians to their leaders (2 Th. 3:14; Ph. 2:12, etc.). More often it refers to man's relationship to God (Dt. 4:30; Jos. 24:24). Indeed, the Old Testament prophets encourage rebellion against a king who has himself disobeyed God (and see Acts. 5:29). Obedience is superior to sacrifice (Is. 15:22). It is connected with the covenant (Ex. 19:5; Dt. 4:30ff; Jer. 11: ff), and by obedience to God's accompanying commands the nation will prosper (Dt. 11:13; 1 Kg. 16:12; Is. 1:19 etc.) Yet the history of Israel is a persistent reiteration of disobedience and rebellion (e.g. Dt. 8:20; Jer. 7:24). With the perfect obedience of Jesus (Rom. 5:19; Ph. 2:8; Heb. 5:8) the old pattern has been broken. Man through faith and love can now in Christ obey God and be saved (Jn. 14:15; Rom. 6:17; 1 Jn. 5:2). Since Christ's obedience is primary, man's obedience takes the form of believing in His saving work; hence we have the expression, 'Obedience to the faith' (Rom. 1:5; 16:26; Heb. 11:18). Accordingly the New Testament in contrast to the Old Testament, stresses belief rather than obedience as such.

3.4.1. THEOLOGY OF OBEDIENCE

Like the English word obedience, derived from the Latin *ob-audire*, both the Hebrew and the Greek words meaning 'to obey' are connected with the words 'to hear'. to obey means to hearken to the expression of another's will, to respond to it and to comply with it.⁷⁴ To obey is to hear and to do.⁷⁵ Old Testament religion is essentially a religion of the word that has been and that must be heard, the word to which man must respond by his actions. It is a religion of

obedience to the revelation of God in the word of the law and the prophets. Its essential demand is expressed in the sentence: "Hear, O heavens, give ear, O earth, for the Lord speaks" (Is. 1:2; cf. 1:10; Jer. 2:4; 7:12-8). God's greatest reproach against His people is expressed in these terms: "When I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer" (Jer. 7:13; Hos. 9:17). The promulgation of the law in Deuteronomy begins with the words: 'And now O Israel, hear the statutes and the ordinances which I teach you. Observe and follow them'. (4: 1-6). The Father and founder of the chosen people proves Himself by 'hearkening' (Gen 12:4; 17:1; 22:2).

The worship of God consists essentially in obedience. 'Does the Lord take delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices? He requires obedience. Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams' (1 Sam. 15:22; cf. the account of Saul's rejection 1 Sam. 15:10-35; Ps. 40:7-9; 50).

The covenant which God made with Israel demanded obedience to the covenant statutes (for the covenant with Abraham, Gen. 17:9; for the Sinai covenant, Ex. 19:5f; 24:7f). Obedience is the condition necessary for the fulfilment of the covenant promises (Ex. 15:26; 20:6; 23:22, 25; Lev. 20:22ff; Dt. 6:1; 5:32f; 8:1; 28:1-14).

The narrative of the fall provides a most impressive example of what the Old Testament conceives of as the essence of sin: the disobedience of man to the will (commands) of God, his Lord. The basic reason why even injustice against one's fellow man is a sin is that it involves a deviation from the divine will (Ps. 51:6). Man must pass through life by a pre-determined path, which is pointed out at him by the will of God (Ps. 1:1). If he deviates from this path by a free decision of his own will he commits sin (1 Sam. 15:22ff, 2; Jer. 6:16-18; 7:24; Dt. 11:26ff).

In the period after the exile the law becomes the power that governs all things. Obedience to God becomes obedience to the law. Ethical thinking is dominated by the ideal of legal obedience (2 Macc. 7:1-42; Ps. 119).

In the New Testament, Jesus rules His entire life by obedience to His Father. In the temptation He is confronted with the decision of how He is to fulfil His messianic mission. It is

from obedience that He decides not upon the way offered to Him by Satan but on His Father's way; He repeatedly refers to some precept of the law in order to express what obedience means to Him (Mt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13). When Peter wants to prevent Him taking the way of suffering, He repulses him as a tempter, and points out that it is not the words of men but the word of God that He has to fulfil (Mk. 8:33 parables). The first condition for entering the kingdom of God is to take the demands of the decalogue fully to heart (Mk. 10:17ff), so that the will of God expressed in them may be fulfilled in its deepest and most radical sense as preached by Jesus. The prayer taught by Jesus ('Our Father ') shows the direction in which His message leads; that the dominion of God may be imposed throughout the earth and that all obstacles to His dominion may be overcome (Mt. 6: 9-13). They are true disciples of Christ who do the will of His Father (Mt. 7:21; Mk. 3:31-5).

In the preaching of the kingdom of God, obedience to God becomes obedience to Jesus in whom that kingdom comes. Nature (Mk. 4:41), the devils (Mk. 1:27), sickness and death itself 'hearken' to Him. Men too must hearken to Him.

For Paul obedience is the key concept for the soteriological work of Jesus. By the incarnation Jesus becomes subject to the law of Moses so that He shows what depths of suffering His obedience to the will of His Father leads Him into (Mt. 26:39, 42; Mk. 14:36; Lk. 22:42).

Paul regards the attitude of submission to authority as the true foundation of the house of Christianity. In the lists of virtues and vices obedience is required from wives to husbands (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; see also 1 Pt. 3:6), from children to their parents (Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20ff), from slaves to their masters (Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22; 1 Pt. 2:18). In submitting to authority one should have the Lord in view 'in fear of Christ' (Eph. 5:21). Such submission is prompted by a reverent awareness that Christ is judge.

In expounding the high-priesthood of Christ the Letter to the Hebrews relies especially on the obedience of Jesus in His earthly life. The incarnation in its significance for the high-priesthood is regarded as an act of obedience. Since God took no pleasure in the sacrifices and

burnt offerings of the Old Testament cult, Christ brings an offering - His readiness to do God's will (10: 5-10; Ps. 40:8). Obedience in the acceptance of suffering is the way to priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:7-10). Christ's offering of Himself in sacrifice takes place 'in the eternal spirit, in the Holy Ghost who sets alight the obedience of Jesus (Heb 9:14). By this priestly act He brings salvation to those who hearken to Him (Heb 5:9). The Gospel which requires obedience (the word of obedience) will remain with those who hear it and hearken to it by faith. Disobedience will cause them to fail in the attainment of their goal (Heb 4:6; 11).

The Lukan infancy narrative of Jesus is to be understood in the light of the spiritual teaching of Gal. 4:4 (born of a woman born under the law). The incarnation takes place through the obedience of Mary (1:38). He is born in Bethlehem in obedience to the command of Augustus (2:1f). All the requirements of the law which affect the first born child who is a male are scrupulously fulfilled (circumcision, presentation, redemption offering, 2:21ff). From His youth upwards Jesus is obedient to the pious custom of making pilgrimage to the temple (2:41-50); He is obedient to His parents (2:51), and still more to His Father in heaven (2:49).

All the above clearly shows that like the other two Evangelical Counsels, obedience too has its theological roots in the Bible. Obedience, for instance, occupies a key position in the history of God's salvation. Obedience to revealed truth is not compulsory, but is an expression of the freedom of the children of God, devotion to God, the life of one who has been made subject to God's dominion and permeated with divine life.

3.4.2. MEANING AND PRACTICE OF OBEDIENCE

The scope of consecrated Obedience is expressed in the Code as follows:

The evangelical counsel of Obedience, undertaken in the spirit of faith and love in the following of Christ who was obedient even unto death, obliges submission of one's will to lawful Superiors, who act in the place of God when they give commands that are in accordance with each institute's constitutions.⁷⁶

Further, all religious, "are subject to the supreme authority of the Church in a special manner", and "are also bound to obey the Supreme Pontiff as their highest Superior by reason of the sacred bond of obedience".⁷⁷ C.601's brief expression must again be read in the context of Perfectae Caritatis (PC) where it is more explicit that the fundamental motivation for the sacred bond of obedience is the love of the will of God.⁷⁸ It is to this end that members follow the Obedient Christ. The thing which is characteristic of the obedience in institutes of consecrated life is the way in which the will of God is mediated. The Canon, expressing a judicial principle, speaks of the submission of one's will towards legitimate Superiors - acting in the place of God - according to constitutions.

The role of religious Superiors is further outlined in Canons 618 and 619 where the spirit of service and a pastoral kind of concern are included. It is critical for both religious and secular institutes to give clear expression to the role of moderators and the way of observing obedience in their proper law. The Canon surely does not preclude dialogue and mutual discernment, but it does recognise real authority which comes with office.

The concept of the Superior acting in the place of God is very old in religious tradition. The rule of St. Benedict clearly saw the Abbot as taking the place of Christ in the monastery. However, the same rule made clear that He was no arbitrary tyrant because He too was subject to the same rule.

In the apostolic exhortation of Pope Paul VI, the relationship between authority and Obedience is expressed in these terms:

Consequently, authority and Obedience are exercised in the service of the common good as two complementary aspects of the same participation in Christ's offering. For those in authority, it is a matter of serving in their brothers the design of the Father's love; while in accepting their directives, the religious follow our Master's example and cooperate in the work of salvation. Thus, far from being in opposition to one another, authority and individual liberty go together in the fulfilment of God's will, which is sought fraternally through a trustful dialogue between the Superior and his brother, in the case of a personal situation or through a general agreement regarding what concerns the whole community.⁷⁹

Obedience touches the innermost core of the personality and implies the deepest renunciation. Rightly understood and practised, it is a fulfilment of human freedom and not its diminishment. It directs the will in a stable manner towards God who is the source and final end of man. The sacrificial and religious Obedience of Christ is well expressed in PC:

Through the profession of obedience, religious offer to God a total dedication of their own wills as a sacrifice of themselves with greater steadiness and security to the saving will of God. In this way they follow the pattern of Jesus Christ, who came to do the Father's will.⁸⁰

The conciliar decree goes on to say that obedience is based on the spirit of faith and love for God's will. As a responsible body, execution of commands or discharging of assignments is to be performed with "the resources of their minds and wills, and their gifts of nature and grace". Thereby, religious obedience will not diminish the dignity of the human person but will rather lead it to maturity in consequence of that enlarged freedom which belongs to the Sons of God".⁸¹

Obedience is to be taken in connection with creation, touching all people. It means adherence to the plan of God, that all people make of their life a service to God. The original disobedience shows by contrast the true meaning of obedience and what God expects: the submission of man to His will, the execution of His commandments. It is a matter of faith and it is to be a matter of love as well. God made the people of Israel understand that the obedience they had to pay to Him, was not supposed to be a slave-like submission, but an expression of love: "Love me, keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:6). The Psalms, moreover, present the law as the great gift of God's love for men (Ps. 18).

Father de Foucauld used to say, "Obedience is the measure of love". It is a great mystery, and not everyone can accept it even though it is the way that all religious must follow. When obedience becomes repression of the frustration of an independence that one

cannot relinquish, it simply indicates that one is not yet capable of perfect obedience and filial abandon to God.⁸²

The reference to the institute's constitutions is to prevent arbitrary use of authority. In these days when human society is occupied by manifold power struggles, religious are called to make a total renunciation of all power struggles after the example of Christ, "who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God, a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant ... and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross".⁸³ In particular He offered His death as the most agreeable sacrifice, the sacrifice of obedience.⁸⁴

Obedience, therefore, for Christians means following Christ, imitating Christ's obedience to the Father. By obedience, the disciple of Christ enters into the mystery of salvation: obedience to God, to the Gospel, to the Church, to all those who are the intermediaries of God (Rom. 13:7), after the example of the Lord Jesus.

The integral purpose of religious obedience is under the leadership of the Superior, "to strive to build in Christ, a fraternal community, in which God is sought and loved above all".⁸⁵ Christians, moreover, who are members of an ecclesial community with the purpose of continuing the salvific mission of Christ in the world, will work out their own salvation, and the salvation of their brothers, through their obedience to the authority of their institutions, and to the authority deriving from the Church authority.⁸⁶

Since the end of every religious community is to carry on the salvific work of Christ, a religious will try to become, as far as possible, similar to Christ who came to bring salvation by doing the will of the Father: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, that I have come down from Heaven to do".⁸⁷ Jesus thought of His life as a mission received from the Father. Religious obedience is the extension of that mission: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you".⁸⁸

The religious are bound to obey all the legitimate orders of the Superior. Counsels, desires and admonitions, in as much as they manifest the will of God are also to be followed.

Church law, for instance, establishes that the final decision, the authority to prescribe what must be done, remains with Superiors, and Superiors may also give orders in relation to the vow of obedience, within the limits of one's vocation.⁸⁹

The only possible motivation towards imposing an obedience in virtue of the vow, would seem to be that of removing religious from serious occasions of evil or from the danger of losing their vocations. The imposition of obedience in other circumstances would not be admirable, especially since obedience should involve a voluntary aspect.⁹⁰ A religious should enjoy a certain freedom of choice with regard to personal bearing, and to the manner of carrying out orders and functions.

Obedience to Christ and to those who hold authority in His name in the Church involves the transforming of oneself. It is not merely a matter of regulating exterior activities to conform to the requirements of human or professional societies. In religious life obedience to the rule of life goes to the depths of the soul. The aim of it all is to transform one radically in the grace of Christ, and this cannot be accomplished without asceticism and the tearing away of all that could hamper progress.⁹¹

Obedience is the best preparation for charity, which requires an availability which is cultivated effectively in the person who habitually strives to understand and accept the views and wishes of others. It is one of the most perfect expressions of charity to know how to listen graciously to others instead of ordering them around, and to submit to others rather than impose their ways and will on them. This is truly stripping the soil, "losing oneself" in order to find all in Christ and His people.⁹²

Humility is the foundation of obedience. The proud cannot obey. The Council, Vatican II say: "... religious moved by the Holy Spirit subject themselves in faith to those who hold God's place, their Superiors". "Religious, therefore, should be humbly submissive to their Superiors in a spirit of faith and of love for God's will, and in accordance with their rules and constitutions. They should bring their powers of intellect and will and their gifts of nature and grace to bear on the execution of commands and on the fulfilment of the tasks laid upon them, realising that they are contributing towards the building up of the body of Christ, according to

God's plan. In this way, far from lowering the dignity of the human person, religious obedience leads it to maturity by extending the freedom of the sons of God".⁹³

The letter to the Hebrews states: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you". (13,17)

With regard to the Superiors who command, the Council says:

... they should exercise authority in a spirit of service of the brethren, thus giving expression to God's love for them. They should govern their subjects in the realisation that they are sons of God and with respect for them as human persons, fostering in them a spirit of voluntary subjection.⁹⁴

Pope John Paul II said to men and women religious:

Remember also, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the obedience to which you committed yourselves by consecrating yourselves without reserve to God through the profession of the evangelical counsels is a particular expression of interior freedom, just as the definitive expression of Christ's freedom was His obedience 'unto death': 'I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.'⁹⁵

In conclusion, it is worth-noting that religious obedience is a lasting obedience, based on vocational maturity. It is a covenant between a religious and the will of God through the mediation of Superiors, with the purpose of making the religious similar to Christ and enable him to continue the Saviour's mission. This reality demands of the Superiors a deep awareness of the individual vocational responsibility of the religious, and requires of the individual religious a deep sense of the mission she has to carry on in union with Christ. Furthermore, religious are always to remember that obedience pertains to the mystery of salvation, to the mystery of Christ obedient unto death, and therefore is to be accepted in faith and love.⁹⁶

I sum up everything in the words of Father de Foucauld, "Obedience is the yardstick of love, and all must understand, in a concrete way, the important place that this reality must have in every religious life."⁹⁷

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CHAPTER IV

A HISTORY OF NUNS IN KENYA

The History of nuns in Kenya begins with the missionary sisters. It is a special feature of the modern missions in Africa that women were everywhere deeply involved in the work of evangelization. While the Protestant missionaries came with their wives, Catholic missionaries called in Sisters. They were regarded as the only competent persons to educate girls and as the best ones to run a dispensary or a hospital. Moreover, they lifted up the self-confidence of our girls and mothers giving them an idea of independent womanhood equal to men, thus promoting women's emancipation in Africa.¹

The Roman Catholic missionary outreach to Kenya was augmented to a large degree by numerous Orders of Sisters. The Holy Ghost Fathers were assisted by Orders of women. The first to arrive in East Africa were the Filles du Saint Coeur de Marie, founded by Le Vasseur in Reunion in 1846. They accompanied Fava to Zanzibar and stayed on after the secular priests from Reunion left the mission. As their Order had been founded by a Holy Ghost Father, they were always considered as, in some way, forming part of the Spiritan Religious Family.²

In 1897, Le Roy decided that English speakers were needed for work in hospitals and schools, and another Order that had been working in Reunion, the Congregation of St. Joseph of Cluny founded by Anne Javouhey, a great pioneer and authorised by Napoleon in 1806, came to his assistance. Nine Sisters of this Order arrived at Zanzibar in October, replacing six of the Filles de Marie, who returned to Reunion, although others continued to work in the German part of the Vicariate. In 1910, the Sisters of St. Joseph left Zanzibar after the hospital there was suppressed and in 1914, being recalled from teaching in Nairobi, they left East Africa altogether.³

The next Order to work alongside the Holy Ghost Fathers were the Precious Blood Sisters, sometimes referred to as the Trappistines. This congregation, whose personnel was mostly German had come into existence in South Africa in 1884, and came to East Africa in 1898 after Allgeyer, on a visit to Natal, had asked for their help. They worked among African women in schools, orphanages, hospitals and dispensaries in Tanga, Usambara and Kilimanjaro. In 1909 they replaced the Dominican nuns at Bura in the Taita Hills, and they took over the Zanzibar Hospital in 1910 from the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny.⁴

The Consolata Sisters joined the Consolata Fathers who were working in Kikuyu in 1903. Allgeyer reported that the British authorities did not like to see that only Italian nuns were in the English part of his vicariate, and he eagerly accepted an offer from the Loreto nuns of the Transvaal, an Irish congregation, to open a boarding school in Nairobi, similar to their European convent school in Pretoria. They arrived in 1903 but left in 1905. An equally unsuccessful attempt was made by five members of the convent of St. Dominic came to Bura to begin an African novitiate. The work did not prosper and they withdrew in 1908.⁵

However, some authors have it that the first Sisters to arrive on the scene in Kenya were the Daughters of St. Vincent, in 1903.⁶ In the same year, it is recorded that the Loreto Sisters arrived in Kenya. However, they again left on the 19th December 1904 because M.M. Borgia saw there was for her no work "congruous to the times". Therefore, the date recorded of the arrival to Kenya was in 1921. In Kenya, the Loreto Sisters serve in Nairobi, Mombasa, Limuru and Kiambu. Their main educational work is done through nursery, primary and secondary schools. Their apostolate includes catechetical instruction and youth formation at parish level. In the "service of love" to which they are called through the apostolate of education and "other means congruous to the times", they continue to "strive to serve the Church in procuring the good of souls by all means possible for women to the greater joy of God" with Mary, the mother of Jesus as their "patroness and mother".

The Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa arrived in Kenya in 1907. They are also at times referred to as the White Sisters.⁷ Their first Superior General was Mother Marie

Salome, who had deep faith and love of prayer and a great desire for all people of Africa to know Jesus.⁸

The Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa was a congregation founded exclusively for Africa. The founder, Cardinal Charles Lavigeria was convinced of the importance played by women Apostles. In 1868, he had founded the "Missionaries for Africa (White Fathers). But he was convinced that:

despite the zeal of the Missionaries (Fathers) their efforts will never bear sufficient fruit unless they are seconded by women Apostles in their work with women. They cannot fulfil this ministry themselves. Only women Apostles can approach women. Earlier he had written in a letter to the Bulletin of the Association of the Ecoles d'Orient: "Women are destined to be effective missionaries of the African people" (1st June 1871).⁹

It is with this in mind that he founded the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, who were sent to different parts of Africa. The two pioneer Sisters from this congregation were St. Restituta and Sr. Thomas de Villeneuv. The new comers acquired a plot not far away from Mangu Mission in 1907. A provisional house was built for them on Kawere Hill. The Sisters were pleased to be able to welcome their companions who arrived in August 7th of the same year, that is 1907. They were Srs. St. Martial, St. Yves, Maxcimilienne and St. Guillaume.

The beginning was hard¹⁰: the fallow land had to be cleared, the language - Kikuyu - to be learned, health problems to be overcome. However, encouraged by the good climate, so favourable for cultivation, the Sisters started at once to plant fruit trees and coffee seedlings. At the same time, the Sisters offered catechetical instruction to the farm workers, men and women, while in the Dispensary they cared for the sick. Soon also an orphanage was established and classes in reading, writing and arithmetic, with sewing for the girls, were given. Mangu Mission, with a growing population of Christians and catechumen, also claimed the Sisters' services and soon they became involved in Parish work there. In Nairobi, the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa are to be found in Langata and Adam's Arcade. In Kisii they are in Nyabururu.¹¹

The first Consolata Missionaries (Fathers and Brothers) came to Kenya in 1902 followed by the Consolata Sisters in 1913. Kenya was their first mission field and they came only a few years after Christianity started in Kenya. They came in the name of Our Lady of Consolata, better known as 'Consolata', so that they could live their charism, chosen for them by the Father Founder, the Venerable Allamano. "They will proclaim my Glory to the Nations". (Is. 66:20).¹²

Their history in Kenya can be better understood if we look at it according to four periods where the presence and service of Sisters was more felt and needed. From 1914-1940 young and generous Sisters came from Italy, and worked in different places, expanding the missions in what they are now five different dioceses. The expansion in the different mission fields took place in the following order: Nyeri and Muranga, 1914; Nairobi, 1922; Meru, 1923; Embu, 1926. The first concern of the Sisters was to learn the language of the people, to be able to communicate with them, to know their way of living, to understand them. They believed when human relationships were established on mutual love and trust it was easier to share with them the gift they came to bring: Jesus Christ. They moved from one village to another to teach people about Christ, curing the sick, instructing and baptising the dying. A special case is given from the very beginning to women and their full development. During this first period, the Sisters were also involved in the formation of local African Sisters and Seminarians.¹³

From 1960-1980 the local Church started to grow very rapidly and begun reaping its first fruits: local Bishops, Priests and Sisters. At this point the Consolata Sisters felt the need to hand over to the local religious Sisters some of their missions and institutions so that they would be ready to move to other remote areas of the country. From 1980 the Consolata Sisters opened the door to welcome young African girls who wanted to join them in the wonderful adventure of being called and sent into the world to fulfil Christ's command: "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News" (Mk. 16:15). The first African Consolata Sisters, have already been sent to work in difficult mission fields such as Liberia, Brazil, Columbia, Tanzania, USA, England and Italy.¹⁴

In 1918 an African congregation known as Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters was formed. It was elevated to the status of a religious congregation in 1927. The first African Mother Superior, Sister Giulia Wambui was elected in 1946.¹⁵

The Franciscan Missionary Sisters of St. Joseph, then known as St. Joseph's Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of the Franciscan Order, were only fourteen in number when in May 1885, five of them left England for the continent of Asia.¹⁶ It was only in 1925 that the Sisters turned to the "Dark Continent". 1925 was also the year that the Prefecture of Kavirondo was carved from the Vicariate of the Upper Nile. From the first, the new prefect Apostolic was anxious to obtain Sisters of the new mission. A Mill Hill missionary, Monsignor Brandsma turned naturally to the Mill-Hill Sisters.

A few miles away in Kisii town, the F.M.S.J. have another community. This convent was opened in 1965 in the vacated house of then Bishop Otunga of Kisii, now Cardinal of Nairobi. Here the Sisters have had various apostolates; one time a Baby Home, and presently a centre for handicraft and domestic science.

The F.M.S.J. also had convents in Sega (1941-1964), Kubojo (1958-60), Chepterit (1950) and Kaplong (1953). In their golden jubilee year they accepted a new challenge. Three Sisters were appointed to open a new convent in Marigat, in the Diocese of Nakuru.

The Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph were part of the Mill Hill congregation and started working in Western Kenya in 1902. This congregation is mainly in Western Kenya. In Kisii, the first local girl to be professed was Sister Immaculata, on 8th September 1946. Her convent, the new foundation at Rangenyoo, which was one of Bishop Hall's gifts to his religious, was staffed entirely with African Sisters.

It is historically undeniable that the missionaries have tended to dominate the "new" church - to prevent its reality, perhaps unwittingly, becoming a "new" church at all. For example, many missionaries failed to realise the prime importance of creating a self-supporting local sisterhood. They saw native Sisters as useful supplements for missionary workers, rather than religious who should have been grounded and equipped in the intellectual sciences as well

as in the spiritual, for only through the combination of these two can a local church be efficiently shaped.

For quite some time the African Sisters were under the supervision of missionary sisters, sharing their work though living in separate communities. This sometimes gave them the feeling of being just handmaids of the missionary sisters. To overcome uneasiness a new policy was started; to entrust them with tasks of their own in independent. New tasks also needed new training and for this a better general education was needed. Secondary school for aspirants became the rule.¹⁷

4.1. GROWTH OF SISTERHOOD IN KENYA

By 1949 there were four well-established Kenyan Sisters' congregations with a total of 126 professed Sisters. The congregations were: the Mary Immaculate Sisters in Nyeri (1918), the Kakamega Sisters of Mary (1932), the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph - Asumbi (1940); and the St. Joseph Sisters of Mombasa (1941).¹⁸

In the 1950s and 1960s there was a great influx of missionary Sisters as well as strong growth of Kenyan Sisters; both groups almost tripled. Thus the missionary Sisters grew from 225 in 1949 to 738 in 1969; the Kenyan Sisters from 126 to 515. Their congregations also doubled. In Meru, the Nazareth Sisters was founded in 1953. In Nairobi the Assumption Sisters, who are a diocesan congregation was founded in 1957 at Karibaribi, Thika by Archbishop J.J. McCarthy. At present, its members serve in four dioceses of Kenya with a view to extending to other parts of the country and beyond, as the congregation grows. In 1962 an independent branch of the Assumption Sisters was founded in Eldoret. And, eventually, the Little Sisters of St. Francis was founded in Bahati, Nakuru in 1972.

The Sisters of Mercy, Dublin, came to Kenya in 1956 at the request of Archbishop McCarthy; in 1976 they began at Asumbi, Kisii. In the same year they began a Kenyan novitiate in Miguta, Kiambu. In 1982, the novitiate was transferred to Villa Maria, Nairobi. Aspirants and postulants continue to receive their initial training in religious life in Miguta.¹⁹

Many other congregations appeared in the scene in the early 1960s and 70s. The Medical Missionaries of Mary first came to Kenya in 1961 when there was famine in Turkana. They are an International missionary congregation of women religious founded by Mother Mary Martin in 1937. Their aim is to seek God and His Kingdom through sharing Christ's healing mission in the world today. They follow Christ who went about doing good, healing the sick and proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom. They are not carrying out their healing mission only in Turkana but also in North Baringo, Kerio Valley, Kitale, Lower Subukia, Wanyororo and Nairobi. In Nairobi they are especially found in slum areas such as Kibera, Eastleigh, Mathare and Korogocho.²⁰

The Blessed Virgin Congregation which within the Church is an Apostolic religious family started a novitiate in Tabaka, Diocese of Kisii, in 1967. Its mission is to help people especially by educating the youth. It has its own educational institutions wherever means and circumstances allow them and this is even among the most neglected brethren. They visit the old, poor, widows, and widowers, in their homes and help them in cultivating their shambas, and even build homes for them. They do this with the help of their students during Saturdays and Sundays. They call this activity solidarity.²¹

In 1968 the Ondenbosh Sisters of Lwak integrated their Luo Sisters and today their community is almost entirely African.

The Precious Blood Sisters began with a Kenya novitiate in 1963.

The first Sisters of Notre Dame congregation came to Kenya in 1974.²² They are presently involved in secondary education at Gekano Girls Secondary, Kisii, Ojolla Secondary in Kisumu and St. Francis Upgrading Centre - Kisii, and in the formation of Sisters at Asumbi, Kisii.

In Kenya, the Daughters of St. Paul came in 1976 and can already count on young Kenyan and Ugandan Sisters. Missionary activity is conducted through the publishers St. Paul communications Africa, with a list of about 90 titles, and the Catholic Bookshop of the Diocese of Nairobi. From the Catholic Bookshop distribution goes to the five diocesan

bookshops throughout Kenya, through a network of mini-libraries linked to schools and parishes in every province of Kenya, 'reaching the poorest and the most alienated'.²³

The Missionaries of Charity Sisters opened their Mother House in Kenya in 1978. It is found in Kariobangi. There is another house for these Sisters at Langata. They are an international religious family composed of active and contemplative branches with perpetual public vows of chastity, poverty, obedience and whole-hearted and free service to the poorest of the poor, leading each of them to the perfect love of God and the neighbour, making the church fully present in the world today.²⁴

Everybody agrees that more theological formation and updating is needed for all Sisters. The Tumaini Centre in Nairobi was a first common project in this direction. It was founded in 1976 and officially opened by His Eminence Maurice Cardinal Otunga in 1977. It is a place for updating religious knowledge. The word "Tumaini" means "Hope". It is therefore a centre of hope for Kenyan Sisters. It is an inter-congregational centre where as many as 93 congregations have registered. Its full name is Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya, Tumaini Centre (A.O.S.K.).²⁵

Since 1985 the Jesuit Fathers at Hekima College have offered a great service of a 6 months theological course for novices, plus an advanced course for young Sisters.²⁶ This is a great service to the Sisters.

Within the last twenty years, another feature that has occurred is that over fifty new Sisters' communities have opened houses in Kenya. They are mostly from international congregations, some large, some small. Some came to extend their mission field to Kenya, some were looking for new vocations, some followed the call of Vatican II to have at least one missionary enterprise.

In spite of the many newcomers the number of Sisters has not kept pace with the increasing number of Catholics; there was in 1969 one Sister for 1,400 Catholics and in 1989 one for 1,800. The trend in percentage of Kenyans among the Sisters is however encouraging; in 1969 it was 40% and in 1989, 60%. What is interesting is the fact that some 500 Kenyans are already professed in some 30 international congregations and also that 75 novices in the

country were expected to join them at the end of 1990. Additionally another 75 novices are in local congregations. This means that there soon shall be a respectable number of Kenyan missionary Sisters.²⁷ But for the time to come the vast majority of them will do their "mission work" in Kenya, in about the same way as the one thousand sisters in the eight diocesan congregations.

There is one change in the activities of the Sisters which pervades all congregations, that is, a turning away from the work of running schools and hospitals together with mission households to the direct apostolate; like catechetical work, youth leadership, and the apostolate of prayer. For instance, four well-educated girls have initiated a new congregation entirely dedicated to the family apostolate, they will be called Sisters of Emmanuel and will be based in Muranga.

A final feature of the last period of the history of the Catholic nuns in Kenya and a sign of its vitality is the positive response which the Contemplative Sisters have found. In Europe, the leading Contemplative Sisters were the Carmelites of St. Teresa. They came to Nairobi as early as 1940 and started a second "Carmel" as their convent is called, in Tindinyo in 1958. The Contemplative Dominican Sisters followed the Dominican Fathers to Nairobi when the latter took over St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary. Tindinyo was, however, the first to attract local vocations. With the growing religious life of the last ten years, even this most demanding contemplative life has been embraced by an increasing number of young Kenyan women. In 1989, there were 10 Kenyan Dominican nuns, 9 Carmelites in Nairobi and 18 in Tindinyo. They have been joined by three recent missionary foundations; the Perpetual Adorers of the Blessed Sacrament in Nyeri, the Cottolengo Contemplatives in Tuuru, Meru and the Augustinians in Ishiara, Embu (Cottolengo and Augustinians have also at Ishiara Sisters of the Active Life). These Sisters, who constantly pray for the success of the grace of God working in the hearts of the people of God, are like the outstretched hands of Moses who prayed for the people of Israel during its sojourn in the desert.²⁸

Since then there has been an outburst of Congregation of Sisters, who have been a major factor in establishing the physiognomy of the new churches and social services. There are normally more nuns than priests.

4.2. THE VARIOUS CONGREGATIONS SELECTED FOR STUDY BOTH IN NAIROBI AND IN KISII

There are numerous congregations of Sisters in Kenya who are playing a significant role in responding actively to the needs of society. According to the records of the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya, there were eighty nine congregations by August 1989.²⁹ This is however, not the last number because members continue to grow yearly. By 1991, as one informant told me, there were ninety three registered member congregations and by February 1992, the number had risen to over one hundred.³⁰

The Orders which were chosen are the active communities which have moved into vital work and found a lifestyle to match. The Assumption Sisters of Nairobi, the Sisters of Mercy, the Daughters of St. Paul, the Sisters of Charity, the Precious Blood Sisters, the Marianists, the Consolata Sisters, the Loreto Sisters, the Mary Knolls, the Sisters of Virgin Mary, to name but a few are some of the congregations of Sisters involved in active work. These congregations were chosen because their work is geared totally to present needs such as poverty, delinquency, nursing, developing underprivileged areas, etc.

For religious dedicated to apostolic works, the Code indicates the need for integrating prayer and action. There should be no dualism or division of heart. The apostolate is not something extrinsic to union with God. Prayer and action interpenetrate each other so that the religious become contemplatives-in action".³¹ The Code brings out the point using the words of PC.,8:

C.675, 1: Apostolic action is of the very essence of institutes dedicated to apostolic works. The whole life of the members is, therefore to be imbued with an apostolic spirit, and the whole of their apostolic action is to be animated by a religious spirit.

- 2: Apostolic action is always to proceed from intimate union with God, and is to confirm and foster this union.

PC wisely suggests that apostolic community "should skilfully harmonise their observance and practices with the needs of the apostolate to which they are committed".

During the research, the following areas were visited:

A. In NAIROBI:

I. NAIROBI DEANERY

- (1) St. Austin: Assumption Sisters of Nairobi, Loreto Convent Msongari, Mt. Carmel Convent and Sisters of Mercy convent.
- (2) Basilica Minor (Holy Family): Consolata Sisters (Flora Hostel); Loreto Sisters (Provinciate/Convent); Loreto School Valley Road; Medical Mission Sisters.
- (3) Consolata: Consolata Sisters; Consolata Primary School; Sisters of Charity.
- (4) South B: Little Sisters of Jesus; Sisters of Mercy.

II. NAIROBI WEST DEANERY

- (1) Karen: Assumption Sisters of Nairobi; Daughters of St. Paul; Sisters of the Blessed Virgin.
- (2) Langata: Missionaries of Charity Sisters
- (3) Adam's Arcade: Tumaini Inter-congregational Centre (A.O.S.K.); Ingham House; Medical Mission Sisters; Hekima College.

III. NAIROBI EAST DEANERY

- (1) Eastleigh: Loreto Sisters
- (2) Kariobangi: Missionaries of Charity.

- (3) Makadara: Sisters of Mercy.
- (4) Ruaraka: Little Sisters of the Poor.

B. In KISII

- 1. Tabaka: Blessed Virgin Congregation (Tabaka Girls' Boarding Primary School); Camillian Sisters (Tabaka Mission Hospital).
- 2. Nyabururu: Our Lady of Lourdes Convent (Franciscan Missionary Sisters of St. Joseph); Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph; Sisters of Notre Dame.
- 3. Gekano: Sisters of Notre Dame; Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph.
- 4. Nyamagwa: Sisters of Mary.
- 5. Sengera: Sisters of Mary.
- 6. Rangenyio: Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph.
- 7. Kibirigo: Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph.

4.3. ADMISSION OF CANDIDATES

The major concern of religious Orders now is recognising true vocations. This is made more difficult because a woman may have not only good, adequate and conscious motives for wishing to enter, but also unrealised subconscious motives, minor inadequacies even personality disorders. For convents now are more concerned with quality than quantity. As much as they want entrants, they are careful because wrong entrants would bring problems. The Orders themselves have a very clear idea of the entrants they want, and their right applicant varies depending on many factors. In order to be considered suitable, the entrant must not only be emotionally attracted but attractive to the Order she chooses. There are a great deal of qualifications which she must, in Canon Law, fulfil.

The basic requirements for admission as stated by the Canon include:

Every Catholic with the right intention and the qualities required by universal law and the institute's own law, and who is without impediment, may be admitted to an institute of consecrated life.³²

It goes on to say that:

No one may be admitted without suitable preparation.³³

Here the Code demands that first of all one must be a Catholic. A suitable time is needed after reception into the church, particularly if one was a non-Christian. There should be sufficient evidence of constancy in the faith and call to the religious life.

Secondly there should be a right intention. This presupposes a proper discernment of one's vocation. There should also be acceptance by lawful superiors. The 'supernatural' intention is also very important. It is not sufficient to have merely human motives such as security, or greater opportunities for study. There must be desire for striving after the perfection of charity through the evangelical counsels. Concretely, one may be moved by a motive of seriously serving the poor or of giving oneself to Christ and His kingdom. The motive must be firm and constant.

There are some qualities (positive aptitude) which are required by the universal and particular law but they differ according to the nature and purpose of each institute. The positive aptitude required for admission into a religious institute is expressed in the Code as follows:

Superiors are to exercise a vigilant care to admit only those who, besides being of required age, are healthy, have a suitable disposition, and have sufficient maturity to undertake the life which is proper to the institute. If necessary, the health, disposition and maturity are to be established by experts.³⁴

Sufficient mental health is also another positive aptitude. Pronounced nervousness, tension, moodiness or unsociable traits, lack of basic common sense or sound judgement would be counter-indications. Psychological tests for screening the candidates would be wise,

and at times necessary. Renovacionis Causam (RC), on the renewal of formation in religious life, 1969 had stated in this regard:

If in certain cases, the superiors feel, with the free agreement of the subject, that he should have recourse to the services of a prudent and qualified psychologist known for his moral principles, it is desirable, in order that his examination may be fully effective, that it should take place after an extended period of probation, so as to enable the specialist to formulate a diagnosis on experience.³⁵

The candidate should be of sufficient maturity to undertake the life proper to the institute.³⁶ They should be at least 18 years of age; according to the C.203, the required age is normally attained after the 17th birthday. There are strong arguments for not taking girls who are too young. One Superior says, "It can be frustrating if a girl comes very young to the convent". She feels too that "those who are all their lives in a convent do not mature so well".³⁷

In order to be admitted one must be free from impediments or negative aptitude. An impediment is a circumstance affecting a candidate that would make his or her admission invalid or only illicit (prohibitive). The new Code has somewhat simplified the list of impediments. Now they are stated as follows:

One who has not yet completed the 17th birthday; a spouse, while the marriage lasts; one who is currently bound by a sacred bond to some institute of consecrated life, or is incorporated in some society of apostolic life; one who enters the institute through fear or deceit, or whom the Superior accepts under the same influence; one who has concealed his or her incorporation in an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life.³⁷

There should be suitable preparation which normally calls for some form of pre-novitiate. The religious training of candidates extends over a period of three and a half years. There is first of all a period of two weeks during which they allow anybody wishing to join, "to come and see them".³⁸ This is then followed by the Aspirancy period of 6 months and longer if necessary; then the postulancy period of 1 year and finally, the novitiate period which takes 2 years.

Further requirements are in the following: C.643.2; C.644; C.645, 1 and 2.

An institute's own law can constitute other impediments even for the validity of admission or attach other conditions.³⁹

An institute, for instance, may require a minimum level of education or a period of work experience before admission to the novitiate.⁴⁰ It is not proper to refer explicitly to illegitimacy although it may not be prudent in certain cases to admit a candidate to a province where the condition is known and may cause difficulty for the apostolate. Illegitimacy used to be a great bar to religious life. Today, few Orders would refuse such a girl and those that would do so usually justify the rejection on more pragmatic grounds. As one novice mistress says: "She might as well have an unstable family background".

The Code further prescribes:

Superiors are not to admit secular clerics to the novitiate without consulting their proper ordinary, nor those who have debts which they are unable to meet".⁴¹

It goes on to state:

Before candidates are admitted to the novitiate they must produce proof of baptism and confirmation, and of their free status.⁴²

Baptismal certificate alone will suffice if it contains the record of the reception of confirmation. If a certificate cannot be obtained, attestation by trustworthy witnesses or by the candidate himself or herself, if the sacrament was received after attaining the use of reason, might be sufficient. If one has not yet received the confirmation, it is proper that he or she be confirmed at least before the beginning of the novitiate since the religious life to which the candidate is going to be initiated is a more intense living out of baptism and confirmation.

The Code again states:

An institute's own law can demand further proofs concerning the suitability of candidates and their freedom from any impediment.⁴³

The constitutions of most communities contain a phrase that asks that the entrant should have both the physical and mental capacity to understand and practice the spirit of the congregation. Inherited illness, particularly insanity is something that bothers the communities a great deal. "After all," says one Superior, "Our work is looking after lame ducks, and we cannot take in someone seeking refuge from the difficulties of life. Epilepsy for instance, does bar a girl from entering".⁴⁴

There are, however, several Orders abroad which welcome those who are incapacitated. The Sisters of Jesus Crucified is one of them. They have a house in France, two in the United States, and eight more in Europe: they are also in Japan. The Order began in 1930 when a woman called Suzzane Wrotnowska decided to make a genuine religious life possible for disabled women. While they cannot take anyone with nervous or mental illness, they accept all those who would be turned down by most congregations. They claim that poor physical health and handicap should not be an obstacle for someone wanting to live the religious life - rather, they felt it logical such women should be accepted.⁴⁵

4.4. FORMATION OF MEMBERS

The law governing the formation of members of religious institutes has undergone major revision three times in the twentieth century. First, in the 1917 Code, second, in Renovations Causam, a post-conciliar document on the renewal of formation in religious life (RC) in 1969, and third, in the 1983 Code.⁴⁶

The 1917 Code, which was the initial codification of Church Law, established common norms for religious in all areas of life including formation. The renewal initiated by Vatican II for religious in Perfectae Caritatis, a Vatican II Document on the Renewal of religious life (PC) brought with it the need to review and update religious formation. SCRIS, the article on the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, was presented with requests from institutes and organisations representing institutes to revise the canonical regulations governing religious formation. It was recognised that contemporary attitudes, conditions of modern life, and new apostolic needs along with the special charism and purpose of each institute called for changes in formation.

SCRIS responded in 1969 with RC in an instruction that was a combination of pastoral and juridic norms. The institution was understood to be for the interim, since work on the new Code had already begun. Based on the new guidelines institutes began what has amounted to a period of experimentation in formation. The tenor of the instruction was to reduce or relax

legal norms, provide pastoral consideration for renewal, and transfer authority regarding formation to the institute.

The result was to produce a wealth of new approaches and information about formation which would form the basis of the new law governing formation. Before RC, Canon Law regulated formation in institutes by means of a series of detailed laws which covered a variety of ways of life. RC drew out and identified the fundamental principles of formation while allowing institutes to develop their own formation program by applying the principles so that they fit the charism and purpose of the institute.

RC noted it was increasingly difficult to promulgate laws which would apply to every institute considering the differing conditions in which institutes live throughout the world and the diversity of institutes and their works. It especially mentioned the fact that the formation and education will not be the same in institutes of men as in institutes of women or in those of contemplative life as in those devoted to the apostolate.

RC established that:

1. Formation should be extended over a longer period of time.
2. Candidates should be prepared to enter novitiate.
3. For institutes devoted to the apostolate, greater attention should be paid to preparation for the institute's life and work.
4. Temporary vows may be replaced by another bond of commitment.
5. Former members who have completed novitiate may return without repeating the novitiate in accord with conditions established by the institute.

All these conditions were carried over into the new law, except that of replacing temporary vows by another bond of commitment.

The 1983 Code underwent two major drafts before promulgation. Although there were substantial changes from the 1977 draft to the 1980 draft, the changes in the area of formation were minor to their own formation. In one code the responsibility of prayer and good example

is broadened beyond formation directors and those living in houses of formation to all the members of the institute; this is in recognition of the powerful positive or negative witness members provide in the process of formation. Responsibility for on-going personal formation is a lifelong process. Both the individual members and the Superior have a serious obligation for a member's lifelong growth and development.

4.5 THE NOVITIATE AND FORMATION OF NOVICES

The novitiate or formation in a specific religious lifestyle was initiated by St. Benedict and adapted by the church for all religious institutes during the Council of Trent.⁴⁷ This principal period of formation for religious enables the novice to do the following: (a) grow in love of God, and neighbour; (b) study and live the special charism approved by the church; and (c) experience life in a community and the practice of the evangelical counsels.⁴⁸ This initial formation should be planned in keeping in the nature, spirit and end of the religious institute.⁴⁹ Under an experienced director, the novice begins a study of the history and spirit of the institute, the practice of daily personal and communal prayer, and an education in sacred scripture and theology, particularly the theology of religious life.

The Code explains the purpose of the novitiate as follows:

The purpose of the novitiate by which life in an institute begins, is to give the novice a greater understanding of the divine vocation, and of their vocation to that institute. During the novitiate the novices are to experience the manner of life of the institute and form their minds and hearts in its spirit. At the same time their resolution and suitability are to be tested.⁵⁰

Novice should come to know and appreciate the special charism which they are called to live. They should recognise its articulation in the history, tradition, law, custom and above all in the members of the institute. Both the novices and their director must test their call and evaluate their capability to live the particular charism with enthusiasm and fidelity.

There is need for long training in self-denial and purity of intention. As the Code says:

To complete the formation of novices the constitutions can prescribe, in addition to the time mentioned in para. 1 (twelve months), one or more periods of apostolic activity, to be performed outside the novitiate community.⁵¹

The Code explains the scope of novitiate more fully while speaking of the role of the formators. It is their responsibility to discern and test the vocation of the novices, and gradually to form them to lead the life of perfection which is proper to the institute". Ref. No. (C.651,1)

While the immediate discernment of vocation belongs to the formators, the official decision belongs to the major Superior who has the right to admit to first profession.

The document also points out that formation in the commitment to the Gospel cannot be separate from a commitment to human development. Indeed, an important place should be given to developing authentic values and human relationships during the novitiate.

Regarding the duration of the novitiate, the Code prescribes:

For validity the novitiate must comprise twelve months spent in the novitiate community, without prejudice to the provision of C.647,3.⁵²

These twelve months constitute what is called the 'canonical year'. Most institutes nowadays prescribe a longer period, generally two years, although the regulations of the Code regarding absence etc. strictly apply only to the canonical year. The upper limit for the normal duration of the novitiate is twenty four months. Particular law could also make a clear distinction between the first and second year of the novitiate so that the novices are progressively initiated into the religious life and apostolate of the institute.

RC had encouraged doctrinal studies "put the service of loving knowledge of God and a deepening of the life of faith"(29). However, it excluded all studies directed towards obtaining diplomas or in view of professional training. There could be greater latitude during the second year of the novitiate provided the studies or training serves the purpose of preparing for the first profession.

Although the novitiate is an initiation into the religious life, there is not yet a firm bond on either side. Hence the Code states:

A novice may freely leave the institute. The competent authority of the institute may also dismiss the novice ^{C.653,1}

Equality demands that there be a just reason which ultimately is lack of fitness to the religious life, at least to the particular institute. Ordinarily it would be good to urge the novice to leave voluntarily or help the person to discern that she has no vocation. While the old Code explicitly stated that the reasons for sending a novice away, the new Code is silent about the matter allowing the principles of prudence and natural justice to have their play.

4.5.1. FORMATORS OF NOVICES

The Code wants the formation of novices to be under the unified supervision of the Directress under the authority of the Mother Superior and to be conducted according to a programme defined by proper law, that is:

The governance of the novices is reserved to the directress of novices alone, under the authority of the Mother Superiors.⁵³

Further still, the Code prescribes the following regarding members of the formation team:

The directress of the novices is to be a member of institute who has taken perpetual vows and has been lawfully designated.⁵⁴

Those in charge of the formation of novices are to be members who have been carefully prepared, and who are not burdened with other tasks, so that they may discharge their office fruitfully and in a stable fashion.⁵⁵

Matters that affect the whole house are decided by the local Superior, obviously with mutual consultation. In fact, RC states:

Unity of heart and mind must reign between Superiors, the Novice Mistress and the Novices.⁵⁶

This can be procured by Superiors and novice mistresses showing evangelical simplicity, kindness coupled with gentleness towards the novices. This will enable them to build up a climate of confidence, docility and openness in which the novice mistress will be able to orientate their generosity towards a complete gift of themselves to the Lord in faith.^(32,2)

While some are especially assigned to the work of formation, all the members of the institutes are to play their part:

By the example of their lives and by prayer, the members of the institute are to ensure that they do their part in assisting the work of formation of the novices.⁵⁷

This is especially relevant during the periods of apostolic activity when the novices also experience community life in other houses in a more natural setting than in the novitiate house.

The Code wants the active co-operation of the novices themselves in their formation. They are not to be regarded as passive material to be 'moulded' as it were, by the formators. Their innate qualities must be developed. They have to be helped to be responsible and responsive members of the community. They should be initiated to honest self-evaluation, the light of objective criteria.

Novices conscious of their own responsibility, are to co-operate actively with the directress of novices, so that they may faithfully respond to the grace of their divine vocation.

4.5.2. RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

After the novitiate one is allowed to make only temporary profession. Therefore the Code has it:

By religious profession members make a public vow to observe the three evangelical counsels. Through the ministry of the church they are consecrated to God, and are incorporated into the institute, with the rights and duties defined by law.⁵⁸

The religious profession is a process leading to progressive union with God. It is a project in as much as the vows have to be lived out in the community and are means of building up a community of love and service.

During the course of a liturgical celebration, the church, through the competent Superiors, receives the vows of those who make their profession, and associates their offering with the eucharistic sacrifice.⁵⁹

Perpetual profession presumes a prolonged preparation and a persevering apprenticeship. This justified the Church's requirement that it be preceded by a period of temporary profession. Therefore the regulation is:

While still retaining its probationary character by the fact that it is temporary, the profession of first vow makes the young religious share in the consecration proper to the religious state.⁶⁰

Consequently, this time of temporary profession has as its end the strengthening of the fidelity of the young professed, whatever may be human satisfaction which they receive from their daily life in the following of Christ.

4.6. FIRST OR TEMPORARY PROFESSION

The meaning of temporary vows is not that the religious is making the profession only for the period. There is an implicit intention on the part of one making the vows as well as those receiving them that the vows will be renewed on their expiration if no obstacle arises.

With respect to the formation of those who are temporarily professed, the Church prescribes that:

In individual institutes after first profession, the formation of all members is to be continued so that they may lead more fully the proper life of the institute and carry out its mission more suitably. Therefore, proper law must define the program of this formation and its duration, keeping in mind the needs of the church and the circumstances of human persons and times to the extent this is required by the purpose and character of the institute.⁶¹

First profession inaugurates a new phase of formation, which benefits from the dynamism and stability derived from profession. For the religious, it is a matter of reaping the fruits of the preceding stages, and of pursuing their own human and spiritual growth through the courageous execution of their responsibilities. Retaining the spiritual enthusiasm given by the preceding stage is all the more necessary since, in institutes dedicated to the apostolate, the move to a more open lifestyle and to very demanding activities often runs the risk of disorientation and aridity. In institutes dedicated to contemplation, the risk is more apt to be a matter of routine, of weariness, and of spiritual laziness. Jesus taught His disciples through the law to which they were subjected. Through His repeated prophecies of His passion, He prepared them to become more authentic disciples.⁶²

4.6.1. FINAL PROFESSION

Regarding renewals and perpetual profession, the Code gives the following prescriptions:

When the period of time for which the profession has been completed, a religious who freely asks, and is judged suitable, is to be admitted to a renewal of profession or to perpetual profession, otherwise, the religious is to leave.

It would be wise to adopt the maximum period of nine years before final profession. Otherwise, too frequent recourse may have to be had to the Holy See when there is good reason to extend the period of temporary profession. There must be a just reason for prolongation beyond the normal period. RC warns against indiscriminate prolongation.

The fact of remaining for too long a time in a state of uncertainty is not always a contribution to maturity, and this situation may in some cases encourage a tendency to instability. It should be added that in the case of non-admission to perpetual profession the return to lay life will often entail problems of adjustment, which will be all the more serious and trying according to the time spent in temporary commitment has been longer(6).

The most common reason for postponement would be a founded hope that the member will be able to overcome the obstacle to perpetual profession or any doubt regarding suitability will be clarified. At times, the person could be persuaded to return to lay life for some time, with the hope of re-admission if the obstacles are overcome. There would be no obligation of repeating the novitiate.

RC recommends that the final profession be 'preceded by a sufficiently long immediate preparation, spent in retreat and prayer, a preparation which could be like a second novitiate'.⁶³ According to the mind of the instruction, it is not enough to have merely a series of courses, however useful, but there should be serious and prolonged reflection on one's life and religious vocation. If as is provided for in the law, young professed are sent to study by their Superior, such studies should not be programmed with a view to achieving personal goals, as if they were a means of wrongly understood self fulfilment, but with a view to responding to the requirements of the apostolic commitments of the religious family itself, in harmony with the needs of the Church".⁶⁵ The course of these studies and the pursuit of

Degrees will be suitably harmonised with the rest of the program for this stage of formation, according to the judgement of major Superiors and those responsible for formation.

4.6.2. FORMATION AFTER PROFESSION

The Code wants formation of religious to be serious, systematic, integral and effective

It thus says:

The formation is to be systematic, adapted to the capacity of the members, spiritual and apostolic, both doctrinal and practical. Suitable ecclesiastical and civil degrees are to be obtained as opportunity offers.⁶⁶

During the period of formation members are not to be given offices and undertakings which hinder their formation.⁶⁷

There is need for adequate professional training without yielding to the danger of careerism. Religious formation is a process for, as EE puts it: "The call of God and the consecration by Him continues throughout life, capable of growing and deepening in ways beyond our understanding."⁶⁸ Further, especially for religious dedicated to the works of the apostolate, there is need for continual updating. Hence the Code prescribes:

Throughout their entire life religious are to continue carefully their own spiritual, doctrinal and practical formation, and superiors are to provide them with the resources and time to do this.⁶⁹

"Each religious institute therefore has the task of planning and realising a program of permanent formation suitable for all its members. It should be a program which is not simply directed to the formation of the intellect, but also to that of the whole person, primarily in its spiritual mission, so that every religious can live his or her own consecration to God in all its fullness, and in keeping with the specific mission which the Church has confided to them."⁷⁰

4.6.3. REASONS FOR ON-GOING FORMATION

On-going formation is motivated first of all, by the initiative of God, who calls each one, at every moment and in new circumstances. The charism of religious life in a determined institute is a living grace which must be received and lived in conditions which often are new. The very charism of the founders (ET 11), appears as 'an experience of the spirit transmitted to their discipline to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth The specific charismatic note of any institute demands, both of the founder and of his disciples, a continual examination regarding fidelity to the Lord; docility to His Spirit; intelligent attention to circumstances and an outlook cautiously directed to the signs of the times; the will to be part of the church; the awareness of subordination to the sacred hierarchy; boldness of initiatives; constancy in the giving of self; humility in bearing with adversities. Especially in our times that same charismatic genuineness, vivacious and ingenious in its inventiveness, is expected of religious, as stood out so eminently in their foundresses.⁷¹ Permanent formation demands that one pays close attention to the signs of the Spirit in our times and that religious allow themselves to be sensitive to them in order to be able to respond to them appropriately.

Moreover, continued formation is a sociological factor which in these days affects all areas of professional activity. It very frequently determines whether one will remain in a profession or be obliged to take up another. Whereas initial formation is ordered towards a person's acquisition of an autonomy sufficient for faithfully living a religious commitment, on-going formation assists a religious in integrating creativity within fidelity. This is because a christian and religious vocation demands a dynamic growth and fidelity in the concrete circumstances of existence. This in turn demands a spiritual formation which produces inner unity, but which is also flexible and attentive to the daily events in one's personal life and in the life of the world.

REFERENCES FOR CHAPTER IV

1. Fr. John Baur: The Catholic Church in Kenya. A Centenary History. pg. 189.
2. John Patrick Kieran: Ibid. op cit., pg. 73-74.
3. Ibid., pg. 74.
4. Ibid., pg. 73-74.
5. Ibid., pg. 74-75.
6. Fr. John Baur: The Catholic Church in Kenya. Ibid., op cit, page 76.
7. Historical Note: It was because of the long white dress that the Sisters used to wear that people began to give them the name the White Sisters.
8. Mother Marie Salome's Biography is well-illustrated in the booklet, "They Called Her Salome", by Sr. Christopher. MSOLA.
9. Letter of Cardinal Lavigeria dated 17.11.1886.
10. Sr. Christopher in the booklet, "They Called Her Salome", MSOLA, cites this. page 3.
11. Ibid., pg. 10.
12. Sr. L.C. Eandi, "The Consolata Missionary Sisters in Kenya".
13. Sr. Eugenia Bonetti, "The Consolata Missionary Sisters in Kenya", pg. 13.
14. Ibid., pg. 14.
15. Fr. John Baur: The Catholic Church in Kenya. Ibid op cit, pg. 77.
16. All the information about the Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph was from the books:
 - The Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph Centenary 1883-1983 (A short history on the occasion of the centenary of the Congregation);
 - Blessed Be God - How Wonderful Are His Ways. Sister Joan Kerley.
17. This has remained a rule even today so that girls do not take advantage by entering the convent in order to be educated. Therefore, secondary school education is still one of the requirements to be met by most Orders before entering the convent.
18. John Baur, Ibid., op cit., pg. 189-190.

19. A booklet on the congregation of women religions in Kenya, "Called like Mary, who gave all that she had to give and evermore," (1983) pg. 24.
20. A booklet on the Medical Missionaries of Mary.
21. A booklet on the Congregation of Women Religious in Kenya, "Called like Mary, who gave all that she had to give and evermore", (1983) pg. 8.
22. Ibid., pg. 17.
23. "Jesus", A magazine of the Daughters of St. Paul. February (1989) pg. 46.
24. Sister Rachael, the Mother Superior of the Missionaries of Charity Sisters at Kariobangi, provided me with the vocation information sheet which had most of the information concerning this Order.
25. Sr. Marcella, one of the heads of the Tumaini Inter-congregational Centre, gave me a lot of information concerning the centre. Interviewed on 1.2.92.
26. Father Edward Murphy, Hekima College, told a lot about the Religious women in Kenya. He provided me with a list of congregations of Sisters who attend courses at the Hekima College.
27. There is one purely African Missionary Congregation, the Evangelising Sisters of Mary, a parallel foundation (1975) to the Apostolates of Jesus, with the task of preaching the faith all over Africa. It is based in Tanzania and has a novitiate and eleven convents in Kenya. Moreover, there are Tanzanian, Ugandan and even Nigerian Sisters working in Kenya.
28. John Baur, Ibid., op cit., pg. 193.
29. AMAECEA Dictionary.
30. Sister Marcelle of Tumaini Inter-congregational Centre. Interviewed 1.2.92.
31. See LP, 26.
32. C.597:1.
33. C.597:2.
34. C.642.

35. RC 11,3.
36. P. Finktor, "Maturity in Religious Candidates", USIG Bulletin, N.64 1984, pg. 28-48.
37. Sr. Rachael, Mother Superior of the Missionary Sisters of Charity, Kariobangi. Interviewed on 29.1.92.
38. C.643, 1:1-5.
39. Ibid. Sister Rachael. This is called a period of "Come and See Us". This is when they assess the behaviour of the aspirant and if they think she is a prospective Sister they invite her to undergo the stages which follow.
40. C.643,2.
41. This includes the congregations which deal with schools and hospitals such as the Blessed Virgin Mary Congregation, The Loreto Sisters, the Consolata Sisters, etc.
42. C.644.
43. C.645,1.
44. C.645,3.
45. Mother Superior, Sister Germaine from the Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph.
46. Marcelle Berstein: Nuns, pg 71.
47. Jordan Hite, T.O.R.; Sharon Holland, I.H.M.; Daniel Ward, O.S.B. A Handbook on Canons. 573-746. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota 56321, 1985, pg. 115.
48. SCR, March 7, 1967; CLD 6, pg. 483-486.
49. RC 13.
50. PC 2.
51. C.646.
52. C.648,2.
53. C.648,1.
54. C.650,2.
55. C.651,1.
56. Ibid. 3.
57. RC. 32,1.

58. Ibid., 3.
59. C.652,4.
60. C.654.
61. Cf. LG.45.
62. C.655.
63. CIC 659: 1-2.
65. RC 9.
66. cf. CIC 660:1.
67. C660.1.
68. Ibid., 2.
69. EE 43.
70. C661.
71. John Paul II to the Religious of Brazil, 1986, No. 6.

CHAPTER V

THE ROLE OF NUNS IN KENYA

Catholic women have ever since had the option of following a "vocation" in religion by becoming nuns. As nuns, they have played a number of influential roles in life, particularly in education and nursing. They occupy a considerable place at all levels in the world of education. It is not uncommon for non-practising Catholics to entrust their children to them. People know that nuns have given up the possibilities of a family of their own in order to be at the disposal of all families and to devote to them their most loving care and solicitude.

One thing that strikes any observer is the immense place occupied by women religious in the vast place of human suffering. "Who suffers", asked St. Paul, "and I do not suffer with him?" Women in the religious live this phrase at the bedside of the sick, with the handicapped and the bedridden, with old people, lepers, deaf mutes and prisoners. They live it through each day and through each year, with a devotion and disregard of self which compel peoples admiration. They are standing witnesses to the church's maternal love, concerned with all people's miseries, mindful always of the parable of the Good Samaritan and our Lord's words about anything done "for the least of these, my little ones". They are the vanguard of the missionary church in the jungle, desert or Arctic ice. Where there are missionaries they are to be found, perfect partners and assistants beyond price.

5.1. WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Women are both the majority of the active churchgoers and volunteer workers in the church. An increasing share of the professional, that is, paid, ministry is done by women. Although this is the case they have not been given equal presentation in the church. The full incorporation of women into the ministry of the Christian churches has become the critical issue for Christianity today.² Many people still maintain that the decision-making process of the church should be assigned to men, as well as any teaching ministry which is conducted from the pulpit. Some people view the situation from a different perspective. They believe that Christian women should share with men the decision-process and should participate freely in the teaching ministry of the church in addition to the activities mentioned above. There are two factors which have a bearing on this situation, namely scriptural principles and cultural influences.³

5.1.1. CULTURE AND WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Cultural influences are also worth considering in the discussion of the role of women in the church. Conflicting viewpoints among Christians result not only from faulty interpretation and application of the scripture, but also from inaccurate knowledge of the text and lack of acquaintance with cultural issues. The Christian message is not compendium of clear-cut beliefs and practices which must simply be adopted and carried through as a matter of routine. God chose to reveal Himself in the form of a human being who was born into a particular milieu, namely middle eastern society and at a particular point of history, the first century C.E.. The life of Jesus communicated His message just as powerfully as His teachings. But to be understood, the life of Jesus must be reflected on and comprehended in the light of the culture in which He lived.

There are significant principles underlying each act of Jesus. An example of this is found in the Gospel narratives which depict Jesus' attitude towards women. It is commonly assumed that because Jesus chose 12 men to be His inner circle of disciples, He had no place in His entourage for women. Films of the life of Jesus show Him seated in the open countryside teaching the 12 disciples, and Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting of the Last Supper portrays an exclusively male gathering celebrating the Passover meal in the Upper Room. However, the Gospels indicate that women did travel with Jesus, many of them; some were married and some were single (Lk. 8:1-3). Women were often the recipients of His teaching, both in large gatherings (Matt. 15:38) and in individual encounters (Lk. 10:39; Jn. 4:7-30).

Margaret Howe says that acquaintance with the cultural milieu within which Jesus lived reveals some very surprising truths about His relationship with women. It was not common for a rabbi of the time to include women in his group of followers nor was it an accepted custom for women to be singled out as recipients of scriptural teaching. Indeed, it was unusual for any Jewish man to talk to a woman in public. Given the cultural background of 1st century Palestine, Jesus showed a remarkable sensitivity to women and their place in society. When confronted by the accusers of a woman guilty of adultery, Jesus refused to assent to the commonly accepted theory that only the woman deserved punishment. He drew public attention to the male involvement in such acts, and at the same time showed a sympathetic understanding of the woman's plight (Jhn. 8:2-11). In the Lukan narrative concerning Mary and Martha, Jesus is again depicted as moving beyond the culturally accepted norms of His time.⁴ Jesus was quick to recognise the dignity of women; He had respect for the ability to grasp and understand spiritual truths, and He considered them worthy recipients of some of His most profound teaching. According to the Gospels of Mathew and John, even the news of the resurrection of Jesus was communicated first to a woman; and to a woman was entrusted its first proclamation (Mtt. 28:1-7; John 20:11-17).

Margaret Howe gives very good outline on the leadership pattern in the day today churches. She says that in many churches (although the situation is changing) the person

occupying the pulpit is a man. He is responsible for overseeing the worship service. He reads the passages of scripture assigned for the particular Sunday, and in his sermon he directs the thought of the congregation to matters arising from this scripture. His message may be geared to teaching Christian doctrine or to explaining Christian ethics. He aims to move His congregation to response, a response that may take the form of repentance, re-evaluation of standards and lifestyle, or renewed consciousness of the vitality of the Christian experience. He bears a title which in some way shows respect for his office, whether it be "Father", "Reverend", "Pastor", or simply "Preacher". The financial advantages are many, such as, a salary which usually exceeds that of any other functionary in the local church, at times a furnished house, maintenance of the parish/church, a car and so forth. When the church is assembled for worship, this honour is demonstrated visibly by assigning to the leader a seat at the front of the church in clear view of the congregation. He may enter the church from a special door, sometimes in procession, to heighten the scale of honour.⁵

In the church the leading position has been traditionally reserved for a man. Women have been encouraged to work, and to work hard, in lesser spheres. The church secretary is usually a woman. She bears no distinctive title, earns less pay than the minister, and is afforded little prestige. Her duties are performed behind the scenes, mostly out of sight of the congregation. This generally carries no title or honour, no salary, and little recognition.⁶

There are other ways in which the role of women within the church apparently coincide more with culturally conditioned factors than with biblical principles. Both the Western and African traditional culture have designated a woman's role as the care of children, the preparation of food and the creation of a pleasing living environment.

5.1.2. NUNS' PARTICIPATION IN THE CHURCH

The church which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is in a continuous process of renewal, is the living and dynamic context within which religious life finds inspiration and guidance for its own spiritual and apostolic renewal. "The proper mission given by Christ to the church is not of a political, economic or social kind however, the purpose assigned to it, in fact, is of a religious nature".⁹ The meeting of March 4-7, 1980, therefore, gave the mission of religious its true meaning and proper place in the church, outlining the contemplative dimension by which every religious life is defined in a particular way and is made fruitful.

In Kenya, just like in other countries there are several Religious Institutes that are said to resemble a "wide-spreading tree" which beginning with a seed sown by God "has grown up in the field of the Lord and multiplied."¹⁰ Through them the church manifests Christ to believers and unbelievers alike, Christ in contemplation on the mountain, or proclaiming the kingdom of God to the multitudes, or healing the sick and maimed and converting sinners to a good life, or blessing children and doing good to all men, always in obedience to the will of the Father who sent Him.¹¹

The variety is explained by the diversity of the "charisma of their founders and foundresses", which "appears as an experience of the Spirit, transmitted to their disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth. It is for this reason that the distinctive character of various religious institutes is preserved and fostered by the church".¹²

It is no wonder then that in Kenya we find that Sisters' contributions vary from the type of work done by that particular congregation, to the culture and need of the country. For instance, in Kenya, many Sisters keep up the teaching of religion in the parishes.

Since the profession of the counsels binds religious to the church in a special way,¹³ it is they who are exhorted more insistently and trustingly to renew themselves wisely in openness to human needs, problems and searching.¹⁴ Over and above the social and political dramas, in fact, the church is conscious of her special mission to give a decisive answer to the

profound question of the human heart. For this reason, recent documents of the Magisterium, wishing to integrate adequately evangelization and human promotion, stress how fruitful the relationship between evangelization and religious life is for the common mission of the Church¹⁵ and the extent to which the work of religious has contributed in every age to the human and spiritual promotion of humanity.¹⁶ A radical change of mentality and attitude¹⁷ is needed to apply evangelical commitment to the concrete and often disturbing problems of human promotion. The need for greater solidarity with their contemporaries, especially the poor and the under-privileged, compelled religious men and women and many Sisters also to say that the local people in the various parishes in the world over also hinder their role and abilities by holding on to old attitudes and expectations of the role of women in the church.

Sisters feel compelled to bring the Good News to the marginalized, the weak, the down-trodden and the oppressed to invite them to join Christ's family, as they would never find the way on their own. They do all the humble tasks where they are needed in God's family. They do them cheerfully for the love of Christ and out of the conviction that they are co-responsible for the establishment of His church. The Sisters believe that they have the responsibility to spread the Gospel. They comprehend man as a whole and understand evangelisation in a wider sense; creating human living conditions and a Christian atmosphere where the seed of the Good News can germinate and grow. Agricultural development as the basis for nutrition, preventive and curative and promotive medical care, the teaching of children and adults and training them in skills are a legitimate part of evangelization efforts. Through them, Sisters want to tell the people of God: "He loves you, you are somebody worthy of our concern".

The teaching of the Magisterium, in fact, increasingly clarifies the profound links between the Gospel requirements of the church's mission and the widespread commitment to the advancement to become more actively involved, sometimes even in the working world and in politics.

The importance of the urgency of the appropriate involvement of religious in integral human promotion prompted the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes to give special attention in this matter to the specific role of religious in the mission of the Church.

The plenaria of the Sacred Congregation of April 25-28, 1978, therefore, studied a number of matters resulting from a wide-ranging international inquiry, in which the Episcopal Conferences, the Pontifical Representatives, numerous Institutes of both men and women, collaborated. Four major concerns surfaced as being of utmost importance:

- (a) The option for the poor and for justice in our time.
- (b) Social activities and works of religious.
- (c) Involvement in the working world.
- (d) Direct participation in politics.

The resulting guidelines were intended to assist all those who are responsible for religious life in the church in their task of communication, formation and co-ordination. It is they who must approve criteria and choices which, while taking into account the principles and guidelines offered here, respond to the diversity and complexity of the situations, so that Episcopal Conferences and Conferences for Religious in the different countries may reinforce the specific role of religious life in the common task of evangelization and human promotion in whatever ways they deem most suitable.¹⁸

The Pastoral teaching of John Paul II has, in the meantime, clarified and defined the presence and involvement of the church in the world, giving additional matter for reflection and inspiration. It highlights the present attention given both to human problems and to the irreplaceable encounter with Christ and with His Gospel.¹⁹ The desire to be increasingly involved and active in the present historical situations within which the church fulfils her mission seems to be a constant factor in religious renewal; first of all in those places where, either through the works of their Institutes or those of the local church, religious are called to carry out a social mission which is at the same time profoundly religious, and also, in those

places where circumstances require new initiatives which are more pertinent to the life and problems of the people.

Religious often find themselves in a position to experience at close range the events that affect the people whom they serve. The prophetic nature of religious life requires that religious embody the Church in her desire to give herself completely to the radical demands of the beatitudes.²⁰ They are "often to be found at the outposts of the mission, and they take the greatest of risks for their health and for their very lives".²¹

It is therefore worth-noting that the church is at work in our everyday lives. Through the various agencies of evangelism, Bible translation, agriculture and industrial training, education and medicine, dedicated women of God of all races have sought to fulfil the mission of the church. At the same time the role played in evangelization by Sisters consecrated to prayer, silence, penance and sacrifice is particularly effective in Witness and in apostolic fruitfulness.²²

Finally, it is important to note that the church's mission, to which the evangelical counsels unite religious in a special way, can never, in fact, consist simply "in the activity of the exterior life ... The Church's mission is by its very nature nothing else than the mission of Christ continued in the history of the world . It consists principally in the co-participation in the obedience of Him cf. Heb. 5:8. who offered himself to the Father for the life of the world".²³ Therefore, the contemplative life is extremely necessary in the church. Thus the Pope said,

By your vocation, you are for the universal church; by your mission you are in a definite local church. Your vocation for the universal church, then, is exercised within the structures of the local church. You must make every effort to carry out your vocation in the individual local churches, so as to contribute to their spiritual development, in order to be their special strength. Union with the universal church through the local church: this is your way.²⁴

As we have seen in this area, both the active and contemplative religious women have an indispensable role to play in the church. Their role is not limited only to the people who go to church for instance Christians; but it covers people from all walks of life.

5.2. NUNS AND EDUCATION IN KENYA

Education is a major, if indeed not the major concern in the Kenyan society. In an effort to catch up with the developed world, education has attained a considerable position. Without it, Kenya's people would be unable to enter the modern technological world. Each phase of economic planning demands not only capital, but skilled manpower, which can only be drawn from the reservoir of the educated population. For millions of Kenyan, education is the key they hope will open the door to a better life and higher living standards, the fruits of independence they were promised by the politician as the reward of the struggle for national liberation. The government dare not, even if ever it was so inclined, deny the popular demand for expansion of educational facilities.

Even the Bulletin for the Pontifical Council for Culture supports education for all. Following in the wake of the Jauntien World Conference on Education, former Archbishop Angelo Fernandes of New Delhi, President of the Catholic International Office of Education, continued to challenge Catholic educators to respond to the goal of "Education for All" as world illiteracy coincides with world poverty.

Education is the only instrument for peaceful social change. Access to education is the primary condition for effective participation in the life of the modern world.²⁵

The work of teaching and preaching seems to be very much in keeping with the profession of the religious state. This is very clear from the Church's having approved so many Orders and congregations which have this as their particular end.

In the overall picture of the Incarnate Redeemer, there are three aspects which are united in the One Person of the God - Man: Priest, Teacher and King. And if the Gospels were to be sought in an attempt to discover which of these three roles our Lord exercised most often, it would very quickly have to be concluded that it was that of teacher and preacher, one who was sent to make creation once more act as a sign or symbol leading man back to God.²⁶

Today perhaps more than ever before there is need to stress the apostolate of teaching, both on the higher levels and on the lower levels. For it is only in and through these various

activities impregnated with the Spirit of Christ, that all things can be hoped to be restored in Christ. Even though the subjects taught may seem to be almost entirely secular, nevertheless the presence of religious and priests in those fields serve to keep the science or discipline in its right perspective, in its right position and order in the overall plan of divine Wisdom such as that has been parcelled out to men. All truth converges upon the First Truth of which it is merely a share, and therefore it can be said that all learning should and can bring people closer to God. The dignity of the religious and priest teacher at all levels of education should be placed before the minds of those entering a religious community or desirous of contributing something to the apostolate. For there are some who are attracted not to teaching on the higher levels, and yet are very much interested in doing a similar work on the lower levels in which the moral influence and guidance of the priest can play an important role.

Many religious congregations of women engage in educational activities²⁷ and are mainly engaged in girls' education although at times they also play a role in co-educational schools or other learning institutions. In order to illustrate better the role of nuns in the area of education in Kenya, we have selected a few congregations in Kisii engaged in education and the Loreto Sisters in Nairobi who have played a great role in this field.

5.2.1. NUNS AND EDUCATION IN KISII

Several schools and other teaching institutions in Kisii were founded and are run by nuns. Various Orders of women have done quite a commendable job in education, right from nursery, to primary and secondary school level. On the next page is a summary table of schools founded and run by Nuns.

The Nuns' involvement in education in Kisii District started when the Church was established in Nyabururu, three miles from Kisii Town. This was in the year 1936. The first Sisters to arrive at Nyabururu Mission were Sr. Mother Philip and Sister Redempta.

SUMMARY TABLE

Schools founded and run / staffed by Nuns

NYABURURU	
Nursery School	- The Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph
Primary Boarding School	- The Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph
Secondary Boarding School	
St. Paul's Teachers College	
TABAKA	
Nursery School	- The Blessed Virgin Congregation
Primary Boarding School	
Home Craft Centre	
SENGERA	
Nursery School	- Sisters of Mary
Primary Boarding School	
Secondary School	
GEKANO	
Secondary School	- School Sisters of Notre Dame
ICHUNI GIRLS'	- Sisters of Mary
RANGENYO	- Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph
KEBIRIGO	- Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph

Nyabururu is perhaps the busiest mission in Kisii District, and certainly the mission with the greatest variety of Sisters. In the main house, there is room for assemblies and retreats where the Sisters may gather. On the Nyabururu compound there are now a number of other communities: the White Sisters have a house of prayer, the Sisters of Notre Dame, Americans-run an upgrading Centre for the African Sisters, the African Sisters themselves have schools. All work together for the good of the people of the Kisii Diocese. Nyabururu is a small village in itself with an international population.

Over the years the attitude to the education of girls has changed and girls' schools have grown accordingly. It is no longer like the early years when there were one or two girls for every ten boys who received proper schooling: shortly before independence, the girl-boy ratio was one to two. Now the number of girls' schools in Kenya has increased rapidly. Tabaka Girls' Boarding Primary School is run by the Blessed Virgin Congregation which within the church is an Apostolic religious family whose mission is to help people especially by educating the youth. It has its own educational institutions wherever means and circumstances allow them and this is even among the most neglected brethren. Tabaka Girls' Boarding Primary School is situated in a remote place, far away from Kisii Town such that even communication to the school was quite pathetic in the early years of its founding. The actual number of members of this congregation is still small (about a hundred altogether) but during the decades they remained faithful to the church and the Spirit of the foundress. After Vatican II they came to Kenya where they continue their educational work.

Franciscan Missionary Sisters of St. Joseph are in charge of a secondary girls' boarding school in Nyabururu. The school was opened in 1936 as a primary and intermediate school. In those days it was very difficult to fill the classes as girls were not interested in education. They were needed at home, in the farm and to do housework. The large Girls' Secondary School now has notable academic successes and it is recognised that the girls have a very sound spiritual training along with the secular. Local lay teachers and parents complement the religious staff.

Gekano Girls Secondary School is another school run by nuns. It was founded by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. This is an International Congregation which came to Kenya in 1974. Apart from the Gekano Girls Secondary School, they are also presently involved in teaching at the St. Francis Upgrading Centre, Kisii and in the formation of Sisters at Asumbi, which is also in Kisii Diocese. Their ministry is directed toward education which includes many works besides classroom teaching, enabling persons to reach the fullness of their

potential. Like their founders, they exclude no one from their concern, but are especially sensitive to the needs of youth and women, and are impelled to prefer the poor.

Nyamagwa and Sengeru Schools in Kisii are also staffed with nuns. The Sisters of Mary are to be found in these schools. This Congregation was founded by the Ursuline Sisters of Bergen - Holland, assisted by Branziman of Kisumu in November 3, 1932. Since then the Congregation has grown more active in sharing in the Apostolate of Christ's Church through teaching in schools, in colleges, in schools of the mentally handicapped, the deaf and dumb children; through nursing in hospitals, orphanages, nutrition centres. They also engage in pastoral work, social work, as well as looking after the old and destitute people in the remote areas of Western and Northern Kenya and Eastern Uganda, as a way of alleviating the numerous social problems facing our people today,

The Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph have schools in Rangenyo and Kebirigo. The school at Rangenyo opened in 1956. The Sisters have primary and intermediate girls' schools. At Kebirigo, apart from the schools there, they have the "Viongozi Centre", where they have some courses (seminars) for Catholic parents.

In Kisii District, the Congregation that is one of the oldest and has done perhaps the most commendable work in the area of education is the Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph. During the 1983 Golden Jubilee in Nyabururu, the Bishop stressed the achievement of the Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph. For instance the vitally important work of training the African women to take their place in the new social order, undertaken by Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph was given Bishop Otunga's wholehearted support and encouragement. Centres of training for Home craft and child-care were established, the Bishop generously giving up his own house in Kisii to the Sisters that the work might forge ahead without delay. Up to the present time a great number of women have taken advantage of this training and have returned to their villages suitably equipped to practise and to pass on this teaching to others.

The work of the nuns in the area of education has been appreciated greatly because it seems to encompass the whole life of mankind. This is so because it does not only deal with

class work but with almost every aspect of life. It touches the nation in its entirety. Women and girls are taught to be good cooks, good dressmakers, generally good home-makers. Nuns also toil to bring Christ to their fellow country-men and to save them from ignorance and disease. It is no wonder then that, in a special message to Northern Cross, Bishop Otunga wrote:

To educate an African girl in Kenya is to educate six people. To educate an African Sister is to educate 10,000 persons.²⁸

5.2.2. THE LORETO SISTERS AND EDUCATION IN NAIROBI

Nairobi Archdiocese has several schools and other teaching institutions founded, run or staffed by Sisters.

In Nairobi, the most notable Order of women who have contributed greatly in the area of education are the Loreto Sisters. The Loreto Sisters' influence is not only felt in Nairobi but also outside the city. Some of the best girls' schools in our country are run and staffed with Sisters from this Congregation. They came to Kenya in 1921. These Sisters are mostly engaged in educational work although they are now moving out into other fields. In Kenya, these Sisters serve in Nairobi, Mombasa, Limuru, Kiambu, and Moi's Bridge. Their main educational work is done through nursery, primary and secondary schools. Their apostolate includes catechial instruction and youth formation at Parish level.

In the "Service of love" to which they are called, through the apostolate of Education, and other means congruous to the times they continue to "strive to serve the Church in procuring the good of souls by all means possible for women to the greater glory of God" with Mary, the Mother of Jesus as their "Patroness and Mother". The Loreto Sisters started the first Kenyan Girls' secondary school in 1936, and it was Loreto Limuru. Loreto Sisters were asked to enter the lists and lay the foundation stone of an African Girls' secondary school. M.M. Dolores Stadford, M.M. Teresa Joseph, and M. Marian O'Shea took up their abode at

Limuru on 4th December, 1936. The first six boarders arrived from the little homesteads round St. Austin's on Sunday, 13th December the same year. They were joined by twenty-one locals as day girls. All had attended school up to at least standard IV. School work began on Monday morning; the twenty-seven were sorted out into standards V, VI and VII and all in one room! Added to the difficulties of any new foundation, Limuru had that of language. The girls all spoke Kikuyu, but had some knowledge of Swahili. The teaching had to be done in Swahili, in which M.M. Teresa Joseph made astonishing progress.

This group of Catholic girls certainly provided wonderful material, but the going was not smooth! The African girl is home-loving and deeply attached to her mother and the homely fireside with "our children". The school proved too much for some and they began to run away in twos and threes. At different times, both day pupils and boarders staged strikes.

The numbers crept up gradually, particularly when teacher-training was introduced, as the girls' earning potential was enhanced. The opening of a small maternity hospital in which M.M. Dolours Fitzpatrick worked broke down prejudice. By 1948, the teacher training had gone to a higher stage and secondary classes were begun. By then the number of boarders was eighty-four and the nuns had been established in a new house, the present Convent. Colombiere Kelly came fresh from Ireland to lift the burden carried so long by M.M. Teresa Joseph, and accomplished much in the improvement of buildings. By 1954, the first two candidates were ready for Senior Cambridge; in 1970 nearly 80 took the examination.

The school is now a "national" one and every district in Kenya used to be given an equal number of places, although at the moment the quota system has changed things a bit. The result is a very interesting group of pupils. As many as twenty-five different tribes and tongues are represented.

The Sisters also taught African women who resided near the mission. These women were invited to come to classes in religious, needlework, child-care and reading. All went well for a while, but then the Fathers came to say that the men folk feared that the women would become too proud and independent, so the classes had to stop. But the Sisters kept contact with the women through a small dispensary. In fact, through their hard struggle they were able

to teach the women a lot such that by December each woman had managed to stitch a shirt which they took to their husbands as the Christmas present!

Many of the school's alumni are in prominent positions in present Kenya - as university and education college lecturers, as senior officials of various Government Ministries and private sector firms, as headmistresses of well-known schools, and above all as leading members of African Sisterhoods and as members of I.B.V.M. (Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary).

Still in Nairobi, Loreto established a school along Valley Road. The parents pleaded for a "Kindergarten school". With some difficulty a house was found on Valley Road. The small accommodation it offered was helped out by the addition of a few army huts and the use of a stone paved summer house in which M.M. Carmel recalls being able to pick fungi from under her foot for a Nature Study lesson. The house was occupied on May 1, 1942 and school began on May 26. The school is now one of the best learning institutions for girls in Kenya. Everyday applicants are turned regretfully away. A feature of the school is the quiet change over from the "segregation" imposed by law before independence to the truly Christian multi-racialism of today.

"Prepare one teacher and you touch thousands of souls". Loreto's teacher training college at Kiambu is surely one of the most important of their works in Kenya. The College is a 'swarming' from Limuru where teacher training was undertaken side by side with secondary work until 1949. The house, the first of their convents to be entirely the work of an African builder, was taken over on 8 April, 1949. By 1952, the college was in full swing, and the government declared itself ready to take over financial responsibility. The period known as the "emergency" - the war of independence - was one of great strain for the Sisters, as that college is right in the centre of a very populous Kikuyu district. On 17 October, 1954, the Sisters spent the night in the Chapel literally waiting for death. On the hillsides all round them African homes were ablaze.

The first two African girls to join this Order in Kenya were S.M. Lwanga, who had trained in Kiambu as a teacher, and S.M. Ephigenia, a 'grand-daughter' of Limuru. Every effort has been made to give them all that Vatican II demands for Novices. Each is now the holder of a Certificate in Theology. S.M. Ephigenia is a trained science teacher and S.M. Lwanga is a specialised catechist.

Other schools founded by the Loreto Sisters include Loreto Matunda situated half-way between Eldoret and Kitale; and also one in Mombasa.

Another area in which the Loreto Sisters have contributed to education in Kenya is in the work of the mass media. S.M. Canice and S.M. Lucy have shown themselves as apt for it as the youngsters, S.M. Catriona and S.M. Ephigenia. They have contributed greatly in preparing religious programmes with the children, or giving the "Lift Up Your Hearts" and "Epilogue" addresses. They are also engaged at Gaba Pastoral Institute, preparing, as one of a team of four, a series of a very modern catechical text-book - "Development in Christ". The series is likely to be adopted in all English-speaking countries of Central Africa.

Some of their Sisters are often called on to give courses in the teaching of religion to teachers in government schools. Also, Sister S.M. Philip, who is now a retired teacher, has been engaged for some years, working with an ecumenical group on a complete common syllabus for secondary schools. The Kenya Ministry of Education, accepted and approved their work for upto O-level, and established religion fully as an examination subject. Now the Ministry has asked the group to continue the work by suggesting text-books and moderating examinations.²⁹

In summary, the schools founded by this Order can be categorised into two, namely, private-run and the government-run or government-aided schools:

PRIVATE SCHOOLS:

Loreto Msongari	- Primary and Secondary
Loreto Valley Road	- Primary and Secondary
Loreto Mombasa	- Pre-school and Primary

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS:

Loreto Limuru	- National secondary school
Loreto Kiambu	- Provincial and <i>Harambee</i> secondary school
Loreto Matunda	- it is presently run by a Sister of another congregation. A day school is available for those who did not qualify for a government school
Loreto Nakuru	- a co-educational (boys + girls) secondary school.

The sisters from this Order are also to be found carrying out educational activities in government-founded schools such as State House Girls, Nairobi, St. Theresa's Eastleigh, Star of the Sea, Mombasa, and the Catholic Parochial School. Others are to be found even in the universities, carrying out counselling such as Sister Germaine at the University of Nairobi and Sister Mary at Kenyatta University.³⁰

5.3. NUNS AND HEALTH

The medical apostolate, which can be called a true and sacred ministry, is another apostolate in which many religious are engaged. This is because when it is undertaken with a supernatural motive it becomes as it were a continuation of the work and ministry of our Lord Himself toward the sick. So often throughout the Gospels we are presented with scenes describing the loving meetings or encounters of the Son of God with the suffering humanity and of the infinite pity which He manifested in its regard. This ministry of mercy He left to the Church to be carried on through her members. It is these persons who are to recognise Christ in every sick person and who are to act as Christ would act with him.

Christian missions in general were the pioneers everywhere in Kenya of the medical services just as they were the pioneers of education.³¹ For instance, wherever the Catholic church has taken root, medical care has had an important place. While education was in direct connection with Christ's great commission: "Go and teach all nations", healing the sick has been an activity supporting Christ's own teaching mission, and so medical care was another means to support the work of evangelization. But just as Christ was primarily moved by genuine compassion, the same has to be admitted for those who came in his name, teaching and healing.³²

The early missionaries often shared their own medicines with the people, and treated them as best as they could. Christian women in general were the first to enter the nursing profession in large numbers. However, proper medical care came only with the missionary Sisters who opened dispensaries in most of their missions. The effect of their work in the early days is well described by an old Gikuyu farmer. He says:

The humble and respectable way in which the Sisters gave themselves to the sick while treating them, earned them high praise and attracted many to the Church. They used the opportunity to preach to those who were not seriously ill and also to those who accompanied the sick. They would also have a follow-up with their patients in their homes to explain that they were not healed because of the missionaries' own power but because of the power of the Lord Jesus. If they would become Christians they would get everlasting healing from the mighty doctor Jesus Christ. Thus the Sisters created an atmosphere of loving care among the people.³³

It is not unusual to find Sisters as matrons in large government hospitals and nursing schools. These Sisters often practise their profession in very difficult situations and strive very hard to maintain high ethical and professional standards. In so doing they make the presence of the Church felt and contribute greatly to the profession, the Church, and the country. Many up-to-date hospitals and nursing schools, in urban and rural areas are sponsored by Religious Congregations of women. These have well-equipped women engaged in curative and preventive work.

5.3.1. HOSPITALS IN NAIROBI AND KISII RUN AND STAFFED BY CATHOLIC NUNS

DIOCESE OF KISII	ARCHDIOCESE OF NAIROBI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asumbi Hospital - Kisii Hospital - Mawego Hospital - Rapogi Hospital - Tabaka Hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Edelvale Maternity Hospital - Jamaa Home and Maternity Hospital - Kagwe Hospital - Kalimoni Hospital - Kilimambogo Hospital - Mater Misericordiae Hospital - Miguta Hospital - Riara Ridge (Nazareth Hospital) - Riruta Hospital - Thika Maternity Hospital

The Medical Apostolate

In order to illustrate the role of nuns in health, the Medical Missionaries of Mary were taken as a case study.³⁴

5.3.2. NUNS AND HEALTH:

— A Case Study of the Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM)

The Medical Missionaries of Mary are an international missionary congregation of women religious founded by Mother Mary Martin in Nigeria in 1937. The foundress was a woman with great vision for the future. She began in Nigeria as a Lay Volunteer in 1921. She specialised in mother and child assistance and began her congregation.

The aim of the congregation is to seek God and His Kingdom through sharing Christ's healing mission in the world today. They follow Christ who went about doing good, healing the sick and proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom.³⁵

Their charism as Medical Missionaries places them in the world of health and medicine for the missionary service of the universal church. The Congregation is dedicated to Mary, Mother of God. Mary is at the very source of its inspiration. Like Mary the Sisters are called to surrender to the mystery of the Incarnation and reflect in their lives the attitudes she manifested at the Annunciation and the Visitation. Mother Mary Martin's unique insights into these mysteries are her heritage to Medical Missionaries of Mary who try to live with faith filled generosity, as their motto directs - "Rooted and Founded in Love" (Eph. 3:17).³⁶

As Medical Missionaries of Mary, they are concerned with health and healing with particular emphasis on mother and child. Happily, that is part of their healing charisma but they believe they have to create new ways, dare to venture on new paths, perhaps as they minister to them to be ready to learn more from the children themselves. In looking at Gospel values Jesus is seen drawing children from the margin of human community into the centre and drawing attention to their characteristics. He went on to say unless you become like little children you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.³⁷

These Sisters believe Jesus came as a child and still lives among people. He can be seen in the street child, in the refugee, in the ill and the starving, in the drug addict, the AIDS victim and in the sexually abused. Concerning this, one respondent had this to say, "Our Sisters daily

meet with the poor and sick, those who suffer hunger, illness, distress, the victims of famine and flood, refugees who have been driven from their homeland. These are the deprived and marginalised we would like to help".³⁸

They believe that Mary, the woman of faith continues to inspire their lives. Their special concern is for the care of Mother and Child, as already pointed out. "And Mary rose and went in haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth who was also with child". (Lk.1)³⁹

From the beginning in 1937 Medical Missionaries of Mary has expanded and grown so that now they operate in Angola, Brazil, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, USA, England and Ireland.⁴⁰

They first came to Kenya in 1961 when there was famine in Turkana, which had since then been a "closed area" out of bounds to any kind of serious missionary activity.⁴¹ An occasional Protestant missionary got a permit for a brief visit, as did Catholic missionaries operating out of Tartar and Ortum in West Pokot, the district directly south of Turkana. The first three Sisters of the Medical Missionaries of Mary to arrive in Turkana were Andrea Kelly, Bernadette Gilsean and Campion Campbell, familiarly known by the initials of their forenames as A, B and C. The great needs in the Lodwar famine camp suggested that they should provide a medical service there. The Sisters actually arrived in the famine camp on the 24th March. On their journey from Ireland they had stayed for a short time with their own community at Masaka (Uganda), and paid visits to the Holy Rosary Sisters at Turbo, the Loreto Convent at Eldoret, and the Ursulines at Kitale. On March 25th they had their first Mass in the desert, and immediately went to interview the Lodwar medical officer, a Dr. Good, about the availability of medicines for the famine camps. The next few days were spent examining possible sites for a dispensary. On 16th April they opened a make-shift dispensary under one of the few trees in the camp, seeing 109 patients in the course of their first day's work.⁴²

They are now carrying out their healing mission not only in Turkana but also in North Baringo, Kerio Valley, Kitale, Lower Subukia, Wanyororo and Nairobi. In Nairobi, they are

especially found in slum areas such as Kibera, Eastleigh, Mathare and Korogocho. They also show their concern to the refugees by giving them food, clothing and money. Also, some are engaged with helping and counselling AIDS victims.⁴³

Their work is carried out through mobile clinics, dispensaries, clinics and even hospitals.⁴⁴ They also produce handbooks for health workers. There are information books from their practical experience in training, village health workers.⁴⁵

In summary it is worth noting that the Medical Missionaries of Mary fight the ravages of famine, disease and poverty, with dedicated service to the poorest of the poor.

5.4. NUNS AND SOCIAL WORK

5.4.1. CARE FOR THE POOR AND ABANDONED

Still another apostolate that is exercised by many religious communities is that of the care of the poor and the abandoned.⁴⁶ In the Old Testament the excellence of such a work has been very well pointed out for the members of this covenant:

Spent thyself giving food to the hungry, relieving the afflicted. Then shall light spring up for thee in the darkness and thy dusk shall be moonday ... ease the insupportable burden, set free the over-driven, share thy bread with the hungry, give the poor and the vagrant a welcome to thy house; meet the naked, clothe him; from thy own flesh and blood turn away ... the Lord will give thee rest continually, fill thy soul with comfort, thy body with ease. Not more secure, the well-watered garden, the spring whose waters never fail.⁴⁷

Woman with her instructive qualities for giving warmth and alleviating suffering has been inspired by Christian values to bring relief to those in misery. Much time and effort is spent by Sisters not only for works of charity but for helping people crushed by social and psychological problems. Several have undergone professional training in Christian institutes of social work or other university colleges. Some are on the faculties to guide and supervise students during their training. Others are active counsellors, family welfare workers, child-guidance experts, medical social workers, rural development or community workers. Some undertake research on problems general or specific to men, women or children. Yet others

participate as volunteers on district, state or national bodies that make decisions in the field of social welfare which affect large numbers of people.⁴⁸

The Sisters have played a great role in helping with the refugee problem prevalent in our country today. They are present with refugees, whom they provide with food, medical care and even clothing. The Sisters follow the message of Christ which is one of *Koinonia* and *Diakonia*, and refugees are looking for this communion and service; since stripped of their dignity, burdened by ideologies over which they have no control, they look for companions who will be with them to the end.

The Sisters are also concerned with the youth. "Youth", as Sister Fernande Party from the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa put it, is a popular theme, a slogan, in today's world. Everyone is concerned about young people. It is a sign of the times, the hope of the church and of the world, a challenge of missions today, and a challenge to Sisters. Sisters see in the youth outstanding qualities as signs of great hope.

In the wide area of social work, the Catholic nuns have set out to deal with problems of the day in Kenyan society. Several problems, such as rural-urban migration; arose due to urbanisation, bringing about overcrowding in the urban areas. A great number of people are jobless; homeless, abandoned, etc. According to United Nations reports, 2 million people moved into the cities of Asia, Africa, and Latin America during the 1960s. Moreover, it is estimated that by the end of the twentieth century one half or more of the world's population will be living in the cities. Up until the present no nation has been able to avoid uncontrolled development in the face of this migration. And there is no evidence to indicate that independent African countries will do any better, unless there is good planning and vigorous action to accommodate the large influx of low-income families moving into the cities, and to accelerate the pace of development in the rural areas. In East Africa, the situation is no different, with large movements of population from rural to urban areas. Many of the urban people remain homeless. For instance, the streets of Nairobi and other big urban centres in Kenya have become the 'home' for many people. The majority of these people are children

under the age of 15 years. Additionally, there is another good number living in slums and in shanty towns throughout the Republic

5.4.2. ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN NAIROBI

Various organisations have come up in an attempt to solve the social problems prevalent in the streets and slums of Nairobi, but our main concern is with the roles nuns have played. For a long time, the urban ministry consisted in providing Sunday service and being available in the Parish office. For the 1960s one courageous attempt to go out into the streets is to be recorded: the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity went to look for destitute girls whom they educated in Edelvale Home and Waridi House. More recently they have opened the Jamaa Home for pregnant girls.⁴⁹

There were two other attempts made in the 1970s, not only to help but also to share the life of the poor in Mathare Valley, namely by the Brothers of Taize and the Missionary Sisters of Charles de Foncauld. Then the Missionaries of Charity, founded by Mother Teresa, came to care for the aged and the handicapped. Later the Sisters of the Poor opened a similar home in Kasarani.⁵⁰

In the 1980s the growing pastoral awareness that religious care had to go hand in hand with socio-economic assistance was impressive. In every parish there was some project or other. Nursery schools and child development programmes were quite widespread. In Karen, the Salesians built one of their internationally-renowned Boys' Town. The Apostles of Jesus and the Benedictines organised Vocational Training Centres at their places. The Marianists began a series of "IMANI" projects, (IMANI is both the Swahili word 'faith' and an acronym: Incentive from Marianists to Assist the Needy to be Independent. The first of such incentives was Maria House in Eastleigh, which assists unmarried mothers to learn a skill and to find employment. It also gives loans for starting a small business. In Mukuru a similar incentive for penniless boys has just been opened. Finally, there have been thousands of refugees who have found help through these various channels. On the more spiritual side, there have been

numerous formation and retreat courses. The awakening of so many lay people, their assuming of tasks of apostolate and leadership, has been one of the most promising features of the recent past. The latest building-stone in this direction is the Mary Ward Leadership Training Centre in Langata, organised by the Loreto Sisters.⁵¹

Several charitable homes have been set up to cater for all sorts of social problems in our day to day society. Several are to be found in Kisii and Nairobi.

5.4.3. CHARITABLE HOMES

DIOCESE OF KISII	ARCHDIOCESE OF NAIROBI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ichuni Small Home - Nyamagwa Small Home - Nyakooru Home for the Blind and Deaf - Nyakooru Small Home - Rangenyo Small Home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Edelvale Girls' Home - Jamaa Home - Waridi Villa - Huruma

5.4.4. NUNS AND SOCIAL WORK:

— A Case study of the Missionaries of Charity Sisters ⁵²

In order to illustrate the role of nuns in social work, the Missionaries of Charity Sisters have been given special reference. After visiting their charitable home at Huruma on several occasions, a lot of information was gathered.

The Missionaries of Charity is an International religious family composed of active and contemplative branches with perpetual public vows of chastity, poverty, obedience and whole-hearted and free service to the poorest of the poor - leading each of them to the perfect love of God and the neighbour, making the Church fully present in the world of today. Their society is dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, cause of their joy and Queen of the world. The spirit of the society is one of total surrender, loving trust and cheerfulness.

The Mother House and Centre of training is at S4A, Acharya Jagdish Chandra Bose Road, Calcutta 700016. They also have training centres in other parts of India for the aspirancy and in different continents, Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa and Australasia. Every member of the society goes where she is sent and does not choose her place of work or the kind of work she would like to do. They go out two by two and pray the Rosary daily at home and in their way to and from work. The language of the society is English. As a sign of entrance into a new state of life and of their desire for self-effacement, they receive a new religious name at profession. They call each other "Sister", they cut their hair completely. Their religious dress consists of:

- a simple and modest white cotton habit;
- a white cotton sari with blue border covering the head;
- a cuiture made of rope;
- a pair of sandals;
- a crucifix and rosary.

The special aim of the society is to labour at the salvation and sanctification or the poorest of the poor not only in the slums but also all over the world wherever they may be, by:

- nursing the sick and the dying destitute;
- gathering and caring for beggars, leprosy patients and their children;
- giving shelter to the abandoned and homeless;
- caring for the unwanted, the unloved and the lonely.

through:

- (a) Homes for abandoned and crippled children, known as *Shishu Bhavan*
- (b) Homes for sick and dying destitute, known as *Nirmal Hriday*.
- (c) Mobile clinics, leprosy clinics and leprosy rehabilitation centres.
- (d) Primary slum schools, sewing, handicraft and typing classes.

going out to the spiritually poorest of the poor to proclaim the Word of God by their presence and spiritual works of mercy; and

by adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

This Order, having been founded by Mother Theresa, has played an important role in dealing with all sorts of people who are suffering in one way or another. Having come to Kenya in 1978, these Sisters have accomplished a lot. In their Huruma Charitable Home, which is also their mother house in Kenya, they have housed several categories of people. They have about 280 people being taken care of at present in their charitable home. They take care of the abandoned children, who they either gather from the streets or are brought to them by the priests; the disabled, abandoned old men and women. Those that are not given accommodation there come for food and clothing from these Sisters. The Missionary Sisters of Charity have set aside 3 days in a week in which they provide some food and clothing to those poor people in the streets and slums. They visit these people in their resident homes where they are able to identify the most needy, abandoned and desperate. These Sisters rely on donations for their upkeep and that of those they take care of. They believe their joy is in responding to the poorest people's needs in society. Their foundress, Mother Theresa was moved by poor and abandoned people in the streets of Calcutta, India. These people's miseries moved her to found this Order - which has carried on her work by also trying to take care of the poor of the poorest in the streets and slums.

Their work entails a lot of hardships and endurance and so it is no wonder that candidates desirous to join the society are required to be healthy in body and mind, hence able to bear the hardships of this vocation.

Asked whether they enjoy their work, the Mother Superior had this to say:

We consider it an honour and privilege to serve Christ in the distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor with our humble work using humble means, relying on the omnipotence of God who said: "Without Me you can do nothing".⁵³

In carrying out these physical works of mercy, the Sisters are directly showing Christ's love for mankind. "Whatever you do to the least of my brothers that you do unto me", so the Sisters feel it their duty to take care of those suffering. In recent years for instance, more and more babies are being abandoned and are destitute. The opening of Huruma Charitable Home is like the seed planted in good soil that Jesus spoke of: "It bears much fruit". All this is due to the love these Sisters have for these people in misery.

It is important here, therefore, to conclude with the child's prayer which says:

"LOVE IS THE ANSWER"

Little children ask no more, for love is all they are looking for; and in a small child's shining eyes, the faith of all the ages lies. Oh Father, grant once more to men, a simple child-like faith again. And with a small child's trusting eyes, may all men come to realise that faith alone can save man's soul and lead him to a higher goal". (From Helen Steiner Rice's, "A CHILD'S PRAYER").

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CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the findings of the "calling and service of Catholic nuns in Kenya" are evaluated. Both their strengths and weaknesses are noted. In addition, recommendations on the role of nuns in Kenya are given to help the nuns improve their plans for the future involvement with programmes designed to help people in all walks of life.

6.1. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

In precise religious terms, we have found out that those religious women in active orders such as teaching, or nursing, are Sisters. Only those in contemplative communities, forever enclosed are, strictly speaking, nuns. But to most people, 'nun' is generally held to mean both.

It was the hypothesis of this thesis that a study on the calling and service of the nun in Kenya be discovered. It aimed at finding out why some women become nuns; and why some leave the convent even after staying for a very long time. We found out that some women become nuns because they feel "called" to this type of life. Others, due to influence and example from other Sisters or friends. Some, due to unconscious motives such as the hope of getting economic gains and to be educated. Many young women entering religious communities have been challenged with the following question, 'Why on earth are you going into a convent ?'¹

We found out that it is the voice of God that takes women into the religious life. It is a calling heard only in the heart, a need. One informant when asked how she knew she had a call to the religious life had this to say:

This was first of all an attraction. I was attracted to the spiritual life. I loved Sisters, the Church and talking about God with my friends. It was a feeling inside me.²

But it is not enough to say that they enter because they love God. Obviously they do, but so do other people and most of them do not become nuns.

At the origin of the religious consecration there is a call of God for which there is no explanation apart from the love which He bears for the person whom He calls. This love is absolutely gratuitous, personal, and unique. It embraces the person to the extent that one no longer pertains to oneself, but to Christ. It thus reflects the character of an alliance. The glance which Jesus turned towards the rich young man has this characteristic:

"Looking at him, He loved him".³

All Sisters interviewed said this was not something they decided for themselves. They were called by God to this life. The call of Christ, which is the expression of a redemptive love, embraces the whole person, soul and body, whether man or woman, in that person's unique and unrepeatable personal "I".⁴

The motives for entering the convent are as different as the entrants.

"The varieties of call", according to a superior who has seen many women choose 'convent life', are like the stones of the sea.⁵ One Sister, trying to explain it said, "You hear it. You know it". Another one added, "It is not different from other things, from getting married, for example. You know you must marry a man, that this is the right one for you, that you are called to be joined with him and bring new life into the world. It is the same for us."⁶

According to Sister Jane of the Blessed Virgin Mary Congregation at Karen, fear and desire are nearly always the first signs of a vocation. She believes every woman, called at whatever age, invariably feels both. She adds that the first contact with God is disturbing and the conflict is natural since every woman wants to be loved by a man and to bear children.

Many Sisters said they entered the convent because they were responding to a call. A vocation is not realised till it receives a free response from man which God enables him to make.

Many women struggle for years against the conviction that God wants them to enter a convent. A lot of Sisters would say they had fought hard against choosing this life. Comparatively few would say how marvellous it is because it does mean you are turning your

back on a lot of things that honestly are very desirable and great fun. But there is a feeling that one must try at least, and see.

Some of the Sisters said that they had the feeling when they were young and resisted it till they were over twenty years. One informant had this to say:

I was happy and fulfilled and I knew if I entered I would not have marriage or children, which I would have loved to have at some point. But it seemed to me like God saying, "Look, I am sorry, but this is the way you must work". I went against it for years, but finally I joined the convent.⁷

Another informant remembers kneeling in Church and listing mentally on one side all the reasons why she should become a nun, and she could think of only one reason why she should not. And to her, that did not sound like a very good reason.⁸

For most women who become nuns, the conviction that this is a choice they must make overrides their realisation of loss. Out of a group of novices in one convent, the first said, "I think you are drawn to it anyway". And another: "It might not be your personal choice; it is in the end. But not in the first place". And a third: "It is not up to yourself, really you have to come".⁹

Often the attitude of the family is the major influence on a vocation. In some countries it is traditional for one or two members of a large family to enter the church for reasons both of faith and finance. The influence of the mother particularly in encouraging vocations is acknowledged to be immense. At a recent meeting in London to discuss the subject of vocations, one of the tactics recommended to boost the diminishing numbers of entrants was that a mother should encourage her little ones to play at being nuns and priests.¹⁰

At the other extreme, there are families who are horrified at the idea of their girls taking the veil. A superior who regularly gives talks on vocations says:

Of course, we often find parents are not terribly anxious for their girls to become nuns. They prefer them to get married, and then there are possibly grandchildren and dowry. "In fact", the Superior added, "this is not only in Kenya. A recent inquiry into the subject of vocations carried out in France showed that while a son becoming a priest was acceptable, a daughter choosing to be a nun was a calamity. Some nuns have had such intense opposition from their families when they entered that relationships with them are completely broken off. Almost all Orders have their own stories of families bitterly resenting the entrance of their daughters."¹¹

One Sister expressed the fact that parental opposition has been in part responsible for enclosure. Convent walls were put up not to keep the nuns in, but intruders out.¹²

Often girls educated at convent schools are influenced towards the religious life. Some Sisters think the nuns at their former convent schools put the idea directly into their heads. Example and imitation have been important factors. They certainly impressed them as women who had all the gifts. Not in terms of looks, though some were very good-looking, but they were not out-casts of society. They were intellectually very able and of very good personalities.¹³

In spite of the efforts so many women make to enter the convent, it is strange that one of the false impressions outsiders have of convents is that they represent for the inmates an escape, an evasion of responsibility, an easy way out if life does not offer the conventional happiness of a husband, a career and children. This is a myth that has been demolished by many Sisters. They say:

So many people think this life is a rejection, an escape from the physical. But that is not part of the pattern. If you marry one man, you are rejecting thousands, but people do not see that as a rejection. And, would a life in common of obedience and poverty, make up for the lack of a husband, beauty and intelligence? Nuns cannot simply be dismissed as women no one wanted. Even if charming and intelligent people do not deserve more credit for the strength of the emotions which drive them to give their lives to God, their sheer numbers must prove something. Christianity in general has a million nuns and Sisters and they cannot all be suffering from disappointments in love!¹⁴

Many people feel this is a life against nature. They imagine one is not going to have anything; no married life, no young family, no happiness. But the findings have shown that these religious are as happy as the married women. They have happiness in their work just as married women have their happiness in the family.

Another myth about nuns is that they are driven into convents by unhappy love-affairs. It is true that some girls, afraid of their own sexuality, can by entering avoid contact with men and at the same time ensure their own holiness. But someone who is not capable of good relationships with people in the world is going to be no better off inside a convent. She is not, after all, living a hermit's life but a community one.

Many Sisters interviewed on why they joined Sisterhood said that it was because they had a vocation to this religious life. There is the duty of following one's vocation. The young woman who is clearly called by God to the religious life cannot without being held responsible, refuse to listen to the divine call.

"Indeed, infidelity resulting in the loss of a divine vocation is certainly dangerous"¹⁵

Reasons for leaving the convent were found to be pressure from parents; the inability to cope with the rules and regulations of convent life and therefore the desire to go and get married and bear children of one's own.

In Chapter Two the Theology of Calling was dealt with. The main objective of this was to enable us get a glimpse of the reasons some women become nuns, and how people generally understand calling. Although the reasons some women become nuns were not our direct consideration in this chapter, we set a background in this area for a further discussion in Chapter Three. What was stressed in Chapter Two was that it is God who calls people into this life. The general christian conception of vocation was discovered and the special calls in both the Old and New Testaments were outlined. This stresses the fact that vocation is not a new thing. It is as old as the history of mankind. It is God revealing Himself to His people through the deeds of certain people. We found out that Sisters understand vocation as a divine call. Therefore in the presence of a vocation they adore the mystery and respond lovingly to the initiative of love and say "yes" to the call.

In Chapter Three, the three evangelical counsels taken by nuns were dealt with. These are chastity, poverty and obedience. We managed to gather that the evangelical counsels are three because there are only three ways of pledging oneself to live as Christ lived in areas which cover the whole of life, and these we said are affections, possessions and autonomy. Included in this chapter was the fact that the vows are a sign of total and perpetual dedication of one's entire being to the service of God and one's fellowmen. This was emphasised in the part which dealt with reasons nuns take vows. Each vow was also dealt with singly in four main areas; that is, their Biblical setting, the Theology of each vow; Canon Law and each vow and lastly, the practice of each vow in which case the problems were also described. As far as

the vow of virginity is concerned, this study showed that it is not merely abstention from marriage but a total and perpetual dedication of one's fellowmen. Virginity is both a gift and a task. This was stressed in the study. If nuns honestly endeavour to suppress their egoism and the hardness of their heart, they can expect to tend towards perfect virginity, which consists in a deep friendship with God and dedicated service to their brethren.

As for the vow of poverty we found that nuns take it in the hope of imitating Jesus Christ who, "for mankind's sake, made Himself poor though He was rich! We found out that the practice of poverty involves sacrifice, without which there cannot be consecrated poverty. A sacrifice is expressed even in simple things such as, avoiding superfluities, using commodities with temperance, accepting privations without complaints, asking due permissions, giving accounts to Superior or community, etc. Poverty means the absence of extravagance. It is not supposed to mean penury. Some informants estimate poverty by what one can afford if she was a mother in a house with an ordinary family. They say that they are supposed to be poor, and not indigent. They say taking to poverty does not mean to be in rags.

As we have seen of obedience, it touches the innermost core of the personality and implies the deepest renunciation. Rightly understood and practised, as we found out, it is a fulfilment of human freedom and not its diminishment.

We found out that a lot of effort should be put in order to observe these vows well. There are always temptations in life and unless one entirely puts a lot of faith and effort, these vows cannot be observed well. We cited incidents of violation of these vows which leads to some nuns leaving the convent.

The Fourth Chapter's main objective was to give the history of Sisterhood in Kenya and the requirements for entrants. Some of the basic requirements for admission as already pointed out in this chapter include: one must be a Catholic, one should have the right intentions, suitable disposition and sufficient maturity to undertake the life, and good health.

One should also be free from impediments. Suitable preparation which normally calls for some form of pre-novitiate is required also. The mode of their training was laid down.

We found out that nunhood is not generally a very acceptable vocation in our society. It is much easier for parents to give out their sons to become priests than a daughter to become a Sister. Girls were expected to stay at home and when of age, get married and bear children. People considered these girls who left home to become Sisters as poor, misguided daughters who would become useless persons, missing their proper role in life to become mothers. Their parents made many attempts to 'rescue' them and bring them home again. Sometimes a father would ask a 'dowry' from the parish priest for his daughter and was satisfied with one cow only - as a sign of respect for his parental rights; otherwise he would have given her away as if she had not been his child. To have to overcome so many difficulties was for our early Sisters a good test of their vocation and only Sisters with a truly religious motivation would persevere. However, we discover that this attitude changed as time went by. In fact at present large numbers of our Kenyan girls are going into the convent and the idea of a parent asking for 'dowry' is long gone. We have also seen that the coming of the nuns to Kenya radically altered the African's view of the African women and their role. Nuns are women whose roles are not defined by the traditional society. They are women who do not just serve husband and children but lead quite an independent life, and moreover a very religious life. The traditional arrangements could no longer effectively prepare African girls for life in the new society. Because of this and the fact that the African traditional system of life was also unsuitable for the pioneer nuns, who were mainly Europeans, new ways of meeting the changed circumstances were found. The history of nuns in Kenya has revealed that there are numerous congregations of nuns operating in Kenya and several convents.

6.2. EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF NUNS IN KENYA

As already pointed out, Chapter Five constituted the bulk of the second part of the thesis which dealt with service. Father Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, a contemporary scripture scholar, holds that one of the essential characteristics of the christian life according to St. Paul is its quality of witness through good works. It was this essential attribute of the christian which was made difficult if not impossible, by the rules which governed religious communities in the nineteenth century.¹⁶ In 1990, the church, in response to changed conditions in many countries, modified its rules for nuns. The Sisters have shaped a form of religious life that responds to all the needs of people. They are engaged in several areas of life for the good of mankind. This is mainly in their desire to live as Christ lived. It was realised that there are various works which are considered compatible with the religious state. While in general it can be said that any spiritual or corporal work of mercy can be objective of a religious order or congregation, still it seemed as though certain types of work had been most frequently undertaken. These included teaching and preaching, the Medical Apostolate and caring for the poor and abandoned. In order to illustrate this, a case study of each was given except for their role in the church.

In order to understand the opportunities and handicaps of Sisters in the church, we had to comprehend the basis from which they have to operate. As already pointed out, Sisters were through the centuries sub-servient to the other half (the Fathers). We noted that many Sisters keep up the teaching of religion in the parishes. They instruct those intending to do weddings, the newly-wed, and single mothers. Their work is also extended to the care of the sick in hospitals, care of the abandoned children, old women and men. They find the opportunities of pastoral care very rewarding. These Sisters get more and more involved in the ministries of the Church. Many of the Sisters believe they could do virtually everything the priests do in the church. They are only limited in their capacities to function dynamically in the church by the traditionalists, paternalists and those fearful of progressive change in society. In

spite of the great roles the nuns perform, they have not been given the right position in the church. We also noted that the church, particularly the Catholic church, which had started the revolution for human dignity is now lagging far behind the secular society. The church is still male-dominated despite the numerous numbers of women. Several authors' views on women and their church leadership was given.

We noted that the church has been impoverished in the past by its failure to exploit all the gifts women have to offer. It has been impoverished by inadequate sensitivity to the pastoral needs of women. The presence of competent women in the traditionally male areas of administration and finance should therefore constitute an enrichment of the church's life and work in these areas. Some people still hold the belief that women are negative in influence and are inferior to men. These views should be swept away completely because as the Bible says, we are all created in God's image.

The role of the nun in education was examined with a case study of the Loreto Sisters in Nairobi and those congregations in Kisii engaged in teaching. We found that the Catholic missionaries, mainly priests, called in nuns to help them in carrying out activities involved with other women. We noted that the nuns' role in the education of girls deserves great mention due to the fact that it had its special difficulties. The nun had to fight the well-known belief that the girl is destined to marry, to run the household and to bear and bring up children, a task which she best learns from her mother. Hence, no need for schooling.

In the early years as we have noted, there were one or two girls for every ten boys who received proper schooling; shortly before independence, the girl-boy ratio was one to two. These schools gave to the girls a new self-esteem. As teachers, nurses or secretaries, they could earn their own living, making them independent in choosing their husbands and running their family affairs. Thus the school was the decisive stepping-stone in the emancipation of women, which as we have already noted the historian F.W. Welburn calls,

"the greatest single achievement of the missions besides the general education".

There are positive aspects of the nun's role in education. First of all it is worth noting that these schools absorb a significant number of students who could not get places in

Government-run secondary schools and this gives them hope of a future, on successful completion of their education.

In providing education, the nuns relieve the anxieties of parents, who worry very much about what their children would do if they did not get secondary education. It thus gives them hope too that their children have a chance to make it to the future with possibilities of gaining knowledge and getting employed.

Furthermore, the Sisters' academics offer terminal education in which both the classics and practical training (chiefly domestic arts) are important. Courtesy, refinement, and good manners are stressed in many of these schools. As a description of the Georgetown Visitation Academy published in 1830 states, which is also true of Sisters in our country;

The Sisters' care and watchfulness are so sisterly and motherly, that the pupil is naturally moulded, not drilled to good manners. Discipline is constantly going on even in those hours of relaxation in which girls left to themselves often acquire an awkwardness of manners that cleave to them for the whole course of their lives¹⁸

In addition to the classics and the arts, the Sisters' schools also teach what one admirer called "the profound ethics and the sublime doctrines of the christian religion".¹⁹

The number of Catholic schools in both Nairobi and Kisii districts is significantly high and most of their schools are evenly distributed particularly in the rural areas in Kisii district. Even in Nairobi, these schools are found far from the hustle and bustle of the city centre for instance, Loreto Msongari, Our Lady of Mercy (South B), Consolata Primary School in Westlands, to name a few. The schools in Kisii district are even further from Kisii Town as is the case with Tabaka Girls Primary School, Sengera Girls, Nyamagwa Girls primary and secondary, Gekano Girls Secondary School, to name but a few. These schools produce outstanding examination results.

The role of nuns in health services was examined with a case study of the Medical Missionaries of Mary. The Medical Missionaries of Mary as already noted, are an International Missionary Congregation of women founded by Mother Mary Martin in 1937. The congregation and the members are also known by their official initials MMM. The aim of the

congregation as we found out is to seek God, and His kingdom through sharing Christ's healing mission in the world today. They follow Christ who went about doing good, healing the sick and proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom. We found out that their charism as medical missionaries places them in the world of health and medicine for the missionary service of the universal church.

These Sisters, as we noted, contribute highly to medical facilities although their proportion is relatively small. They largely provide curative medical services which help to sustain the health of the rural and urban populations they serve. They are mainly to be found in Turkana, Subukia, North Baringo, Kerio Valley, Kitale, Wanyororo and Nairobi. It was also noted that these Sisters take their services to the rural and remotest corners of the country to treat and instruct mothers on child-raising and hygiene. In this, they save their time and money and meet those who may be could not afford to travel to their dispensaries. They have also helped reduce child mortality rate especially in the areas they visit. It is therefore worth noting that since life is most precious, whatever protects and promotes it is of greatest value and to this effect nuns make a contribution. These Sisters also go to the extent of producing handbooks for health workers. These are information books on their practical experience in training Village Health Workers. Other congregations of nuns engaged in health include the Sisters of Mercy at Mater Misericordiae Hospital and Jamaa Maternity Home and the Sisters of Cremona in Kisii and Tabaka Hospitals.

The role of the nun in social work was examined with a case study of the Missionary Sisters of Charity founded by Mother Teresa. This study proved that another apostolate that is exercised by many religious communities is that of the care of the poor, the abandoned, the aged, the tiny, the orphans, and the disabled. The purpose of this work as already noted is to incarnate throughout the whole of human history God's concern, Christ's concern, and the Church's concern for these members of the human family. Like other works already mentioned, this work is also one of mercy, of pity and consequently ought to be seen within the framework of the redemptive Incarnation which is an act of mercy or pity per excellence.

In the wide area of social work, the Catholic nuns have set out to deal with problems in the day to day Kenyan society. As was noted, much effort and time is spent by these Sisters not only for works of charity but for helping people crushed by social and psychological problems. Several have undergone professional training in christian institutes of social work or other university colleges, and with this profession they help in alleviating several problems that affect mankind.

It was also noted that the Sisters cater for the three basic needs of mankind, that is by providing food to the hungry, clothing to the naked and shelter to the homeless. This is seen as quite a good job done. However, on the other hand one may question this by saying that the Sisters do not encourage people to be independent and self-supporting. As in the case of the Missionary Sisters of Charity, they have specific days in a week that they give food and clothing to the poor from slums or streets. One wonders, how long they will keep providing to these people.

However, their work is quite encouraging. They are ready to share whatever little they have for the good of mankind. This should be a challenge to all those that are able, to be generous enough to share their riches with the poor and abandoned. If this were implemented, the society would be more just and more equal.

During the time of the research we visited many nuns tackling work as diverse as helping handicapped children in Nairobi and Kisii districts, to the abandoned and aged people; from those engaged in publishing books (the Daughters of St. Paul), to those working in the slums; where they still walk in pairs, but now for protection rather than for modesty. We met nuns nursing people dying of cancer, listened as they advised pregnant school girls and helped battered wives and children. We were deeply moved and greatly impressed. For most of the nuns we felt immense and lasting affection. If our ignorance part of their lives amused them, they did not let it show. They were painstaking in answering our questions and did so with an honesty and openness for which we had hardly dared to hope. We hope other enquiring laymen now have a better understanding of these religious women. Whatever that cannot be

totally comprehended may partly be taken as a mystery of the human spirit that cannot be completely explained.

What we really wanted to do was to listen to what nuns have to say on all aspects of their lives. They discussed their work, their Superiors, and their relationship with the outside world. We asked them how they felt about the vows they have taken, whether they miss the company of men or regret the children they will never bear. The impression got from most of them is that they really enjoy their work. Most of them said they find joy in doing their work.

If any lesson for the future can be learnt from the past experience of nuns, it is that the only commitment which can remain static for the religious life is the commitment to live according to the Christian gospels. All other aspects of the Sister's life, including the way in which she supports herself and the type of apostolic work she does must be determined by the needs and the realities of the constantly changing society of which she is a part. We have therefore seen that nuns are an indispensable group of Kenyan women who deserve to be looked at. To ignore them is not only to neglect a significant group of Kenyan women workers; it is also to miss out an important product of dynamic forces in Kenyan life at this time and to skip a vital page in the history of Kenyan women.

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1. Oral Interview: Informants include Sisters: Rebecca, Mary, Angelina and Agatha, all from Daughters of St. Paul, in their postulancy period, who had come to Hekima College for some training. Interviews on 3.2.1992.
2. Sister Marcella; *Ibid.*, op.cit.
3. 1 Cor. 6:19.
4. This was an answer given by all Sisters interviewed.
5. Sister Caitriona Kelly; from the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is presently the Provincial Superior. Interviewed on 9.3.1992.
6. Sister Josephine from the Mill-Hill Sisters, Ingham House, Nairobi. Interviewed on 3.2.1992.
7. Sister Mary Claire of the Blessed Virgin Congregation, Tabaka, Kisii. Interviewed on 3.12.1991.
8. Sister Anna Karomba from the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. Interviewed on 16.3.1991.
9. Interviewed Sisters Magdalene, Salome and Rose; all from the Missionaries of Charity Sisters, Huruma, interviewed on 29.2.1992.
10. Marcelle Berstein: Nuns, Collins, St. James Place, London (1976) pg. 53.
11. *Ibid.*, pg. 54.
12. Sr. Mary from Tabaka Convent, Kisii. Interviewed on 23.12.1991.
13. *Ibid.*, pg. 309.

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NAMES OF INFORMANTS

A. SISTERS

1. Sr. Philip
From the Loreto Sisters at Msongari. She is a retired teacher. She is 81 years old.
Interviewed on 14.3.1992.
2. Sr. Stephanie
From the Loreto Sisters, Valley Road. She is a Novice Directress and has a Bachelor of Arts Degree. She is 44 years old. Interviewed on 20.2.1992.
3. Sr. Germaine
From the Loreto Sisters. She is a Counsellor at the University of Nairobi. Interviewed on 18.3.1992.
4. Sr. Maria Goretti
From the Loreto Sisters. She is a teacher at the Catholic Parochial Primary School; Holy Family Basilica. Interviewed on 20.3.1992.
5. Sr. Rebecca Kemunto
From the Loreto Sisters. She is a Novice. Interviewed on 19.3.1992.
6. Sr. Caitriona Kelly
From the Loreto Sisters. She is presently the Provincial Superior. She has a Bachelor of Science Degree and an M.A. in Pastoral Studies. She is 50 years old. Interviewed on 20.2.1992.
7. Sr. Alice Bangnidong
From the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (MSOLA). She is a teacher. Aged 29 years. She is a Ghanaian. Interviewed on 5.2.1992.

8. Sr. Ingrid Hager
From the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. She is a teacher. She is 31 years old. Interviewed on 5.2.1992.
9. Sr. Margret M. Poreku
From the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. She is 29 years old. Interviewed on 5.2.1992.
10. Sr. C. David
From the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. She is 37 years old. Interviewed on 27.2.1992.
11. Sr. Anna Karomba
From the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. She is 30 years old. Interviewed on 27.2.1992.
12. Sr. M. Placida Awuor, O.S.B.
From the Missionary Benedictine Sisters. She is 24 years old. Interviewed on 19.3.1992.
13. Sr. Christiane Spannheimer O.S.B.
From the Missionary Benedictine Sisters. She is 55 years old. Sister is a specialised Gynaecologist and Obstetrician. Interviewed on 19.3.1992.
14. Sr. Germaine
From the Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph. The 65 year old Sister is a Secretary, Teacher and Social Worker. She has a University Diploma. Interviewed on 24.3.1992.
15. Sr. Liza Garcia
From the Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph; Adam's Arcade, Nairobi. Interviewed on 1.2.1992.
16. Sr. Maria MacPheson
From the Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph; Ingham House, Nairobi. Interviewed on 1.2.1992.

17. Sr. M. Bradbury
From the Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph; Nyabururu, Kisii. She is a teacher and an Assistant Superior for Kenya Region.
18. Sr. Agnes Kwamboka
From the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph; Nyabururu, Kisii. She is a teacher aged 41 years. Interviewed on 20.12.1991.
19. Sr. Rose Bosibori
From the Blessed Virgin Congregation, Tabaka, Kisii. The 35 year old Sister is a teacher and a Vocation Directress. Interviewed on 22.12.1991.
20. Sr. Mary Grace
From the Blessed Virgin Congregation; Tabaka, Kisii. The 48 year old Sister is the headmistress of Tabaka Girls boarding primary school; and the Mother Superior. Interviewed on 23.12.1991.
21. Sr. Theodora Bonareri
From the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph. The 32 year old Sister is a Social Worker and works with married women and poor families. Interviewed on 20.12.1991.
22. Sr. Salome Kemunto
From the Blessed Virgin Congregation, Kisii (Tabaka). The 36 year old Sister is a teacher and organiser of the sodality groups (students who go out to help the poor men and women around). Interviewed on 22.12.1991.
23. Sr. Benedict
From the Blessed Virgin Congregation, Tabaka, Kisii. The 39 year old Sister is a Teacher. She is in charge of the "small ones" that is, those in Std. 3-5. Interviewed on 22.12.1991.
24. Sr. Joanne Scotch
From the Blessed Virgin Congregation, Tabaka, Kisii. She is a Teacher by profession. The 65 year old Sister has a Bachelor of Arts Degree. Interviewed on 22.12.1991.

25. Sr. Mary Claire

From the Blessed Virgin Congregation, Tabaka, Kisii. She is both a Teacher and Social Worker by profession. The 50 years old Sister has a Master of Arts Degree in Theology. Interviewed on 22.12.1991.

26. Sr. Carola Redig

From the Order of School Sisters of Notre Dame; Gekano, Kisii. She is a Teacher by profession. The 71 year old Sister has a B.A and M.E. postgraduate work in Theology. Interviewed on 23.1.1992.

27. Sr. Dianne Dobitz

From the Order of School Sisters of Notre Dame; Gekano, Kisii. She is both a Teacher and a Vocation Directress. The 38 year old Sister has a Bachelor of Arts Degree. Interviewed on 23.1.1992.

28. Sr. Josephine

From the Ingham House, Nairobi. Interviewed on 3.2.1992.

29. Sr. Marie

From Sisters of Mercy Congregation in South B. Interviewed on 10.1.1992.

30. Srs. Rebecca; Mary; Angeline and Agatha.

All from the Daughters of St. Paul Congregation in their postulancy period, who had come to Hekima College for some training. Interviewed on 3.2.1992.

31. Sr. Marcella

At the moment she is one of the heads of the Tumaini Inter-Congregational Centre (A.O.S.K.). She is both a Teacher and Social Worker. Interviewed on 1.2.1992.

32. Sr. Catherine

She is also one of the heads of the Tumaini Inter-Congregational Centre (A.O.S.K.). Interviewed on 1.2.1992.

33. Sr. Rachael
From the Missionaries of Charity Sisters, Huruma. The 65 year old Sister is the Mother Superior of this Congregation in Huruma. Interviewed on 29.1.1992.
34. Sr. Monica
From the Missionaries of Charity Sisters, Huruma. The 19 year old Sister is in her postulancy period in this Congregation. Interviewed on 29.1.1992.
35. Sr. Jacinta
From the Missionaries of Charity Sisters, Huruma. The 32 year old Sister is a Social Worker. Interviewed on 29.1.1992.
36. Sr. Giovanna
From the Blessed Virgin Congregation; at Karen. The 41 year old Sister is a Teacher. Interviewed on 1.2.1992.
37. Sr. Jayne
From the Blessed Virgin Congregation, at Karen. The 45 year old Sister is a Teacher. Interviewed on 1.2.1992.
38. Sr. Agnes Moraa
From the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph; Assissi House, Adams Arcade. The 28 year old Sister is a Novice. Interviewed on 19.2.1992 at Hekima College.
39. Sr. Jerusha Kemunto
From the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph; Assissi House, Adams Arcade. The 27 year old Sister is in her postulancy period. Interviewed on 19.2.1992 at Hekima College.
40. Sr. Margaret
The Secretary-General of the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya; Waumini House, Westlands. Interviewed on 17.7.1992.
41. Sr. Teresia Njoki
From the Sisters of St. Joseph of Tarber. Interviewed on 31.3.1992.

42. Sr. Florence Karimi
From the Sisters of St. Joseph of Tarber. Interviewed on 31.3.1992.
43. Sr. Anne Kemunto
From the Sisters of St. Joseph of Tarber. Interviewed on 31.3.1992.
44. Sr. Josephine Khagai
From the Sisters of St. Joseph of Tarber. Interviewed on 31.3.1992.
45. Sr. Florence K. Nyamai
From the Ursuline Sisters. Interviewed on 17.3.1992.
46. Sr. Redempta N. Samson
From the Ursuline Sisters. Interviewed on 17.3.1992.
47. Sr. Susan Kamau
From the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Interviewed on 18.3.1992.
48. Sr. Esther Clare Wanjiru
From the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Interviewed on 18.3.1992.
49. Sr. Sammela Gironi
From the Daughters of St. Paul. Interviewed on 27.3.1992.
50. Sr. Anastacia
From the Little Sisters of the Poor. Interviewed on 27.3.1992.
51. Sr. Priscilla Anene
From the Medical Missionaries of Mary. She is from Nigeria. Interviewed on 27.7.1992.
52. Sr. Pauline
From the Medical Missionaries of Mary. Interviewed on 27.7.1992.

B. PRIESTS

1. Father Edward Murphy

From the Jesuits Theological College at Hekima. Interviewed on 12.3.1992.

2. Fr. Joseph Mahtam

From the Jesuits Theological College at Hekima. Interviewed on 28.7.1992.

3. Fr. Felix

From the Jesuits Theological College at Hekima. Interviewed on 27.3.1992.

4. Fr. John Baur

From Eldoret Diocese.

APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SUPERIORS

Name District

Name of Order Education

Occupation Age

VOCATION

1. What do you understand by "Vocation" ?.....

.....

2. How did you know you had a call.....

3. Did you have any problems responding to your call?

Yes

No

4. If yes, how did you manage to solve them?.....

.....

5. Why do women join nun hood?.....

6. Is there a decline or an increase in the number of entrants into the convents today?

.....

7. Depending on the answer given:

If a decline, why do you think is the case?.....

8. If an increase, why.....

9. At what age do most women enter the convents?

Between ages:

12-16

17-21

22-30

30 and above

10. What is the criteria for accepting those who want to join your convent? (Tick those that apply)
- (a) Entrants should be virgins
 - (b) They should be between a certain age limit
 - (c) Concrete reason for joining should be given
 - (d) She must have had a Catholic background
 - (e) Must be without children
 - (f) Any others. Please specify
11. How many nuns can you accommodate in your convent at a time?.....
12. How do you know that the young girl who wants to join your order is fit for it?.....
.....
13. How do religious orders recognise true vocations?.....
.....

VOWS

14. Which vows do nuns take? Name them
15. Why do nuns take vows?
16. What do you understand by each of them?
17. How do you feel about the vows?
- i) They are too strict
 - ii) They are fair
 - iii) They are easy to accommodate
 - iv) Any other, please specify
19. Do you like the single-sex community with its rapid concept of the celibate?
- Yes No

SERVICE

20. What service do nuns render in the church?.....
21. How do nuns participate in development?.....
22. Which are the schools founded by this Order? Name them.....
23. What of hospitals?.....
- Are there any houses that this Order has built for the poor, aged, orphans, etc.?
- Yes
No
- If yes, please name them.....
24. What problems do nuns experience in rendering their services?
- (a) in the convent?
- (b) in the outside world
25. How do you think these problems can be alleviated?.....
-

GENERAL

26. What is your attitude towards married women?.....
-
27. Do you love children?.....
28. How can nuns work hand in hand with other women in Kenya:
- (a) for the good of the Church?
- (b) for general development?
29. What is the number of Sisters in Kenya? (roughly).....

FUTURE OF CONVENTS

30. Why do some nuns leave the convent?.....
.....
31. When a nun leaves does it affect the whole convent?
Yes No
32. If yes to (question 31), How?.....
33. How many leave your Order every year, approximately?.....
34. Is it possible to have one community of nuns in Kenya instead of the many Orders that exist today?.....
35. What do you think is the future of convents in Kenya?.....
.....

APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR OTHER SISTERS

Name District

Name of Order Education

Occupation Age

VOCATION

1. What do you understand by "Vocation"?

2. How did you know you had a call?

3. Did you have any problems responding to your call?

Yes

No

4. If yes, how did you manage to solve them?

5. What was your parents' attitude towards your decision?

6. Why did you enter this particular Order?

7. Do you enjoy life of nun hood?

8. Which vows do nuns take? Name them.

9. Why do nuns take vows?

10. What do you understand by each of them?

11. Do you find any problems in putting the vows into practice?

12. How do you feel about the vows?

i) They are too strict

ii) They are fair

iii) They are easy to accommodate

iv) Any other, please specify

13. Do you like the single-sex community with its rigid concept of the celibate?

Yes

No

14. How do Superiors behave towards the other nuns?.....
.....

SERVICE

15. What service do nuns render in the Church?

16. How do nuns participate in development?

17. (a) Do you know of any schools founded by this Order?

Yes

No

Please name them.....

What of hospitals?.....

(b) for general development?.....

FUTURE OF CONVENTS

18. Why do some nuns leave the convent?.....
.....

19. When a nun leaves, does it affect the whole convent?

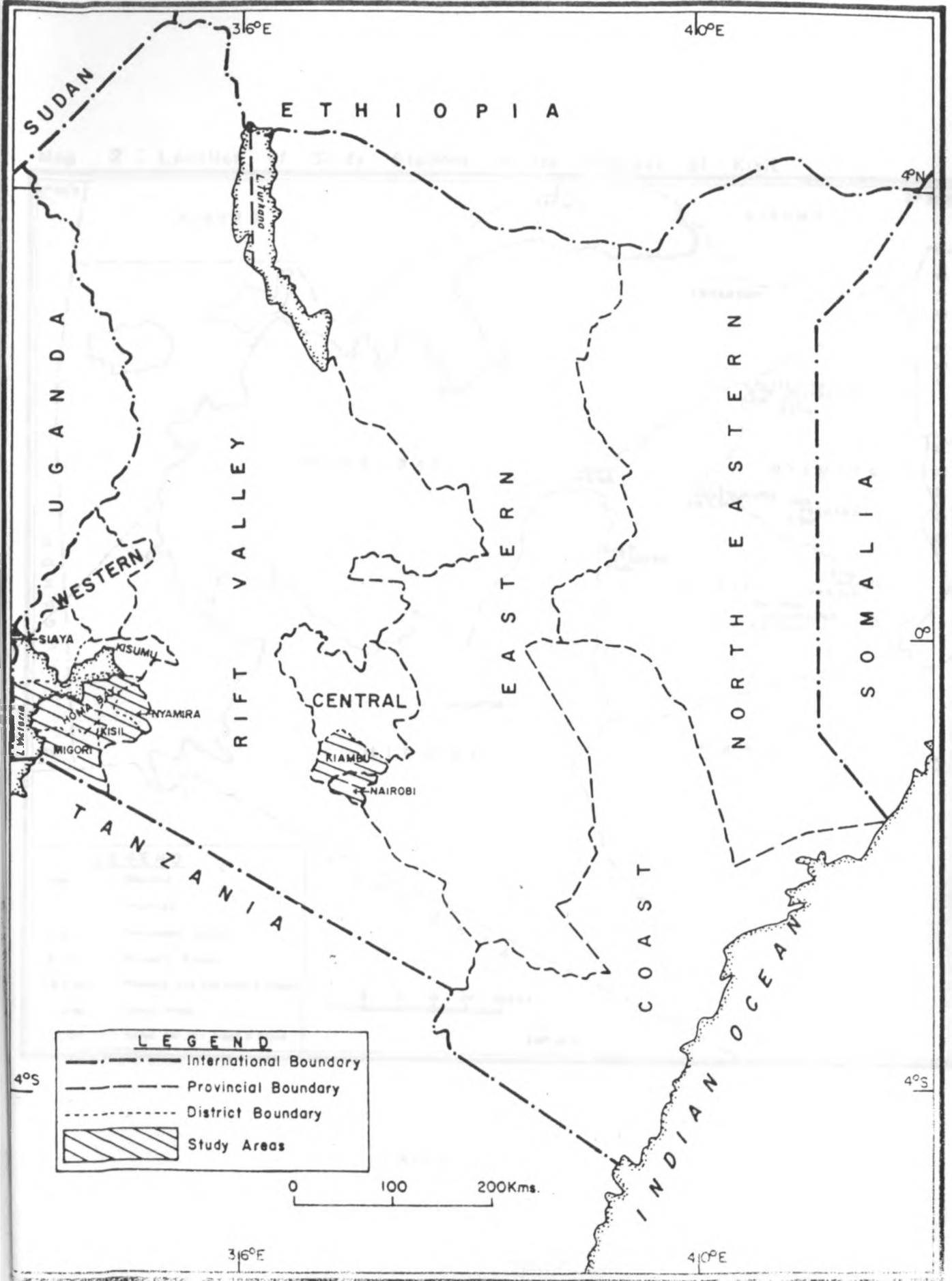
Yes

No

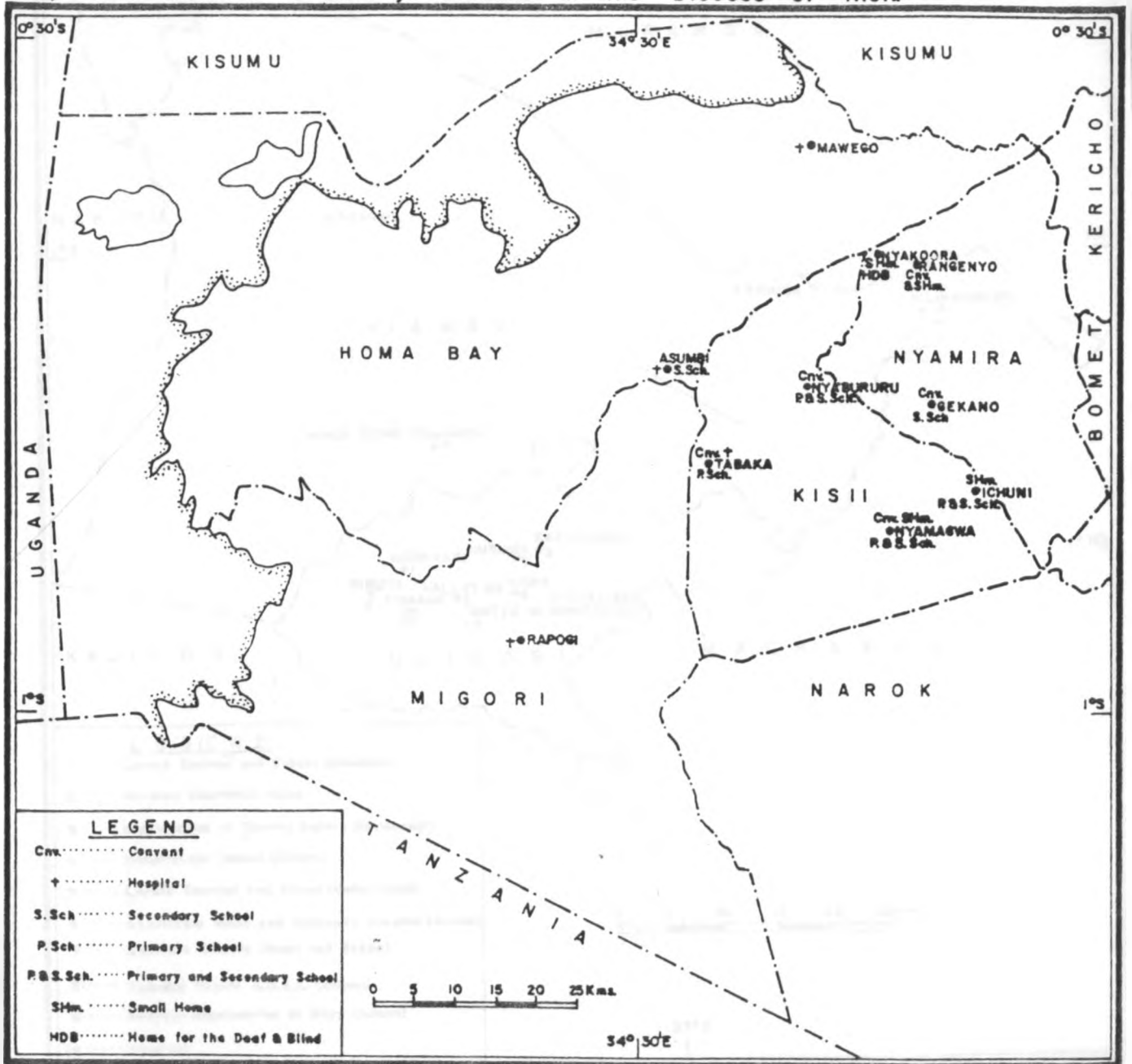
20. If yes to (question 19 above), how?.....

21. Is it possible to have a community of nuns in Kenya instead of the many Orders that exist today?.....

MAP 1: LOCATION OF STUDY AREAS IN KENYA.



Map 2 : Location of Study Stations in the Diocese of Kisii.



Map 3 : Location of Study Stations in the Arch-Diocese of Nairobi.

