BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THEORY AND LIVED EXPERIENCE IN FORMATION

MTh IN PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation, BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THEORY AND LIVED EXPERIENCE IN FORMATION, which **I hereby submit for the degree programme** at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at another university. Where secondary material is used, it has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with University requirements, I am aware of the University's policy and implications regarding plagiarism.

SUMMARY

This research, which lies in the area of Practical Theology, examines the gap between theory and praxis among Holy Cross sisters and Dominican priests and brothers of the Roman Catholic Church in Southern Africa, with special reference to Zimbabwe and South Africa. It proposes scaffolds for better synthesis of theory and practice for the purposes of bridging what is learnt in the academy and the praxis requirements of mission and ministry. The major strain noted by this research is that of the out of context theology. The experiences of the post-novitiate brothers and sisters have shown that there is need for doing contextual theology, which enables the members to adapt to new situations and contexts without imposing imported theology and ideas on the faithful. The second strain has been that of an inadequate formation programme, which has incapacitated nuns and members of the clergy from fully practising their spiritual maternity and paternity in their ministries. The chasm between the inadequate theoretical formation in novitiate and the practical life of ministry and mission creates abrupt and unnerving hurdles for those in temporary vows. Lack of Catholic grounding also impedes smooth transitions between stages, and concerted efforts have to be made to address this problem. Whilst the vow of obedience has a strong aspect of listening from both African and Latin roots, there are times when the interpretation of the vow may be highly influenced by cultural contexts. This is true with regards personal expenditure of allowances. The research has also discovered that proficiency in inculturation and the use of African languages, values and perspectives could bring about the joy of being an African religious. It is also important that from the time the novices are introduced to the formation programme, they are made aware that they are called to be prophets who reach out to those on the margins of society. The proposed formation programme in Chapter Four has recommended more time in the novitiate, as well as gradual and ritualised exit, to cater for those who believe they leave novitiate prematurely. It also recommends the introduction of theology of hope.

Key words

Celibacy, consecration, Dominican, Holy Cross, obedience, poverty, practical theology, religious life, religious orders, vows

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM SETTING

1.1 Problem field

This research examines the gap between theory and praxis among Holy Cross sisters and Dominican priests and brothers of the Roman Catholic Church in Southern Africa, with special reference to Zimbabwe and South Africa. Theory is taught as part of the Religious Formation of the two Religious Orders (Holy Cross sisters and Dominican priests and brothers) and praxis is the resultant behavioural change as a consequence of training observable after the final profession of vows (graduation). Put differently, this research evaluates the effectiveness/short comings of Religious Formation of the selected Religious Orders, noticeable in their rapport or otherwise, within their living and working communities to which they are deployed after completion of training.

This study can safely be termed 'action research', because the motivation behind this undertaking emanates from the researcher's duties as a formator (accompanier) under the Order of the Holy Cross sisters, with exposure to Dominican formation. Etymologically, the term formation comes from the Latin word "*formare*" which means "to mould". In its present use in religious Orders, the term "formation" is used to describe the process that brings about a transformation in a man or woman who presents himself for religious training. The term captures the internal personal integration that leads to organising, reorganising and restructuring of oneself; a kind of metamorphosis mitigated by various experiences resulting from events, happenings and relationships. It is an integral process of growth that needs to integrate the heart and the mind for the person to be transformed into the final product intended by God (*AOSK 2019).*Religious formation is a "planned, guided learning experience of religious life with the intended learning outcomes under the auspices of personnel suite to the task of aiding and evaluating a candidate's continuous growth, personal, social and spiritual competence" (*AOSK 2019: 3).*

The author has worked for over twenty years in that capacity of a "personnel suite," generally called a formator (trainer), of those who presented themselves with the hope of consecrating their lives to God. Consecration itself is "the act or process of

officially making something holy and able to be used for religious ceremonies" (Cambridge English Dictionary). Priests, brothers and sisters consecrate themselves by taking and living the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, which accord them leading roles in religious ceremonies. The most important aspect of this vowed consecration is in the giving of oneself in a total and genuine way to God, whose name is at the centre of religious rites (O'Murchu, 2018: 220-221).This is only possible for those who have experienced God calling them for their consecration, setting them apart to live for God and to confine their efforts to God's work.

The Second Vatican council in *Perfectea Caritatis* (PC); emphasises that religious men and women trace their origin of being set apart for God to the life of the Divine Master, Christ, who came for the sole purpose of bringing God's kingdom to reality. The ceremony and liturgical celebration where the new religious take vows is the ceremony of being set apart to "live more and more for Christ and his body the Church" (PC 1). In the document on the Church called *Lumen Gentium* (LG), the Second Vatican says of consecrated men and women;

> Besides giving legal sanction to the religious form of life and thus raising it to the dignity of a canonical state, the Church sets it forth liturgically also as a state of consecration to God. She herself, by virtue of her God-given authority, receives the vows of those who profess this form of life, asks aid and grace for them from God in her public prayer, commends them to God and bestows on them a spiritual blessing, associating their self-offering with the sacrifice of the Eucharist (LG 45).

The traditional vows of chastity, poverty and obedience are taken in imitation of Jesus Christ who was chaste, poor, and unconditionally obeyed his Father in Heaven (John 4:34). Within the Catholic Church Jesus is counted among those who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of God (Matthew 19: 10-12; I Corinthians 7: 7, 25). By referring to the act of making himself a eunuch, Jesus refers to deliberate choice not influenced by the human community known to make some people eunuchs by violence https://www.biblestudytools.com. The choice did not amount to the mutilation of the body, as happened to many men castrated for the purposes of entertaining harems of kings to avoid bearing illegitimate children, or as happened in the cases of inborn impotence. In other words, religious life is for those who deliberately chose to serve God as single and not for the mutilated or impotent https://www.biblestudytools.com.

Though birds of the air which neither sowed nor harvested had nests to lay their heads, Jesus remained homeless denoting extreme, though voluntary, poverty. This idea of having access to plenty, but volunteering poverty, is the kind of disposition the religious are called upon to experience. This enduring poverty must be experienced in compliance with the will of God the owner of mission (John 4:34), generally referred to as *mission Dei* (Peters 1972: 55; Kritzinger, 1987: 5; Musasiwa, 2011: 16-18). Jesus shared the little at the disposal of his community with the five thousand hungry listeners, which was meant to be a lesson to his disciples who had intended to send the hungry masses away so that they could adequately share the five loaves and two fish among themselves (Mark 6: 35-44; Luke 9: 10-17). Detecting the selfish motive among the disciples Jesus ordered that the people sit in groups and have a share of the food available. The disciples' urge to send away the hungry as a mechanism for excluding those considered outsiders, is not without precedence in modern Catholic communities. As shall become apparent subsequently, today this commitment to live without owning property, but sharing in common with the community in order to be free for the kingdom, has its own challenges. Just as Jesus' disciples showed signs of inadequate religious formation, while they were still with him, the religious of the modern times do the same.

Reports from the communities to which the graduates are deployed have shocked the formator, with respect to the graduates' negation of their vows initially taken with commitment and vigour in the process of adopting the way of life of religious men and women. The young religious takes his or her vows through public profession, which terminates the period of probation known as noviciate, and introduces the new graduate to community, ministry or study. It is then that the problems begin to surface. The major problem, as shall be discussed subsequently, lies in the same areas that also troubled the disciples, concerning sharing what one has, and the loving values of chaste life. Some graduate sisters tend to accumulate rather than share the 'little they have', which shocks the communities to which they have been deployed. Of course, there are cases when the vice versa is true; that is, the older sisters meant to help with on-going formation of the new sisters, are themselves selfish and unloving. Some old sisters put on expensive attire, while confining the new graduates to the basics specified in the dress codes, which may be limited to

the official black and white colour, despite the fact that the range is quite expansive. Some of the allowed combinations are as indicated. These include white, grey or blue dresses with long or short sleeves. In addition Holy Cross sisters are allowed the wearing of a black or grey pinafore outfit; black or grey skirts with white or light-grey blouses or jumbers. For official occasions, that is, for professions, jubilees and funerals of sisters, the accepted religious dress or pinafore or skirt with a white blouse is worn, despite the fact that the official colours are indicated as black and white (HCS 102).

Just as the disciples were shocked to find the celibate Jesus, not only speaking to a woman, but a Samaritan woman (John 4: 27), the communities often have problems of harbouring attitudes full of suspicions in relation to fellow sisters speaking friendly to male congregants. This is because “as a celibate one renounces the joys of intimate sexual pleasure, of gestures direct or symbolically leading to sexual union” (www.onenote.com).The new sisters who have been taught in the academy that celibate life means “to love as many people as possible as deeply as possible” (O’Murchu, 2018: 220-221) are astounded by the love-inhibitions of the world of praxis. This is when the mismatch begins to emerge as the young professionals attempt the synthesis of theory and practice for the purposes of “bridging the academy and ministry” (Osmer 2008: 13).

The research intends to unearth any possible backups needed to scaffold the new professionals in their endeavours to cope with the demands of praxis noticeable in the aftermath of completion of training. Osmer (2008: 33) proposes that such backups should be availed in the area of “internalisation” which seems to be a problem for young people coming out of formation possibly because of the demands to process the new stage of being a religious as well as living a “spirituality of presence” both within the ministry and to oneself. Personal integration and internalisation are manifested through certain attitudes and behavioural patterns, including contentment within the cross-cultural communities of such international religious Orders.

Whilst one remembers what s/he was taught, the transition from a protected environment of being a novice and the exposure of being in the active professional

life encountering the world and its needs and demands is sometimes unnerving. This is particularly worse where one gets into an unloving community. The theory graduates into unexpected reality and the new graduate does not know how to proceed without sufficient support of her community (Osmer 2008). The core elements for religious life, summarised as vows, prayer life, ministry and community life, lived according to the founding principles and interpretations of the constitutions and rules that guide each Order, often fall short of saving the new situation. Worse still, the interpretations and applications of these constitutions are reposed in the hands of senior sisters and the new sister may not proceed without sufficient direction from them (*HCC: 94)*. Any arbitrary application of these rules stalls community life, as well as ministry which tends to reflect community joys and frustrations.

The researcher is intrigued by the tenability of how someone can make a choice for such a life and go through five to six years of formation freely without being forced, only to drop what one has learnt after the final profession of vows. This is despite the fact that religious formation tries to meet the physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs of a person. The physical needs refer to basic needs such as food, shelter, and health care. The religious congregations assume that once these basic needs have been attended to, one should be stable and ready to share anything s/he comes across. There is no need to worry about amassing goods for the dim possibility of self-receding into needy situations. The idea is that once one is satisfied with the commonwealth of the community, one must self-actualise through giving and never-hoarding (*HCC: 40-45*).

The psychological provisions cover education about the ‘self’ and its reconciliation with religious life. Many novices (though not exclusive of professed sisters) have a lot of trauma trying to reconcile with their past life, which may not be honourable in terms of the general community norms (Cencini 2006: 134-135). Traumatic experiences haunt those whose families are labelled backward, deviant or cursed. Some families may have multiple mental retardation among the siblings, which may be erroneously considered a curse on the family, even in terms of some weird Biblical interpretations (John 9: 1-3). Such erroneous interpretations demonstrate lack of maturity. It is, therefore, the intention of religious Orders that only those who have matured in self-knowledge and in knowing God should graduate to prevent the

professed religious priests, brothers and sisters from projecting the self onto others as the only reality (Cencini and Manenti 1985: 375 – 376).

The sociological concepts of the African religious are founded around the principles of *ubuntu,* which has to do with positive attitudes that we are one with all humanity. This is signified in the words '*sisonke* and '*simunye'* (we are together and we are one), which picture the community as one living, loving and sharing organism; a community of mutual companionship. No one is or should be ostracised or counted as an outsider not worthy the love and sharing within the community, because "*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" (I am a person through other persons) (Brooddryk 2008:41). *Ubuntu* means one's needs, emotions and psychological traumas, are subsumed by the whole community (Mbiti, 1969; Dolamo 2013: 2). This specific sociological concept teaches that religious life is not a renunciation of the world, but emersion in the world as radical disciples of Jesus, who were taught to share with the ostracised worldly sections of the Jewish community (tax collectors and sinners) (Luke 19: 1-10).

Religious formation seeks to emphasise freedom of choice so that the novice does not just comply with the programme, but that by the time she is committing herself she does it out of her own will and her belief that God is calling her. In other words, formation aims at merging theory with practice though this is not always achievable. For example, when the researcher directed a retreat for four young brothers who were preparing to renew their vows, she was shocked to realise that there was a gap between living one's conviction and listening to the different voices within. The religious brothers exhibited responses that negated the traditional Catholic values of regular confessions, spiritual direction and waking up early for prayer. They questioned the traditional norms associated with the healing brought by confession (*Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC),* 1992, para. 1440) even as they prepared to be teachers of such doctrines. They expressed dislike for sitting before spiritual gurus to access spiritual direction, generally defined as

> help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship (Barry and Connolly 1982: 8).

Spiritual direction has exclusive focus on religious experience, that is, being in communion with the mysterious 'wholly Other,' generally simplified as God of mission (Musasiwa, 2011). This experience with God is not a one off event, but an expression of the enduring personal relationship with God, who calls individually to men and women to come and work in his field. The efficacious "spiritual direction has always aimed ultimately at fostering union with God and has, therefore, had to do with the individual's relationship with God" (Barry and Connolly 1982: 8)

The young brothers suppressed the voices calling them to experience the therapeutic values associated with getting up early to be before the throne of God supplicating and offering thanksgiving (*CCC, 1992)*. They had reservations for the practical aspects that make them Catholic gurus. In other words the novice brothers fell short of the "need to think, judge, abstract, and go beyond the here and now. Ability to use symbols" (www.onenote.com). They failed to respond to the voices symbolized by the Catholic doctrines of personal healing.

In short, the concern or problem field of this research lies in the area of Practical Theology (the impact of Religious Formation on practice) among the Holy Cross sisters and Dominican priests and brothers in Southern Africa; with special emphasis on the seeming mismatch between theoretical formation and the resultant praxis observable in the work field. Practical theology keeps the relationship with the world open so that there is always unfinished business requiring more and more involvement of those on the mission. It is "a passion for perfection in an imperfect world" (Veling 2005: 7). In this regard Practical Theology is envisaged for 'the kingdom to come, and not what is.' Practical Theology seeks to pay attention to people's various life situations and contexts. It seeks to align itself, as the Second Vatican Council so eloquently reminded the faithful, "with the joy and hope, the fears and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor and afflicted in any way" (Veling 2005: 8). In other words, it is a continuous response "to questions of history, culture, and society, urging us to respond to the real needs of our world, to the conditions of human existence, on earth" (Veling 2005: 8).

The question is; if properly formed religious brothers show inertia to enhance the necessary praxis associated with their formation, how can such formation be adjudged vis-à-vis actual practice? Statistical analysis reveals the number priests,

brothers and sisters of these two Orders who took vows between 2000 and 2016, and how many of these have since left these Apostolic religious Congregations of the Catholic Church. Apostolic Congregations are those Orders of priests, brothers and nuns who are actively involved in the lives of the people either through pastoral care or doing some service such as teaching, nursing and other jobs. Nemer (2015: 15) defines apostolic religious life as a form of consecrated life within the Church, where "members profess the three vows of chastity, poverty and obedience and live in a Congregation which was approved by the Church." Their life is experienced as community where the individual members give witness to living in communion with Christ, his Church and with one another. There is also another form called Contemplatives or Enclosed orders. Such Orders spend their entire life within the Convent or Monastery where they work and pray without going out to the people.

1.1.1 Origins of Religious Orders

The concept of living religious life

> was born in the East during the first centuries of Christianity. Lived within institutions canonically erected by the Church, it is distinguished from other forms of consecrated life by its liturgical character, public profession of the evangelical counsels, fraternal life led in common, and witness given to the union of Christ with the Church (*CCC.,* 1992, No. 925).

The Second Vatican Council repeatedly connects religious life with close following of Christ. Documents of the Church, including the *Perfectae Caritatis* 5, credit St. Benedict of Nursia (480 – 547 CE) with the founding of organised Monasticism in Europe. The creation of monasteries was a radical transformation of religious life from the lonely lives of hermits who pried the Egyptian and Syrian deserts refusing contact with other people for fear of contamination. From individual hermits living lonely lives in desert huts, St Benedict introduced secluded community life. He retained the 'desert seclusion metaphor' despite the monasteries being among settled people. St Benedict was trying to mitigate the frustration of merging the Church with the state which had triggered the exodus of the Early Fathers seeking communion with the God in the desert. He felt that one could find God in the secluded comfort of the monastery, sharing communion with other God-seekers.

St. Benedict sought to infuse a sense of order into the activities of various hermits scattered in the deserts by bringing them to work together under strict community rules. He did not favour asceticism and therefore emphasised “humanity, moderation and spiritual inspiration” (O’Murchu, 2018: 80). His prophetic style was keen on balancing the spiritual with the secular, which made him acceptable both to the Church and to the world. His approach was adopted throughout Europe as the enduring concept behind providing education for the citizenry, spiritual support for the State and social welfare programmes for the poor, which infused order and organization to the region for centuries.

After the collapse of the Roman Empire the monks became the centripetal force in the restoration of advanced European civilisation. They managed because of endowments amounting to large tracts of land and political connectedness. Armed with such invaluable resources they created schools, centres for sacred learning, and a range of commercial enterprises patronised by local lords. Although the Benedictines took a fourth vow of stability; that they would not leave their monastery, “their influence went far beyond the monastery walls, co-creating the earthly and cultural development that in time would make Europe the most advanced cultures on the planet”(O’Murchu, 2018: 81).

The monastic women were a formidable cultural force, denouncing and challenging society’s misogynist values of the day and helping co-create the original communal flair of the vowed life in what is now known as the apostolic movement. The female monastics lived apart from their male counterparts, in buildings with varying degrees of supervision from bishops and clergy, and with more restricted access to ministerial outreach (O’Murchu, 2018: 81).

A transition in religious life was witnessed during the Mendicant Era, spanning the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries. The period was ushered by St Francis who observed literally poverty and complete dependence on God, viewed as the provider of every need. Unlike the earlier hermits, the mendicant priests lived among the people and begged for food wherever they preached the Gospel. The two surviving Mendicant orders are the Franciscan Order founded by St Francis in 1210 and the Dominican Order founded by St Dominic in 1215. The Franciscans were reputed for living at the periphery of society sharing the word with the poor of the prowling cities

and eating what they ate. The Dominicans were given to learning and nursed a passion for “an empowering theological vision amid the intellectual questioning of the time” (O’Murchu, 2018: 84). The two Orders complemented each other in their mission to the poor, the dwellers of European slums. The Franciscans committed themselves to pastoral work, while the Dominicans offered itinerant theological education to the literate believers. The simplicity of their fervent commitment provided precedence for those following their steps to date. The mould of their religious values continues to flourish in modern religious groups including the Holy Cross and present day Dominican priests and brothers. By the time of the demise of St Dominic in 1221, his order had spread throughout Europe, offering tuition in ecclesiastical institutions and secular universities of their time (O’Murchu, 2018: 85).

The freedom witnessed among the Mendicant friars was absent among monastic nuns who remained confined to their convents and not allowed to minister to the people. Religious women of the middle ages “struggled with unwanted subjection to episcopal authority”, who wanted them cloistered, “coupled with unwanted liberty from the organizing efforts of the monastic networks” (O’Murchu, 2018: 83). Those who criticized confinement were denounced and looked down upon as perverted.

The First Vatican Council of the nineteenth century reinforced the idea that the nuns should remain confined to the nunnery. To circumvent the restrictions the nuns began to provide social services to the neglected women of Europe (O’Murchu, 2018: 97). The women needed support in the areas of shelter, education and catechism. They provided shelter for the abandoned; fed the orphans and mitigated child labour. They achieved this with formidable church and political resistance and meagre resources. It is clear that the religious Orders concentrated on what no one else considered worthwhile doing; focusing on the peripheral God-seekers. They recognised the naked God–quest in the centre of their hearts (Schneiders 1986: 35). They strongly felt that they were not meant to conserve the old institutions, but to pioneer new God-centred approaches to serve humanity. They bound themselves with the passion to respond to evolving needs, by developing alternative ways to surmount them. They lived simple lives fully cognizant that they had been called by God to follow Christ “by radiating the values that many would aspire to live” (O’Murchu, 2018: 97).

This dissertation reveals that the members of Apostolic religious Congregations go through initial and on-going formation with differences of when they do their novitiate, how long the novitiate lasts and when they take their final commitment, also called perpetual or final vows. First vows (simple vows) are taken on a temporary basis after one year for the Dominicans and after three years for the Holy Cross sisters. Temporary vows are renewable. The temporary aspect has been envisaged as a way of allowing the possibility of somebody changing mind or being asked by the leaders of the Order to leave. Final vows (perpetual vows) are taken after some more years of on-going formation and study when one feels ready to give oneself to God for life. It is not a guarantee that one may not leave after final vows but the process of being allowed to do so takes longer.

The field of research among selected communities in South Africa and Zimbabwe exposes the short comings of general formation which is obviously not tailor-made for all times. Perceptions of the various schools of thought with respect to changing times and contexts receive considerable attention, for the purposes of proposing fill ups to formation, which are sensitive to the various persuasions within the communions.

1.1.2 Research questions

This research is guided by the following research questions:

- What factors influence the ministerial stresses and strains that are usually viewed as lack of an integrated life within the post novitiate programs of the Holy Cross Sisters/ Dominican fathers and brothers?
- What is it about the transition from the novitiate to living community life and ministry that challenges the brothers/ sisters in their faithfulness to the values of the vowed life?
- Does the understanding of being autonomous and living the vow of obedience contribute anything to the problem of living religious life with conviction?
- How can the novitiate training and post novitiate support help the religious to live happily?

The above questions are an attempt to discover the extent of the problem and finding suggestions as to how to narrow the problem gap that exists. The research helps in understanding and interpreting the problem. The findings of this research

expose the missing elements in formation showing that the brothers and sisters are not sufficiently prepared for the challenges of ministry and community life and also proffer solutions to the problems.

1.2 Epistemological paradigm of research

This research draws from and contributes to the knowledge within the discipline of Practical Theology, which Campbell in Browning (1991:35) calls “a critical reflection on the Church’s ministry to the world”. Put differently, “Practical Theology is a critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world with a view to ensuring a faithful participation in the continuing mission of the triune God” (Swinton and Mowat 2008: 25). It will raise fundamental epistemological questions, for example: What happens after the professions of our novices? What are the causes of post novitiate problems? What should be happening and how can we effectively respond to what is going on? (Osmer 2008: 14).

The research utilises the four tasks of Practical Theology, including the descriptive/empirical; interpretive; normative and pragmatic modes. These provide the epistemological paradigm for this research and the lenses for comprehending the issues which will be raised in this research. The four core tasks of Practical Theology are used in the following manner for the enhancement of understanding of the issues at hand. The descriptive/empirical task is utilised in the gathering of empirical data, where it is essential in the discernment of patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts. The interpretive task is used for drawing on theories of the arts and sciences to better comprehend and explain why patterns and dynamics occur within the data accumulated during fieldwork among the Dominican priests, brothers, and sisters of the Holy Cross. The normative task is preferred for employing theological contexts to interpret particular episodes, situations or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide responses, and learning from “good practice” (Osmer 2008: 4). The pragmatic task determines strategies of action capable of influencing situations in ways that are desirable, with respect to reflective conversation with the “talk back" emerging when they are enacted (Osmer 2008: 4).

This framework will widen African religious world view of "*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" – a person is a person because of other people. John Mbiti (1969:1) has succinctly summarised the Bantu communitarian philosophy as "I am because we are, and because we are therefore I am". As a philosophy, "*Ubuntu* upholds individuality and community together. Central to the concept is the idea that relations and transactions that take place among people should be undertaken humanely, in light of values that people share in a given community" (Hadebe 2004:298).

In his book subtitled *Living Ubuntu Values in Africa Today within Religious Vows*, Innocent Mabheka SCJ says,

> The religious way of loving people by serving them goes along with the spirit of *ubuntu*, the spirit which is loving and friendly to all the other persons and to all creation. The humanness of the spirit of *ubuntu* is a firm ground on which on-going formation can humanly be done and practised by the religious and priests (Mabheka 2013: 20).

It is clear that embracing the values of Ubuntu spirituality helps the African Religious to merge those values with what the Traditional Catholic Religious Vows intend them to be. This attitude of taking responsibility for one's human development is also confirmed by Murove Munyaradzi Felix in his book, *African Moral Consciousness,* when he says, "The ability to realise that one's personhood has been contributed to by others in their various ways carries with it some moral obligations that prioritise a sense of concern for others in the community" (Murove 2016: 174). There are obviously the provisions of the physical and psychological needs by the religious and lay communities. One owes spiritual direction and social etiquette to the training community. The laity often pays part of the seminary funds and acts as the field of training for the novice. One may not afford to put all this aside after profession, in order to live a selfish lavish life, oblivious of the part played by the laity and fellow religious members of one's Order.

The fruits of this research will hopefully contribute to strengthening the post novitiate programs of the Holy Cross Sisters, the Dominican brothers, and perhaps other religious congregations of apostolic life within Southern Africa: by focusing on the relationship between theory and praxis.

1.3 Methodology

The methodology which guides the researcher is qualitative methodology within the discipline of practical theology. Osmer (2008: 49- 50) contends that “qualitative research seeks to understand the actions and practices in which individuals and groups engage in everyday life and the meanings they ascribe to their experience”. This description suits the current research, which utilises interview guides and questionnaires to draw out the practices of each of the participants in the research. The questionnaire was appropriate because the focus was more descriptive than quantitative; the quantitative questionnaire concentrates on numbers interviewed. The pertinent questionnaires had evaluative question about what was going on in the lives of the candidates involved. The research sample comprises ten Holy Cross sisters in temporary vows and two Dominican brothers also in temporary vows. They are all at different stages; with some in their first year whilst two are approaching their final vows. As a Holy Cross sister, the study has the interest for the whole Congregation, therefore, taking all of the present sisters in temporary vows would give a wider perspective of how they are experiencing life as part of the Religious in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The two brothers provide the perspective from the side of young African men desiring to be Religious priests today. They are both studying at St. Joseph’s College in Petermaritzburg in KwaZulu Natal in South Africa. One is in his final year of philosophy and the other one in his first year of theology. The questionnaire will also be informed by the discipline of Narrative Therapy. It will also touch on their motives for doing what they do and that leads to their social constructions.

There are two other groups that are interviewed and these comprise three formators (mentors) who are currently involved with the formation of novices in their respective Congregations in Gauteng and two Provincial leaders for Holy Cross sisters and for the Dominican Order in South Africa. These two groups are to give their experiences of training and admitting sisters and brothers in their Congregations and their expectations for newly professed and how they see them progressing in life.

The participants are given the questionnaire a month before so as to give them enough time to prepare for the interviews. The interviews are recorded so as to provide optimum attention on the part of the interviewer.

The method includes the quantitative approach, for it includes some statistical information as regards the number of people who have professed, those who are still there and those that have since left. The statistical data is provided by the leaders of the two congregations and formators interviewed.

Data accessed through questionnaires, interviews and participant observation is analysed through "the breaking down of the data and thematising it in ways which draw out the meanings hidden in the text" (Swinton and Mowat 2008: 57). The information recorded is reflected upon and then interpreted in the light of the individual context.

To protect the participants, pseudonyms are used except for the leaders whose information is not personal. Each of the seventeen participants in this research has received a letter of consent drafted by the Theology Department at the University of Pretoria, whose signing by the participant is a pre-requisite for the field research to take place. When the data collection is concluded, the instruments are put together and handed over to the University of Pretoria, Theology Department for safe keeping.

1.4 Literary survey

A systematic review of the literature available especially with regard to Catholic religious life, as well as literature within Practical theology that deals with reducing the gap between theory and life experiences, is carried out. In his book, *Consecrated Life in Bantu Africa*, Kiaziku Vincent Carlos (2005), seeks to prove that an inculturated religious life within the values of the Bantu speaking Africans is possible and that it frees the person to live religious life happily. He looks at the Bantu speaking people's long held values and customs that have sustained them and he brings them to religious life, thereby making it more home grown instead of looking at it as something that was brought from Europe by the Missionaries. Vincent's research is very thorough for it gives suggestions of living the vows, community life, prayer life and how to go about forming future religious aspirants within the Bantu

speaking Africa. His work is a product of many interviews of the religious in the Democratic Republic Congo and Angola, but it is almost silent about other Southern African countries particularly Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Shorter Aylward (2002) produced three little booklets on the three vows of chastity, poverty and obedience in Africa. Unlike Kiaziku who is an African, Shorter is a Missionary who has worked in Kenya and Tanzania for many years. He has also taught within those countries and his home country, the United Kingdom. He too did a very thorough research on vowed life and how the vows can be inculturated in the African context. He remains an outsider although being very familiar with the social life of the Africans.

At the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Mwanzia Dominic (2011) finalised his Master's Degree dissertation on "The challenge of forming the African youth for religious life". He worked with formators and formattees in Kenya and his conclusions are that the formation process has to be well grounded so that the youth intending to become religious can internalise what they have learnt. He has also discovered that the lack of adequate preparation for the formators creates the gap and lack of internalisation of the values by the candidates for religious life. His conclusion focuses on the lack of training of the formators but does not answer how those who are trained can be sustained amidst those limitations.

In 2007, under the supervision of Professor Ward Edwina, PhD, Innocent Mabheka submitted his Master of Arts dissertation at the University of KwaZulu Natal with the title "Research on human values in religious life as practiced in the Roman Catholic Congregation of Mariannhill Missionaries in the Diocese of Mariannhill in South Africa between 1996 and 2007". It is much appreciated that this research was done in Southern Africa and it highlights the vows lived as human values but it is too confined to one particular male Congregation, with no concern for female congregations.

Another graduate from the University of KwaZulu Natal, Anna Brigid Melanie O'Connor, a Holy Family sister submitted her dissertation for the Master's Degree on " The Holy Family Sisters: Pioneering Missionaries in South Africa 1875 – 1922". Whilst this research is focused on a particular Congregation, it is the driving force

behind their zeal to go to another continent that can bear on the current research. The belief in the sense of being called and being sent on Mission is still making many young people respond to follow God today.

In his book, *A Radical Love a Path to Life. The Beauty and Burden of Religious Life*, Joe Mannath, SDB, (2014) writes on wide topics on religious life that makes it worth a choice especially when one lives a life of prayer, faithful to the vows, community life and service of humanity. He shows that it can be a joyful life yet on the other hand one can be unhappy if there is no freedom. This book is very informative on the values of religious life but the writer is limited to India and America and has very little knowledge of Africa.

Religious Life in the 21st Century by Diarmuid O'Murchu (2018) is a thorough research into the journey of religious life within the Catholic Church. He traces religious life from the time of the wondering hermits in the Syrian and Egyptian deserts living in lone huts several miles away from each other, to the organised monasteries of communal monks. The book looks at religious life as a process inundated with ups and downs spanning over a number of centuries, sometimes getting closer to annihilation, but always bouncing back with new vitality. New resilient models have marked religious life from one century to another. O'Murchu has coined the term 'evolutionary process' to denote this flourishing, fading and then resurgence of more lively religious life. The author pays tribute to the many women foundresses who have never been highlighted together unless it is within their own community or country of birth.

O'Murchu locates religious life in its original place of being a lay movement in the Church. He tackles the area of its having a liminal call; being missioned to be prophetic from the edge of society and yet leading in finding new ways and new approaches for the people. Consistent with his previous books on *Religious Life*, he continues to work at re-naming the vow of Celibacy as the vow for relatedness, Poverty becoming the vow for mutual sustainability and Obedience as the vow for mutual collaboration. He calls on all the religious to see the need for the re-founding of religious life as it is impossible to bring back yester year. This is an astute observation often missed in praxis by those trying to recreate yester year in current praxis.

Although the book is written with a European bias, it is quite pertinent to this research because of its focus on exploring new paradigms to solve on-going mismatch between formation and praxis. He challenges any resort of anachronistic clichés of the past. This challenges the researcher to reflect on how the African candidate to religious life can innovate in order to recreate new ways for modern religious men and women in Southern Africa.

In his 1999 publication, *Poverty, Celibacy and Obedience; A Radical Option for Life*, O'Murchu acknowledges the monastic reality in each person but highlights the non-violent approach to the vows that is offered by the Eastern religions. The author proposes the reformulation of vows replacing the preposition "with" for which he argues is promoting something to be done much more than "of" which focuses on containing something. He also emphasises vowed life as a liminal way of life whereby one is called to intensify the values for the community and to live them in a more radical manner.

Another book by the same author: *Consecrated Religious Life: The Changing Paradigms*, focuses on living vowed life as an adult with a very strong emphasis on renaming the vows in the way that they would speak to the reality of the consecrated men and women. The renaming of the vows as vowed commitment to erotic liberation for celibacy or vow for relatedness, poverty as vow for mutual sustainability and obedience as vowed commitment to justice-making; allows the vows to express how they should be lived. He departs from the traditional names that tend not to draw out the reality of how the vows are lived, such as poverty, where one would never see a really poor religious person.

Four other books that will help in this research are by Sandra Schneiders; *New Wine skins, Re-imaging Religious Life today* (1986) is looking at the theology of the vows and the influence of the Vatican II on the men and women in religious life. At the time of her writing the movement of consecrated life was happening on a large scale in Europe and America but it has something to say for us in Africa for we are now beginning to raise the questions they would have dealt with then.

Her other three books on Religious Life that are based on Matthew 13: 14, the treasure in the field are called; *Finding the Treasure*, *Locating Catholic Religious in a new Ecclesial and Cultural Context* (2000), *Selling All, Commitment, Consecrated*

Celibacy, and Community in Catholic Religious Life (2001) and *Buying the field, Catholic religious life in mission to the world* (2013). These are well researched theological books on religious life with specialisation on each vow from the discovering of the field to the buying of the field to gain access to the treasure. It is a rich series that would contribute to this research on the history and present living of religious life today.

A recent article by Carballo Jose Rodrigues, OFM with the title “Forming for a full life in order to avoid departures and to strengthen fidelity” strikes the cord with this research and the current researcher pays attention to his findings. The article by Carballo is engaging today’s young people who are in Europe and in Africa. It shows how one can live up to their commitment if they find meaningful work or ministry.

1.5 CHAPTER OUTLINE

1.5.1 Chapter One – The Problem Setting

This is composed of developing the research question and methodology as well as the intended outcomes of this research.

1.5.2 Chapter Two – Theory on religious Formation

In this chapter focuses on the theoretical framework of formation as well as information that is available in religious formation especially regarding the Holy Cross sisters and the Dominican Fathers and brothers. The primary sources for this chapter will be the Church documents as well as the formation handbooks or Constitutions for the two Congregations. It will also contain the on-going formation information of sisters and brothers in temporary vows.

1.5.3 Chapter Three – Experiences of Brothers and Sisters in Temporary Vows

This chapter focuses on all the interviews carried out including an appendix of all the questions administered to different participants. The signed permissions to interview also appear as an appendix of this chapter. This chapter analyses the findings as shown by the interviews in Chapter three. It groups all the facts and identifies the original hypodissertation of the research. It is backed up by those who have written on the same topic before. It also looks at the lived experience that is not matching with the theory as intended by the proposal.

1.5.4 Chapter Four – Formation Programme

This chapter contains the suggestions and recommendations for the way forward in formulating a new formation programme. The programme might emphasize on values and personal choices that create new habits that are empowering the sisters and brothers to live a fulfilled life.

1.5.5 Chapter Five – Conclusion

It brings the writing together with some Theology of hope in the lives of sisters and brothers in temporary vows.

1.6 Summary

This research has presented a researchable gap between theory and lived experience as deduced from the experiential living of Religious Life of the Dominican brothers and sisters of the Holy Cross. Research questions have been proffered to probe this gap in order to find possible mitigants. The problem field within Practical Theology focuses on brothers and sisters in temporary vows, their mentors and their religious superiors. A brief literature review has demonstrated that a research on the mitigants of incompatibility between theory and praxis, with special emphasis on African vocations, is overdue. The next chapter pays more attention to the history of the two Orders and the gap within the theory of formation.

CHAPTER 2

THEORY ON RELIGIOUS FORMATION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the theoretical pedagogy of consecrated life within the Roman Catholic Church, and in particular, focusing on the Dominican Order and the Sisters of the Holy Cross. The said theoretical package was developed in a European *sitz im leben* and introduced to Africa in 1883 with no regard to the local context. The chapter considers the possible gap between the European formation package and African formation requirements, as well as the possible impact a wholesale external imposition of content and procedure might have had on local religious praxis. Of particular importance are the Western individualistic precepts versus African communitarian values and expectations of maturation. This includes an evaluation of the concept of celibacy in the African context, in order to establish any possible gap as a result of any kind of incompatibility.

The chapter opens with a discussion of the background of the two Religious Orders (Dominican and Holy Cross) under consideration. It then moves on to examine the contextual realities, before moving on to explore the requirements of novitiate and the evangelical counsels (vows taken during and at the conclusion of formation). The chapter ends with a summary of the major issues interrogated within the chapter.

2.2 Background on the two Orders

The Dominican order was formed in Italy, during the pre-Reformation, for the purposes of counter-reformation. The reformation of the 16th century was a religious revolt in the western church resulting in the formation of new Christian communities separate from Rome (Bokenkotter 2005). The reformers accused the Church of Rome of betraying faith by going against the Bible. There were remote developments like the stay of the pope in Avignon, Conciliarism, Nominalism and Humanism in the 15th Century, and the religious climate in the church. John Wycliff and Huss all gradually and remotely paved way for the reformation. However, of immediate concern was the fact that the church in the Middle Ages had become very legalistic and corrupt rather than being prophetic and evangelical.

Simony, which is the buying and selling of church benefices and offices, was very common. For example, Alexander VI bought the papacy through gold bribery. Close relatives of popes and cardinals were elevated to higher positions irrespective of competence and maturity. For example, Sixtus II elevated six of his relatives, including Peter Riario who died of over eating and drinking at the age of 28. There were parties within the curia which were often in orgies of loose morality. Many bishops never or rarely visited their dioceses. Urban Priests only said mass for drawing stipends and the rest of the time they were idle (Bokenkotter 2005). Without doubt, the church was in need of reform from top to bottom. This was not something very strange since we know that the church is always in constant need of reform (LG 8). In fact there had been Gregorian and other reforms prior to the schismatic reformation of the 16th century. The idea of reform at the time was quite widespread, and the people waited impatiently for charismatic leadership. When the leadership eventually presented itself, it was from an unexpected office. It was neither taken up by the bishops nor the papacy, but by an Augustinian priest from a small university village called Wittenberg, by the name Martin Luther (Bokenkotter 2005).

While many ordinary Christians and large sections of the clergy joined and celebrated the reform movement, the Dominicans fought in the opposite direction. The Dominicans were therefore well known for orthodoxy, as their major thrust was elimination of heresy, hence their motto: *veritus* (truth). They were (are) an Order of Preachers armed with the mission of equipping people with nothing, but the truth only. For them, the truth was reposed in the papal tradition, which the reformers were fighting. Anything other than the papal position was seen as heretical, since the papal position was seen as all-enduring and trans-cultural. It was this understanding, of nothing other than the papal position, which the Dominicans brought with them to Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Holy Cross Order was founded in Switzerland in 1844, in response to abject poverty and the need for educating the struggling girl child at the periphery of society. The mission of the founder was centred on the liberation of the girl child, and as a result of such and similar efforts from other quarters Swiss women were liberated much earlier than the rest of Europe. According to Sr. Maria Crucis Doka, writing on Theodosius Florentini (2003: 12), the founder of the Holy Cross Order,

there was a yawning gap between the tenets of lived cultural experiences in Switzerland and the gospel of Jesus Christ at the time of the formation of the Order of the Holy Cross sisters. The Christian faith of the time saw all irreligious persons as incomplete, who needed to re-orient their lives towards eternity, for the attainment of happiness and perfection. The emerging orders had to be structured in such a way, that they would fit every circumstance of life (Christian and non-Christian), would be accepted everywhere, and so penetrate the life of the people in every situation. Nothing should deter the people from employing them (Doka 2003: 18).Florentini writes in the First Constitutions of the Teaching Sisters drawn up by him: "The primary purpose of the Institute is the education of young girls and women...in primary schools in towns and in the country-side and therefore, has to consider the needs and requirements of these establishments when training teaching sisters" (2003: 18). Florentini' main concern was a wide, general education of the people and not in the first place the education of girls of so-called better families. He, therefore, stressed in the Constitutions: "Private tutoring posts may not be accepted" (Doka 2003: 23). At the same time Doka pointed out that according to the statutes the office of the "director" was not given to the male, but solely to the female superior, her assistant and the council. With regard to the tradition this was a new and important step (Doka 2003: 51-52). From the perspective of Florentini, the 19th century women in Switzerland although relegated to the house, were a changing force that could transform society if they are empowered with education. Switzerland like other European countries was still struggling to allow women to take leadership roles in the country till the late 1970s. In 1977 for the first time a woman, Mme Elizabeth Blunchy, was elected president of the National Council of Switzerland in spite of the fact that women in Switzerland received the vote only in the 1970s (McDonagh 1983: 25). The Holy Cross sisters came to South Africa armed with the same zeal to raise the education of the people at the periphery of society, for the sole reason of empowering them to love God and themselves.

Both the Dominican obsession with truth external to local communities (originating in the papacy regardless of subsidiarity) and the Holy Cross concern for the liberation of the girl child, fall outside the African communitarian norms (Mbiti 1997; Idowu 1973). For the African, truth is communally based, while the assertiveness of the woman is strange. It is this alien culture of imposing truth from without that the Holy

Cross and later the Dominican communities brought into Africa prior to Vatican II, whose new emphasis had migrated from imposition to inculturation (grafting the new onto the existing local culture).

The first Holy Cross missionaries to South Africa landed at port Natal from Switzerland on 12 July 1883, 79 years prior to the Second Vatican Council, whose chief theologian Karl Rahner's position was a serious revision of the Vatican I's hegemonic dogmatic position the sisters brought with them to Africa. In criticising that position Rahner asserted: "No longer should the Christians consider the Church as an island of salvation surrounded by a sea of perdition. And no longer should the missionaries find their motivation in the belief that they must preach to 'pagans' who otherwise would have little chance for salvation" (Rahner in Knitter 1985:129; cf. MacDonagh 1980: 62). This was supported by Eric Sharpe who reminded the post Vatican II missionaries to remember the efficacious words of Canon Warren that, "Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on man's dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was there before our arrival" (Sharpe 1977: 22f).Such pluralist theology was anathema to Vatican I, which shaped the dogmatic position of Roman Catholic missionaries who came to Africa prior to 1965.

Armed with the theology of the First Vatican Council: "outside the church no salvation at all" (Knitter 1985: 122), the Holy Cross Sisters landed in South Africa, to offer this doctrinal salvific education. The Swiss sisters found themselves among the Zulu and Xhosa who were very suspicious of white settler communities whose languages were strange to them. The sisters could not be explicated from their colonial kin and kith, especial because like the colonists, the sisters believed that schools were the "best means of bringing Christ to the people" (MacDonagh 1980: 61). Though the sisters may have given their education out of genuine love, their education, like that of colonists, retained the oppressive and alienating aspects, since it was basically meant to wean indigenes from their traditions in order to qualify for salvation. For that reason, when they eventually settled in Mthatha, in the Eastern Cape, they met with hostility from indigenous people who had suffered under white colonists. A cultural gap dogged their work for a long time to come, although the four Swiss harbinger nuns had come to live on the periphery of society with indigenous

Africans, in response to a call for help from the founder of the Marianhill missionaries in Natal. Their non-conforming ‘straight jacket education’ was loathed by the suspicious locals, who found it strange that the nuns hung onto the title ‘sister’ right into old age; challenging anyone who preferred the title ‘mother’ or ‘grandmother’ as honorific for age. This nonconformity with indigenous terminology presented a compatibility problem. In this case spiritual formation in Africa “remains fruitless as long as the language of religious experience is one that is totally foreign or cannot be understood” (Kiaziku 2007: 31).

The nuns endeavoured to narrow the language and cultural gaps by using education to bring over the Africans to their side, which, when accepted, was highly alienating. Civilisation and salvation had to be culturally Swiss and dogmatically Vatican I Catholicism, with no room for indigenous African contribution. The challenge was worsened by the intervention of English language. The sisters had to learn both English and African languages for them to communicate with both the settlers and the local people. They forged ahead despite local hostilities though some of their neighbouring farmers abandoned annexed land “because of difficulties” (MacDonagh 1980: 105). Their perseverance and tenacity at such difficulties came from their belief in divine providence and new life beyond the cross (HC C. 1990: 41).

These first Holy Cross sisters to South Africa made sisterhood a preserve of the white missionaries for the next forty years, with the first profession of African women coming on 26 July 1923 (MacDonagh 1980: 244), a fortnight after the celebration of their fortieth anniversary as missionaries to South Africa. Even then, the colonial laws would not allow them to share the same community as Whites and Blacks, so those African nuns had to be sent to Lesotho where mixed communities existed. On the face of it, the Swiss missionary sisters maintained the status quo in the face of the population who never saw their kin practising their sisterhood. Worse still, for the newly professed African nuns, the pain of being forced to work in an alien environment they had not envisaged in their training, was both unfathomable and unnerving. In a similar manner all coloured women who joined the Holy Cross sisters were posted to the Western Cape Province, which enhanced racial segregation by destroying communitarian aspects of both religious and African lives. This racial translocation of people from homelands for the purposes of enhancing the status quo, was not only painful, but also an act of cowardice on the part of the Church

(Kairos Document 1985). The Kairos document was a "critique of the current theological models that determine the type of activities the Church engages in to try to resolve the problems of the country (Kairos Document, 1985: 1). It was authored by robust theologians with a critical grasp of the socio-political and economic environment obtaining in South Africa, which was spurned by the state and colluded with by the mainline churches, including the Roman Catholic Church. The lay and clerical theologians therefore called upon the church to face up to the moment of truth and avoid colluding with evil forces by sitting on the fence (Kairos Document, 1985: 2). They criticised the church for failing to emulate Jesus who deeply wept for the destruction of the city caused by the religious leadership who did not recognize the massacre of the people all because they did not recognize their "opportunity (KAIROS) when God offered it" (Luke 19: 44). By sending the newly professed to Lesotho and Cape Town province (for the blacks and Coloureds respectively), the Church assisted in the cover up, instead of tackling the situation head-on. By so doing the church assisted in creating "two Churches in South Africa – a White Church and a Black Church" (Kairos Document, 1985: 2). As we have seen, this was true for the Catholic Church which had racially separate churches for the same denomination. Instead of furthering their Holy Cross motto of siding with those at the periphery even against the state as they had done in Europe, the sisters did nothing to fight the tendency of those who shared the same baptism, bread and blood of Christ in the same church living perpetually at loggerheads. Consequently, their theology did "not express the faith of the majority of Christians" in South African churches of the time (Kairos Document, 1985: 7). In reality they failed to realise that even neutrality was not a virtue in the face of injustice, because it inevitably emboldened the oppressor (Kairos Document, 1985: 2 11).

Prophetic theology bound the Church to fight the state theology advancing racial segregation, at the expense of racial harmony. One description of the prophecy entails speaking truth to those in the corridors of power. This requires a comprehensive analysis of how society adopts, appropriates, and mediates power throughout our major structures and institutions, and why it is done in such a way that restricts empowering outcomes to a minority leaving the majority disenfranchised and disempowered. That is the "foundational crippling injustice that Jesus sought to challenge and rectify by proclaiming a new reign of God as the

Companionship of Empowerment. And that too must be the primary vowed undertaking of those who claim to be following Christ the liminal prophetic threshold of the twenty-first century" (O'Murchu 2018: 165). The church must understand this most, because by its nature the church is voluntary and egalitarian in which power is not exercised hierarchically and therefore cannot normally be exercised coercively. Such non-cohesive structures must be spread to the whole society, with due regard to a theological and spiritual option for the kind of non-hierarchical community Jesus founded and for its collegial rather than monarchical structure and function (Schneiders 2013: 456,505). But as the sequel demonstrates, this is exactly what the church avoided doing, choosing to collude with the oppressor.

The historical situation of segregation in South Africa affected the Dominican priests and brothers too. The Dominicans also chose a conciliatory option to circumvent having two novitiate one for whites and another one for blacks as the Holy Cross sisters ended up having. They took both their white and black candidates to Lesotho where the environment for mixed communities was conducive. Lesotho with its monarch was free to permit any race to live within their borders and the Catholic Church has been the Church of the Lesotho Kingdom for a very long time since the arrival of the French missionary Fr. Joseph Gerard, a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate (OMI), in 1862. He was born in France on 29 May 1831. At the age of twenty he entered the Congregation of the OMI, who sent him to South Africa where he was ordained at Pietermaritzburg, before working among the Zulu. In 1862, he pioneered missionary work and spent the rest of his long life there. He died on 29 may 1914 and was declared Blessed by Pope John Paul II on 15 September 1988. A conversation with one of the Dominicans who did his novitiate in Lesotho also revealed that the process closed the language gap for the white colleagues who did not know seSotho. They learnt the language then because Church activities in Lesotho were usually in seSotho. Those who were African Dominicans could now converse in English and seSotho with their companions without feeling compelled to speak English for the purpose of accommodating others.

The Dominican Fathers have just celebrated their centenary since their arrival in South Africa in 1917 to become bridge builders sent to bring back people to orthodoxy, in order to "make these modern times measure up to the former times, and to propagate the Catholic faith" (DC 1: 1). There was very little consideration of

the local context by the original missionaries, though African priests of later epochs became fairly conscious of the integration of their Dominican vocation with that of being African priests. Such attempts at inculturation can be identified from the way they assist people in understanding Gospel virtues through their culture. Like Holy Cross sisters, the Dominicans too had never envisaged that their missionary work in Africa would bear flourishing fruits of brothers and priests of African origin. These young African men have taken up leadership and are involved in the formation of future Dominicans whom they are helping to appreciate the Order's founding values with their own African religious experiences (Kiaziku 2007: 31). Like the rest of the Bantu people, they are

> exuberant, brimming with life, they easily draw each other along, they share their joys and sorrows, they are not ashamed to bring up delicate subjects like the problems they meet with in their families. The Muntu quite genuinely is a person with others, a person who likes to live in company. This is so by his very culture (Otene 1983: 27-28).

Today Southern African priests and nuns desire to keep the missionary spirit of the pioneers (of going out to the periphery) alive and to live consecrated lives with genuine intentions of an "African religious soul" (Kiaziku 2007: 27). The new evangelisation, which attempts to cater for the African soul, envisages that the training process of future religious when done properly is one way of creating a holding environment that would help those who are formed to imbibe the spirit of consecrated life and that of the pioneers in an African way. Great consideration has to be put on reflecting what the pioneers offered that is helpful to forge ahead with the integration of the values of religious life. With the Africans taking centre-stage,

> it is becoming increasingly clear that what is most important is not the preservation of models but rather willingness to re-examine, in creative continuity, the consecrated life as the evangelical memory of a permanent state of conversion out of which insights and concrete choices flow (*New Wine Skins* 2018: 21).

Whilst the two Congregations appreciate their pioneers who brought the richness of spirituality to Southern Africa, they should not continue the legacy blindly without evaluating what is appropriate for the particular time they live in. Consideration and

weighing of the previous models has to be looked at with the eyes of the present needs of the youth of today. Remaining in the 'alien past' has the problem of creating a perpetual gap between formation and the missionary environment. Otene (1983) is clear that formators in Southern African have to take cognisance of the fact that formation houses in Southern Africa are filled with novices from the Bantu tribes whose road to adulthood is much different from that of Westerners. While Westerners have laxity towards communitarian values "the Muntu (person) is carried along by his community and this in a general way...The fact of being carried along by a community means that the young adult will be open to receiving – for example, in a novitiate – a pronounced feeling for life in common" (Otene 1983: 27- 28).

2.3 The Contextual Realities of the two Orders

The African in either of the two religious Orders has no option but to live up to the contextual realities, because "the influence of the theologian's cultural context on his or her theological formulation can no longer be ignored" (Brian A. de Vries). The traditions of the Orders have to be adapted to the cultures of the receiving/formation candidates. Both the Holy Cross and Dominican Orders belong to international and multi-cultural Congregations. Within their contextual communities are sisters, brothers and priests from different races, tribes and cultural backgrounds. While appreciating the European origins of the two Orders, the Church has to take cognizance of the current multi-cultural composition of the sisters, brothers and priests living under one roof. The current Church formators have to avoid the repeat of "the heralds of the Gospel who landed in Africa ... [but] had from the beginning a handicap inherited from the society and from the Church that gave birth to them. The missionaries, people of their own time and place, were often victims of the prejudices of that time and place" (Kiaziku 2007: 39). Most of the prejudices pitied local cultural and spiritual beliefs against western culture which was mistaken for Christianity; with the result that local culture was described with a lot of negative clichés such as 'superstitious,' 'backward,' 'fetish,' 'idolatorous,' 'polytheistic' etc (Ray 1976). The current inclusive focus, as dictated by the Second Vatican Council, must be on conformity rather than uniformity (Abbot 1967). If the new insights are not carefully taken into consideration many formation candidates will continue resenting the models that were transplanted from the European context to Southern Africa with no due regard to the cultures of Africa.

The current position on contextual theology is clear on the need for a holistic approach to formation as is also expressed by these two Congregations (DC VI: 39). While the Holy Cross Sisters' recent Handbook for formation includes physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional areas as covered in holistic formation (2011:5), it is the social aspect that needs to be clearly defined in order to reflect the local context. O'Murchu Diarmuid argues that a proper contextual integration of these aspects of formation leads to a balanced religious maturation (2010: 12 -14). One's context contributes to the way one internalises the theory of religious life. The theory that the candidates for religious life are taught during novitiate is not just put to some empty vessel, but it is going to meet with the developmental context of each individual who is an adult in their own right.

2.4 The Novitiate and Religious Formation

Both the Holy Cross sisters and the Dominican Order of Preachers have periods of formation called novitiate, meant for introducing the candidates to the prayer life, vowed life, community life and norms of the particular Orders (HC.C: 146GS). The Holy Cross sisters' novitiate is in Victory Park, Johannesburg, and most of their novices are from Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa and Lesotho. The purpose of training the multi-nationals together is to make them aware that they are all one despite geographical spatiality. It is this attempt at inculcating oneness that dilutes the necessity for deep cultural studies, leading to the destruction of contextual formation. Despite the cosmopolitan nature of novitiate, which in essence reflects future contexts of ministry, novices are not deliberately encouraged to share their own life experiences. In reality this supposed inter-cultural living and sharing is subsumed by an alien 'universal culture', representing none of the cultural traditions of novices. For one year, for the Dominican novices (DC: 43), and for two good years, for the Holy Cross novices (HC. C. 1990: 7, 147), the formators take them through cultural migration into the 'universal culture'. And yet, "overcoming cultural barriers is a difficult task. And in any case it will always appeal only to a small minority" (Kiaziku 2007: 31).

Novitiate is, however, a time for cultural integration with the gospel of Christ as envisaged by the Second Vatican Council (Abbot 1967), yet the integration is not always realised because of the many activities they need to cover. Simultaneous with the cultural integration, the novitiate is a time to go inside oneself to encounter

the God of vocation (DC VIII: 43), who fills the novices “with the missionary spirit, that they understand the conditions and needs of people living in the world” (DC VIII: 45). The emphasis here is on repackaging of the intellect in preparation for such Parish activities as feeding the poor, teaching catechism and looking after the elderly. These activities run concurrently with the process of learning theoretical norms and regulations of the novitiate. The novitiate is there to form someone who lived for more than twenty years in their own home and worldly environment into a sister, a brother or a future priest fully embracing the spirituality of the new Order, oblivious of the participant’s cultural commitments.

The purpose of the novitiate has to be viewed as two fold; growing in relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and “to make young people in formation aware that their respective religious institute has a mission to fulfil on behalf of the Church and of the world for which they are held responsible and to which they are expected to be faithful” (Gomez 2006: 40).The responsibility to be missionaries on behalf of the Church is a practical reality that is there to instil in the novice the need to internalise both prayerfulness and the outward ministry to the needy (DC VI: 39). Novices are sometimes sent to the communities of their particular Order for a period of two weeks for some and two to three months for others. This is a time to enable the integration of the life of prayer, ministry and community life. The communities within the specific religious Order are seen as the micro societies, representing the macro world where the candidate will work after profession (graduation). It is a crucial period that offers the novice opportunity to recognise the need to merge theory and the lived experience. If a candidate manages to integrate with the community of the religious Order where s/he has been posted, that is taken as potential success in future ministry in the open world (and the reverse in interpreted as failure in both worlds).

For the novitiate to be authentic, the Church encourages the different Orders to create an environment that is secluded from ministry and other activities that can destruct the novices (Canon 648 - 649), which gives the “impression that the formation process is more informative than performative” (*New Wine in New Wineskins* 2018: 21). The isolation of the novitiate in intended to help with self-reflection for the purposes of discovering if one can find personal ways of living convictions that can build sustainable ways of being. Novitiate is also a time to help

the novices to realise that transformation is possible when one can go into the inner self and live from the values they discover within. Prayer and ministry “ought to be conceived and carried out in practice as a continuous and progressive process whose integration arises from a unity of purpose” (DC VI: 40). The very beginning of the novitiate reflects the future life of the candidate which will always be ministry born out of commitment to a life of prayer.

The novitiate is also an invitation to “experience conversion to evangelical counsels and to purify and deepen the novice’s motives” (HC Formation Handbook 2011: 22). It is this researcher’s perspective that conversion can only happen if the individual recognises and experiences God’s love for them. Experiencing God’s love leads to believing that God desires each of them into friendship and this helps one to choose to live according to that friendship and according to God’s terms (Hudson, 2015: 22-24). It is not easy to think of embracing a totally different way of life and letting go what one grew up knowing. The early Church fathers went to the desert in search for God and finding themselves in God, after living in lone huts for long periods of time. As we do not have the desert environment, the isolation that the novitiate tends to have is the desert of our time. According to prophet Hosea, the desert is a place of utter dependence on God, which is why God often threatens to take Israel back to the desert in order to renew her earlier faith (Hosea 2:14-23). In the Semitic tradition, the desert is also full of temptations which the anointed ones have to overcome (Hitti 1981). Within this novitiate desert, the expectation is that the candidate integrates strength for later use in the life of fidelity as s/he encounters the demands of discipleship.

The choice to take this route of the desert of consecrated life and entering the novitiate is also an invitation for ongoing search for God. God’s invitation to the seeker in consecrated life “asks a total commitment, one which involves leaving everything behind in order to live at his side and to follow him wherever he goes” (Vita Consecrata 1996: 20). Unfortunately for the candidates from poor backgrounds, religious life may be a route for ‘gaining everything’ rather than ‘leaving everything’ which one does not have. There is no doubt that there is a section of the novices which is after social class mobility; which after graduation would have the opportunity to grab the gifts from the laity for personal use instead of community use as expected. Seekers for religious life need to be adults who know what they want and

who are not frightened to discover that in their search they may discover that the vowed life was not meant for them in the first place. According to DC 156: 39 of the Dominican Order; “The primary responsibility for his own formation lies with the candidate himself, in free cooperation with the grace of a divine vocation, and under the guidance of masters and of other assistants”. The ability to take responsibility for one’s formation can only be done by adult men and women who are aware of God’s active work in their lives. Adults may also recognise that the vowed life is not a duty or law to be observed but way of life where one can discover their fullest potentials.

2.5 Life according to the vowed life

Article 22 of the Holy Cross constitution says that the “purpose of the vows is to render us free for God and his kingdom”. The heartbeat of religious life is the choice of living according to the three vows (celibacy/chastity, poverty and obedience) which are also called evangelical counsels (Vat II PC, 1975: 614). Life according to the vows is an imitation of the life of Jesus Christ whilst he was still on earth. Jesus lived a chaste life which he interpreted as representing being made a eunuch for the purposes of the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:12). Here Jesus distinguishes amongst various categories that can live celibate lives with some contentment: “some by nature, and others by violence offered to them, are rendered incapable of entering into a marriage state; and others, through the gift of God, and under the influence of his grace, abstain from marriage cheerfully and contentedly, in order to be more useful in the interest of religion” https://www.biblestudytools.com. Celibate life should be for those who deliberately choose because of God’s call, and not those who are prevented from marriage by mutilation of bodies or biological inadequacy. His poverty was seen in homelessness represented by having ‘nowhere to lay his head’; while obedience was clear in making duty his ‘food’ (John 4: 34). The vows become crucial during the initial time of learning what religious life is as a way of preparing one for living such a life.

2.5.1 The vow of Celibacy and Chastity

Celibacy is a state of being unmarried and remaining single for different reasons for each person (Sammon 2013: 103). Religious sisters and priests choose celibacy for the kingdom of God, to render themselves free for God by giving their “love to Christ so that we [they] may belong unreservedly to him” (HCC 22: 53). Chastity is a state of being faithful to one’s committed relationships as well as the ability to recognise

the sacredness in each human being by respecting every person throughout one's life (Sammon 2013: 105). Every person is called to be chaste and to live their calling by clinging to God with "an undivided heart" (DC III: 10; Canon 599). That means chastity can relate to marriage, just as it relates to celibacy. The Catholic Canon Law (CCL) teaches that chastity has its origins in Jesus Christ who was steadfast in his mission, as specified by his Father in Heaven (CCL 575). In that, Christ is the "consecrated celibate par excellence" (Otene M 1983: 31).

Celibacy for the sake of the kingdom is a relatively new way of life for African men and women, because the African concept of deference for life has a symbiotic relationship between fertility and maturity (Kiaziku 2007: 149-151). The rites of passage were meant to inculcate in the young, a sense of procreation as the ultimate goal of life and human continuity (Kangwa 2017: 67-69). Though Africans had female ritual personages in fertility shrines, such as the *mbonga* (celibates cf. Ngara 2014: 469) of the Mwari shrine in Matonjeni and Makwewana (variably the wife of Chisumphi) in Malawi, the ritual personages were not perpetual celibates (Daneel 1970: 282; Dube 1995). Here we note that those in the African shrines were seen as spouses of God in their days of celibacy. O'Murchu (2018: 151 -152) therefore argues that

> Celibacy in its primordial significance seems to arise from a passionate desire to share more closely in the erotic intimacy of the Divine. God is the supreme Lover who allures and captivates the heart of the loved one. This can easily be depicted as a mystical calling for the rare few, one not readily available to the rest of humanity. I suspect that the opposite may be the case. The celibate fulfils a cultural role – perhaps a paradoxical one – exemplifying the ultimacy that is at the heart of all our desiring as a human species, perhaps a central feature of the monastic archetype.

As noted by Daneel (1970), however, African celibacy had a life span, which gave way to marriage and the utilisation of the 'fire of life' in them. Marriage was the sign of maturity, and any religious personages who dared perpetual celibacy would have to live with the reality of being seen as perpetual minors because of being single and childless. The unmarried were barred from decision-making boards such as village or territorial courts. The Setswana of Botswana prevented the unmarried from sitting

on the *kgotla* court, just as their Zimbabwean counterparts barred the same group from their *dare* court, unless they were juvenile successors with senior members advisors (Togarasei 2012: 233; Schapera 1992). Childlessness is a big challenge to Christian priests who act as spiritual fathers with no tangible facts to support their fatherhood.

Worse still, Shorter Aylward, maintains that "there is no human culture in the world in which celibacy is a norm" (Shorter 2002: 16), making it the unusual pattern within human societies. It puts humanity in danger because humanity thrives through procreation. Kiaziku quotes Otene who expresses his annoyance with anybody who focuses on Africans only as the ones who might not be able to live the vow of Celibacy/ Chastity "rooted in faith in the living Christ" (Kiaziku 2007: 152). The point is, every race wants ways of continuity, which is why celibacy is not a norm in any single society in the world. It, therefore, means that the vow hangs like a milestone on the neck of anyone who chooses it from any race in the world, unless they have made a breakthrough in uniting with God through Christ. The church understanding is that "celibacy is not something one consciously chooses but rather an inner transformation that happens as a result of being overwhelmed by the divine embrace" O'Murchu 2018: 146. But open debates about celibacy and its functions have been abounded. It is in this light that it has often be said that "clerical celibacy has had quite checkered history, and today it holds prominence not for any profound theological reasons but as a pragmatic arrangement so that the pastoral availability of the pastor takes precedence to preoccupation with wife/partner, home, and family" (O'Murchu 2018: 145).

The celibate is expected to transform the love that one would have shown to his/her spouse and children to general love shared with all people in an inclusive way. Celibacy does not focus on exclusive relationships but it is open to love all people especially those who are less privileged and even the less attractive; those despised to live at the periphery of society (Chittister 1996: 122). In their constitutions, the Holy Cross Sisters assert that the vow of Celibacy/Chastity is not for the service of humanity only but "liberates the heart for an ever-growing love of God" (HC C 27: 55). Chaste loving leads one to master the senses so that they are not guided by how one feels but what one is convinced God is saying. This leads to the redefinition of maternity and paternity, in that the vow of celibacy/chastity turns participants from

focusing on biological reproduction to spiritual paternity and maternity. Religious maternity and paternity focus on accompanying the laity (the infants in spiritual matters) through spiritual growth. Pope Francis says of this call to have maternal love; “going forth in maternity and maternity is not only having children! Maternity is accompanying growth; maternity is spending hours next to a sick person, a sick child, a sick brother; it is spending one’s life in love, with that love of tenderness and maternity” (http://w2.vatican.va/2015/may/html). This papal definition of maternal love is a challenge for the young person who has not yet reached the age of being a mother to comprehend the invitation to showing abstract maternal love. Most novices are still at the college going age and motherhood and fatherhood might still be far from the plans of their peers outside of religious life.

In the African context, being a biological parent is an expectation that society has on an adult person, yet African novices are equally taught to find fulfilment in God and not in biological parenthood. The focus of novitiate is on the creative powers of God as opposed to biological procreation (Kiaziku 2007: 155). This is meant to give celibacy precedence over biological procreation.

Celibate living is focused on the person of Christ who captures the hearts of those who are called to follow Christ in this way of life. Those in formation are helped to grow in their relationship with Christ, which helps them to become mature human beings who are free to create life-giving communities in ministry. Being in ministry, a celibate has to love chastely, to reach out to people by attending to their needs and to be of service to the people by giving them a listening ear and to help people with practical possible ways to be self-sufficient. For this vow to take root, it is important that each vowed person is a prayerful person who is ready to forgive any misunderstandings for the wrong done by others. It is also important that the celibate grows in self-knowledge and having the ability to live in solitude with one’s God, because without God’s help personal strength will be insufficient to take the celibate through life. More so, “inclinations of the African religious soul, inclinations that were not done away with by Christianity”, would need God’s involvement to “reach their fulfilment and development” (Kiaziku 2007: 27; cf Otene M 1983: 31). The issue needs skilful navigation because Africans feel marginalised, and “no longer accept subordinate roles. The desire to take over roles of responsibility in order to evade situations of submission could ... risk jeopardising the unrenounceable process of the

inculturation of the Gospel" *(New Wine in New Wineskins* 2018: 21). Rather than desiring to lead, the African religious must desire more to live for others, rather than create niches for self-reference (Silvie 2011).

2.5.2 The Vow of Poverty

During their novitiate and during the years of preparing for final vows, the candidates are often helped to understand and embrace the vow of poverty with the same spirit they live celibacy and chastity. The vow of poverty is a public declaration that whatever is in the world is simply a gift given to humanity out of God's generosity (Paul VI 1967: 13). This is the vow where an individual imitates Christ in living a life of sharing whereby having less is a privilege to learn to live a life of dependence on God. Unnecessary accumulation is a failure of living in a sustainable way. Pope Paul VI emphasises the gift of sharing as key to the "reality of human *solidarity*, which is a benefit for us, [though it] also imposes a duty" against keeping excessive surplus while the others "lack necessities," for this is detrimental to the common good (1967: 9, 11). This vow, therefore, helps the religious to develop a healthy way of relating to material goods by taking only what they need and leaving the rest for others. This theological view is informed by the fact that "we have inherited from past generations, and we have benefited from the work of our contemporaries…and we cannot refuse to interest ourselves in those who will come after us" (Paul VI 1967: 9). O'Murchu (2018: 159) renames the vows of poverty "mutual sustainability." He links poverty to power dynamics throughout history. He note that

> Domination is frequently exercised through colonisation of oppressed others, condemning them to an inferior status by stripping away the resources that sustain and nourish them, including their right to property. The exploitation of natural and material resources is often a corollary to the domination and subjugation of other peoples. Without access to land and property, most people feel diminished, their integrity undermined, and their value stripped away by those seeking to exploit and disempower them (O'Murchu 2018: 159).

To such disempowered people are the religious sent, to share with them and restore their humanity rather than worsen, through further dispossession, complicity or show off. This is particularly pertinent to Southern Africa were colonisation dehumanised

indigenous people by taking away their land, the fruits of their land and mineral wealth. The dispossessed have become poor labourers on their erstwhile fertile land, now owned by others. By deliberately taking a vow of poverty the religious equip themselves to live prophetically with the segregated so as to empower them from within (O'Murchu 2018: 159). In liminal terms the

> religious are called to the critical threshold of Companionship of Empowerment (the new reign of God) to discern more deeply how values are acculturated in contemporary world, how the modes of articulation distort and even destroy the more authentic meaning of the values, and what liminal people need to do in order to reclaim what has been subverted and perverted (O'Murchu 2018: 160).

This liberation theology attached to the vow of poverty has been associated with the challenge for religious people to live simple, so that others may follow cue. The religious, however, lose focus of the implication of the vow as they often migrate from poverty to live more comfortable, from which lessons for the poor may be difficult to draw. Theory is clear that anybody who takes a commitment of living in poverty is also saying 'no' to owning personal property. St. Francis and St. Dominic whom the Holy Cross sisters and the Dominican Friars follow, respectively, chose lives of total dependence on God's providence instead of being distracted by property ownership (DC; HCC). God becomes the focal point for the vowed person and that space that is sometimes taken by material things is occupied by God. The life of being poor in religious life also frees the vowed men and women to travel light for the sake of being available to any ministry that one might be called to render. In the African context, the value of sharing is very important; therefore; this vow becomes meaningful for an African if it is interpreted as a vow to share. Africans of days gone by used to take the best out of their food stores to feed the hungry, including the unknown passers-by (Mararike 2001; Bourdillon 1976). The Shona do not see sharing as wastage. This is why they say, "energy is milk, it continues to ooze out", which relates to food and goods as products of virtuous hard labour (Hamutyinei and Plangger 1987 para. 1408). Others have called it a vow for depending on God and right relationship with the material goods (*HC C Art 37)*. For anyone who lives the vow of poverty, it is not a life-style of comparisons with what others have, but one of finding one's security in God. Finding security in God leads

one to abandon self to God as this frees one from the anxiety of having to protect what one owns. It is not a call to destitution but a call to be content with what one needs and not with the wants. Of course, there is always a problem pertaining to balancing needs and wants, let alone being able to clinically distinguish them.

Article 37 Holy Cross Constitution is clear that the purpose of the vow of poverty is to imitate the self-emptying life of Jesus Christ, who stripped himself of divine riches to live at the periphery of human society, for the advantages of those negated by society (cf Luke 4: 18-19). Like Christ the celibates are expected to leave all personal riches and comforts in order to suit the lives of those at the margins of society, to whom they have to preach the good news of the Gospel (Canon 600). Early Christian communities made spirited attempts to rid themselves of riches by placing all they had at the disposal of the whole congregation (Acts 4:32-5:11). In that regard, the name of Barnabas of Cyprus, stands prominent for having sold his field and given the total proceeds to the apostles (Acts 4: 36-37). But it was not easy even at the earliest times, for it is reported that Ananias and his wife Sapphira failed to remit all the proceeds resulting in their unceremonious fatal exit from the community (Acts 5:1-11). Even to date the problem of avarice continue to claim the Ananias and Sapphiras of the modern era, which is what novitiate aims to minimise, if not eradicate. The Holy Cross Sisters pledge that "in the spirit of poverty we are ready, when necessary, to adapt ourselves to new situations and other customs and cultures" (*HCC Art 47*). As noted above adaptation "to new situations and other customs and cultures" is easier said than done, for often novices are forced to adopt one "universal culture" oblivious of their own context.

The Dominican congregation equally pledge poverty for the sake of the kingdom of God as well as staying closer to the poor in need of evangelisation so "that charity may reign which abides forever" (*DC IV:* 12). The congregations bind themselves thus: "In our profession, therefore, we promise God to possess nothing by right of personal ownership, but to have all things in common and to use them under the direction of superiors for the common good of the Order and of the Church" (*DC IV:* 12*)*. In principle it means that "none of the brethren can retain as his own any goods, either money or income allotted to him in any manner whatsoever, but he must hand over everything to the community*"* (*DC IV:* 12*).*This is the taught doctrine, which novitiates must internalise, but there is need to explore any possible gaps between

intention of training and actual practice. How much this pledge dissuades them from the Ananias-Sapphira syndrome is yet to be established; just as its suitability to the African context has to be evaluated.

Like other Catholic scholars Shorter Aylward (2001) grounds the vow of poverty in Jesus Christ who despite riches "became poor, so that by his poverty, you might become rich" (1Cor. 8: 9). Shorter is however, appalled by the glaring disparities between vowed religious poverty and the actual material conditions of the Catholic Church in Africa in comparison to the average poor indigenes. He laments:

> The living conditions of most religious in Africa are far from the degrading level that has been described. They live in decent houses. They know where their next meal is coming from. They have clean water and good sanitation. They do not have any insecurity about the future. When they fall ill, medical care is readily available for them (Shorter 2001: 8).

He observes that the religious are generally counted among the affluent in Africa. They live among the affluent in the porch suburbs, and are wont to travel a lot using own modern transport. Many work with or "for the sick, the destitute, the refugees, but they do not share the lives of the poor" (Shorter 2001:8). In reality the religious are among the most secure of this world, reneging from challenging the imposters of this world to embrace a more generous use of the temporal goods of this world, meant for equitable use by the creator (O'Muruchu 2018: 161; Schneiders 2013 236).This means they "have not really entered the world of the poor. This is true of both African and expatriate religious" (Shorter 2001: 8). Shorter's observations indicate a clear mismatch between intentions of training and lived experiences despite profession of vows. Schneiders (2013: 159) encourages the religious to take bold steps to stop self-accumulation in order to spending time finding ways to eradicate destitution among the poor. Despite lip service huge challenges lie on the way especially with respect

> (1) How to be authentically in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, with the ensuing challenges for those of us who are rich to opt for greater simplicity; and (2) How to challenge and change those forces of oppression that frequently condemn the poor to poverty in the first place and keep them

trapped there, sometimes for several generations (O'Muruchu 2018: 160 – 161).

The irony is, novices from poor African backgrounds are brought into these porch houses to be taught to live poor lives they have left behind for good. The Holy Cross novitiate house in Victory Park, for example, is quite grandiose by African standards, though it may be counted among the moderate by western standards. In this case the western reading is out of context for the overwhelming majority of the African novices. In reality, for the religious of African descent, vowed life entails an upward social mobility, away "from the African poor" (Shorter 2001: 9).

Of course, the question remains whether poverty should be reduced to material living standards, for which vowed poverty becomes ironic. There have been attempts to define poverty in terms of "attitude of the mind" or "quality of faith", which are certainly inadequate without "engaging in a real solidarity with the African poor" (Shorter 2001:9). Such engagement with the African poor provides the essential inculturation of religious poverty, which must always be read in context. Shorter (2001) further notes that the communitarian values of the religious societies fail to break the family ties, with the result that the religious members of African descent give priorities to relieving the burdens at home whenever they get some property. Abject poverty at home makes them dishonest in light of community rules and norms requiring them to surrender everything acquired subsequent to entering the communities, to the communities for use at the discretion of the superiors.

Since the kenosis (self-emptying) of the religious is modelled on that of Jesus Christ, which is itself based on the kenosis of the Father, "it is clear that religious poverty in Africa entails a simple life-style. Religious are unavoidably part of the non-poor, but they should not be among the affluent. Luxurious living is not consonant with religious poverty" (Shorter 2001: 23). This may be partly why the religious of African descent find it difficult to give to the communities that are already affluent, preferring their own families which are really poor. The negation of frugality makes the religious grabbers rather than givers.

In fact the "life-style of the average religious, especially those who belong to international congregations, is often far advanced of the diocesan clergy, owing much – as it does – to more affluent foreign standard of living" (Shorter 2001: 27).

To match Jesus as the archetype and prototype of poverty the religious have to share their wealth with the poor, just as Jesus commended his follower to go sell everything and give the money to the poor (Mark 10: 17- 22). There should be rapport devoid of any superiority complex or condescension in the interaction of the religious and the poor. Such interaction should result in skills transfer to the poor, which is an ennobling self-emptying that enriches the needy. Shorter (2001: 30) is clear that the vow of poverty entails travelling light, that is, with minimal movable property which does not impede swift physical and spiritual movements. In other words, through the vow of poverty, the religious avoid material attachments which impede their necessary movements. He compares their necessities to those of the African nomads who travel light with no attachments to immovable property which limits movements (2001: 34).

Kiaziku Vincente Carlos (2007: 122-123) is clear that the vow of poverty is the most controversial of the three evangelical counsels, because it is a direct affront on the African communitarian development of blood relations. It entails offering a separate route of development for a member of a community used to developing in solidarity with the family whose guarantees for survival lie within. The African religious therefore continues to plod ahead with one leg in the family of birth and the other in the adopted family, to the great chagrin of the latter. In African communities blood relations have solidarity through times of scarcity and abundance. And more so, “in a Bantu clan, the woman is not only the mother of her own children, but also the mother of all the children of the clan” (Kiaziku 2007: 123), which makes it difficult to alienate a woman from solidarity with her people. If that successfully happens, then she can only be seen as a social misfit. To avoid alienation, the African religious often adopt the Ananias-Sapphira paradigm as a way of sharing the abundance that often characterize the religious life, in stark contrast with the living realities in the families of birth. This satisfies the African morality of sustained solidarities throughout the fantasies and vicissitudes of life.

The jinx here emanates from the fact that the power to share community abundance lies with the superiors, who may not consider families of fellow members resulting in secret transfers of community ‘surpluses’. The nature of African community solidarity stands in opposition to that of the religious, which creates an unfathomable gap the African religious struggle to bridge throughout their vocations. The reading of the

African pertaining to “a new solidarity with the poor, an effective love for the little ones” (Kiaziku 2007: 130), may not omit close relations lest this introduces the Hellenist-Jewish paradigm (Acts 6:1-6). In the Early Church the ordinary community members of Hellenistic background accused the Jewish component (superiors) of selective solidarity, putting Hellenists at risk of starvation. Such tussles of interpretations still exist in modern communities. The African definition of the vow of poverty remains that, “to be poor is to share what one is and what one has – to be personally and completely at the disposal of all, and insofar as possible, to share what one has. This means to be poor with the poor Christ” (Kiaziku 2007: 130). The African solidarity, hospitality and communion are thrown into disarray by the retention of excess goods within the religious community irrespective of the vagrancy of families of some African members.

To mitigate such problems, the Second Vatican Council encourages religious men and women to be creative about what poverty is by adapting it to the cultures and understanding of the people they minister. Novices need to be helped to realise that their understanding of poverty grows through adaptation to the needs of the local situations they find themselves in. Of particular importance is the current religious over concern with the other world, at the expense of material poverty bedevilling their African ‘flock’. The religious also need soul-searching introspections to find explanations for such contradictions to poverty as they “slide in recent decades into comfortable middle-class acquiescence” (O’Muruchu 2018: 162). The vow of poverty may not be fully realised if the religious maintain the dualism of the spiritual and the secular more strictly at the expense of eco-justice. They need to tackle structural oppression, the mother-breeder of all poverty, head-on, in order to enable smooth flows of temporal goods, which though sufficient for all, are often concentrated in the hands of a few (Paul VI 1967; Francis 2015).

2.5.3 The vow to listen – Obedience

In terms of the church statutes, the evangelical counsel of obedience, undertaken in a “spirit of faith and love in the following of Christ obedient unto death, requires the submission of the will to legitimate superiors, who stand in the place of God, when they command according to the proper constitutions” (Can. 601). The major challenge here stems from the qualities of those who are called upon to represent

God as religious superiors. It rebuffs the mind why God decides to be represented by humans, in the extreme sense of their weaknesses. Sometimes the emphasis of their vicarious positions actual irks the faithful followers, breeding disobedience. Yet, aaccording to Mannath (2014: 47) the term obedience is coined “from the Latin word ‘ob-audire’ (to listen intently). O’Murchu concurs with the interpretation when he writes that the word means “to listen attentively” (2005: 227). It means listening intently to God’s voice, to follow that voice generously and sincerely. The Benedictine rule has a phrase that calls on the monks to “listen with the ear of the heart” (Shorter 2001: 31). Trevor Hudson says that listening lies at the heart of Christian ministry and that of evangelism (unpublished notes 2015). For the future religious, this is important for them to listen so as to discern what God wants of them. It is within this discernment that one enters into a relationship with the Order or group within which the vows are pronounced. This relationship extends to the whole Church of God who calls each one who enters religious life. Kiaziku (2007:157) maintains that “obedience to a rule is an attraction to a Person (Christ), to a project which he embodies and lives, and to an eternity which he prefigures”. As an imitation of the person of Christ, religious obedience is very different from military obedience and obedience that is based on fear. Pat Farrel in O’Murchu (2018: 159) notes that the difference lies in the fact that post Vatican II leadership calls for collaborative decision making, as opposed to authoritative commands based on superior-inferior positions. In other words, both the leaders and the followers are called upon to listen to the just and loving voice of Christ, without exception. And yet, despite all canonical efforts to outgrow

> the parent-child approach to Religious obedience, opting instead for an adult mutuality mediated through communal discernment, the history of Religious Life exhibits many tragic deviations of the abuse of power in the name of being loyal and obedient. Even today there are many Religious who carry the scars of such abuse, including those who were called to exercise its implementation (O’Murchu 2018: 164)

This is because those in leadership mistake the Gospels when they say that Jesus spoke with authority, to mean that he spoke with patriarchal authority. They do not learn from the Gentile ruler who dissuaded Jesus from entering his house because he had that kind of military authority (Luke 7). Rather it means that Jesus spoke with

exalted inner wisdom that was well beyond scribal knowledge, which made his listeners marvel (O'Murchu 2018: 166). This means that in religious life leadership does not translate into monarchical supervision of a ministerial outlay, with its elegant buildings and structures. It pertains to mutual collaboration that "denotes above all else a group committed to reflective discernment on alternative ways to empower new life among all who are downtrodden, marginalised and disenfranchised" (O'Murchu 2018: 166). The leadership is called upon to have moments of solitude, prayer, study, dialogue and social analysis, to be able to come up with satisfying decisions for the whole group. There is no need for complete separation of the leaders from the followers, as is done by kings all over the world.

And yet, the leadership often forgets that the vow invites each religious man and woman to focus on listening to God who speaks in scripture, in prayer, during liturgical celebration as well as through the community members and the authorities of the Congregation. To be able to obey, one has to learn from the founder of the Holy Cross sisters (Fr. Theodosius Florentini) who said, "The need of the time is the will of God" (*H.C. C Art. 15*). Some writers have suggested renaming this vow as a vow of collaboration, to entrench the in thing and do away with abuse (O'Murchu 2005: 233- 237, Schneiders 2013: 488 – 489, Kiaziku 2007: 159). This is why Mannath (2014: 45) says; "the most obedient religious is the one who is most initiative". The novice, who models his /her life on Jesus, has to be intent on creating new life for the people of God within "the company of others who, too, are on that same meaningful search" (Mannath 2014: 48). Research has shown, however, that many of those in leadership still employ pre-modern strategies, emphasising the top-to-bottom exercise of authority. This "divine right monarchy… [style] can be exercised absolutely on the assumption that the subordinates have no rights except those bestowed upon them by the superiors" (Schneiders 2013: 547). This is despite the fact that the religious orders were nurtured in non-totalitarian societies over the past two centuries, cognizant of the inviolability freedom of conscience, and equality of the baptised. The resort to pre-Vatican II leadership styles, therefore, irks the learned more than the average religious candidates, with a blurred sense of history. If the autocratic nature of leadership reflects society in general, then it means the

approach must first be confronted on the general scale, to remove any possible justification on the micro scale.

The Dominican Constitution (*Art II*) is clear that “by this vow a person dedicates himself totally to God”. In that light any hardship encountered on the way is equated to that of Christ who came to fulfil the will of the Father and accepted it as a necessary sacrifice. *HC Constitution Art.53* puts the vow of obedience as indicative of “obedience in God’s plan of salvation”. This is stressed in *Art*. *54*, “The Son of God by his incarnation voluntarily placed himself under human authority. In religious obedience we submit ourselves voluntarily to human authority and in this way imitate the obedience of Christ.” This vow stresses the sanctity of human authority in moving forward God’s plan. Disobedience to the superior’s authority is therefore seen as a negation of the fulfilment of God’s salvation plan. The joys of religious life are here defined in terms of self-denial.

The word obedience in many African languages is closely related to its Latin root, meaning to listen. The Shona say, *anoterera* (s/he listens), when referring to an obedient person. Before being a vow, listening is a value that every African child is expected to have. If a child is not obeying, they say that the child does not listen (*haateereri)*. It is the duty of the community to teach the young child good behaviour. They do so through “stories, narratives, proverbs and songs”, illustrating “the benefits of obedience and the evils of disobedience: those who do not obey their elders in these stories all end up being destroyed, by being defeated by enemies or killed” (Kiaziku 2007: 157; Dube 2017:63 - 75). Shorter (2000:13) is clear that African cultural tradition is well known for the great respect it offers to elders. The elders of a family clan are progenitors of the generations that follow them. They have given them life. They are also closer than their offspring to the world of the ancestors. Elders are the ones who connect the living to the source of life itself, who is God, the Creator and Life-Giver, the ultimate Ancestor. For this reason, elders are honoured and their wishes are obeyed. When they die, these elders become – in many African ethnic traditions – the objects of a religious cult. It is difficult, therefore, to exaggerate the authority of elders in Africa.

But even then there is never unmitigated authority. The *mhondoro* (territorial spirits), as the guardians of the land (Schofeleers 1979), and the sovereign God, would not

allow for the existence absolute human power. The proverb is clear that *rwendo rwomuranda rwunogurwa norwashe, rwashe runokoneswa nemvura kunaya*(the journey of the ordinary person is cut short by the chief's; that of the chief is foiled by rain). Though the chief has authority over people, he is subject to supernatural forces, the sources of morality, which send 'rain' to keep him in check. In fact the chief is encouraged to remain collected when his subjects scorn and revile him, or bring before him any form of trivialities because *ishe idurunhuru*(the chief is a rubbish pit). This metaphor reveals that "everybody is entitled to get a hearing no matter how trivial or repugnant the case may be" (Hamutyinei and Plangger 1987:304).

Novices of African descent used to conceiving of superiors as "rubbish pits", may find vowed life taxing, for such a rendering of authorities may be interpreted as a negation of one's cross and worth dismissal. The same African context allows *jakwara* (criticism of elders and leaders in a carnival mood) during threshing of sorghum, millet or rapoko. To such criticism there is no reprisal and the only reaction allowed is reform by the wrongdoer (Gombe 1998).

Though Shorter (2000:14) compares novitiate to the African initiation rites, in which initiates are supposed to respond by cue with no room for questioning, he is quick to mention that the phase is transient. Once the initiates are professed adults, they can "become culturally creative, operating autonomously within the parameters of the ethnic culture (Shorter 2000:15). Though African culture is controlled by taboos, adults generally negotiate through these taboos without direct supervision by their superiors (Lan 1987; Dube 2019). On the contrary religious formation teaches about perpetual discipleship (Shorter 2000:31), making the religious perpetual minors.

Still, Kiaziku (2007:159) is convinced that "obedience is different from timidity, fear, or the servile obedience of a slave or a subject people. Religious obedience is the imitation of Christ, who was obedient unto death, even death on a cross". Modelling obedience on that of Jesus which endures unto death often results in abuse of power by the superiors, once they adjudge one's obedience to lack a resignation towards their authority. Though the image of crucifixion is salvific in reference to the person of Christ, it is often dehumanising when used in reference to humanity under watchful eyes of unflinching superiors. This is more difficult for an African novice used to

paying *makuku* (traditionally a chicken or small payment) as admission of guilt with respect to an adult; as a way of receiving abundant forgiveness. Here one senses a gap between what is taught and what obtains on the African field of operation. Kiaziku (2007:160) even thinks that a novice has to be 'liberated' from the African 'servitude' to the community before s/he can fully belong to Christ, which further complicates the issue by creating extreme alienation and lack of belonging. In this case the novice operates in his/her African community like a stranger.

2.5.4 Community life

Community life refers to the communal existence of the religious in individual religious communities in order to inculcate in them "one mind and one heart in God" *(DC: 1).* Such envisaged oneness among the religious is meant to communicate the love of Christ better, and in more concrete representations which are more comprehensible to the laity, the target of training and mission. The current religious communities are modelled on the Apostolic communities reported in Acts 4:32 thus: "Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and one soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common". Religious communities intend to adequately inculcate this "one mind" before coming out to the public, though as we have already seen not even the archetypal Apostolic community was able to clinically overcome the Ananias-Sapphira and the Jewish-Hellenistic paradigms. This means the residual "pre-religious" culture continues to pervade any new cultures introduced in adulthood. This makes inculturation necessary in achieving hybrid paradigms; because attempts at wholesale importation of new cultures have much more limited chances of success, Ananias-Sapphiras are bound to complicate non-inculturated paradigms.

Yet the religious community continues to ignore culture by aiming at migrating from the usual traditional life to a life built around, and united by Holy Communion (Otene 1983: 74). The new life is dissociated from blood relations, and therefore no one qualifies by birth or by blood relation to one who has already qualified. In short, it is not a natural community, but rather, one that is modelled on the enduring community of the three persons of the Triune God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. To achieve this, the inmates have to fully answer to the call of the Trinity as did Barnabas of Cyprus, avoiding the fiasco of paying any attention to stray noises as

did Ananias and Sapphira. Maybe others just admire class mobility represented by religious life in Africa, without being called at all, which causes a lot of chocking in religious communities clogged by those not meant for religious profession. These may be people used to swimming with the crowds without taking any firm stand, and yet religious life is both communitarian and individual, because each person is specifically called out to take a unique responsibility. The Eucharist community does not accommodate bystanders and those who just follow without any unique personal contributions. The Apostles of the early community were clear on the distribution and division of labour: apostles taught while the deacons shared food as each had need (Acts 4: 35; 6: 2-5).

Each religious person, therefore, has to take an active part in helping others build a responsible community with ethos of the kingdom of God; fully cognizant that religious life is voluntary and not a requirement for salvation, as God chooses his own from the seminary/convent and from ordinary members alike (Otene 1983: 74). Working corporately, and yet with specific areas of attention, is a fact graciously duplicated from the persons of the Trinity, which have specific functions self-allotted to them. There is no duplication of functions, and no 'stand aloofs' in the Triune. In other words, community life

> can be embodied on the personal level in a plurality of lifestyles, both group and individual, which are related to each other as equally valid variations… Just as the corporate mission of the congregation is not necessarily subverted by a plurality of ministries, so its community life is not necessarily threatened by a plurality of dwelling lifestyles (Schneiders 2001: 350).

The major problem today relates to how far religious life should differ from static ancient models, and how the church can rely on new untested models whose outcomes are not yet known; those whose results are still conjecture (Schneiders 2001: 350, 376).

Joining a religious community is as voluntary as being accepted. Those who accept a religious candidate are under no obligation to do so for any observable merit. The individual answers a call, and those who receive the new member are only models in as far as they have gone ahead of the new member, whose sight must be set on the Triune. If one should be connected to individuals, disappointments are bound to

happen, since transfers and configurations of communities are generally not negotiable. In this sense, Religious community is not intentional in any absolute or non-negotiable sense (Schneiders 2001: 285). In other words, “the person who enters a Religious congregation is not simply opting for community life. She is joining a unique form of community that requires a high degree of psycho-sexual integration and maturity if it is to be lived in a healthy, relatively relaxed, and growth-producing way” (Schneiders 2001: 286 – 287).

The community life is meant to establish a covenant community “united through obedience, joined in higher love through the discipline of chastity, dependent more closely on one another through poverty” *(DC Art 1)*. It is this interdependence that builds community life, as it is the safety valve of the taxing mission. The community should always come to the aid of those that have encountered snags during evangelisation. To achieve this “everyone should accept and embrace each other as members of the same body, differing indeed in talent and work, but equal in the bond of charity and of profession” (*DC Art 1).* But since single-sex communities are not the natural environment for growth and fulfilment “only a person truly called to consecrated celibacy, who finds both psychological and spiritual fulfilment in her commitment to Jesus Christ in himself and in his members, is likely to find this one-sex environment a naturally supportive matrix for her own affective development” (Schneiders S. 2001: 286 – 287).The superiors should have great interest to relieve pain, sickness and distress among community members; by making express provisions to counter these well ahead of time. This makes religious communities classy and more secure (Shorter 2001), though the idea here is, if the religious can expressly care for themselves, then they can do the same for the world, though this has proved impractical (Zvobgo 1996). But Mannath, SDB, (2014: 53) still insists: “When we are happy and feel cared for, there is such an extra outburst of energy and a willingness to go the extra mile, and do things for one another without even being asked”. Though the Dominican Constitution stresses that “parents and relatives of the brethren shall be treated with due honour and respect” (*DC Art 1)* as a way of relieving a member of distress, failure to fully address this is often the cause of intense distress in religious communities (Shorter 2001).

The Holy Cross Congregations stress that “the [religious] community is each sister’s home” and the members “share the interests, joys and sorrows of the individual

members" (*HC C*: *86*). This entails that the community members are her adopted relatives, which complicates blood relations, the key to African communities (Vansina 1975: 167). To ease life in the new home the virtues of tolerance, cheerfulness, respect, tact and courtesy are encouraged *(HC C: 88*). The Holy Cross Congregation does not underestimate the hardships of community life, and they state in *H.C. Constitutions Art*. *90*: "We bear hurts and disappointments, arising from our life in common, patiently and calmly and in a spirit of penance and prayer". The value placed on prayer and forbearance in religious communities is invaluable.

Each community has a "leader as representative and spokesperson of the community" (Shorter 2001: 42).Though representing the community to God and the outside community, the leader has a corporate responsibility as a member of a particular community. Shorter is clear on the role of the community leader, in that the "community leader interprets the community consensus and facilitates the fulfilment of its project. The leader identifies with the community, rather than the community with the leader" (Shorter 2001: 43). Community life is bitter where this top-bottom approach is adopted and the group is required to identify with the position of the leader as shall be empirically shown subsequently. That gap between the doctrinal collegial position and praxis is interrogated through fieldwork. The fieldwork should respond to the problems of mismatch between theory and practice, if Mannath (2014:51) is right that "in religious life, we enter into a group consciously, drawn by its ideals and inspirational character, and by what our heart is seeking". Mannath says that each member must place all his/her talents, and products thereof, at the disposal of the whole community, which as we have already seen among the apostles' early communities, has its own shortcomings. Mannath is clear that one does not come to the community to lead, but to offer service. He sees as unfortunate the fact that some members end up being worried about power games, which are not foundational to their calls.

Finally Mannath (2014:54-55) reminds fellow religious members that "the main task of a religious community is to live together in real love and to treat others with genuine love. Make sure it is a family; don't let it become a factory!" A factory has the problem of concentrating on production and commodification, often in contravention of human needs for warmth, love and health. Negating human needs contravenes the religious motto of the 1990s: "community is for mission". This means that

community is only relevant as a mode of evangelisation, which is impossible without loving care for one another. This is bolstered by the fact that “fraternal communion, as such, is already an apostolate; in other words, it contributes directly to the work of evangelisation” (Fraternal life in Community 1994: 45). Fraternal living has to be worked at and members in the community grow in finding ways of creating life-giving communities. Communion in religious life has the beauty of having history behind it, from which those in novitiate can learn from, so that they can recognise the strengths and weaknesses of common life.

Healthy communities can also thrive in an atmosphere of honesty, where the members allow others to know them without fear of being judged or being gossiped about. Honest communities strengthen one’s resolution of living the vows with integrity. Where there is integrity, one is able to remove the mask and recognise a sister and brother in the community and not to search for them outside of the community. In the novitiate, community life is also enhanced by the ability to play games together; a feat which lies at the heart of the African culture (Tempels 1953). When members can play together, they are more likely to be able to give each other quality time that would allow members to remove any masks they might be hiding behind. The ability to be real with each other would also help each member to readily help the other knowing that their life is supported by their sharing the same purpose of life. Our own African understanding recognises that one is a person because of the others. The Shonas of Zimbabwe have a saying that goes; “One man cannot surround the anthill”. It implies how a farmer would seek the help of others to level the anthill, because a mammoth task needs the help of others. Community life helps to attract others to come for the witness of their love and novices have to be aware that life in community is permanent and no one should seek to live alone. The work needs toughness though some miss the point by judging the community success by the “comfort of living conditions, the support structures for greater personal freedom and a climate where everybody was [is] nice to everybody else, no matter how serious the issues we need to confront” (O’Murchu 2018: 180). Finally O’Murchu summarises the essential qualities of a thriving religious community as including: embracing gratitude, keeping promises, living truthfully and practising hospitality, “where all are welcome and particularly those who feel alienated or estranged because of painful life experiences” (O’Murchu 2018: 182).

2.5.5 Prayer life

The Jesuit Institute South Africa defines prayer as “a time when one is more than ordinarily open to God” (Unpublished notes 2015). It is the glue that makes possible the living of the vows and fluency in missionary work. It is imperative that each candidate who wants to enter religious life is taught prayer from the beginning, because novitiate builds on the prayer life that the family and the Christian community modelled for the future candidates for religious life. Novitiate is a time of being set apart to create an environment of union with God; therefore, it is in prayer that the novice’s relationship with God will develop.

Article 80 of Holy Cross Constitutions of 1989 says; “Prayer requires an atmosphere of quiet and silence. In this interior recollection we learn to see people and things in the light of God. We seek this silence for ourselves and make it possible for others”. This shows that one has to decide to pray and to cultivate an attitude of loving that quiet and recollected space, coveted by all in need of prayer. More importantly is the stress on reciprocity and cordiality within the community of God as enshrined in the statement: “We seek this silence for ourselves and make it possible for others” (HCC Art. 80). In the Constitutions of the Dominicans Art. 1, there is an affirmation of the need to practice “contemplation of divine things and intimate conversation and friendship with God”. It is very clear from the written guidance of each Order that prayer is at the centre of all the religious men and women and not only for the novices.

Prayer has also a communal dimension with respect to specific Prayers of the Church (Divine Office), going for Mass, having Bible sharing, praying the rosary and other devotions such as novenas (long devotional prayers especially for the intersession of saints). These are encouraged for the purposes of divine and communal bonding, but in either of the Constitutions of the two Orders, there is an appeal to the members to set aside at least thirty minutes of meditation and silent personal prayer daily (DC 66: 17 and HC C 74: 77). This type of prayer strengthens one’s bonds with God and it brings about better focus in response to God’s will.

Included under prayer are the annual retreats that can be preached or directed. Retreats are usually in these two forms. Directed retreat is a time when one prays with scripture for four hours daily and then goes to discuss the fruits of prayer with

the retreat director. The preached retreat has two conferences a day and then the individual goes to pray alone. All retreats are silent except the periods of discussing with the director or attending conference. Going away for a retreat helps with clearing space for God and checking oneself how one's relationship with God has developed for the good or the opposite.

While it is very important to emphasise the importance of prayer because lack of faithfulness to prayer can lead one to lose her/his vocation, the period of the novitiate has to teach prayer practically. To create an atmosphere of openness to God in an extraordinary way and for one to experience the closeness of God, effort has to be made towards preparation for prayer and the discipline of being at prayer. The novices are often taught to prepare for their prayer by reading the text they shall use the night before. Many forms of prayer (such as meditation, Gospel contemplation, *lectio divina* or Holy Reading and praying with art or clay) can be used but it is important to expose the novices to those many forms so that they are able to use the one that agrees with them best. Contexts may render one form less meaningful, leaving the novice with chances for trying other forms of prayer.

It is important that an environment where prayer is going to happen is consciously prepared so that distractions can be minimised. As one settles to pray whether walking or sitting, it is important to have sometime of being aware of God who invites one into solitude. This can be done by being aware of God's presence and how God looks at one as the one praying surrenders to God. After being aware of God's presence, the novice can now move on to ask God for the grace they desire. The asking of the grace is a way of allowing oneself to be vulnerable before God, knowing that all we have comes from God. It also helps to build trust within one's relationship with God. The grace to be asked touches one's deepest desires before God. It is an important tool of awareness that one can be open to God about their deepest desires.

When the novices have expressed their desire or grace to God, they can now read the scripture they prepared the night before and if praying with a picture, they can pick it and if it should be an activity of using clay they might want to hold it as they picture what God would like them to create. The text can be read slowly and it can also be repeated as long as one needs to. The one praying might want to close their

eyes when they have understood the text so as to enter into a listening mode to God who speaks to them. Meditation and contemplation is done in silence with the attitude of listening to what God might be saying through the text.

At the end of the meditation or contemplation, one is invited to have a heart to heart conversation with God, where the one praying responds to what God has been saying and also to listen to God responding to one's response. There is always a need to take a few minutes of thanking God for what was going on in prayer before closing it. The prayer session can be concluded with praying "Our Father". At the end of each prayer, the novices are usually encouraged to write down what went on during prayer. This can be done in their journal even through drawings. This type of prayer would help them to grow in union with God and that when they are at the Eucharistic celebration or community prayers, their friendship with God would find meaning.

2.6 Ministry and mission

According to Schneiders (2013: 486) "ministry is the free proclaiming, by word and by work, of the good news of the reign of God". To live the ministry and mission of God is "to live with the awareness that I am on this earth to do God's work, and to commit myself to do it with a willing heart. And in trying sincerely to do God's task, I will find fulfilment and peace" (Mannath 2014: 57). The meaning of the word "mission" as it is used in the Catholic Church is derived from the Latin word "missus", denoting "sent" (Mannath 2014: 56). The Church has always taught that Jesus was sent by God the Father for one particular reason, *missio Dei* (mission of God). The religious endeavour to enlarge the 'reign of God' inaugurated by Jesus, for the glory of both human and non-human inhabitants of the world is executed in line with the mission of God (Whitehead and Whitehead 2000: 193). It is part of a global enterprise, and even as one operates in a particular limited environment, the awareness of the broad mission is always present. Everyone is seen as part of this grandiose outgoing mission to the entire world, for the flourishing of all creation in wholeness, peace and tranquillity. From the moment of our birth, we too are sent by our Creator to live for what we were brought into the world. That sending has been done and we gradually discover our purpose of existence as we become more and more aware of our gifts and abilities (Matthew 28: 19-20). As the Gospel is

proclaimed in the Church and the individual is touched by the socio-economic realities and destitution among the people, there could be feelings to respond to them and that would be one way of experiencing the call to minister to God's people. Mission is generally viewed as something larger than life, or a kind of sacrifice on the part of those who respond to the call of God to do his work, in order to assist in the unity of all creation with God.

Each religious congregation that is involved in the vocation of pastoral needs, has to be clear about its reason for existence. The Order of Preachers is explicit that St. Dominic founded them for the "preaching and the salvation of souls" (DC 1: II), and the Holy Cross Sisters were founded in response to "educational, religious and social needs, to help people and to show them new directions" (HC C: 31). The Holy Cross Sisters continue to minister in areas of teaching, pastoral care, nursing, social work and other areas they feel needed. They find themselves responding to the call to show people the new directions by bringing meaning in their situations through the enhancement of the awareness of God among them. They help people to go beyond theory, to use their hands to grow their own food, and to transform their environment by caring for it (*HC C Art 119)*. They endeavour to create a more humane world.

The religious must be able to adjust to people and situations and to collaborate with them and among themselves for the purposes of getting the mission done. Collaborative ministry is a pristine value adopted and adapted from the missionary apostles like Peter (Acts 8: 14-16) and Paul (Acts 18:1-3; Galatians 2: 12). In the various world contexts, "a religious Order should clarify repeatedly what its mission is, where it is still relevant" and whether members can still own it (Mannath, 2014: 58). Contextual studies are particularly important for international religious congregations who need to attain "knowledge and appreciation of other modes of thought, respect for the value criteria of other people, for their religion, culture and manner of life" (HC C Art. 120).The idea is, despite the changing world, the religious must stand on Christian principles in their professional work, human relationships and public life (HC C Art. 117), and "it is the duty of the individual sister and of the superiors to be concerned about professional updating" (HC C Art 128). During the novitiate period, the Dominicans as well as the Holy Cross sisters insert the novices in communities to experience and observe their ministries and apostolate. It is part of

the Dominican way of life that the friars commit themselves to a life of study that unites them with God and making God known to others. The Holy Cross sisters' commitment to educate the whole person is seen in their passion for the suffering (the poor, the sick and people on the periphery of society) and the alleviation of both social ills and material poverty. Novices are given an exposure period where they can participate in the ministries of the Congregation so that their discernment of whether to pursue religious life or not, can be informed by real life experiences

The placement into ministry (different work responsibilities) also helps the novice to develop compassion and mercy in dealing with pastoral issues. They grow in being available to the needy in our world and in showing genuine love to others without always being concerned with personal needs. Because novitiate tends to be self-reflective, experiences outside the novitiate would be an opportunity to heal the tendency to be selfish and then help the novice to be other centred. In times of hardships the novices are comforted by the fact that Jesus' ministry embraced not only the law-abiding but the "sinners, the clean and the unclean, those who followed him and those who murdered him, Jews and Gentiles, women and men, the poor and the rich, humans whose hearts he calmed and nature whose storms he calmed, so Christian ministry extends to every creature" (Whitehead and Whitehead 2000: 193). When beset by the numerous problems, discernment on how best to satisfy all without discrimination becomes very important.

Learning from the example of the brothers/sisters on their ability to integrate prayer life, vowed life and ministry, will help the novice to find ways of coping with tensions, joys and sorrows that arise in ministry. The novice practices being in union with the Gospel, the leadership and the community of the faithful (Whitehead and Whitehead 2000: 193). The senior members of the Order where the novice is sent have to be clear about their identity, mission and joy in living community life. When the community works together, prays together and discusses its way of life, it is a great help in the discernment of the vocation of a novice. The novice would be able to identify when s/he sees that those who are already professed are united and that they do not speak against each other. It is also important that a novice sees how they resolve their conflicts without allowing the tension to spill out to the people not part of the community.

In the novitiate, the novices embrace the wider mission of the Order so that they can find ways of uniting their God-given talents with the overall mission of the bigger group. Those particular talents are translated into different ministries and service gifts through pastoral care, teaching, social work, radio and spiritual direction. The formation of the novice should not be the sole work of the director but an interest of all the members who lead by example as they genuinely strive to respond to the God who called them and whom they witness to by their lives in a prophetic way. The whole community of the religious should help bring their vision in line with the rest of the baptised to whom they will in turn minister (Schneiders 2013: 141). This helps them appreciate that their call and mission are specifically meant to enhance the mission of the church to which all the baptised belong. This is despite the fact that the immediate "sending agency" for the Religious is the Order rather than the ecclesiastical authorities, and the "determining criterion of particular ministries is the charism of the Congregation" (Schneiders 2013: 143). The novices must be equipped with the capacity to renew their call when it grows cold, through a contemplative renewal of the Gospel vision that gave rise to Religious life in the first place; the indomitable spirit of responding whole-heartedly to the post-resurrection experiences. It was that spirit which gave rise to the urgent and spontaneous need to share experiences pertaining to the risen Christ (Schneiders S. 2013: 144).

A well-adapted pastoral reflection model called "theological reflection in ministry" (Whitehead and Whitehead 1995), can help the novice make a reflective journey into the history of the church and the particular religious Order to select the best leads for revamping their collapsing vigour. Through completive suspension of judgement they are able to discern through personal experiences, Christian and cultural traditions, for the enrichment of their calls. Whatever each individual discerns in the period of lone discernment, must then be brought to the whole group for robust discussion and refinement through inter-personal clarifications. No one should grow cold feet with regards sharing their experiences, because that has a danger of keeping residual contradictory directions with regards those collectively reached by the group. In other words, everyone must have the courage to have their positions collectively challenged before refinement for group implementation. Positions collectively reached have the efficacy of enlisting everyone for the envisaged pastoral response, the very purpose for the discussions and the various insights. Once implementation

has started, after all the planning has been completed, then evaluation mechanisms must be in place for the objective assessment on what has been accomplished. Assessment allows for modifications in action, in order to achieve the best objective for the whole group (Whitehead and Whitehead 1995: 13).The researcher's experience of having worked in formation found this process helping the participants to be interested in the ministry and the community members have often appreciated that reflection, as it gave them the scope of their ministry they might not have thoroughly looked at. This is premised on the fact that the goal for Christian ministry is the formation of reflective communities alive to the presence of God (Whitehead and Whitehead 1995: 17).

2.7 Summary

Chapter two has captured the essence of the theory of religious life with some practical realities regarding the recorded movements of the first pioneers of the Dominican and Holy Cross Orders. A glaring gap has emerged from the way the two religious Orders tried to universalise European norms, resulting in the alienation of Africans from their operational context. This has been exacerbated by the struggle of the two Orders to fit within the demands of the political situation that was segregating between the white and black people. The core elements of religious life namely vows, prayer life, community life, mission and ministry were thoroughly dealt in order to expose the desired ideal, which falls far short of the contextual requirements, leading the religious to struggle with their contextual operations. Attempts have been made to equip the novices with discernment techniques that can help them combine the pristine values of the post-resurrection communities and contextual realities of the modern praxis. This was meant to bring the founding religious values in line with current needs for enhanced praxes, cognizant of the fruits of the reforming Second Vatican Council, which put to rest the exclusive model: "outside the church no salvation at all" (Knitter 1985: 122). Chapter three, deals with the practical experiences of the religious in varying levels of profession and authority.

CHAPTER 3

EXPERIENCES OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN TEMPORARY VOWS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the practical experiences of brothers and sisters in temporary vows (post novitiate), novitiate directors/directresses and Provincial leaders for both Dominicans and Holy Cross Sisters. This is in line with the phenomenological approach as presented by Kristensen W. B. (as cited in Bettis 1969: 49), who asserts that anyone who wants to capture the precise experiences of any believers, that person must rely on the confessions of those believers. In that light the end result must be in conformity with the understanding of the pertinent believers. This research which looks for the possible gap between theoretical instruction and the requirements of missionary praxis, turns to the Dominican brothers and Holy Cross sisters who have just graduated from novitiate for the possible pointers to the sought for gap. Of interest is the fact that the interviewees are products of the various cultural milieus in Southern Africa, who have as a group or severally, been introduced to the 'Universalist norms' of novitiate deliberately divorced from cultural contexts (cf. Kiaziku 2007). Below are their responses to what they see as problems of integrating into one homogenous group of a specific Order, as well as suggestions for bridging theory and praxis. These results are the outcomes of the questionnaires and the interviews administered to them as a research package meant to unlock the causes and fillers of the gap. After data transcription, what follows are the various analyses, made tenable by the careful transcription necessary for all serious researches (Osmer 2008: 55). Note that pseudonyms have been preferred for those in temporary vows only, because it was envisaged that it might free them to provide more spontaneous answers, without fear of any subsequent victimisation. Proper or real names have been used for those in administration, because no amount of circumvention would prevent those familiar with the two Orders from recognising them. In any case no one was in a position to victimise them, since they were the ones wielding the necessary disciplinary and expulsion powers. In any case, their answers were based on officialised information considered free from personal reduction. The chapter opens with the juxtaposition of the novitiate theoretical instruction with the experiences of field or missionary work.

3.2 Bridging Novitiate learning with the experiential Religious living

Brothers and sisters in temporary vows discovered huge gaps between the intensely prayerful novitiate and the more practical post novitiate life. Sr. Gwen, four years into post novitiate, cited ‘solitude’ and work as distinguishing novitiate from life in the community and ministry. The ‘solitude’ (secluded/ private moment during novitiate) was punctuated by lone prayers as tests for character, as opposed to life in the community which concentrated on work, with prescribed early morning prayers. She noted that “there is a big difference between the community requirement for getting up early to pray as a community ahead of work, and the novitiate offer for a full day of prayer with no work every week. The change was so abrupt. In fact there should be a process of weaning graduates from the novitiate, in preparation for missionary work” (07-10-2016). The universalistic training, originating in a European *Sitz im Leben* divorced from the African context, which she had received, had not sufficiently prepared her for the contextual operations of mission in an African milieu. She had to go back to her novitiate notes to mitigate the sudden strain caused by the inadvertent descent from novitiate, which for her was a “supermodel of religious life”, into pastoral work, which was like coming to reality after a fantastic dream. She yearned for the phantoms and fantasies of novitiate, which now receded into the distant background like lullabies of childhood, with no chance of re-living the childhood. The church and the religious Order were convinced that she had outlived the days of her childhood (novitiate), and was mature and ready for the rude awakening of adult life. She was well aware of the African understanding that “a steer/heifer has come of age and therefore must browse on its own without breastfeeding, otherwise it risked starvation; and that the ox that stubbornly moved behind the rest risked whipping.” Now the ‘whips’ of religious life are reposed in the management, which is always ready for responding to the grey areas of continuous formation. She was aware of several hearings and dismissals in her own time in the Order, which made her tremble even more.

Even then, the psychological tremors caused by fear of dismissal, made adjusting to community life even more difficult, because she continued to feel as if she had to just let go of the only thing she knew and valued about religious life (novitiate life). She had replaced it with a ‘milestone’ in the form of the demanding activities and requirements of community life. Sr. Gwen’s community living experience has also

taught her that there is no one who is there to assist the new sister when she errs, which breeds a “new kind of loneliness even in the midst of company.” Such a kind of loneliness cuts much deeper than the ordinary loneliness of physical solitude. In the novitiate companions and formators would always courteously bring one to the awareness of their mistakes, which improved confidence and group solidarity. But in her community, as the only junior sister she had to grope in the dark, with sudden spasmodic pronouncements against what she had done in earnest and in good faith as being right, which increased her chances for making more inadvertent mistakes. Generation gap in the community made the situation worse compared to novitiate where the majority of the candidates were her peers. The African cultural context meant that she had to maintain her distance, by avoiding getting too close to her superiors in whose hands her fate lay, since she was yet to pronounce her final vows.

Br. Elson (interview: 29-10-2016) shared the sentiments of Sr. Gwen with regard to viewing the novitiate as a supermodel type of life; always beckoning his insatiable nostalgia for re-living it. He said that of all the communities that he had lived in, novitiate was outstanding as “a community with a different structure, gathering members together in a sense of unity, obedience, discipline and smooth living of vows” (interview: 29-10-2016). Post-novitiate on the other hand was a shocker, and without the necessary absorbing facilities to capacitate the new members.

Highlighting the differences of the novitiate and community life, Sr. Portia (four years into post novitiate) experienced the gap between the treatment of the sisters in temporary vows and those who are fully professed. She recognised that those in temporary vows were expected to live simple lives, yet in the same community the senior sisters bought expensive clothing and shoes. She had no problem with living that simple life in the novitiate, but then when her superiors were not abiding by the vow of poverty she wondered why she was an exception. She felt the “deep bites of the sudden appearance of segregation and the disappearance of uniformity and loving sameness” (date). Life in communities left brothers and sisters in temporary vows with no space to practice what they had learnt in novitiate, because there was no longer tolerance towards the ‘use of kid gloves’. Community life emphasised differences dependent on levels in the Orders and the new brother or sister had to rise to the occasion in order to be allowed to cross the gulf that separated the fully

professed from those still looking forward to finding the ford into new life as fully professed members of the Apostolic Congregation.

Sr. Agnella (three year of post novitiate) seems to be the odd one out, as she portrayed a smooth continuum from novitiate to post-novitiate. Responding to the question: What do you still value from what you learnt in the novitiate? She demonstrated no disjuncture between novitiate valuables and her experiences in community living. For example, she found her novitiate belief that she was called by God, giving her freedom to live community life with joy and freedom. She was not affected by community relations *per se*, for she had always known that human character is fickle, though God was always constant. He beckoned those he loved despite context, and she was content that no matter what her community did she would always survive under the cover of the loving God, who had called her for the special religious ministry. Her stance was galvanised by faith in the face of all travails.

Except for Sr. Caster who valued the inter-congregational meetings and Br. Edias who valued principles of human development taught in novitiate, the rest valued prayer, vows and unity, all of which resulted in serious disjuncture in community life. Inter-congregational meeting were occasional exposures to other Orders; where at least two Orders participated in directed or preached retreats with their formators. These were sources of inter-congregational exchanges that enriched those still in novitiate. That wider scope was a source of inspiration for Sr. Caster, who came to grips with the fact that problems were not peculiar to the Holy Cross sisters, but that every congregation was beset by its own problems. Br. Edias was clear that principles of human development inevitably included ‘sweating’ as a virtue, and it was therefore a misnomer to be puzzled by community hurdles which stood on the path of development. Though such problems could be mitigated, they could neither be eliminated nor avoided. Sr. Virginia was of a like mind. She added that her vowed life was nourished by what they were taught that vows were not there to be kept safe but to be lived and practised. There was no possibility of practising what had been internalised with absolutely no chances of stumbling.

Sisters Juliet and Caster seemed to have found their own “art of steering that has helped them to navigate” (Osmer 2000: 88) through their delicate situations as new

religious sisters. One learnt from her formator to light the candle when having a special intention to pray and she has experienced it being very effective when petitioning on behalf of others. She has grasped the essence of imagery, and can easily see the burning candle physically burning away darkness and replacing it with light. She notes that of “critical importance is that the candle burns away to give people light by diminishing itself. Likewise, I am prepared to be a punching bag if that should bring the glory to God’s creation. The lesson from the candle ignites the code of my call”. The other one (Sr. Caster) has valued the wisdom of the past and the knowledge of founding events in other Congregations. She said that the knowledge about the founders of the Holy Cross sisters and those of other Sisters and Brothers has helped her to learn from them and to value their own perseverance amidst challenges and difficulties of their time. The Holy Cross sisters suffered the brunt of fighting for women and girls, in a society which relegated them for peripheral considerations. It was not easy to fight for female rights in the 19th century Switzerland, which denied them sufficient social welfare to scaffold them into public life. But the sisters risked their dignity to dignify the relegated groups living at the periphery of society. The Dominican friars fought against heresy, even as the situation appeared ready to overwhelm and engulf them. This gives her hope to live up to the vision of the founders in the world of today despite a multiplicity of challenges.

Sr. Noxolo was deployed to do her early ministry in an Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre, at the core of the Holy Cross foundation in Europe. For Sr. Noxolo (30-09-2019), the values of prayer, vows and unity have helped her to be of service to the needy and the children at the early childhood development centre she was then working at. Her mates had their relations strained by gossip to the extent that they could not be of assistance to each other in times of need, especial if that need warranted absence from work. None of them was prepared to minister to the other’s class in her absence, but she rose to the task. She considered herself as making a difference in the manner she took up her duties and going an extra mile for the other teachers when they would be absent. Her approach to service as well as her readiness to take care of at least sixty five to seventy children alone gave her joy because she was aware that other teachers would complain when left with that responsibility. Mannath supports this type of positive attitude to religious life when he

says: “Like marriage or parenting, celibacy is best learnt from those who live it lovingly and joyfully” (2014: 34). Her hands-on approach to work gave her great relief and a sense of contentment that her mates lacked in their approach to ministry and mission.

Responses to questions 2, 3 and 4, on community integration unearthed a lot of hurdles for the younger religious in temporary vows, but Richard Rohr (www.cac.org/19.06.2015) is unperturbed by such difficulties, for he says; “It is in doing it wrong, being rejected, and experiencing pain that we are led to a total reliance upon God”. This is in line with the theodicy advanced by Tilley who says:

> The reality of suffering, temptation and sin are necessary for humans to develop into people worthy to share life with God. If no evils challenge people to overcome them, no one could develop sufficient character to be with God. If no evils veiled the irresistible beauty of God’s countenance, no one could freely choose to love God. Each person’s life is a journey, which should develop a heightened capacity to know and love God (1989: 361).

The dejection and challenges that the post novitiate religious sisters and friars are encountering are mainly because of the expectations that are either external or internal. At least three of them felt the pressure of expectations coming from the senior sisters who wanted the younger generation to give more because the elder sisters thought that the young still had energy for self-giving. Quite often the senior sisters had contradictory expectations which puzzled the new comers on which instruction to follow; because by preferring one the others took grudges leaving the new sisters and friars between hard rocks and hard places. This frustrated younger ones pushing them from relying on God to relying on their potentials for work production, which is a misnomer in religious life. Those with the dexterity for delicate balancing were praised, while the slow ones were chided, which made them morose and melancholic. This was despite the fact that showing any kind of non-fraternal attitude was very risky.

It was also interesting how uniformity of dress was a challenge to Sr. Gwen, who saw it as dull, static and anachronistic. She said she wished she would come out of her room with a different colour of a dress one day; with all the attraction it would

make on a good, with all the admiration from her colleagues. Though this is quite understandable that at her age that she should want to show her own taste of what she puts on, that would create more horror than awe. This also shows the inadequacies of novitiate which teaches the essence of uniformity as nobility, but allows novices to graduate before they have comprehended the noble concept. That allowed Sr. Gwen to graduate with blared concepts about autonomy which she mistook for independence; and yet autonomy is quite cognizant of conformity served by similar outfits for inmates.

Sr. Gwen was intrigued by the breach of the younger sisters' right to information. She felt left out when a mishap occurred to one of the sisters, details of which remained the privy of the seniors. She was hurt because constitution of the Holy Cross Order says that "the community is each sister's home" (HC C. 86). Instead of being at home with her sisters in a time of need, she stood alone, confused, whilst the senior sisters talked among themselves and in the process healing their inner world. She was not prepared for such differentiating dissemination of information, with dire consequences on the segregated. Speaking to similar situations Chittister (1995: 160) recommends that communities have to present Religious life as a "crosscurrent in time, showing a way where there is no way for those who, on their own, attempt the same intensely spiritual path with little to guide them". Sr. Gwen certainly needed further guidance to be able to surmount the hurdles in her ministry.

For Sr. Agnella, it was difficult to come to terms with both other religious and the laity who did not accept her lifestyle, as a new religious sister. She was saddened by the demands of the laity who approached her at awkward times when she should be going for community prayers, making demands contrary to her vows and sardonic about her community obligations. They ignored her calls for departure, as they kept telling her their stories and delaying her. She concluded that people had not yet understood the religious' way of life. She also experienced tension caused by expectations, particularly with respect to gender disparity. She felt powerless and frustrated by the attention given to traditional chiefs during ceremonies, which takes attention away from the ceremony. She wondered how inculturation should go, since chiefs received a lot of attention during Christian ceremonies, but Christian received no attention during traditional ceremonies. Shorter Aylward (1999: 22) equally

believes that there are cases when authorities in Africa overstep their boundaries. As a young religious who has studied the brotherhood and sisterhood of all people in the novitiate, Sr. Agnella is genuinely troubled by the fact that she has to live with the reality that goes against her Christian and religious values. She mentioned that even at Church events, if the chiefs arrive, the protocol takes away the honour that has to go to God. She refused to be comforted by the theology of Karl Rahner, who envisaged the presence of God prior to Christian ceremonies. In other words, the Christian ceremonies do not introduce God, but acknowledge and praise God already home to the indigenous people.

Sr. Agnella also felt challenged to live the vow of poverty in a radical way by creating oneness with the people she ministered to. She said, “The people are very poor” and she had sensed Jesus calling her “not to be different from the people she was sent to minister to” (Interview: 29-09-2016). She noted that the call to be radical in her style of living poverty was influenced by the writings of Shorter Aylward who encouraged living in conformity with the pastoral community (2001: 32). She found it much easier to live the vow of poverty in the novitiate, because then, the possessions (for example dresses) were specified per type and fulfilment was clinical. While the vow was retained, the specifications were omitted in post novitiate, which made self-evaluation cumbersome. With respect to celibacy, she found creating the balance by reaching out to all in an equal way more fulfilling than maintaining close relations with particular individuals showing special interest in her. That, however, created a tassel for those intending to attract her attention.

Sr. Virginia, Br. Elson and Br. Edias had very similar challenges which had to do with living with people of different backgrounds, cultures and even different ideas and opinions. These differences manifested themselves both in their houses as well as in ministry, where they tried to reach out to everyone, with quite acute challenges. The brothers tended to withdraw when they could not cope with a colleague that was difficult, but Sr. Virginia was not only frustrated by human beings around her. She also felt confined even by the small praying space in the house, which hugely contrasted with the novitiate space for prayer. The situation of ministry in the parish and the school worsened the situation for Sr. Virginia who stood firmly for the rights of the children. She was astounded when some crèche officials wanted to embezzle

money for the children. Such an act frustrated her conception of adults in the parish and school, as *in loco parentis,* which naturally meant that they should be good to the children. The perception of holistic goodness prepared in the novitiate house was not mirrored by reality, and adjustment to the realities was a mammoth task because novitiate had taught them to expect nothing but the goodness of the people of God. She was therefore prepared to receive the backlash as long as the children got the best out of their funds, paid by struggling parents living from hands to mouth.

For Br. Elson, the reality of not being able to help his elderly parents as in pre-novitiate period when he had a job was making it very difficult for him to remain focused. This meant that novitiate had not done enough to re-direct his focus toward mission, for he remained stuck with problems of *coban* – giving to God what should be due to his parents (Mark 7: 11-13). Worse still, his post-novitiate study of philosophy was also taking away his interest in prayer that he had acquired in the novitiate. He was making effort but the essence of prayer was lessening. The tales of poverty from his country of birth, Zimbabwe, were putting a strain on him and he was considering taking sometime out to help his parents. There was very little integration because of the Zimbabwe economic situation as well as the studies that would question the existence of God. His point was "is there an all-powerful, Omni-benevolent God in all the problems besetting my family and country" (cf Stackhouse 1998: 11; Davies, 1993: 32; Peterson 1998: 8). His insatiable intellectual questioning continued to grope in the dark, without producing any satisfactory answers for his call vis-à-vis home situation. How could the God who had called him for evangelisation expose the family he had left behind, ostensibly in the hands of an all-providing benevolent God?

Br. Edias experienced study as a spiritual exercise because it helped him to be focused, even after he had shared his challenges of living poverty and celibacy as a first born in his family whose expectations are to provide for the younger siblings and to provide a grandchild for the family. It is interesting that the Dominican Constitutions talk about how St. Dominic saw study as "decreed to be part of the liberation of humanity" (DC 76: 20), and the origin of that study being God. It is clear that Edias had begun to embrace the spirituality of the Dominican Order at the time of this interview, which Br Elson had failed to comprehend due to the same family

expectations faced by brother Edias. Br. Edias also saw it necessary to strike a balance amongst study, community life, apostolate and ministry so as not to idolise one of these important aspects. It was also important for Edias to manage his time so that none of his duties suffered when others got more commitment from him. The meticulous schedule to keep all the aspects in balance kept him occupied with the result that he experienced no regrets for having left novitiate.

Br. Edias, had done journalism whose sifting quality gave him a continuous urge for learning and discovering more. Journalism by its nature was more professional in its approach, always thriving on being informative, after getting to the news first and making ground-breaking revelations. He was quite motivational to his 'flock' as university student chaplain; which is in line with the findings of Osmer who notes that those seeking knowledge need to be ministered by people "for whom the love of God and the desire to learn go hand in hand" (2008: 82). He handed his flock the same truth-seeking instinct, which made him quite popular and invaluable to the learners. The drive towards study that made him useful to the students had been interiorised as part of the novitiate spiritual exercises. He had also mastered the delicate intricacies of liturgical amplification. His love for liturgy and worship which brought enthusiasm among his community members during novitiate, also enthused his university flock to which he ministered after novitiate. His motivational capacity was augmented by his ability to integrate study with work. He had an excellent skill for making rosaries (fifty three beaded religious artefacts with crucifixes used in repetitive prayer by Catholics). That skill did not only keep him busy, but also took his prime time, evading the temptations of idleness. It also gave him sponsorship for ministry, as the faithful bought the rosaries from him at factory prices, which was definitely affordable for them, while making him the preferred market, which enabled him to get the much needed hard currency. As the rosaries are needed as part of liturgy, it also enhanced his liturgical control.

On the other hand, Sr. Portia struggled to embrace the vow of poverty, which for her was insensitivity to the material needs of her parents, which left her hooked to the problems of *coban* like brother Elson. While the vow of poverty expected her to share her allowances with her convent inmates, this compounded her guilty conscience, because she would rather share such allowances with her parents

languishing in poverty rather than her well off fellow sisters (Shorter 2001). She felt the pinch of the economic situation of Zimbabwe, which dehumanised her parents just as in the case of Br. Elson. Her family members made no significant progress in education, which severely affected her when others shared about how their families were progressing in the area of education. With respect to the dilemma of caring for one's parents and being faithful to the traditional vow of poverty (sharing), Kiaziku suggested that God would not go against Himself. Thus he writes; "The God who calls us to love our parents with great affection is the same God who demands that we prefer him to them" (2007: 135). That God is the source of both commands, is the source of the confusion which is both disheartening and sickening for Sr. Portia. When she entered novitiate, she had seen a social worker sister doing charity to the underprivileged, who should include her parents, but when she passed novitiate that programme had also disappeared. She got frustrated that current programmes on a smaller scale catered for those in the parish and on the street. When she asked for help from the same sisters who catered for those groups, in respect to the problems faced by her parents, such assistance was denied. Worse still at the university where she was studying, fellow students expected stationery handouts from her, while the Holy Cross Congregation stressed frugality and guarding against loss of congregation property. She could not convince the faithful that the same sisters who haphazardly showered assistance on the streets, with no social work expertise could not afford them paltry gifts of stationery. Instead of believing her they labelled her stingy and non-representative, which irked her even more.

Generally, the sisters and brothers in temporary vows found the vows of poverty and obedience being their greatest challenges. The vow of celibacy seems to be liveable for most of them, while the other two vows seem to touch the deep area of doing one's will, being independent and the disposal of goods. Those who are remaining steadfast in their call are finding consolation in prayer and going for spiritual direction, otherwise they would not make it.

3.3 Confronting Expectations

Brothers and sisters in temporary vows clearly experienced serious challenges, resulting from both the short comings of novitiate and limited experience, which frustrated their expectations of life in the community and ministry. Referring to the

interpretive task of sagely wisdom, Osmer says, “Since wise judgement involves the ability to sift through and evaluate particulars, it requires experience, making it rare among the young” (2008: 85). For example, young Holy Cross sisters in temporary vows experienced frustrations and disappointments because they wanted to change the world and felt that the pace of the projects was slower than they would have wanted them. It was only by finding the correct niche that one felt satisfied; thus Sr. Agnella found fulfilment by creatively involving herself in home-visits and creating an after school study centre for the orphans and vulnerable children. In that regard she concentrated on the core values of the founding of the Holy Cross Order. Whitehead and Whitehead are clear that “though we remain children of God, we must become adults in the Church, balancing a personal calling with our communal responsibilities” (2000: 50). Finding a clear niche for herself Sr. Agnella was, therefore, making a significant move towards maturation. Sr. Bridgette has discovered that her own expectation of growing in a spirit of service was fulfilled as she reached out to the old people with generosity. The old people’s expectations helped her to cultivate the value of patience in herself.

Creativity was however not sufficient to deal with problems in the communities, and Sr. Virginia’s frustrations were made worse by a non-supportive community in which the senior members of the community were always at loggerheads. She could not cope with incessant criticism, with no complements. Novitiate did not prepare brothers and sisters for non-supportive communities, but was rather premised on the receptibility of every brother and sister, and consequently every community. The only solution to Sr. Virginia’s case was transfer, showing that sisterhood is not a panacea to community-hood. Her transfer did not immediately deal with her traumatic disorders; nor did it bring sanity to the community she was leaving. This means novitiate had failed both the junior sisters and their superiors, who equally did not live admirable lives inspired by the spirit of God.

Echoing Sr. Virginia, Sr. Caster expected to live her vowed life with freedom, and had to struggle with the senior sisters who did not like to live up to the standard of religious life she learnt in the novitiate. She described the lack of implementation of the core elements of religious life by some as being unfair to the younger generation; particularly by expecting the young to live frugally while they lived expensively. Jose

Carballo says for formation to draw out the adult in a person has to be demanding from its earliest stages “so that there may be a gradual integration of the Gospel call for radicalism, always with respect for the fundamental freedom of the person” (www.cssr.com/english/who).

In the community of religious sisters, all participants admitted that the differences of race, age, tribe and language were not hindrances to their relationships with others within their communities and outside their communities. Yet one participant said that she could relate freely with members of her own age group and the elderly but she found it difficult to be free with those in the middle ages. This might be because most of those sisters in middle age range were indeed leaders of communities which would most probably take away the joy and freedom of being a religious, which brings in the dichotomy of obedience and freedom. In other words power dynamics hindered rapport between the junior sisters and the managerial middle-aged group, though better rapport was possible with the elderly. This means that those exercising authority did not do it collegially. The other member found it very touching that the senior sisters shared their life experiences with her, which was very humbling.

Similarly, in the community of religious brothers, some experienced difficulties which facilitated the impoverishment of their relationships with fellow community members. For example, Br. Elson said that his religious life had been impoverished because he was naïve about the lives of priests and the religious. He had thought they were perfect and that they never quarrelled among themselves, which made him model his call on such expectations instead of modelling it on the Triune, the owner of mission. He experienced the opposite when he joined the congregation, which made him live with a conflicted mind. Conflict is generally defined as “the emotional and intellectual arousal we feel in the face of discrepancy” (O’Murchu 2000: 178). It is in this light that O’Murchu Diarmuid calls all who live a vowed religious life to embrace “the trust to let new wisdom surface from the margins to which most people have been consigned against their will, and listen to their dreams for an alternative way of being.” (2000: 213). This on-going search for wisdom is often not exploited, leaving seekers stuck with their preconceived ideas, with no idea how to overcome them.

To try and survive the scourge of post novitiate lives, most brothers and sisters have attempted modelling their lives on the experiences of saints. This is clear in the

claims of Sr. Gwen whose role models were Mother Bernarda, foundress of the Holy Cross Sisters, St. Faustina and Mother Theresa whom she claimed to be courageous, prayerful and different. They also inspired her to strive for holiness. Sr. Portia was influenced by Mother Bernarda in the same way. Again she found the people with the backgrounds similar to hers to be her role models since they encouraged her to pray.

3.4 Statistical reference for the questionnaire

Below is a statistical illustration of how the above participants felt or experienced the ten aspects of the religious life as focused by this research (see Appendix A). This part will be divided into three parts, that is to say, the fig 1 illustrates their answers to questions one to four; fig 2 illustrates their responses to questions five to eight and fig 3 illustrates their responses to questions nine and ten. In the illustrations they responded by choosing if they were strongly affected; slightly affected or not affected.

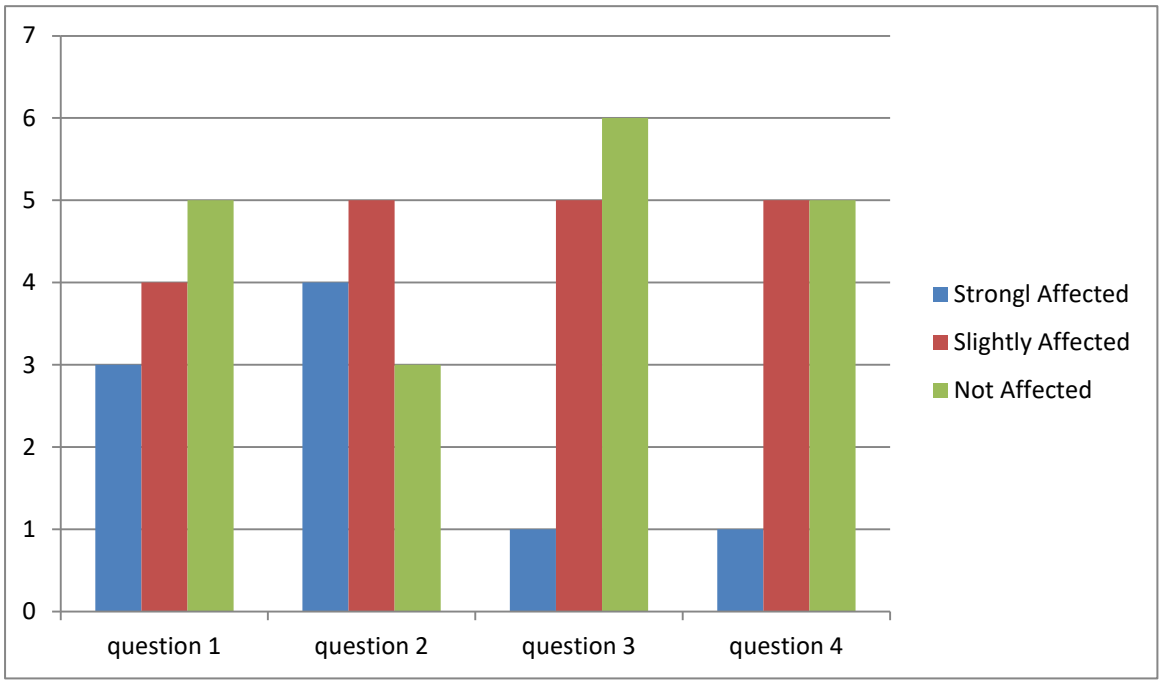

Fig 1: Responses to questions 1-4

Fig 1 above shows that, when the brothers and sisters in temporary vows compared themselves with people of their ages, three participants found it very easy to be in touch with their emotions and thus are strongly affected; four of them are slightly

affected and five of them are not affected at all. Again four respondents are strongly affected; five are slightly affected and three are not affected in relation to how their autonomy is challenged by the vow of obedience. There is also one person who is strongly affected by serving fellow community members. While five of them are slightly affected in serving their community members, six of them are not affected at all. Lastly, one person is strongly affected; five are slightly affected and six were not affected by the need for privacy that can affect their transparency to community.

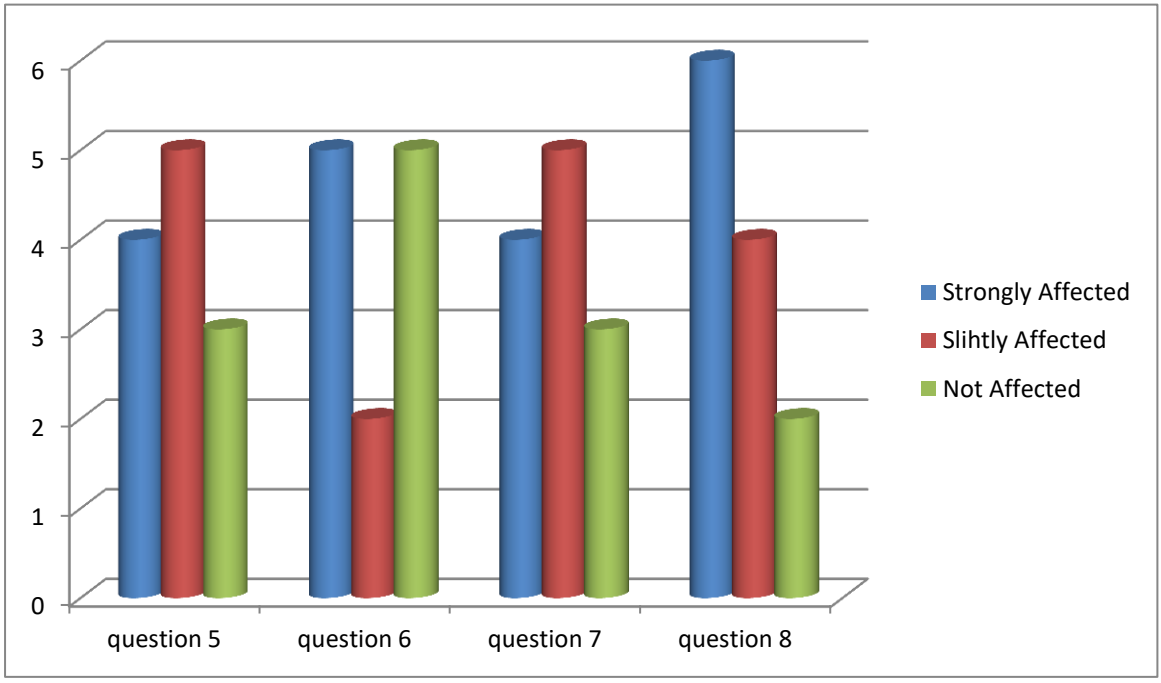

Fig 2: Responses to questions 5-8

Fig 2 above shows that, four people among the participants found it very easy to be in touch with their emotions and to talk about them and thus are strongly affected; five of them are slightly affected and three of them are not affected at all. Again, five people are strongly affected; two are slightly affected and five are not affected when dealing with the humiliations and vulnerability which comes with religious life. There are also six persons who are strongly affected when it comes to sharing of their gifts and talents with their community members. While four of them are slightly affected regarding sharing of gifts and talents, two of them are not affected at all.

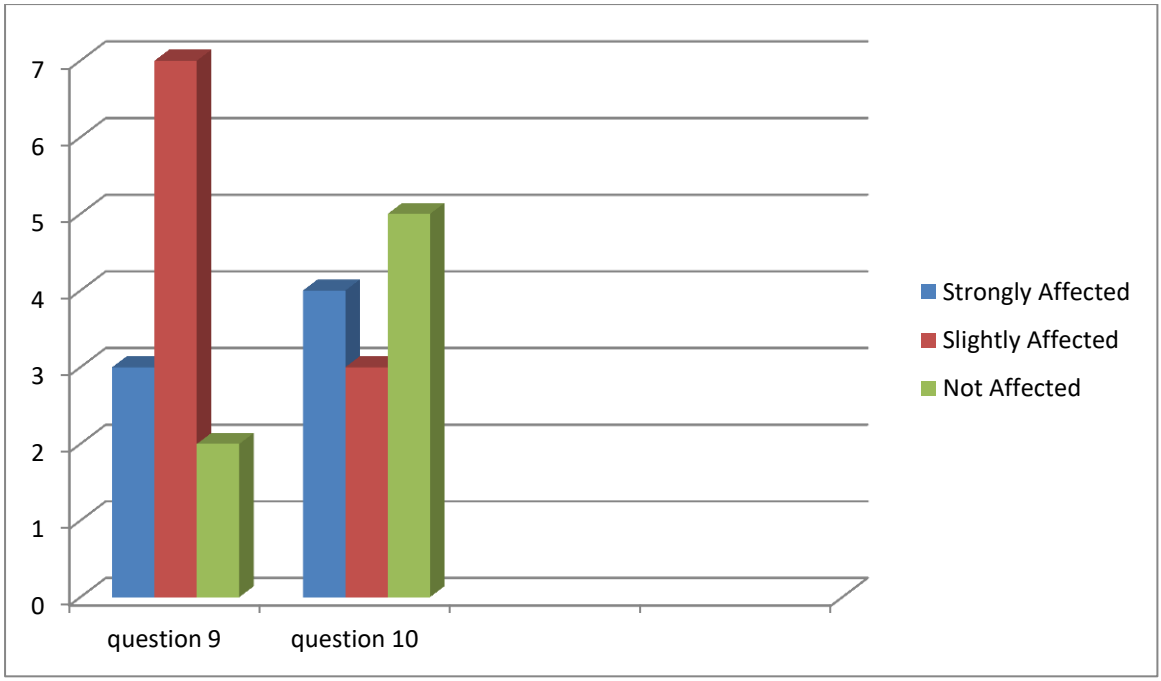

Fig 3: Responses to questions 9 - 10

Fig 3 above shows that three people among the participants have their religious life strongly influenced by those they consider their models; seven of them are slightly affected and two of them are not affected in terms of being influenced by those who are supposed to be their models. Again four people are strongly affected; three are slightly affected and five are not affected in their commitment, when it comes to the way religious life is lived by senior sisters and brothers.

3.5 Experience of Formators

This section of the presentation deals with the experiences of those involved with the training of the novices in other Orders (formators); and in that respect three novitiate mentors presented themselves for the interviews. Their responses go a long way in exposing any gaps in the syllabi needing plugging for the purposes of producing more robust novitiate graduates. Of particular concern is whether the pertinent periods of novitiate training are adequate for the internalisation of content relevant for brotherhood or sisterhood. Moreover, joys and disappointments in religious life; help and support given by leaders; and how the formators would like to see their former novices live after graduation are subject to examination here.

Despite the fact that those interviewed belonged to different congregations including the Holy Family Sisters, Franciscan Missionaries of Mary and Order of Friar Minors (Franciscan Fathers), most of their responses tally. For example, all the participants claimed that the essential elements to be taught to those who are aspiring to take the vows at the end of the novitiate are prayer, the spirituality and the charism of the institute, evangelical counsels, human development, social teaching of the church, and scripture. They identified prayer as essential for deepening inmates' relationship with God and Christ and everything else should follow from prayer. Again, they said that it was important to teach those in novitiate about the spirituality and charism of the institute so that they might know the central tenets of Brotherhood and sisterhood. One of them, Fr. Siphelele, emphasised the centrality of study as a scaffold for the internalisation of the syllabus requirements. Hence commitment and personalising formation becomes another essential element to teach in the novitiate.

Concerning the time spent in the novitiate and the amount of material to be taught, all the interviewees hold that the period that the congregations offer are inadequate for the internalisation of the full package of learning. This is so because some students require thorough catechism depending on the preparation done prior to novitiate; especially now that most catechists are handpicked volunteers with inadequate or no training at all. In the past catechists were salaried specialists who had no other duties apart from the right formation of the catechumen; but their days lapsed simultaneously with the days of the expatriate missionary (white fathers). The expatriates had good sponsorship for catechism from abroad, which made their job relatively ease compared to the diocesan priests who now run most parishes. Now, the problems currently besetting novitiate are exacerbated by the lack of manpower and inadequate resources, which means that more time is needed since a lot has to be done. For instance, Fr. Siphelele was convinced that some of the novices had to be made proper Catholics at the very beginning, before helping them understand how the church and its religious life operates. In this way the gap created by the departure of the salaried catechists is now being felt by the formator, who has to do a double job despite dwindling time. The time factor creates a serious gap in the implementation of the syllabus, which has always been inadequate in itself even in the good days, making the situation much worse. Crush programmes in light of

diminishing time and increasing content, is not health for the production of adequately prepared sisters and friars.

Pertaining to the joys of formators in the novitiate, all the participants rejoice in the blossoming of the spiritual and physical growth in the youngsters taking the relevant paces in the novitiate. Sr. Breda says this growth entails a firmer relationship with God, the originator and owner of mission. She therefore experiences joy in seeing that those novices are enthusiastic for the mission of God, including love for the poor, and having hearts filled with forgiveness. Formators also find joy in the novices who are free to express their emotions in healthy manners, which do not implode creating various resultant difficulties. Fr. Siphelele is particularly impressed with novices showing their zeal for studies, which are crucial for the cultivation of religious knowledge which needs a lot of internalisation. On the other hand, all the contributors encounter great disappointment when their novices are not open, and pretend to be what they are not, or are not serious with prayer. Fr. Siphelele deplores the urge towards mob psychology, which leads novitiates astray, taking away the joys of honest religious life from time to time.

The formators deplored insufficient support from the leadership of the congregations which marred progress in carrying out their responsibilities. They are all agreed that the leadership should provide proper and adequate personnel to run formation, so that people may help each other rather than leaving the responsibility to singular mentors who find it a tall order to accomplish the work with the expected dexterity. Thus Sr. Breda said that living as a team of formators is a requirement, with Sr. Annacletta adding that teamwork could be the best avenue for saturating the students with understanding. But this has remained at the level of wishful thinking with no concrete steps being taken to fulfil these requirements, which is often blamed on both human and capital resources within the pertinent Congregations. These were required in many other places, in furtherance of the overall church mission. This realisation did nothing to deter the formators from eulogising the advantages of teamwork.

The formators cited some advantages of teamwork with respect to people in the same community supporting each other with ideas, lessons, skills and responsibilities. Better achievements were possible where colleagues assessed and

evaluated their work together as a team, because many minds are capable of doing much more than solo work. However, they said that teamwork has its own disadvantages. For instance, Sr. Annacletta, said that if the roles are not clear or if one person crosses the boundaries, there will be clashing in the roles, overlapping and misunderstanding in forming the team. Some people may feel threatened by others resulting in hatred and jealous. Fr. Siphelele also mentioned that since people do not see things in the same way there will be clashes that may affect continuity. Again when one thing like prayer is emphasised by one formator and other formators are not doing it that way, there will be contradictions which may lead to the suffering of some and lack of internalisation on the part of the novices.

There are also a number of things the participants expect from their former novices before they take perpetual vows, including conviction, enthusiasm, joy of being a religious with great fluidity immersed in love. While Fr. Siphelele also adds that he would like to see change for the better not for the worst, Sr. Breda expects them to continue with spiritual direction, attending on-going formation courses, and being available to the poor. Allowing them to graduate from formation prematurely has its own problems, which may affect the final profession of many novices.

The participants ended by presenting some forms of advices they could give to the newly professed members for them to live happy and fulfilled lives as religious in today's world. All the participants said that they would urge a newly professed member to strike a balance of what they have learnt in the novitiate especially prayer life, service, and self- knowledge. They also said that they would advise them to be committed and to have conviction, and to be satisfied with what the congregation provides. Fr. Siphelele added the issue of being true to oneself, and nurturing their relationship with God. Finally, Sr. Breda insists that she would advise them to be faithful to their daily prayers, to love God, to take care of themselves, to read the bible and other spiritual books, sharing with others in the community, and reading the signs of the times. Reading the signs of the times is a reputable quality of prophetic and apostolic mission (Kairos Document 1985).

3.6 PROVINCIALS

After an exploration of the views of the formators regarding their stay in the noviciate and their demands and expectations of religious life, this part concerns whether the provincial leaders are satisfied with the quality of religious life the brothers or sisters in temporal vows have been living from the year 2000 to 2016. The provincial leaders interviewed are from the Dominican and Holy Cross Orders. They shared the number of professions they have had during that period and the number of those who left the congregations and the reasons why they left. Again what could be done to help the process of integration; the advices the provincials could give to the novitiate formators regarding the on-going formation of sisters and brothers in temporary vows; and their suggestions on how those brothers and sisters could live happily while fulfilling their commitment in religious life are also matters of concern in this presentation.

While the provincial for the religious sisters said that she is partly satisfied with the quality of life led by sisters in temporary vows, the provincial for the brothers said that he was not happy at all. They gave some reasons to this. Both noticed that those in temporary vows lacked the growth in certain areas like spiritual development, and self-awareness is hardly seen in many of those concerned. Instead of appropriating the religious symbols that would allow them to consummate the spiritual dimension of their calls, they remained concrete, making several material demands for themselves and their families. Their self-awareness was marred by continuing to sit on the fence between their blood families and their adopted religious families, making integration impossible. This made some put off their profession of the final vows, continuously demanding fees for continued education, far beyond the normal primary level of instruction where the Holy Cross sisters normal operate. Again the provincial leader of the brothers of the Dominican Congregation added that the realisation of the Dominican life, that is, practising apostolic responsibilities is highly lacking, and there is the need to improve that because the functioning Dominican priory is not there at all. The purpose for the formation of the Dominican order of friars was the defence of orthodoxy; which made their central motif, the teaching of correct dogma. That was the very reason that brought them to South Africa, to ensure that the correct dogma flowed throughout

the Roman Catholic fraternity. Lacking zeal to do the same among the young friars, is therefore blamed on inadequate formation, which allows the young to profess before they comprehend the core reasons of their existence as a Congregation.

The provincial leader of the sisters maintains that twenty-five sisters professed in their province during the period from 2000 to 2016 for which eight of them left the congregation. Simple ratio shows that about a third of the professed sisters among the target group, have since left, which is the cause for concern. Even without making comparative studies to previous periods, it is clear that formation has demonstrated some inadequacy, which has cost the Congregation quite a lot in both human and capital resources. In fact, it shows that the house of formation has been operating at around two thirds of its expected efficiency, which calls for more attention of the relevant authorities, so that efficiency can be improved for the benefit of the Order. The provincial leadership may work with reports from lower levels, where hands-on experience has explanations for the loopholes in formation.

As indicated above, seventeen are still in the Congregation, and six of them are finally professed and while the rest are still in the temporary vows. The provincial leader to the Congregation of brothers said that during this period, they had eight ordinations. Eight against twenty five shows that there are more vocations among nuns, than there are among Dominican friars. This means more young women are called in comparison to young men, even if we dispense with the third which has since left the Order of the Holy Cross sisters, because seventeen are still more than twice the number of the friars.

They further indicated that some left the congregation because they failed to cope with the elements of religious life, especially related to the vow of poverty, or internal sharing. Others left because they were not integrated, in that they exuded inadequacies in every defining feature of religious life. Thus they did not value poverty, and their prayer life was shallow, which sometimes tampered with their central vow of celibacy, through allowance of other relationships which interfere with their relationship with Christ. Human relationships thus clogged the space meant for the Triune, with the result that they remained not integrated. Some of them left because they failed to deal with the pressures of ministry and resolve them, particularly those that were deployed to difficult religious and lay communities. Some

of those deployed in this way found novitiate training too inadequate to help them surmount the problems of ministry, forcing them to conclude that religious ministry was never meant for them. The religious superiors blamed their departure squarely on inadequate mentoring during novitiate, without shouldering any blame for lack of human and capital resources in novitiate. As long as the blame game is allowed to go on like that, the problems of novitiate are likely to be there to stay for quite some time.

As for having the structures to help the young persons, the provincial leader to the sisters cited a proverb in her language which goes: 'You can take a horse to a river but you cannot make it drink.' In that regard she was convinced that the young had themselves to blame because structures to mitigate their problems (the river) were both ubiquitous and at their disposal. It was clear that the use of such structures was voluntary, just as the horse had to make use of its own will to decide to drink or not. The proverb was clear that dictatorship of the way forward was not productive, as it was bound to encounter insurmountable resistance. Both provincial leaders concerned said that they insist on spiritual direction, retreats, refresher courses, reflections, feasts, communication and proper use of media for these often succeed in facilitating one's integration (holistic approach to things) and internalisation. As emphasised by the formators, these have always been in the syllabus, but time allocated for them is quite inadequate; and this is worsened by frugality in the allocation of human and capital resources to adequately deal with them. To cater for this glaring gap, they said that on-going formation, intra-dialogue, promotion of one's brand or living the truth are further areas of emphasis to help the process of integration, even well after the completion of novitiate. In that regard they took communities of deployment as further formation incubators.

Furthermore, the provincial leader to the sisters concerned said that she always advises the formators and formatees to continue concentrating on the search for God, self-awareness, and coherence. Final profession (graduation) was not the seal of the search, which she described as life-long. Again, she emphasised on the truth and getting in touch with deeper self and living on it is a matter of concern, because bereft of the truth and self-knowledge progressing could not be defined. Fr. Martin also emphasised catechesis as also another thing to consider. It was more than

necessary in our time because specialists in the parishes were scarce, and the church had come to rely more and more on the voluntary para-trained catechists whose knowledge was quite limited. It was worse for those converts who had attended thorough catechism contra-Catholic in some denomination, and then aspired to join religious congregations of the Roman Catholic Church. Fr. Martin noted that such people needed more help to grasp and live out their charism (gift of the Holy Spirit given to the founder of the congregation) and mutual appreciation. He did not specify how that should be achieved with shortages in the formation houses.

Finally, Sr. Monica, the Provincial of the Holy Cross sisters, suggested that for those sisters living their temporary vows, to live a happy and fulfilled religious life, they should maintain a certain disposition for receiving the Lord, including vigilance, commitment and consistence. Vigilance was necessary considering the several snares and temptations that the religious faced, especially where the laity failed to appreciate the differences in lifestyle between the religious and the laity. Those in temporary vows complained bitterly about such discrepancies in realisation, as discussed above. Consistence and commitment helped those non-religious working with the religious, to slowly comprehend their vocation, which has a tendency of improving working relations. Fr. Martin also suggested that the religious should take God seriously, but they should respond to upheavals, obstacles and gifts with less covetousness. They should not expect absolute perfection from superiors because no one is perfect, but God alone. Thus, every religious brother needs to be committed, and to work hard at perfection together with the leadership, which is in the same struggle with the rest. In any case, leadership among the religious is rotational, and not related to life promotion. This means that the young have to use their time to polish their leadership qualities, in anticipation for taking over from the old guard, because leadership generally belongs to the middle-aged group.

3.7 Conclusions

Listening to the participants involved in this research, it has come to light that indeed there is a gap between the learning theory of the novitiate and that of the lived experience of the sisters and brothers in temporary vows. It is a gap that the participants are already bridging for they gave suggestions for every area they have issues with; but were wont to say that the going was tough, and in some cases it

suited the metaphor, ‘moving from the frying pan into the fire.’ Some communities of deployment were best described as scotching flames for those new members in temporary vows, and yet, some were characterised by chilling indifferences of the senior members, which only the most pragmatic could surmount.

There was a suggestion for slow weaning of the novitiate by keeping a certain regulation and timetable for prayer times and monthly days of recollections as community. The sudden introduction of early morning prayers followed by tight work programmes has shaken many who had expected a gradual descent into the tough requirements of mission and ministry. The teaching that happened in the novitiate has to act as a point of reference and new developments have to stand on its foundation so that there is a continuation for those in temporary vows. What is being esteemed in the novitiate has to be held with the same respect in the communities and not to be spurned and ridiculed as currently happens in some communities today. This unsettles the new novitiate graduates, who are made to feel that their vocations rest on shaky straw, which means in essence they have been wasting time and resources in the novitiate house. Instead the senior sisters and brothers could mitigate that by having meetings together with the new members just arrived from novitiate, and sharing experiences regarding their faith history as well as who they are, and where they come from. Where it was done that way, the new members have been telling a different story, demonstrating narrowed and constricted gaps between the new comers and the senior members of the communities they are joining. The reports about rapport in such communities were much better.

There was also a suggestion that when one is younger, there is a greater desire to share with people of the same age. It would be good where it is possible to put at least two younger sisters in a community with a large age gap so that they can help each other integrate themselves in community. This is especially valuable because the senior sisters seem to share among themselves and leave out those who are younger. The loneliness that accompanies the lone sister in such circumstances is often too overwhelming for her tender age. The brothers are usually not affected by the issue of being the only junior in community because they all go to the house of study for theology. The friars have overcome the hurdle because their study is more integrative, and not discriminating along levels as happens among sisters.

The different treatment of those in final vows as compared to those in temporary vows has to be mitigated otherwise the younger members would consider the senior members among the Holy Cross sisters, to have favouritism and then instead of focusing on Jesus and the service of the kingdom of God, frictions in community become self-serving. Continuous frictions run counter to the expectations of the Provincial leadership that there should be on-going formation, including intra-community formation, which is a huge disservice to the sisters in temporary vows. In the regard, the Provincial leadership has to put in place mechanisms to monitor on-going formation within communities of deployment. Although the young sisters are expected to report their experiences in writing, they are not empowered to reveal the underlying counter-productive dichotomies. As a result they often write eulogies in praise of their community mentors, in place of objective exploratory reports that have organisational value.

The existing chasm between the sisters and brothers can be mended if the following could be considered and applied in communities; allowing members to meet with other Orders as a way of building bridges, serving with love and joy, taking people as they are and not creating unachievable expectations and pressure on the younger members. There is also need for the elimination of secular distractors, which stand in the way of the fragile trying to respond to God. Lessons on inculturation have to be amplified so that those who find the respect accorded traditional leadership during Christian ceremonies understand why the often more read friars and diocesan priests (who form the ecclesiastic authority) allow that to happen. The communities need to reduce the mentality of competition in all that is done, and instead work on building synergies that make all members feel accommodated and loved.

For the friars, they need to make sure that lessons on philosophy of religion have been well concluded, so that they do not leave residual matter that make the questioning of the existence of God an obstacle to prayers leading to union with God. In matters relating to *coban,* religious Orders need to ensure that such matters are dealt with in a manner that is seen to be creating rapport with the members' understandings of the fourth commandment: Honour your father and mother (Exodus 20: 12; Deuteronomy 5: 16; cf Mark 7: 11-13). Some members have noted segregation in that there are sisters whose home situations have been largely

alleviated by their Congregation, while their more deplorable situations have been ignored. This has been worsened by the fact that those whose situations have been addressed have been policing them, making sure that all their allowances are utilised within their communities, with nothing reaching their families. This has been a source of friction, which too has to be addressed with the result that every sister must either get some assistance, or completely nothing, as long as that is done uniformly across all needing cases. It is hoped that uniformity may create united communities, where compassion and solidary have the same definitions across levels of professions. Above all the senior members must lead by example so that the younger, who will take over in future can interiorise the correct procedures, so that they too may act justly when they take over leadership (which is a prerogative of the middle-aged) in future.

CHAPTER 4

FORMATION PROGRAMME

4.1 Introduction

Having gone through literature review, interviews and analysis of participants' responses, the results proved that there is a gap between theory and lived experiences of the newly professed brothers and sisters. This has been witnessed in the majority of cases, with those in temporary vows suffering traumas they had neither expected nor been prepared for by novitiate. This gap has to be mitigated if the situation has to improve in future. Accordingly, this chapter has adopted the four tasks of practical theology as given by Osmer, which have already been discussed in earlier chapters. This chapter, therefore, proposes to avoid repetition by simply concentrating on the "pragmatic task of practical theological interpretation: the task of forming and enacting strategies of action that influence events in ways that are desirable" (2008: 175 -176). Therefore in this chapter, the focus is going to be on the suggestions and recommendations in formulating a revised formation programme that will help curb the problems identified, emphasising Gospel values and personal choices in following Christ. The formulation of the new formation programme would be an aid to both candidates for religious life and their mentors, for it will aid them to have competitive benchmarks in their different tasks, which can lead to a transformation of behaviours and attitudes. The first part of the present chapter will focus on the suggestions or recommendations and the final part will be a lucid outline of the new formation programme.

4.2 Towards profound transformation

The focus here is on the succinct transformation of the self; first in the self-definition within the broader cultural milieu, followed by the realignment of the same definition within multiculturalism, to suit the international religious Orders. This helps bridge the gap between the often unrealised need for understanding one's own culture and that of comprehending other people's cultures in an inclusive or pluralist manner. As Richard Rohr (2016) argues, each individual is made up of their past, present and their encounter with other human beings. He says: "Identifying and embracing your lineage is an important part of any pathway to greater wholeness because it involves

remembering your own story. All the parts of your journey must be woven together if you are to transcend your present organisation and level of consciousness" (https://cac.org/2016-12-07/). Studying one's culture would assist the individual to interpret the information about one's past and one's culture to other members of the multicultural community, who in turn would understand the particular individual's feelings, behaviour and reactions, as nurtured by a particular setting. The treasure of giving credence to the nurturing culture may not be over-emphasised, because it forms the core of knowing someone. Further, when other members have an understanding of their fellow member's culture, they would treat him or her accordingly and with compassion and respect pertaining to any differences in interpretation and reactions to particular situations and events. Richard Rohr (2016) affirms the freedom that self-knowledge leads the individual to taking on God's qualities; "God is not threatened by differences, as we see in the three persons of the Trinity. It is we who are" (https://cac.org/2016/12/10). Though the Trinity is made up of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, whose attributes are not congruent, they are one God. But for human beings each noticeably different quality is a cause for division and dissent. This is how the community at Corinth viewed things, attracting the wrath of Paul's chiding and realigning their perceptions with the source of all the gifts, the same spirit (I Corinthians 12). In the preceding chapters we saw how different levels of profession, as well as assistance from the Congregation to one's family, have been causes for sustaining chasms amongst members of the same religious Order.

Furthermore, knowledge of other people's cultures helps an individual person, if he or she is a new member, to adjust and adapt to the new environment requiring new ways of communication. The importance of reflecting on one's culture in relation to the Gospel and its values would help the individual member to affirm what is good and acceptable in his or her culture, based on Gospel values. It also helps one to challenge that which might not be life-affirming within one's culture (Kiaziku 2007). Noting the importance of knowing other members' cultures prevents unnecessary criticisms of other cultures and individual persons which may create divisions, chasms, repulsion and hatred among community members. Living according to the Gospel values also deepens one's ability to tolerate and accept others as they are. Being tolerant in community demands of one genuine love for which Richard Rohr in

one of his daily meditations says: “Love, like forgiveness, is a decision. It is a decision in your mind and in your heart.” (https://cac.org/2016/12/6).

The awareness of each other’s cultures could be assisted to deepen through inculturation so that when one encounters cultural behaviours that appear to be women friendly or Gospel oriented, they are not destabilised. In the Gospel, for example, Jesus Christ had disciples across opposing groups, including fishermen, tax collectors and zealots; all in one cosmopolitan group. The cultural attitudes that Sr. Agnella encountered and found difficult to live with can be transcended if one is at home with her own cultural expressions without feeling alienated from his or her Christian and religious values. The several members of the lay apostolate who made undue demands on her should have been understood in their own cultural context, without being viewed as undue irritants. The young sister deployed alienation from her culture, in her analysis of the various scenarios involving her ministerial encounters.

Another factor that enhances the relationship of community members is the need to trust one another, which was generally anathema between fully professed sisters and those in temporary vows as revealed by the interviews. Trust and mistrust are shown to have positive and negative effects on community relationships respectively. Where people trust one another, there are openness, freedom and mature approaches to events and issues concerning individuals and the community. In community living, when one is trusted, there is a feeling of being empowered and it promotes peace but all this happens where genuine love exists, and yet the foregoing has shown that young sisters are often segregated, despised and overloaded with responsibilities. Reflecting on disciples being those who love others on December 20, 2016 again Richard Rohr says “it’s not really what we do that matters; it’s the energy with which we do it. Love is not what you do; it’s how you do it. When you stand in the state of love that Jesus offers, you live inside of a different energy”. If love is not genuine in community, it leads to pretension as noted by formators in the previous chapter, where they observed that the novices often hide their true selves by offering attractive facades.

In turn, when those in temporary vows are deployed to new communities, they lose their trust in the leadership, generally referred to as the incompatible middle aged

group, once there they realise that the 'love' shown to them is nothing but shades of facades. Where there is mistrust, there is disharmony comparable to the chaos experienced by the Church of the 13th century because of interreligious mistrust caused by inadequate knowledge of Islam and the Eastern Orthodox churches. In his book *Eager to love*, Richard Rohr observes; "It is significant to realise that the mistrust, fear, hatred between the East and the West in the thirteenth century; and between Christianity and Islam matches if not exceeds what we are facing today" (2014: 154). He goes on to explain that the lack of knowledge of the other also caused the deterioration of the situation because there was no knowledge of Islamic culture which led to the viewing of the other as an enemy. The Early Christian community was equally plugged by the same spirit of mistrust which reared its head in the Ananias-Sapphira and the Jewish-Hellenistic paradigms.

In the previous chapter, it was emphasised that there was a need for a process of weaning the novices from the initial formation to entering community life with other sisters and brothers. The gradual preparation of those leaving the novitiate has to be marked with rituals and celebrations before the day of profession. One way of doing this is to mark the periods of formative activities, when they are placed into communities for the time of experiencing ministry, prayer life and living vowed life in community. The formation team can prepare some reflections as well as having services whereby the novices are helped to know that they are being led to detachment from the novitiate life. One way of marking these periods of formation in the novitiate is by having innovative Eucharist celebrations. During such celebrations, the formators could commission the novices by washing their feet, a symbol of humility Jesus used to show his disciples that they should do the same for others. A similar gesture could be performed by senior sisters in the receiving communities. That action would be telling them that they are on their way to become partners or companions with the other senior members and their days as students are done. In the process it would be good to give each of them a candle to remind them about the importance of prayer, which illuminates one's road to God (see Sr. Juliet interview above). Some cultural symbol of the place where each would be going could be given to show them that they are called to be one with those people and to share their joys and sorrows, as did the founders of their Orders in Europe. On the actual day of taking the vows after the required number of years in the

novitiate, the pronunciation of the vows should be a culmination of the process that has been happening during the final year of the novitiate. In this way the transition becomes calibrated with memorable rituals, which prepare the individual for take-off and safe-landing in the next phase of religious life. African cultural experts have found it valid in rites of passage that litter the road to maturation from birth to death (Kangwa 2017).

Thorough preparation which involves the review of the work experience that the novices would have done is also very important. José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM believes that if the period of formation is accomplished with meaningful work and ministry, it will lead to maturity (see also Sr. Agnella interview above). The process is succinctly captured in the following quote:

> "The habit of constant and creative work seems a very important chapter in formation to maturity. A person expresses him/herself in the work of his/her hands, intelligence, and will. Work– manual as well as intellectual – shapes the person, reveals and helps him/her to mature. It allows the person to keep his/her feet on the ground and develops the capacity to stay in contact with reality. The person is also enabled to know his/her limitations better, to face and overcome difficulties and unexpected events, to acquire a sense of responsibility and of how to do one's own work in collaboration with that of others" (www.vidimusdominum.org Carballo: 2011).

According to Carballo, the maturity of a person is also rooted in the meaningfulness of work and taking responsibilities, which Br. Edias (one of the interviewees for this project) also found enriching. He was able to combine chaplaincy, study, liturgy and the making of rosaries, which enhanced the liturgy and prayer times for the laity. Timetabling kept him focused and helpful to his Congregation as well as his 'university flock'.

The nature of religious life with its emphasis on the vow of obedience and not being allowed to plan one's life can have a negative impact of producing perpetual infants who might be praised for being obedient. In the rule and Constitutions of the Holy Cross sisters, it is said; "In the spirit of obedience we renounce the independent planning of our lives. We willingly undertake whatever task is assigned to us and, without the permission of the competent superior, we do not accept services or

offices outside the Congregation" (HC C 56). Obedience is a value for service and listening to God but if it is misunderstood, it might be viewed as limiting one from reaching his /her potential. Obedience as leading to the formation of community links is affirmed by Kiaziku when he writes: "obedience is linked to the idea of the African family community, which is a community of solidarity, sharing, cooperation and reconciliation" (2007:159). Kiaziku understands obedience as communitarian allegiance which has the potential to lead the members to maturity and to greater participation and ownership of the community projects. In the African community decision making itself is communal, and no one has the right to dictate, even though leaders are said to adjudicate over matters. They only have the honour to pronounce the decision collectively arrived at.

The present researcher takes the formators and community leaders to be the mentors for the young religious who would watch and imitate those who were in religious life before them. The popular saying about "walking the talk" could be applied in this interpersonal relationship of mentors and learners. The lack of walking their part, on the part of those leading the communities was among the most recurrent disappointments that the sisters and brothers in temporary vows pointed out. They were disgruntled that there were expectations placed on them, and yet they did not witness those very expectations being lived out by the senior sisters as indicated in the previous chapter. To combat the disgruntlement of sisters and brothers in temporary vows, there is a need for creating "the habit of work" as a way of forming one "to everyday perseverance" (www.vidimusdominum.org Carballo 2011). Carballo (2011) reiterates that "our programs of formation, perhaps, do not take sufficient account of this dimension which, together with all the others, can help the person to grow in a more harmonious way and also to deal with the obstacles presented in the different stages of growth." It is when the seasoned religious members continue to be energised and fulfilled by the habit of work that those who see them would be able to embrace it from seeing how the seniors live. Being a pacesetter that other people look up to and admire has to embrace Paul VI's understanding of work as quoted by Carballo: "an essential aspect of your poverty is to bear witness to the human meaning of work which is carried out in liberty of spirit and restored to its true nature as the source of sustenance and of service" (www.vidimusdominum.org. Carballo 2011). Vowed life seems to be deeply

intertwined with the spirit and habit of work as it involves service and living poverty. The attitude to work with its self-giving spirit would lead those who are still learners in religious life to offer themselves with energy to something they view as a value and part of the identity of being a religious. Working hard is one of the key virtues of African maturation, which is inculcated into the age groups during initiation, which takes places at a tender age (Kangwa 2017). For Apostle Paul and his fellow religious workers, manual work was highly celebrated as part of mission, because proceeds thereof sponsored mission through sharing (Acts 18:1-3; 1Thessalonians 2: 9-13) and therefore those who did not work were not worth feeding (2 Thessalonians 3:10-13). The examples of Paul, Aquila and Pricilla working at their tents during the mission to Corinth (Acts 18: 1-3), shows that work was taken as a virtue by the early Christian community, which did not want to burden the believers by making them cater for all apostolic needs.

Further emphasising the importance of walking the talk Mannath Joe SDB states: “If, instead, a candidate hears great talks about mission, but the superiors seem more interested in getting money from students than in admitting and teaching poorer students, then he concludes: all this talk about mission is humbug. What really matters is money” (2014: 156). Earlier on whilst introducing the need to lead by example, Mannath also talks about the need for superiors to know that those who join religious life do not learn from the talks they give them, but from watching what they do and how they live (2014: 156). The Africans are wont to say, ‘A calf watches while its mother moors grass’ (Achebe 1958), and ‘A goat feeds on the Mufenje tree because its owner does the same’ (Hamutyinei and Plangger 1987). The present researcher proposes that during their final year of novitiate, the novices be allowed to attend workshops that are done for sisters/brothers so that they may get to know what their future community members do. Those who organise such workshops have to bring those brothers and sisters who work with their own hands as facilitators, and avoid armchair theorists who have a tendency of piling more theory on top of the other.

In the third chapter, there was a desire expressed by the participants to allow the practice of sharing about each other’s background whenever another person joins the community. There is a strong understanding among religious communities that whenever a new member joins the community, the community becomes new. If that

understanding could be responded to by giving room to know each person from his or her own perspective, it would be a strong element in creating bonds and fostering the new community. During the year of consecrated life for the entire Catholic fraternity (2015), the present researcher experienced the power of sharing one's background in community. Each sister was given an opportunity to share about where they come from, their family, how they came to religious life and how they have lived it till then. The researcher realised that the practice of communal self-disclosure led to empathy towards other members and that they were individuals she had taken at face value, or as Sammon (2013: 42) observes, had made conclusions about their characteristics on the basis of ignorance. Knowing each person from their own perspective brought about new understanding, compassion and mature intimacy among community members. It was easier from then to understand why certain individuals behaved the way they did, and why they should be understood and taken for what they were.

In another research done for the Union of Major Superiors in Rome, it was observed that communities that attract followers are those with strong Catholic identity, hopeful about the future, and those who lived community life with a structured prayer life (UISG on webcast). The above characteristics for communities would strengthen the desire of the participants of the present research to be treated as adults. It is the communities that have a positive approach in their faithfulness to the teachings of the Catholic Church that would also call forth the adult in the individual because they would all be focused on their search for God through individual and communal prayer (Chittister 1995: 45). Chapter three demonstrated that being hopeful about the future cannot be wholesale applied to the communities under study, which may be why the Orders under study are relatively small despite their histories in Africa spanning over a century. They have been outpaced by those that were formed more than half a century later (Barr 1978).

The centrality of a lived experience of prayer to strengthen one's commitment to religious life is also emphasised by Pope Francis in his address to Religious Orders and Congregations on 4 May 2018 (*Zenit News from Rome 2018*). Pope Francis cites what he calls "the three pillars of consecrated life: prayer, poverty and patience". For Pope Francis, prayer is an awareness to go back to the first calling where each individual is supposed to have experienced that intimate call of Jesus.

He goes on to say: “And prayer, in consecrated life, is the air that calling make us breathe, renewing that calling. Without this air, we would not be able to be good consecrated persons” (*Zenit News from Rome 2018*). It is clear that prayer in consecrated life is life-giving and it is pivotal to the life of each consecrated person.

Deepening his understanding of the three pillars of consecrated life, Pope Francis shares on the vow of poverty as the central vow that gives birth to other vows because he believes that fruitfulness comes from poverty and that poverty is the “perimeter wall of consecrated life”. Poverty becomes a barrier that prevents one from accumulating riches and focusing on material things which might take away one’s gaze on the One who called him/her, the person of Jesus. Aylward Shorter also considers poverty to be the root vow that leads each consecrated person to a radical following of Jesus which is a kenosis (self-emptying) in order to have space for God and to becoming poor for the sake of the kingdom (2001: 31). During their early years of profession, the post novitiate period, the sisters and brothers desire to deepen this understanding of the centrality of their call in living religious life.

The third pillar as given by Pope Francis with a deepening effect on one’s consecration is “patience” and he says of it: “without patience, that is, without the capacity to bear suffering, a consecrated life cannot be sustained, it will be a half measure”(*Zenit News from Rome 2018 cf.* O’Murchu, 2018: 220-221). The area of being patient does deepen one’s understanding of vows, the painstaking work of self-reflection and internalising the reality that is at the core of letting go the normal passage of marriage is not “asceticism or hatred of creation but the desire for God” (Schneiders 2000: 130). Growing in patience also unites one with Jesus who bore suffering on the cross and yet remained faithful to God for “real religious commitment must be radically public if the Gospel to which we say we dedicate ourselves is to be real in our lives” (Chittister 1996: 11). Knowing that one’s way of life is for the purpose of being with God and imitating Jesus Christ needs to continue being strengthened through a life of reflection that helps one to confront motives of actions and of remaining in religious life. Cencini and Manenti concur when they say; “the question of why we act is more important than the question of what we do” (2009: 58). If one grows in the virtue of patience, there would be an eagerness to face the question of motives that helps to clarify why one does what they do and the joy of being a religious would also be experienced.

If one grows through the ability to reflect on one's motives, the ability to reflect at real issues that affect our world would fall into place. Consecrated people are called to "mirror the struggles of the time; defining them, facing them, dealing with them in their own lives and not running away" (Chittister 1996: 7). One's vocation makes sense when it touches and desires to answer the deep seated unmet needs that this world finds itself in. In his book; *A radical love, a path of light*, Mannath Joe emphasises that the on-going formation of every religious falls totally on their shoulder (2014: 202). It is the responsibility of the individual to see that they are living Pope Francis' three pillars of prayer, poverty and patience. The best programme of formation can be created but if the individual person does not choose to make use of it, there will not be an adult response to what is provided. We may as well reiterate the words of the Holy Cross Provincial that though you may manage to take the horse to the river (that is, providing a viable programme of formation), but you may not manage to make the horse drink, just as the novices have to be willing to be transformed by the programme.

One important factor needing attention is the understanding of the principle of subsidiarity as taught within the social teaching of the Catholic Church. The principle of subsidiarity encourages authorities to allow that which can be done at the local level to be carried out locally and to avoid centralisation of the services that should benefit the community (SDC: 189, 103). Applied to religious life, the community leaders need to be given the responsibility of the brothers and sisters in their community and to avoid shaking off their duties to the provincial leader or any of those members responsible for the growth of the temporary professed. Working with the local person would allow the sisters and brothers in temporary vows to participate fully knowing that their issues, if they arise, can be dealt with in their home-ground. Currently decision-making is centralised in the hands of the Provincial council, leaving the local authorities powerless, since their entire local undertakings have to be authorised. This includes taking duties at the Parish where they attend mass.

Though community leaders and all the brothers and sisters in community who might become leaders later on in their lives, need to know their boundaries, constant reference to the higher authority or to the bishop by the community leaders sometimes leads to delays in the settlement of important issues affecting local

communities. Already during the biblical history of the Jewish people, we learn that their request for a king with centralised authority to settle local problems had advantages and disadvantages. The centralised authority of the king might have helped them acquire wealth but there were also grave abuses of the subjects by the silencing and unfeeling hand of a detached monarchy (Osmer 2008: 184). Religious authority may not be monarchical, but if it remains centralised, its detached chastising hand may continue to foster the existence of the gap noted by mentors in the last chapter. Higher authority remains out of touch with the brothers and sisters in localised communities because of distances which magnify lack of knowledge through information gaps and bureaucratic sieving by community leaderships. Communication channels within local communities are centralised around community leaders, accused by those in temporary vows of not walking the talk by living expensive against frugality requirements of the vow of poverty. Lack of subsidiarity means that the real issues will continue to be circumvented through spruced up reports sent to the top leadership in cases of abuses by local leaderships, oppressing the inmates callously in the name of the vow of obedience. In essence, the information gaps mean that those in temporary vows, subject to unprecedented negative reports by community leadership, will largely continue to have no resort for redress. In the same regard the community leadership and the higher authorities will continue to have their own fiefdoms, with little or no deterrence because of fear reposed in those in temporary vows.

Should the community leaders manage to lead the members towards the values of servant leadership that Jesus promoted, they would also create confidence in the brothers and sisters who would recognise that the leader is committed to his/her “internal vision” (Osmer 2008: 178). Whilst it is imperative for each member of the community to experience their own “deep change” as they grow in friendship with Jesus who once led them to religious life, there is power in the communal choice that is radiated by the local leader who is able to deal with local issues responsibly, and not disparagingly as noted by post novitiate brothers and sisters.

With the growing consciousness of the need to be updated in today’s world, provincial leaders with the collaboration of the community leaders need to create opportunities for on-going formation and renewal. Formation is said to be “primarily accomplished in everyday life; in situations experienced by the community itself,

assuming the usual things, such as joy, fatigue, pain, success, and failure as prime moments offered by the Lord to transform our lives" (www.vidimusdominum.org. Carballo: 2011). The present research aims at bridging the gap between theory and lived experience and that the brothers and sisters in temporary vows can become integrated ministers. If the on-going search for God in community life could be lived with the awareness of the above issues raised by Carballo, the integration of theory and the living of those values would be easier because the community would be journeying together with those in temporary vows. We would also suggest that during their final years of novitiate, the novices be allowed to attend renewal courses with the sisters to strengthen their religious identity and desire to learn from those who have walked the path of religious life before them.

St John Paul II defined formation as a "progressive assimilation of the sentiments of Christ" as well as "being converted" (Vita Consecrata 65). The imitation of Christ needs to be deepened at all levels of one's life so that the communal living can become a home to all members who radiate the joy of giving themselves to God. Being at home would also reflect an attitude of contentment and a level of equilibrium among the community members. As one grows in the assimilation of the sentiments of Christ, one would also approach the issue of power in an adult way so that community conflicts could be minimised. The attitude of living community life with the focus on Christ who brought the members together can only be cultivated by the individuals who open up their hearts to the Gospel "in daily life, committing oneself to the ongoing conversion to follow Christ with ever greater fidelity to his charism" (www.vidimusdominum.org, Carballo. 2011).

4.3 Prayer, Mission and Fraternal life

In prayer, one learns who Jesus is and what Jesus wants through paying attention and listening intently to his daily calls. Daily listening has the ability to renew a youthful attitude in each individual which enlivens the awareness that one's vocation is ongoing, which seems to have evaporated in middle aged sisters referred to by those in temporary vows interviewed in the last chapter. Prayer is one form of closing the gap of feeling alone amidst sisters of different ages as often happens to those in temporary vows. The formative life of the novice and the ongoing formation of the sisters at every stage of life should be a fresh quest to find where Jesus abides daily,

rather than relying on past convictions which may now be out of touch with the current realities. In times of being misunderstood, a praying sister or brother can escape to the Lord for consolation. In every formation programme, there should be intense times of prayer where every candidate should be able to fall in love with the Lord and to make it their purpose of life. Living for the Lord and making prayer the reason for getting up every day can only grow through the encounter with God who beckons each person into friendship.

Some of the participants in the research experienced pressure from senior members who had expectations they found hard to fulfil. The area of meaningful ministry that is connected to the mission of Jesus should lead to an awareness of what is going on in the world so that the candidate is able to hear the cry of the poor and respond to it; a cry which the senior members failed to decipher in their juniors. Starting from the novitiate, the brothers and sisters need to be taught to think about others and to give themselves out of compassion for the suffering of the other, which addresses the current unfortunate gap between theory and praxis. If one is able to read the needs surrounding the less fortunate, that person will also grow in being able to put others first and not turn on themselves. Reaching out to others would close the gap of feeling overworked without finding meaning in the work rendered.

Writing on the theme about work, Carballo says; “work manual as well as intellectual – shapes the person, reveals and helps him/her to mature. It allows the person to keep his/her feet on the ground and develops the capacity to stay in contact with reality” (www.vidimusdominum.org Carballo. 2011). It would also be a great help that the future religious men and women have emotional skills to help them transcend issues that might come between their commitment and service.

The area of emotional maturity is dealt with in the article of Carballo where he calls it frustrations. He encourages the accompaniers to help those in the process of formation to develop a culture of being able to identify the frustration that might be happening within, to give it a name and then to take steps of resolving it. “An insufficient or non-existent resolution of frustrations lies unquestionably at the root of many crises and of many departures, especially after the first years of apostolic activity” (USIG Carballo). The need for creating an environment of self-assessment

and reflection that would help the candidate to see beyond the frustration and emotional turmoil is a way to develop in the future sisters and brothers a culture of self-knowledge in relation to God and ministry.

Emotional maturity is also essential for one's life in community, especially a multi-cultural community. Community life can be a hub of the affective reality. Adults who have grown in their love for God and who are confident about their relationship with God, would be able to deal with the frustration of ministry and work in an effective manner as compared to those who believe that everything they encounter has a hidden agenda directed at them. Frustrations would just intensify when one is suspicious of all others and their motives. During the formation period, the program could include ways of sharing on a fraternal level so that the individual participant can be helped to identify and to name their blind spots as regard their emotional maturity and other areas of growth. Once a problem has been identified and named, its resolution will be forthcoming.

Whenever one of the brothers and sisters in formation decides to leave, the rank and file should be able to process the loss together without the formators creating information barriers for the formatees. It would be a great help that when processing the departure of someone, those left have to ask themselves the individual question: "Why do I stay?" Confronting oneself on whether the motive to stay is out of love for God or fear to face the world would help to reformulate motivations and to seek the help of God and spiritual directors to move forward.

In his book, *From Wild Men to Wise Men,* Richard Rohr makes an assessment of what he calls "power conservatives" and "value conservatives" (2005: 89). The former would stick at it because of the security and status that comes from being connected with institutional religion whilst the later holds on to power through whatever situation they find themselves in. In doing so they are not propagating the values of the Gospel but they are self-serving in the name of the Gospel values. They would not change their position even if it means that it would save life, for they would keep on quoting scripture and in our case, the founders and the traditions of the Orders. These are some of the motives that need to be acknowledged and to be assessed so that one can align their way of life with that of Jesus, the man who

“transforms pain instead of transmitting it” (Rohr 2005: 90). Creating an environment that is always scapegoating either the formators or the companions would leave the future brothers and sisters stuck in the above two conservative attitudes that are not life-affirming. This contrasts well with Jesus who praised David and his men for consuming the sacred bread of the presence reserved for priests, and allowed his disciples to harvest, reap and grind on a Sabbath to serve lives (Mark 2:23-28; Matthew 12:1-8). Jesus broke tradition and protocol to serve lives, to the extent of even touching lepers relegated by law to the periphery of society (Matthew 8:1-4; Luke 5:12-16). In that light, a true imitation of Christ would give them a sense of identity and would help to clarify and resolve one’s motives either of staying on or to take up a new task outside the Congregation. Life in the community can also be a form of affirmation and joy if individuals in the community are genuinely open about their motivations and influences they need to retain or discard.

The issue of power needs to be included in the program of formation. Formators are free to place it where they see it more appropriate in the process of formation. The five aspects of personal power developed by Whitehead and Whitehead (1984) can be observed as lived in community and by the members within formation and in the ongoing life of the religious and priests (i.e. power on, power over, power against, power for attitude). Karecki Madge, 1999 (*Patterns of mission praxis*) used these types of power to reflect on how each context can be influenced by them. The present researcher has also seen these aspects of power either lived by others or by her within community life. The Power on is the ability and competence to accomplish what has to be done and power over is both positive and negative. It gives the person management skills as well as ability to take charge of events, tasks and situations. The negative side of it can be applied as wanting to be in control of others. One has to be able to discern where to apply that power because if it is in a classroom, the ability to have classroom control is healthy but in fraternal life, taking over other adults’ ability to think on their own is unhealthy. The power over might create relational gaps if not applied well in community and ministry, as noted in the previous chapter where those in temporary vows ended up clustering all those in the middle aged leading group as incompatible.

The power against is often seen where there is competition, struggle, conflict and opposition. It is not advisable for a religious leader to live in an attitude of power that is competitive and conflictual. Diarmurd has shown that competition is not healthy because human nature is meant to work towards cooperation and inclusivity. He writes; “There is an organic dimension, highlighted in the bacterial foundations of all life, thriving primarily on cooperation, not via competition” (http://www.diarmuid13.com/adult-faith-development). In his book *“Adult Faith”* he also says, “Humans are programed for mutuality and cooperation, not for competition and domination” (2010: 81). The practise of power for, could influence values of service, care and the spirit of volunteering for the benefit of others in community and society at large. It would lead one to being charitable and yet being ready to be served too without feeling that as a priest or religious, one is the only giver. There is mutual dependency in the power for experience which is healthy for a religious leader to know that the Congregants and the people of God however poor they might have something to give. For a professed person whether soon after the novitiate or some years of novitiate, society sees in each of them a leader in the Church.

The researcher believes that it is valuable to apply the power for attitude in situations of creativity as well as giving room for suggestions in formation. If people in formation feel permitted to apply their own power in deciding how lessons should be done, they indeed take the process seriously. Great emphasis has to be stressed here that formation mentors need to listen and take serious suggestions that come from the novices and other candidates so that they know that they belong and are co-responsible with the formators for their ongoing formation. It has been observed by the researcher that when involved in practical work where one can see the product; there is fulfilment and joy among most novices. It is difficult to harness one’s full attention where they do not see light beyond groping in the dark and sweating for no obvious outcome.

This research would suggest that the study of these different types of power be carried out during the novitiate years. The study could also be used as an introduction to the theory of “multiple intelligences” by Howard Gardner whose book of 1983: *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, illustrates in detail how every person is gifted differently in their learning abilities and comprehension of

the subject matter (https://www.verywellmind.com/gardners-theory-of-multiple-intelligences). One could interpret the types of power in relation to these multiple intelligences where each candidate can discover a niche they identify with. These intelligences with their wide perspectives have led many in the formation process experience liberation of mind with some narrow approach to education.

Candidates for religious life, who have been informed in the area of multiple intelligences, would manifest attitudes of openness that are African in nature and that type of context is described by Kiaziku as a "network of relationships with the visible and invisible" (2007: 167). Kiaziku goes on to describe the African individual's life as to exist in a "live-with" relationship. To apply power within fraternal life is also a way of acknowledging that God created humanity not for solitary living but for joining others on the journey to work together and lead each other towards fulfilment of a God founded relationship. Communal living of a religious or priest should also give room for the individual to be influenced by many other people from whom the community can collaborate with and live in solidarity. In his book, *Friendship with God,* Hudson Trevor says: "There is no solitary Christ follower. When we open our lives to Jesus, He comes with his arms around his brothers and sisters" (2015: 27). This means that Jesus Christ is the accompanier of all the dejected and lonely as long as they provide space for his entrance into their lives. He provides the ford when those who call upon him are overwhelmed by floods of existential problems.

The future brothers and sisters need to realise that they will work with the people from different backgrounds and statuses in life and that the community is also endowed with skills and wisdom that might help their ministry to grow. As a priest or religious, the individual has to learn to develop personal and healthy boundaries that are receptive and not creating contempt among people. The power with style needs person oriented approaches to the reality of life and it demands a collaborative approach to both ministry and community living. Carballo regards openness to dialogue as the cure for a religious to move away from self-serving attention and inward turning (www.vidimusdominum.org. Carballo -2016).

4.4 Collaborating with the family of origin

The research has revealed the importance of acknowledging one's family of origin in the process of formation. One's upbringing has a great impact on each adult, as the summative locus of his or her feelings, reactions, approaches to problems and conflict resolution procedures. The stance of that nurturing family of origin has a lot to do with the psychological stability of the novice. The knowledge that the family is supportive of one's decision to follow Christ as a religious nun or brother helps with the stability and freedom to carry on towards fulfilling the goal that the candidate has chosen. If the family is not supportive and is dysfunctional, there is anxiety and worry in the candidate. That state of affairs spills to that person's relations with community mates, as unattended to business clogging the brain and inhibiting its functions in an unconscious, though disruptive manner.

The upbringing of a person certainly influences the candidate's ability to live community life because in religious life, one has to interact with others and to develop the skill for inter-personal relationships. If family members were not interactive, there is a tendency for that person to withdraw and to avoid community meetings and activities (cf. Sr. Portia with stagnant family above). Where there is a positive influence within the family, there is co-operation and a reaching out to others in community. Mannath writes about one young woman who joined religious life to share with both the sisters and the poor people "the deep love she has received from her family" (2014: 53). She exuded the zeal to share, which was the gift she was handing down from her family tradition. When community living is experienced as family with love and care for each member, the new members also exude the positive experiences they have received from their families, as in the cases of Sr. Agnella and Brother Edias. The family of Brother Edias had sponsored his passion for journalism which helped him see through the various competing paradigms, leaving him happy and contented even in difficult circumstances.

Just as the family welcomes and accommodates every member, so should the religious community become a home for every race, the highly educated, the less educated and every age group. Religious nuns and brothers find themselves in different communities because they have all responded out of love for Jesus and the desire to witness to all the embracing love of Jesus. To achieve high levels of rapport

within communities there is need to revisit formation programmes that have given rise to the type of life in the communities. Below is a suggested programme which caters for the recommendations received from those in temporary vows, formators and the religious superiors.

4.5. PROPOSED FORMATION PROGRAMME

4.5.1 Postulancy (1 – 2 years)

The term postulant is derived from the Latin word "*postulatum"* meaning something craved for, and is used by the Roman Catholic Church to refer to a person demonstrating desire to enter religious life by taking the first step in religious life before entering the novitiate and receiving the habit (https://www.catholicculture.org). The purpose of the postulancy is to acquire some knowledge of the religious life and of the particular institute through personal experience. The postulant spends specified times with the particular religious Order, which enables one to become better known to the superiors of the community, and to develop such virtue as will qualify the candidate for acceptance into the novitiate. The length of the postulancy varies, but normally it is at least six months. The specific timeframe of this stage varies with the Orders. This research proposes that in order to reduce the gap between theory and praxis the timeframe for Postulancy needs to be doubled. This addresses the perennial problem of shortage of time in relation to the syllabus or observation period, which the formators have highlighted in the previous chapter.

In the expanded time postulants need assistance to:

- Focus on deepening self-knowledge. Knowing oneself fully equips one with the capacity to fit smoothly into a multi-cultural religious communities, by reflecting on one's own culture in relation to the Gospel in order to interiorise those customs that promote life while setting aside those that are life threatening. This enables the young man or maiden to live the Gospel fully as an African, while accommodating the rest for what they are.
- Deepen their relationship with the Lord in prayer and daily living, which may lead to inner freedom by fostering an ageless relationship among the religious, thereby altering the post novitiate tendency to snub the middle aged leading group.

- Improve rootedness in the Catholic doctrine and teaching. The knowledge of the teachings of the Catholic Church would help the candidates in strengthening their sense of belonging both to the Church and to the Order. It would facilitate self-confidence and freedom to teach and to discuss with others. Postulants, at this stage, could be asked to write a paper on how they experience the major doctrines of the Catholic Church or be led into a continuous reflection of those doctrines. Such doctrines would include the Incarnation, the doctrines on Mary Mother of God, the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, the Trinity, the meaning of the Cross and the living of the Paschal Mystery. Questions leading to the living of the doctrines could be framed in the following format: How do I experience the Incarnate Word in my life? If some youths would ask you to explain how they can practise their priesthood, kingship and prophecy, how would you explain to them? (Flannery A O.P 1975: 360 – 365). Their ability to identify with, and the daily living of the Catholic faith would be a preparation for the life according to the vows, which would later on bridge the gap of their alienation from the vowed life which came out of a Euro-centric context.
- Cognitively comprehend principles of psychological assessment: Myre's Briggs personality indicator, Stages of development according to Erick Erikson, and faith developmental stages by Fowler. The Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator is a self-report inventory designed to identify a person's personality type, strengths, and preferences. The questionnaire was developed by Isabel Myers and her mother Katherine Briggs based on their work with Carl Jung's theory of personality types. There are sixteen types that are spread between the basic personality of either being an extrovert or introvert (https://www.16personalities.com/).
- It is advisable to include a course on multiple intelligences so that they identify their strengths. The mentor/ formator should be able to guide them to relate what they learn to their relationship with God at this stage of life so that later on, they can be able to find God in all things or to relate to creation in a respectful manner.
- Recognise their unique journey and call from God leading them to dissimulate the tendency to leave the formation process in the hands of the formators by

reneging on personal responsibilities for their growth. One of the questions for reflection at this stage is “Who has inspired you to come to the priesthood or religious life?” (Chatteris 2015: 59). In the end it has to be out of a deep response to God’s love that has led a postulant to religious life. Other human beings might inspire them but God’s love should sustain one’s journey when the human beings fail and struggle with their own sinfulness.

4.5.1.1 Recommended films to watch at this stage

Film as a medium of deductive communication has “a direct or indirect impact on social streams, even though it may not be immediately perceptible. A good film does more than entertain or fill seats at the cinema. It has the power to change hearts and minds – and sometimes society more widely”. (https://tedxhyderabad.com/social-impact-of-films/).

- *Ugandan Martyrs*, (the 19th century young Ugandans who chose to die for their faith instead of compromising their morality at the king’s court. This is meant to inculcate courage to do the right thing in trying moments, when one may be forced by circumstances to dissimulate faith or rescind one’s religious choices).
- *Bhakita* (the Sudanese girl who was trafficked by Arab modern slave traders and landed in Italy where she became a religious sister and was later on canonised. It has to be clear that one’s original circumstances in life do not prohibit one to rise to great heights in religious life. In fact God chooses his own from those that humanity may not stop to give a second look).
- *The life of Benedict Daswa* (a South African who died for his faith and refusal to practise witchcraft. This didactic film teaches that those African aspects that are life-threatening have to be abhorred at all costs. Of course witchcraft has always been deplored by Africans and Magesa, a Tanzanian Catholic cleric and theologian, is very clear about that when he says, “Witchcraft is *the* enemy of life” [1997: 186]).
- *The life of John Bradeburn* (An English man who dedicated his life for the caring of lepers in Rhodesia (present day Zimbabwe). He stayed on at Mutemwa leprosy in Mutoko, even when it was no longer safe for a British

national to do so at the heart of the Zimbabwe liberation war. He was consequently murdered and today Mutemwa has become the leading Catholic shrine in Zimbabwe. Plans to canonise him as a saint are currently under way).

- *Romero* (on the life of Archbishop Oscar Romero who was killed during Mass for his opposition to the repressive government of El Salvador. It is a didactic film on the fight against structural sin. Latin America has always been the source of Catholic inspiration with regards liberation theology. The film market prophetic theology as opposed to church theology practised by the early missionaries to South Africa, who were complicity to structural sin, known as State Theology [South African Kairos Document 1985]).
- *Dead Man Walking* (on a convicted killer who is comforted by a nun who empathises with both the killer and the victim's family. It revolves around the social teachings of the Church, especially the sanctity of life. Even though one has killed, he derives no lesson from being killed. In fact, by saving him from the gallows, the living who takes everyone as the imago Dei will see the value of life).
- *The Mission* (on two missionaries who fight for the rights of South American Indians against Spanish colonial landowners. The rights of the native Indians here are seen in light of liberation theology premised on the social teachings of the Catholic Church).
- *The Heart has its Reasons* (which tells the story of the l'Arche community and its founder, French-Canadian Jean Vanier. Jean Vanier gathered in his communities all over the world both able bodied and mentally and physically challenged people. These form the l'Arche community that values the person who is created in the image and likeness of God.

All these films help deepen the understanding of the Roman Catholic doctrines, including its social teachings. They can be used to facilitate deeper understanding of living one's conviction in the following of Christ and remaining steadfast in the face of opposition. Some of the postulants may actually encounter opposition from their religious communities which may be expecting them to be available when they need

them. Some may experience the same from their blood families, for which they must have some refined leads on how best to approach the demands.

4.5.2 Novitiate (3 years):

Novitiate is the period of formal probation of a person in a religious community or secular institute. It follows the postulancy and precedes the first profession of vows. (https://www.catholicculture.org)

- Canon Law 665 stipulates that the duration of the novitiate is one year but it leaves room for each Congregation to add up to two years. Having listened to the formators, I propose that the novitiate be pegged at three years in order to create enough time for internalisation and reflection on the bulk of the necessary input to be given. Currently, the Dominican priests and brothers' novitiate is one year and that of the Holy Cross sisters is two years, both of which are insufficient for the amount of coverage required.
- Formation, especially novitiate should become an integral process including interpersonal elements, the relationship between life and truth, theology and other human sciences, the search for one's very self and identity that involves the truth of each person's expectations and values and hopes. *Vita Consecrata* (1994) encourages religious communities to create environments of study that are consistent with the Charism of the Congregation so that each novice can be led towards the desire for personal commitments. The pastoral formative experiences that are part of the novitiate should also respond to the signs of the times (VC 73). To do that more clinically the syllabus must clearly elucidate what is to be covered in each novitiate year.

4.5.2.1 First Year Novitiate

- This research proposes that the first of this three year novitiate period be spent on the learning of vows: celibacy as a vow to love and creating right relationships, Obedience as a vow to listen and collaboration and poverty as the vow to share in sustainable living. These three vows are the root to building one's religious understanding and they should lead one to build the

inner self as well as the ability to reach out to the needy as a response to the following of Christ.

- When teaching prayer, formators should open a variety of ways such as meditative writing, praying with scripture, *Lectio Divina* (holy reading), praying with clay and other arts such as colouring *mandalas* (circles that can be coloured reflectively) as well as Gospel contemplation (imaginative prayer with Gospel stories of Jesus). Exposing the novices to a variety of prayer forms helps them later on not to be stuck in one model, but that when they are faced with frustrations, another method could rescue them from the stalemate. One important aspect of prayer is that they get the opportunity to lead communal prayer and to pray together in faith sharing. Lessons on vowed life and prayer should be applicable to their context to sustain their cultural identity, by avoiding unnecessary alienation which is often responsible for unfathomable gaps between theoretical 'universalism' and practical reality.
- The first year novitiate is a time for harmonising the attitudes that are proper to consecrated life for each novice for the purpose of growing in awareness of owning their own journey and process.
- The spirituality of the founders of each Congregation; in our case St. Dominic and Fr. Theodosius Florentini and Mother Bernarda (founder and foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Cross) should be thoroughly studied, and not for intellectual purposes only, but also for creating ways of relating their *sitz in leben* to the context of the novice. God spoke to them and is still speaking to each novice in her own situation in life. The knowledge of how the founders navigated their faith within their context helps the novices to recognise their own God, who continues to speak within their own context, responding to their existential needs.
- The other crucial aspect of the novitiate is the way the novice is able to live in community and to relate inter-personally as well as intra-personally (self-reflection). Whilst community life helps one to find God in the other, there is also need for one to be at home with his/her inner self and to be at home with the God within. The necessity of communal life for one with inner knowledge would deal with the gap of tending to watch what others are doing, especially those that have been in religious life before the newly professed.

- Subjects that deepen the knowledge of the history of the institute, such as mission, charism and the spirituality of the founders, must be continually developed for the purpose of remaining rooted both in history and contextually. Teaching the founding history for its own sake without contextualising may not help those with inadequate contextualising capacities. Such an approach may therefore be taken as segregating along intellectual lines, and yet God's calling is not restricted to the intellectually gifted ones.
- There is a need for inter-institute formation experience where one meets with those from other Orders. Those experiences lead to the forging of identity clarity and the reality of belonging to the larger body of the one, holy Catholic and apostolic Church. Meeting with other institutes is complimentary to the growth of all novices and it becomes a support system for the formators too. During those inter-institute meetings, the novices could also share on their spiritualties with the guidance of formators. Connected to the inter-Congregational meetings would be the study of different cultures and intercultural living. Sr. Caster in the previous chapter shared how she benefited from those meetings, and how that continued to illuminate her way throughout the subsequent years.
- The novices need to learn the constitutions, rules and statutes of the Congregations so that when they go to the communities later, they know how they are expected to live.
- With the help of a specialised team, the director of novices should avail periods of individual mentoring and personalised accompaniment by being attentive to the growth of each novice in an atmosphere of evangelical values, serene and sustained by joyous experiences. Those mentoring sessions should consolidate the founding event and the Charism.
- The Congregational leader is to be abreast with what goes on within formation and with each novice's aptitude.

4.5.2.2 Second Year Novitiate

- This research proposes that the second year of novitiate be a period of integration of the first year novitiate with community life and ministry.

- The novice could go to live in a community with the fully professed sisters/brothers/fathers, where she/he is treated like any other member of the community with known responsibilities. This would give him/her the freedom to choose if the life is meaningful to them or if they are ready to live that kind of life-style forever, before making commitment.
- Some form of journaling should be allowed at this stage so that the novice has a record of what the day involves. It is important that each novice is given an opportunity to create their own time-table and to present it to the whole community to express what they think. Once passed for implementation, the novice should be allowed to honour it, and to make evaluations pertinent to further action research. And interested community must help the novice assess progress at prescribed times and help through any necessary remedial processes.
- Their placement into communities could be divided as follows: four months within community, then they return to the formation house for two months of reflection, evaluations and sharing; including writing a paper on social analysis and share with their novitiate community and the community can in turn give feedback. The novices can be missioned again for another four months and then return to the formation house for two months, which both increases and improves interaction between theory and praxis with the possibility of healing the gulf between them.
- During the four months the formators are encouraged to visit the novices and formally meet the sisters, and informally meet the people they might be working with. This enables the novice to remain focused on his or her objectives.
- Upon returning to the novitiate, the novices would be led into reflections on their joys, sorrows, community life, how they have lived their vowed life, difficulties, fulfilling experiences and challenging ones.
- Communities where the novices are placed should be encouraged to find a way of welcoming the novice. There should be a sharing of each community member's background, including the novice. This has proved to be empowering and the novices feel at home when such rituals are done in their new community. The experiences of Sr. Agnella in this respect have been

enlightening and worth of emulation by other communities as a way of improving compatibility between formation house and mission community (see chapter three).

- At the beginning of each of their novitiate years, the novices would be availed with an opportunity to go for an eight day directed retreat (time for silence and prayer) with a director identified by the director of the novices.
- The recommended book for the second year novitiate is *Passion for Christ Passion for Humanity*. It was produced by Superior Generals of both male and female Congregations in 2005. It seeks to relate to Jesus from the experience of the Good Samaritan (passion for humanity) and from the perspective of the Samaritan woman at the well (Passion for Christ) (cf Luke 10: 25-37; John 4: 1-42). This book would be one way of bridging the gap between how one relates to God and to humanity.

4.5.2.3 Third Year Novitiate

- The third year novitiate should be a year of bridging gaps that might have been identified in communities and by the novice's own reflective living.
- This research suggests that the novices be given a chance to complete one book of Schneiders Sandra on religious life and vows as well as going through the three little booklets on the vows by Shorter Aylward. Their personal reading would lead to closing the gap of remaining minors, to young adults that listen to God who guides them personally. The reading itself must be ritualised, as happens in the traditional maturation rites, which have proved to be quite effective (Kangwa 2017). Mere reading divorced from rites and rituals would not lead to maturation, because maturity in the African context is always directed and certified. Taking away either direction or certification makes the envisaged outcome open-ended and incomplete.
- There should be less organised lessons as they work on their own, and yet coming together daily to share on what transpired in their day. There should be an hour for adoration (praying before the Blessed Sacrament), beside their daily meditation and other prayers. The adoration of the Blessed Sacrament would facilitate union with Jesus whom the Catholics believe is fully present in that Sacrament.

- If it would be possible, third year novices should be given an opportunity to go for a pilgrimage (prayerful journey to a shrine or sacred place) on their own and record the daily experience of that pilgrimage in order to harvest that journaling from their own perspective, instead of living on other people's stories. Mutemwa shrine, flocked by the faithful from the region, could be one such choice capable of enlisting their interest, especially those that have never been there.
- They could be given an opportunity to watch a film on any pilgrimage experience before they embark on one. This is intended to arouse the necessary legitimate expectation from the Catholic point of view.
- One of the books that the present researcher believes must be covered within the third year of novitiate is *The Confessions of St. Augustine*. This is a book written by St. Augustine after his conversion and it helps the individual to learn from Augustine to own one's journey and to be free to talk about it as a gift from God. The book, *Friendship with God*, by Trevor Hudson should be a must read for the third year novices. This book would also enlighten the novice on being true to their daily experience and yet finding God in those ordinary experiences. Very often novices wonder whether God is actually present in the daily happening, especially where one faces enormous hurdles.
- Unconditional service and self-giving based on Scripture need to be consolidated at this stage.
- The role of the director of the novices and other formators is to facilitate and to listen to the experiences and decisions that would be carried out by the novices. The assessment of the novices at this stage should be reviewing maturity and ability to make adult decisions that are consistent with their decision to follow Christ in consecrated life.
- Four months before the end of the third year novitiate should focus on reflecting upon the meaning of commitment, community living, vows and ministry in the lives of the future religious sisters and brothers. They should be encouraged to make their own habits if they decide to take vows.
- Before leaving the novitiate, a workshop of two weeks could help the novices to deepen their understanding of community life, ministry with integrity and

pastoral circle and social analysis. It should be sufficiently ritualised to make it meaningful as a penultimate marker of novitiate.

- Ritualising every stage of formation and marking the end of the novitiate is often appreciated by the novices who tend to remember those rituals as special moments of their journey. This means that the very last day of departure or the night before must be marked by the ritual, for example, the washing of feet as suggested before. The receiving communities must be equally ready with receiving rituals, tailor-made for their own communities.

4.6 Summary

This chapter has intensified the analysis of the experiences of religious people, and has unearthed contextual gaps caused by shortcomings in the current programme and staffing of religious formation. It has proposed that brothers and sisters in temporary vows, their mentors and religious superiors be given chances to chronicle their experiences and periodically suggest possible mitigants. Taking cognisance of the findings of the empirical research just concluded, the chapter has rolled out an updated proposal for implementation by the formation houses.

The envisaged transformational programme has centralised prayer as invaluable both to the individual call as well as the fraternal living in religious life. That prayer has to be ritualised and permeated with art forms as scaffolds necessary especially in times of crises. Research has revealed that the uses of candles, clay and painting are handy, especially as alternatives to ordinary prayer in times of difficulties during ministry and mission. The chapter has also proposed that the family of origin of each member be taken aboard during the formation journey, so that the novice remains in a continuum of relations. The chapter has also proposed the programme for the postulants as well as that of the novitiate. The two programmes have to be lengthened to cater for long internships and periods of internalisation, as proposed by the current formators. These programmes have incorporated possible aspects that might bring the transformation that may lead to a better quality of living religious life. Of note was the sustained use of films with strong Catholic flavours, based on the social teachings of the church, which are meant to be psychological anchors for the young religious. These and other suggested alternatives, including books and

pilgrimages, are also meant to deepen knowledge of Catholic catechism based on its main dogmas. Ritualising every segment was seen as memorable and effective in carrying the group to the next stage. What now remain are the concluding remarks of the research which have been reserved for Chapter Five below.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUDING THE FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter sums up the research findings anticipated by the research questions. The conclusion evaluates the gap between theory and praxis in the area of formation of the Holy Cross Sisters and the Dominican brothers and fathers as reflected by those who were interviewed. The chasm is not impossible and therefore suggestions have been proffered to narrow it, and possibly eradicate it altogether in some places.

5.2 What factors influence the ministerial stresses and strains that are usually viewed as lack of an integrated life within the post novitiate programmes of the Holy Cross Sisters and the Dominican fathers and brothers?

The major strain noted in this research is that of contextual theology. The experience of the post-novitiate brothers and sisters has shown that there is a need for doing contextual theology with the broader view that enables the members to adapt to new situations and contexts without imposing the external theories and ideas on the people. Some sisters demonstrated scanty knowledge about inculturation, with the result that they struggled with the European models which did not suit operations among people under African traditional governance systems. The formators and the provincials observed that brothers and sisters lacked dependence on God and commitment to prayer, which was an acute source of their stressed religious lives.

The second strain has been that of an inadequate formation programme, which has incapacitated nuns and members of the clergy from fully practising their spiritual maternal and paternal qualities in their ministry. This has made it necessary to emphasise this aspect in the proposed programme of the novitiate and early ministry.

Thirdly, societal demands and senior members' expectations on the brothers and sisters in temporary vows has also brought about stresses that need the attention of those who accompany them so that they do not give in to the endless demands of ministry.

5.3. What is it about the transition from the novitiate to living community life and ministry that challenges the brothers and sisters in their faithfulness to the values of the vowed life?

The chasm between the inadequate theoretical formation in novitiate and the practical life of ministry and mission creates abrupt and unnerving hurdles for those in temporary vows. Although religious life is entered by adults who make choices of particular Orders, the gap between theory and praxis is not thoroughly appreciated, with the result that the anticipation that those in temporary vows live a reflective life that enables them to make choices that eases the problems of transition from the novitiate, falls far short. The research has demonstrated that reflective life is further compromised by backgrounds that moulded the mixed pool of multi-racial, trans-national-cultural inmates forming religious communities. By the time the person comes to religious life, engrained cultural habits have taken control and are resistant to change. It is up to the formators to help novices and newly professed to digest how best to inculturate the Gospel in less discomforting ways.

The African concept of communitarian sharing among blood relatives and obedience to chiefs and elders often frustrates Christian religious communitarian values. The brothers and sisters in temporary vows can facilitate their faithfulness to living their vowed life by being generous with their gifts and talents, going the extra mile and being creative about what they want to see happening such as an ability to transcend the demands of the chiefs that might frustrate some.

Lack of sound Catholic grounding often impedes smooth transitions between stages, and concerted efforts have to be made to address this problem. To mitigate shocks of transition, brothers and sisters in temporary vows may initiate community sharing that would encourage learning from the example of the saints, some of whom gradually came to terms with Catholic doctrines.

5.4. Does the understanding of being autonomous and living the vow of obedience contribute anything to the problem of living religious life with conviction?

Whilst the vow of obedience has a strong aspect of listening from both its African and Latin roots, there are times when the interpretation of the vow may be highly influenced by cultural contexts. In the Zimbabwe Shona context the superior or

leader can be viewed as a bin where members can empty their frustrations, which may be anathema in non-Shona cultures. Some members may be professed before they are weaned from such cultural norms, which may invite a lot of labelling of disobedience from community members of different cultural backgrounds.

The vow of obedience is very much connected to the vow of poverty for one has to follow the regulations on how the allowances the sisters and brothers receive have to be spent. Some religious members fail to see autonomy when follow ups are made on how they spend their monthly allowances. In reality they have no autonomy to spend their allowances on their blood relatives, who are more deserving than their religious community members who live in 'luxury', far beyond any security fears.

5.5. How can the novitiate training and post novitiate support help them to live happily?

The research has discovered that the awareness of inculturation and the use of African languages and values perspectives could bring about the joy of being an African religious, especially with regards to the models of religious life. It is also important that from the time they are introduced to the formation programme, novices are made aware that they are called to be prophets who reach out to those on the margins of society. Each religious community has its spiritual patrimony that it inherited from those who lived before them. This heritage has to be reflected upon in connection with one's cultural background so that there can be freedom to live in those two worlds without creating superiority of the other. There are times when the sisters and brothers have shown novitiate nostalgia when they are already on ministry. Whilst the appreciation of what rooted them in God is wonderful, they need to radiate the joy of living vowed life in ministry through on-going formation, which is inclusive of all community members. Should there be extra time needed for the period of the novitiate, the sisters in formation should implement this without fear, favour or discouragement because it strengthens the commitment of the individual. The proposed programme in the previous chapter has recommended more time in novitiate, as well as gradual and ritualised exit, to cater for those who believe they left novitiate pre-maturely.

5.6 Theology of hope for the brothers and sisters

Some of the brothers and sisters were touched by having companions on the journey, and seeing senior members who have faithfully lived their lives as religious men and women. They have desired to live with that fulfilment and the joy of being there for the Lord and the community. The desire to belong to the community was expressed strongly by Sr. Gwen when she felt left out when a certain incident happened in her religious community, but she was barred by senior sister from accessing the details. The sense of being part of the community and one with all is emphasised by Schneiders (2013: 488) when she says “this theological re-envisioning of community as a discipleship of equals has led to a completely different understanding of how ministry is discerned in Religious community”. Formators and leaders of the Orders have to practise what they teach by making this a reality for the sisters and brothers in temporary vows so that they can experience being equal with those who came before them.

With the sense of belonging, the brothers and sisters have to remain faithful to their prayer life so that it can become a light to their path of life, since “prayer, both personal and communal, is the seed ground from which the tree of our spirituality grows” (Gribble Richard, CSC in rlr Vol 55, 301; 2016). One of the sisters named Juliet has found that the practice of lighting the candle for her prayer intentions has helped her and given her the hope of knowing that the Lord takes care of her needs. This means that use of symbolism enhances satisfaction in prayer.

The recent motto of the Holy Cross sisters is that hope urges them forward. The forward movement that the brothers and sisters have done in remaining faithful to their calling despite the stresses and difficulties they have found show that they still perceive God as the centre of their commitment. These brothers and sisters are the future middle aged and senior brothers and sisters for the Holy Cross and Dominican Congregations. Their genuine assessment of the realities of their Orders is hope for the future that will be carried on by people who are honest about the situations and the two Orders will have members who implement the inclusive teachings of

Vatican II.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

Due to financial limitations and time constraints as a result of the researcher's duties as a full time formator within the Holy Cross Congregation, she had to limit herself to the sisters and brothers in the post novitiate stage, three formators and two provincial leaders. Other areas of formation such as novices themselves as well as finally professed sisters and brothers who were involved in ministry were not interviewed. Moreover, this research was limited to only one out of four Holy Cross provinces in Southern Africa. In addition, the Catholic Church is composed of many Religious Orders that could have been listened to. In South Africa and in Zimbabwe, there are bodies of Major Superiors who could have given their insight from the perspective of having to deal with many Congregations.

1.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

This research recommends further studies encompassing all communities and individuals within the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross and that of the Dominicans, so as to produce results that can be generalised as tenable in Southern Africa. To validate such a study, further researches should be done to encompass all religious orders within the Catholic Church in the region.

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APPENDECES

APPENDIX A: Introductory letter and informed Consent

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND INFORMED CONSENT
FOR PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Title of the Study:
Bridging the gap between theory and lived experience in formation
Researcher:
Dzivaidzo Mafuta – Student for Masters of Theology degree in Practical Theology
+27 797 730 504, +27 11 7824685, thrsmafuta20@gmail.com

You are cordially invited to participate in an academic research study due to your experience and knowledge in the research area, namely Post novitiate formation. Each participant must receive, read, understand and sign this document *before* the start of the study. If a child is 7-17 years and is requested to partake in a research study, the parent/legal guardian must give consent. Children from 7-17 years are also required to sign an assent form.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of the study is to discover solutions to the problem and difficulties of post novitiate period. The results of the study may be published in an academic journal. You will be provided with a summary of our findings on request. No participants' names will be used in the final publication.

Duration of the study: The study will be conducted over a period of 2 years and its projected date of completion is June 2017.

Research procedures: The study is based on guided questions for interview and questionnaire to be filled. The interview will also be recorded for the purpose of analysis later.

What is expected of you: To prepare for the interview prior to our meeting and then to participate when I meet you for the real interview.

Your rights: Your participation in this study is very important. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without stating any reasons and without any negative consequences. You, as participant, may contact the researcher at any time in order to clarify any issues pertaining to this research. The respondent as well as the researcher must each keep a copy of this signed document.

Confidentiality: All information will be treated as confidential, therefor, privileged information. Your name shall remain anonymous even to the professor at the University to whom I shall hand in everything at the end of the studies. All the notes and recorded data shall also be handed in to the University for safe-keeping for ten years. The relevant data will be destroyed, should you choose to withdraw.

WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT

_____

I hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature of this research.
I understand that I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent andparticipation in the research. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions.

Respondent: _____

Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Contact number of the Researcher:

_____

VERBAL INFORMED CONSENT *(Only applicable if respondent cannot write)*

I, the researcher, have read and have explained fully to the respondent, named _____ and his/her relatives, the letter of introduction. The respondent indicated that he/she understands that he/she will be free to withdraw at any time.

Respondent: _____

Researcher: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B: Interview questions for sisters and brothers

Questionnaires for the sisters and brothers in Temporary Vows

1. What do you still value from what you learnt in the novitiate?
2. Are there any challenges in living the core elements of religious life (vows, prayer, community life and ministry or study), because of the social, cultural, economic situation of where you are?
3. Having lived religious life since your first profession of vows, how do you experience the value of service within community and the Church?
4. With reference to question 2 and 3, ow do you deal with the challenges you encounter in living the core elements of religious life and service?
5. What were your expectations of religious life after your first vows? Were they met or did you experience disappointments?
6. Do you feel that your personal autonomy is affected by living religious life? Explain your experiences around autonomy.
7. How have the relationships within and without the community nourished or impoverished the quality of your religious life?
8. Reflecting on your role models for religious life, how have they influenced your way of living and responding?
9. Does the reality of having somebody from your tribe or sharing your totem in the Congregation or Community influence the way you relate to your sisters and brothers in your life?
10. Having reflected on the challenges and joys of religious life, what makes you still believe that religious life is worthy living?

The following statements show many aspects about religious life. Show by rating yourself how you feel or experience them.

The rating is out of 10. 8-10 means it affects me deeply

6-7 it affects me slightly

0-5 does not affect me

Scores	8-10	6-7	0-5
I usually compare myself with the people of my age			
I always find my autonomy challenged by the vow of obedience			
I find it easier to serve those community members whom I am at home with.			
My natural need for privacy affects my transparency to my community.			
I find it easy to be in touch with my emotions and to talk about them.			
I find it difficult to deal with the humiliation and vulnerability which comes with religious life.			
It is easy for me to show appreciation whenever I receive service and gifts.			
I find it easy to share my gifts and talents with my community.			
My religious life is often influenced by those I consider as my models.			
The way religious life is lived by senior sisters and brothers, at times affects my personal commitment.			

APPENDIX C: Interview questions for formators

Questionnaires for those working in the novitiate formation

1. What do you consider to be the essential elements to be taught to those who are aspiring to take vows at the end of the novitiate?
2. Do you see the novitiate period that your Congregation offers adequate for the internalisation of that learning?
3. What are your joys and disappointments for being an accompanier to others on the way to religious life?
4. What help and support do you need from the leadership of your Congregation to carry out your responsibilities?
5. Do you see novitiate formation work as the responsibility of one person or of a team? What are the advantages and disadvantages of teamwork?
6. How would you want to see your former novices living their commitment before final (perpetual vows)?
7. How would you advise a newly professed to live a happy and fulfilled life as a religious in today's world?

APPENDIX D: Interview questions for Provincial leaders

Questionnaires for the Provincial leaders

1. When you look at your province from 2000 till 2016, are you satisfied with the quality of religious life the brothers or sisters in temporal vows are living?
2. Do you mind to share the number of professions you have had and the number that left before final vows or before ordination?
3. What might be the reason for them to leave after having made a commitment to Jesus?
4. How much help do your temporary (junior) professed brothers or sisters get towards integrating and internalising the theory they learnt in the novitiate formation with their experience of being in community with responsibilities?
5. What more could be done to help the process of integration?
6. What advice would you give to all the formators for novitiate as well as for the ongoing formation of sisters and brothers in temporary vows?
7. Please give suggestions to those sisters and brothers in temporary vows on how to live a happy and fulfilled life as committed religious men and women in Southern Africa.