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THE CHALLENGE OF LIVING INTERCULTURAL Community Life with Specific Reference to the Canossian Sisters Daughters of Charity Servants of the Poor

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A long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Diploma in Spirituality and Spiritual Direction

NAIROBI 2003
To my lecturers, parents, brothers, sisters, friends and to my fellow Sisters of the Canossian family of the Eastern Province, Queen of the Apostles.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work has been accomplished through the encouragement and support of many people. I therefore wish to thank most sincerely all who have assisted me in various ways.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my congregation, Canossian Daughters of Charity Servants of the Poor, for giving me the opportunity to study this course of Spirituality, Religious Formation and Spiritual Direction. I appreciate the support I received especially from my community here in Nairobi.

I thank especially and sincerely my parents, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces for their encouragement. I am deeply grateful to Fr. Quirine K. Ong’om for his patience, availability and listening heart, his prompt intervention and carefully reading over my work and offering useful guidance.

My sincere gratitude to all who assisted me in collection of materials and other details, especially, my superior Marilena Casa, Sr. Maria Orlandin, Fr. J. Chakanza, Fr. Bruno Epis, Mrs. Mable Odima, Br. Benedict, Noel Marie Gama, Sr. Elisabeth Kamuiken, Sr. Rose Amaase and Fr. MacDonald Tom. I cannot manage to mention all because it would require another volume.

Finally, I convey my sincere gratitude to my lecturers and for the permissions granted for the use of material both published and unpublished.
DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Diploma in Religious Formation and Spiritual Direction. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed: CA ____________________________
Name of Student: ____________________________
Date: ____________________________

This long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college Supervisor.

Signed: ____________________________
Name of Supervisor: ____________________________
Date: ____________________________
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The author having lived in various intercultural communities has experienced both the richness and challenges of intercultural living. It is in this line she would like to explore the challenges of intercultural living vis-à-vis the Canossian Sisters Daughters of Charity Servants of the Poor.

This paper does not intend to give the sociological or anthropological reasons for the challenges encountered by intercultural living. Rather, the author will explore some characteristics of culture and how cultures influence the people who live it. She will also try to explore some values of culture and the need for different people to be open to appreciate other cultures and possibly learn them.

The author will try to see how intercultural living can be facilitated among the FdCC whose basic charism is “The Greatest Love” which Jesus showed on the Cross. In this, the author will also mention challenges encountered by intercultural living of which she will try to explore basically some topics relating to Charity/hospitality in the Bible vis-à-vis intercultural generosity called for everyone both in the OT and NT. Climaxed on the Eucharist as the ultimate form of hospitality by Jesus. This will not be an exegesis, rather simply references to certain passages.
Lastly, the author will try to explore the obstacles encountered in an intercultural Canossian community, and the role of the authority in helping to facilitate the health and integrated intercultural living.
Chapter I

Challenges Encountered in Intercultural Living

1.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the challenges faced in intercultural living that is when people of different cultures live together and adopt a new and common culture. Firstly, I will explain the meaning of culture and its characteristics, the importance of communication in intercultural living and its richness, knowing that different cultures have different forms of communication. Hence in a multi-cultural society is both challenging and enriching. To adopt a common culture, the individuals need to have a better knowledge of one another’s culture and be able to learn and share with each other the different cultures. Culture makes the individual’s identity in the society. Therefore, the need to balance is necessary in order that one does not lose completely one’s cultural identity. Consequently, learning does not end with school education; one continues adapting to other cultures in order to grow in knowledge and maturity.
1.1 The Meaning of Culture

"Culture is a totality of socially transmitted behaviour, pattern, arts, beliefs institutions and all other products of human work and thought typical of a population or community of a given time."

People grow up with different behavior and character, because of the environment in which they were brought up. M. Freilich explains that, "Man's behavior is fully explained by culture. Man learns to think, feel, believe and strive for that which his culture considers proper." Thus culture is a vast treasure of learned behaviour that has been passed down through generations. Taylor, on defining culture, says, "culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."

Therefore, the violation of the individual culture is the violation of the person's identity and society. When one speaks of culture, he/she is concerned with the way people live because it is the pattern of their life. People learn to think and believe according to their cultural norms and values. Culture, therefore, is what makes the whole person feel the sense of belonging in the society.

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1.2 The Characteristics of Culture

a) *Culture is Communicative*

For culture to be perpetuated, understood, relevant and passed on from one generation to the next, it must speak to the people who live it. It is through the influence of culture that people learn to communicate. If a particular society is to set up its values and standards and live effectively, they must learn and communicate them. Communication, therefore, is a very important aspect of culture. Culture must speak to the people living it, if they are to share their own cultural values with others and if each individual is to value it. The system of communication by culture is like a journey both by the society and the individual in which one adjusts to the changes of culture and to the people one lives with. Louis Luzbetak says, “Culture is constantly adjusting according to the needs and growth of experience.” Hence, culture is not something stoic, but dynamic. To live in harmony and solidarity, a culture has to be communicated and understood by the people. Communication can be either verbal or non-verbal, whereby one needs to learn the language of culture; as people use symbols in communication to enable them to understand each other. Therefore, learning new values of other people’s culture can be challenging, frustrating and discouraging. Larry A. Samovar discovered that “intercultural communication is difficult. Even when the natural barrier of language is overcome,

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4 L. J. LUBETAK, The Church and Culture: New Perspective in Missiological Anthropology, 156.
we can still fail to understand and to be understood." Communication is not only limited verbally; for instance, when a person is worshiping, there are certain moments of silence, still communication goes on. A touch or other signs and symbols can have various meanings according to various cultures. In order to learn how to communicate, an individual needs a lot of patience and interest in observing some of the non-verbal communication.

b) Culture is Shared

Living in an intercultural setting demands sharing of ideas, gifts and other values. Sharing of differences gives strength and leads to love relationships in a community or society. It is in sharing of one's own identity and culture, which demands some sacrifices, because one needs to be flexible in giving and receiving. In cultural sharing one recognizes that people differ in their approach to life and their ways of living and thinking. William A. Haviland said, "While a culture is shared by the members of a society, it is important to realize that all is not uniformity." There are some differences in living out one's culture in society. For instance, the cultural needs as well as the roles of women and men differ according to the generation gap among people of the same culture. In some African cultures, to see a man fetching water can be a scandal, since fetching water is considered women's work. The same thing can be said of the roles of children, which differ from those of young adults or adolescents.

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Therefore in cultural sharing the adjustments and adaptability need to be learned tactfully. William A. Haviland wrote, "Differing cultural standards may be a source of misunderstanding in a pluralistic society.""  

**c) Culture is Learned**

People are born without a culture; it is acquired from childhood and each individual learns by perceiving and experiencing. Louis J. Luzbetak explains how even animals learn instinctively as they respond to one another. "Ants, bees and other social animals learn through instinct their particular set of rules for the game of success living. Human beings, by contrast, must learn their set of rules from societies. This they do through the process of enculturation."  

One learns slowly one's culture as one grows in a particular society. Louis J. Luzbetak says that culture is learned in four ways: by observation and imitation, by education and unconscious imitation. No one, for instance, teaches a newborn to breast-feed or to cry. The learning of culture is from our ancestor that is passed on to generations, that is "Enculturation." The person acquires this by actively participating in all the beliefs and values of the society. The learning also takes place through imitation; for example, when a mother looks at a baby with a smile he/she responds with a smile too. Enculturation is a life journey process of adapting and adjusting cultural values. It can be, for instance, the different kinds of

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3. The process by which a society's culture is transmitted from one generation to the next.
needs of the individual, such as, eating habits, manner of clothing, and many others. All these are acquired as one grows up in a society.

In order to fit in an intercultural living, one needs to learn from other peoples' culture, the way in which they live their culture. Thus, by being interested in and allowing one's own cultural values to be challenged by the cultural values of others. Duane Elmer experiences learning of culture in this way, "I need to learn and adapt to the cultural lenses of the local people. That would require not setting my lenses aside, but adding theirs to mine." It requires dying to one's own values so that one may adjust to and accept the other cultures. Thomas spoke on the cultural bias in which certain people believe that members of a given cultural group are inferior, so they are treated as ignorant without cultural values. He said, "The habit of using one's own culture as a point of reference for judging other cultures is deeply rooted in man." It is only when one understands other people's cultures that one can see and evaluate both positive and negative values in these cultures and have an objective understanding of his/her own culture.

d) Culture is Dynamic

Dynamic means an on going activity of something, which undergoes changes now and then. Culture is not static or stagnant. As the society changes with modern
technology, culture too changes accordingly with time and place. A person who tries to learn other cultures, is forced to move from his/her own comfortable zone into another world, which makes him or her to be dynamic all the time. The anthropologist Paul Hiebert comments, "At the level of the individual, we can make changes in the lives of people as they move from one job, social class or culture to another." At every stage of life, a person is forced to move from one status to another. The psychological stages of life of every human being are always on the move from childhood until old age. In all these stages, according to Erick Erickson, there are different kinds of changes both in the body and to the culture.

Looking at the society at large, there are vast and tremendous changes taking place every day. Human nature is never the same, thus even culture is on constant change. Hiebert comments, "It is now obvious that any model of society and culture must take into account not only social and cultural structures at a given point in time but also the processes that underlay changes in them over time. Only with dynamic models will we understand what culture and society are all about and be able to modify them to fit our goals." Life to all human beings never remains the same, thus even culture is on constant change. The persons, therefore, have to remain open and flexible in adjusting to new values and cultures so that serious confusions may not take place.

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1.3 Intercultural Living in Respecting One’s Culture as a Gift

All cultures are different in one aspect or another. Every culture is unique, as each individual is unique. There is a great richness when those of cultural differences and uniqueness are lived in their diversity by interacting with each other’s cultural values. Ervin Laszlo states that “In all their variety and diversity, and in the reciprocal influence they exert on one another, all cultures form part of the common heritage belonging to all mankind.” Being in a community is worthy living, only if a person feels secure, accepted and appreciated in sharing one’s gift. It is in committing oneself to learn the cultures of others, that as Duane Elmer said, “will unfold for us new and wonderful dimensions of God’s character, for our God can be properly revealed only through diversity.” This diversity of cultures can be lived interculturally through the following:

1.3.1 Communication

Communication in an intercultural living is an essential tool in disclosing each other’s culture. As seen earlier, communication of culture, the effectiveness of culture is achieved by communication and it is a dynamic reality in which learning never ends. The values of one’s culture are to be given and received; all this is done through communication. Lack of proper communication is a failure and barrier in multicultural living.

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5 E. Laszlo, The Multi-cultural Planet, 135.
6 D. Elmer, Cross-cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry 12.
1.3.2 Language

Language is the most important aspect of culture. For communication to be successful, the language used, whether verbal or non-verbal, should be understandable by both parties. Aylward Shorter says, "Language is the central organ or vehicle of culture." The importance of knowing the language of the people gives confidence especially to those who are foreigners, for example, the tourists, missionaries and many others. This is where acceptance comes in and the people of that particular culture appreciate very much such a person who accepts them because they have seen that he/she is interested in them and in their culture by learning their language. Larry A. Samovar explains, "Language is an organized, generally agreed upon, learned symbol system used to represent human experiences within a geographic or cultural community." It is the language that makes people to interact and argue for the betterment of their living.

1.3.3 Signs and Symbols

Another important aspect of language is the use of signs and symbols: these are simple signs used in a culture but with a meaning that goes beyond the senses and are much valued. The tone of voice used in talking, facial expressions, the kind of dressing and so many other symbols convey various messages and are very meaningful to people in their culture. Thomas compares the sign in this way: "In the United States, the Whites accuse the Blacks of never looking them in the eyes, while the Blacks feel that the
Whites are staring at them. The self-confident gait of the Whites, appear provocative. Each sign or symbol has a different meaning in a particular culture even though it may be very similar in expression. For instance in an African culture, greetings is a sign of courtesy and it can be done anywhere for everybody whether on the way or at home. For everybody whether people meet each other on the way or at home they do greet. Yet the same greeting, that is common in African cultures, differs from place to place. The book entitled, Communication, Culture and Community says, symbols vary from culture to culture. Symbols such as shaking of hands cannot be generalized as proper way of greeting. The use of signs and symbols may inhibit full communication between people of different cultures. The form of greeting in the cities might differ from the rural areas. Whereby, one has to know which symbol to use when a youth is greeting an elder or when a woman greets a man or fellow woman. For example, among the Lomwe of Malawi girls kneel and boys squat when greeting elderly people, men and in-laws. In Uganda, the Baganda women kneel when greeting elders, men and in-laws. All these cultural norms need to be taught and learned so that the individual feels part and parcel of the society when one shares in the culture of that particular society. Nevertheless, "For community to exist the individuals need to interact with each other using signs and symbols to share meaning." Communication gives meaning to culture and it also brings richness in all the cultures interacting.

20 Communication, Culture and Community, 72.
1.3.4 Beliefs

Beliefs in all cultures are very important that one should learn and accept them with all respect. There are so many kinds of beliefs according to cultures. Some beliefs may be meaningless in one culture yet for another it is even a taboo. For instance, "there is no cultural superiority in abstaining from dog meat which the Koreans and many tribes in North-East India find delicious, or from toasted grasshoppers and raw fish which most Japanese enjoy, or mice which the Dahomey of West Africa and many ethnic groups in India find appetizing." While in other cultures it is unheard of to eat these kinds of foods. Those who do not eat these foods have no cause to look down upon these people. It is very embarrassing when other people think that their food is the best. This is a sign of lack of acceptance, diversity and beauty of living inter-culturally. "God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good" (Gen 1:31). Even Peter the apostle had a vision in which God told him not to consider anything unclean that God has declared clean (cf. Acts 10:9-16). Openness to other cultures and traditions can be enrichment, and for a Christian missionary it is necessary.

1.3.5 Ethnocentrism

"Ethnocentrism" is the considering of one's culture as the best and looking down on other cultures. Ethnocentrism is part of human weakness, which is attributed to the environment in which one grew up and from one's family. People learn to compare that one's family is better than of the other. Whereby, it becomes one's pattern of

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22 Referring to a people, nation or cultural grouping.
thinking and subtly spreads itself to cultural comparison. Gerald R. Leslie describes it in this way, "Ethnocentrism is the practice of comparing other cultural practices with those of one's own group automatically finding those other cultural practices to be inferior." It is a human tendency that ethnocentrism appears to be natural. This kind of comparison is also found in religious circles, whereby some people consider their beliefs better than others. This fact also permeates into religious institutes, in which a particular congregation such as Canossian Sisters, Daughters of Charity feels superior to other congregations simply because their foundress (St. Magdalene) was canonized, while other founders or foundresses are not canonized. Hence, the 'Holier than thou' attitude crops in. The most serious cases of Ethnocentrism were apartheid (South Africa) and tribalism, as is the case in Rwanda and Burundi that led to genocide.

Ethnocentrism can be a barrier to (superior-inferior) communication and cultural acceptance. The so-called inferior culture can isolate the individuals who consider themselves superior and vice-versa. It is also the same attitude that brings stereotype in people, for example: expressions like, all Africans are good for nothing; this brings confusion and misunderstanding in community life.

1.4 Recognizing and Appreciating Each Other's Cultural Values as One's Identity in an Intercultural Living

The way human beings live, plan their activities for the day, what to eat, etc; is influence by one's culture. Thus cultural values act as stimuli to individual's daily creativity and mode of thinking. Aylward Shorter tells us that "Cultural identity

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possesses depth, and various levels are commonly identified in a culture." An individual is what he/she is because that is how the environment of one’s own culture has brought him/her up. Quirine Ong’om in his talk on *Sharing Our Unique Gifts Across Cultural Barriers* emphasized, “We do admit that, as we move out of our own cultural environments or come into contact with other cultures we integrate many other values from other cultures. But the fact remains that our own cultures have given us the foundation of our meaningful existence.” Accepting and recognizing other people’s cultural values is to respect their identity as persons created in the image and likeness of God. It also reflects how one respects and appreciates one’s individuality as human being with dignity and security. In recognizing and appreciating other’s gifts as unique individuals, people open up to dialogue, learn from each other and so integrate each other gifts. It brings a desire to broaden one’s horizon in the society and minimizes competition in the community. Ervien Laszlo comments that “Diversity alone does not make a world; at the most it makes a mosaic of individual pieces, which form an interesting but not genuinely interacting pattern. [...] Creating unity calls for action informed by understanding and guided by harmony.”

It is sharing and appreciating the beauty of everyone’s culture that will make intercultural living possible no matter how primitive a particular culture is. It is in cultures where one meets strength and weakness. When these two are merged they can greatly enrich our different cultures.

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1.5 Overcoming Intercultural Stumbling Blocks

Overcoming stumbling blocks in an intercultural living requires self-awareness of one’s own culture and being sensitive to the other cultural values. This is where the learning process should start. Intercultural learning requires good listening. As people of different cultures living together, we need to be aware of our uniqueness and cultural values in the community. In listening to the other cultural values, one goes out of herself, and gains a better knowledge of inter-personal relationships. In the same way, the individual acquires the better understanding of the values of that particular culture; this results into mutual respect and co-existence.

In overcoming intercultural stumbling blocks, one needs to adapt to changes brought by the new culture. This adaptability in an intercultural living is well reached through learning. Every person in the religious community needs to have a good knowledge of the background of each community member, the pattern of family life, whether it is matrilineal or patrilineal. In Malawi most of the tribes (except in the Northern Region) are matrilineal. This means that the husband stays at the home of the wife, and the children belong to the maternal side. In Uganda, on the other hand, they generally have a patrilineal family system. This means, the emphasis is on the father’s side. The wife stays at the husband’s home and the genealogy is traced through the father. We also need to know educational, social and political systems. These factors have contributed to our way of thinking, and the values that have formed us. If we are open to share and to listen to one another with respect, we will be greatly enriched. However, this requires keen interest and flexibility in adapting and adjusting, so that living together in intercultural communities can be harmonious, peaceful and enjoyable.
Spradley McCurdy wrote, “Whenever there is great cultural distance between two people, there are bound to be problems arising from differences in behavior and expectations.” Cultural differences can bring confusions if not understood well. Every person living in an intercultural setting or community should avoid premature judgment before he/she finds out the roots or cause of an underlying perceived problem. There are certain non-verbal languages that if not learned properly can make a person feel embarrassed and offended, unintentionally by the offender. The knowledge and understanding of other people’s cultures will reduce the stumbling blocks in an intercultural living. For instance, when greeting people, some kiss, others hug, others shake hands, others bow or kneel, etc. When we are open to integrate these beautiful gestures they are no longer stumbling blocks but channels of communication.

1.6 Conclusion

Living in an intercultural society is a great challenge to the life of a human being. As said before, every individual is unique; so our perception and understand of the culture differs a lot. Hence, frictions in interaction with each other will be experienced. The challenge is in blending together our cultural differences.

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Culture changes, and likewise people's perception, hence, there is a constant need to struggle in adapting and adjusting if we are to build a healthy intercultural community. Therefore, people living in an intercultural set up have to be very open and sensitive to each other's culture. Flexibility to the changes according to particular place and culture cannot be avoided.
Chapter II

Intercultural Community of the Canossian Sisters
Daughters of Charity

2.0 Introduction

Life in an intercultural religious congregation can be a heavy cross and quite challenging, especially when one culture dominates or some community members regard their culture as superior to that of others. In spite of this cultural ethnocentrism, the dominant culture at times is turned into a charism of the Institute. In this chapter I will speak about the congregation of the Canossian sisters Daughters of Charity, (FdCC) charism, how they live their internationality. The author will also discuss how FdCC blend each other's culture into a common culture, the challenges and difficulties they encounter in intercultural living. We will also try to see how they learn to understand each other's cultural gifts and how they share the uniqueness of their gifts, as their identity demands them. The greatest richness of living in an intercultural community is that a person's self-knowledge is fostered, so one discovers one's specific
cultural identity, and learns to live with it despite having different cultural beliefs and values.

2.1 The Canossian Daughters of Charity

Canossian sisters Daughters of Charity (FdCC) is an international Congregation of Pontifical right. It was founded by St. Magdalene of Canossa in 1808 in Verona, Italy. The Congregation was given Pontifical right by Pope Leo XII on 23rd December 1828. It is a religious family of consecrated women living in community with a common goal. St. Magdalene, founded the congregation with its goal and spirituality, ‘The Greatest Love’ or ‘charity’. “In order to give charity its rightful priority, the institute chose ‘sanctity of its members’ as the first objective, placing before them together with the fulfillment of the two precepts of charity,” thus, “to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.” The name of the congregation FdCC, bears our charism Daughters of “Charity.” Our mother foundress, St. Magdalene of Canossa urged every member of this congregation to respond to God’s love with faithfulness since the Congregation’s charism; ‘Charity’ is God himself. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Magdalene felt that Jesus was not truly loved because he was not known, therefore, she wanted her daughters to make Jesus known so that he would be loved. She chose five ministries of Charity, which are education, Evangelization and Pastoral Care for the Sick, Formation of the laity

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28 RuLe of life Constitutions: Canossian Daughters of Charity, 19.
29 MAGDALENA OF CANOSSA, RLC: FdCC, 18. (RLC: FdCC stands for Rules of the Congregation of the Daughters of Charity)
and Spiritual Exercise. Through these ministries, Magdalene wanted members of the Congregation to render services to our brothers and sisters with charity and intelligence. In this way people would have an integral formation, thus see God’s love and in turn they would love Him. Apart from these five ministries of charity, St. Magdalene insisted more on the sanctification of every member of the Congregation. The fulfillment of these two precepts is not the entire scope of the institute; the aim is to imitate the holy life of our Lord Jesus Christ in the interior and exterior virtues. The foundress desires that every person called to join this institute should have a clear spirit of charity and union of heart, so that the sanctification of every member may be carried out in sharing of gifts with our brothers and sisters for the glory to God. The spirit of charity is also to permeate our community life as consecrated women, and live our differences in unity.

2.2 The Founding Charism Given to St. Magdalene as the Foundress of the Daughters of Charity Servants of the Poor

Since St. Magdalene started the institute, she had the insight of missionary spirit, to make Jesus known to all. She was moved by the Scripture passage, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature” (Mk 16:15). She felt the desire to reach everywhere in the world to proclaim the Good News of Love, thus she wrote in her Memoirs. “I was left with the consuming desire to work for the Lord and to seek
nothing else but the Lord. I felt disposed to serve him even to be ground into dust in order to be spread [...]"\(^{30}\)

On 26\(^{th}\) February 1860, the first missionaries started to fulfill the desires of our foundress by opening the doors to the mission. "With an extraordinary joy of the spirit they undertook the Exodus journey towards a country they did not know Hong Kong."\(^{31}\)

From Hong Kong the Canossians have spread all over the world. (See Appendix A)

2.2.1 Charisms

In the New Testament the first person to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit was Mary mother of Jesus (Luke 1:35) and then on the birth of the Church to the Apostles (Acts 2:2- 4, 14). Holy Spirit is the Advocate promised by Jesus to direct and guide His people. God is always faithful. Even today, he continues to give generously his gift of the Spirit. Some people receive it in a special way in order to carry out God's work of salvation. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) it says, "Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of the people and to the needs of the world."\(^{32}\) Charism is a gratuitous gift of God given to all the believers in diversity. St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians says: "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit, there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings, but the same God who produces all of them in everyone" (1Cor. 12:4-6). God's gifts are given in different

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dimensions of works but every gift aims at one goal, which is the building up of the Church and the salvation of all humankind. The gifts of the charisms have been flourishing in the Church through different religious institutes. Each institute differs from the other according to the kind of gift that was given to the founder or foundress.

St. Magdalene of Canossa received the gift of the Spirit, which led her to become in her own time, an effective witness of the mystery of salvation. Jerome Biblical Commentary explains the wide range of the charism, “Diverse as they are in operation and manifestation, all the gifts come from the one divine source and are directed to the one aim of promoting the well being of the church.” Antonio, quoting St Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, says, “Only the one who has faith, is baptized, has received the Holy Spirit and been made a member of the Church can be made a sharer in its charisms” (1Cor. 12:12ff).

As we are one body with different parts, the head being Christ, so we do share the same gifts. This gives light to understand the needs of the church and to move out to our brothers and sisters. It is the same spirit, which gives energy, ability and creativity to take the responsibility given with courage. Consequently, the apostles, after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, moved with enthusiasm to communicate the same spirit to others.

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33 RLC, FdCC, I.  
2.2.2 Founding Charism

"Consecrated persons are called to be a leaven of communion at the service of the mission of the universal Church by the very fact that the manifold charisms of their respective institutes are granted by the Holy Spirit for the good of the entire Mystical Body, whose up building they must serve (1 Cor. 12:1-11)." Therefore, the charism is like a mustard seed, which grows into a big tree later. It is the same gift that Magdalene received and enabled her with determination and enthusiasm to bring it to real existence, which continues to manifest after her death. The Vatican II says "The charism of the Founders' appears as an experience of the Spirit transmitted to their followers to be lived by them to be preserved, deepened and constantly developed in harmony with the body of Christ. Continually in a process of growth." St. Magdalene was a woman of prayer, and through her prayers, she received her charismatic intuition. She wrote in her memoirs, "During Holy Week while reading in a small meditation book the verse Inspice et fac Secundum exemplar, I experienced the inner stirring, so strong that it remained with me for several days. I felt urged to follow the Crucified Christ but without understanding anything in particular." These insights moved her when writing the Rules of the institute by taking the virtues of the Crucified Christ. The Crucified Lord is

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36 Vita Consecrata, 47.
37 Mutuae Relationes, II, 2.
38 look and do according to the example.
39 MAGDALEN OF CANOSSA, MAA, 37.
the model par excellence of the love of God who was stripped of everything on the cross except of his greatest love. The *eighth General Chapter of the Canossians* emphasizes that, "Christ Crucified is the first original treasure that we should always cherish." The imitation of Christ Crucified became the unchangeable norm in the life of St. Magdalene. The foundress insisted that in the candidates who aspire to join this institute, charity is the first virtue to be looked into seriously, she said, "Charity [...] in modern terms is a synthesis of the spirit of the institute. It is the vital nucleus of our charism." As members of the institute we contemplate the greatest love which Christ manifested on the cross so that each member in this family is imbued and animated by his spirit which is, in our *Rule of Life*, "a spirit of charity, gentleness, meekness and humility, a spirit of zeal and fortitude, a most amiable most generous and most patient spirit." It is this spirit of charity that brings and binds us together as members of one family.

The desire of our foundress for all the Canossian members is to live together in perfect union of 'one mind and heart.' As she wrote in the *Rule of Life*, "By our specific charism, we are called to express in our community in the most perfect way possible the gift of communion." Apart from our ministries of charity, Magdalene stresses union of hearts in the communities, which when lived authentically becomes the gospel's witness.

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40 *FdCC*, 5.
41 E. Pollonara, *Magdalene of Canossa and the First Formation*, 64.
42 *RLC*: *FdCC*, 8.
43 *RLC*: *FdCC*, 43.
2.3 The Sense of Belonging in the Canossian Intercultural Family Setting

In the first chapter I explained about a person’s identity and the need for knowing one’s culture and the society to which one belongs as a way of appreciating intercultural living. Looking from the same perspective, life in the Canossian family is lived through the specific charism, which was given to St. Magdalene as a gift. Therefore, each member needs to discover and to have a deeper self-knowledge of one’s identity, which is the charism of the foundress St. Magdalene. The way to live this charism is a journey of discovering one’s identity and growing into a deeper knowledge of it. Amedeo Cencini emphasizes that “Charism is this project: to discover it, is to know oneself, to live it, is to realize oneself in all its fullness according to the ways that are not totally foreseen and that lead beyond what the individual is normally expecting from oneself.”

Living together in the Canossian family demands a lot, firstly, accepting one’s call and, secondly, evoking the truth of one’s being, so that one can realize the charism gradually.

Better knowledge of one’s charism gives a feeling of belonging to the community and the life it gives. In living an internationality and intercontinental like, Europe, America, Africa and other continents, in genuine love a person feels a sense of belonging. The attention and support given to new members when they have just joined the community helps them to insert themselves in the new environment with warm accompaniment and orientation till they feel adjusted. Amedeo Cencini wrote, “This sense of belonging is

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44 A. CENCINI, You Shall Love the Lord your God: Psychology of Encountering God, 47.
not purely a sentimental feeling, like a gratifying sensation to be comfortable together, among people who like one another, to avoid both loneliness and the nagging preoccupations that we face in the secular life."\textsuperscript{45} The sense of belonging to the Canossian family is the knowledge; a reflection and love of the Canossian family, whereby it makes members in the community love one another as sisters, not strangers. St. Magdalene said, "Charity knows no boundaries [...] regarding the way of loving one another, let the sisters observe the way in which Jesus loved the Apostles."\textsuperscript{46} It is a special call from God, which brings each one of them together, which is not blood-family relationship but is a relationship that springs from the gift given from God himself.

2.4 Sharing Our Uniqueness in a Canossian Intercultural Communities

For people from different cultures to live a common life, the individual needs to open up one's heart to one another. Our mother foundress said, "We are called, by the expressed will of our foundress, to love one another with a universal affection without distinction, aware that perhaps there is no other institute from which the Lord demands a more strict union and mutual charity."\textsuperscript{47} Living in a community made up of different nationalities, humanly speaking, seem something strange and impossible. Nevertheless this is a witness to the world full of ethnic and tribal divisions/wars. Our intercultural

\textsuperscript{45} A. CENCINI, \textit{You Shall Love the Lord your God: Psychology of Encountering God}, 49.

\textsuperscript{46} MAGDALENE OF CANOSSA, \textit{RLC: FdCC}, 247.

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{RLC: FdCC}, 46.
living is a challenge to the world that it is possible for people of different ethnic groups to live together. Our intercultural living is the self-realization that God is the one who called each one of us to come together as sisters of one Father in heaven. In so doing, though we are unique, our differences need to be shared and appreciated in order to encourage one another so that the community can grow strong and in joy. Every individual in a Canossian family is supposed to be aware of her personal gifts. The affirmation and encouragement we give to each other helps us to become aware of our personal gifts. Allowing and welcoming the creativity of individuals and the hospitality we show to one another helps the members to share freely their gifts. Jean Vanier wrote that, "[…] It is important that the gift of each member is recognized and that each is accountable to the others for the use to which this gift is put." These gifts are not necessarily tangible material gifts; even the works one does is a love that can be shared in different dimensions of life. "There are people who have the gift of being able to sense immediately, and even to live the sufferings of others — that is the gift of compassion." There are different kinds of gifts in an individual that, when the communities live authentically in respecting each other, community life indeed becomes a privileged place of formation and growth. Where the person’s gifts are appreciated, the person is energized and even motivated for the unknown gifts, which were yet to be realized.

Being members of an international community as well as a missionary congregation, the Canossians use some common languages, for instance English,
Italian, French and other languages according to the Provinces. Apart from the common languages, there are symbols and non-verbal languages that are used in a certain province. Local languages are learnt and there are symbols and non-verbal languages, which need to be communicated and shared, so that every member in the community has an idea of different symbolic values according to the individual. The fact that we move from one country to another or from one Province to another we are challenged to learn many languages and adapt to different cultures. This facilitates an understanding among community members.

2.5 The Essence of Caring and Sharing in an Intercultural Living as Daughters of Charity

The charism of our institute demands manifestation of the greatest love; therefore, the understanding of it should be seen in deeds. The 8th General Chapter reminds us that, “The charity which characterizes the Daughters of Magdalene of Canossa is the charity of Jesus Christ, which reaches to blood shedding.” Humility in charity is the spirit of the Canossian family. In caring for one another in the community, one has to be sensitive and give a listening ear to the other.

Love and care for one another is the core of our charism, which is charity. Every member in the community has to take a responsibility of caring for one another especially the weak sick. The love and renewed energy drawn from the Cross has to be shared in the community, and prayer helps the members to sense the needs of every person. St. Magdalene urged her members saying, “In the exercise of the works of

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50 BTECP: Contained in the Major Acts of the 8th General Chapter: Institute of the FdCC, 34.
charity, on account of our misery to which everything is a stumbling block, they run the risk of cooling their relationships and of hurting and embittering one another if they are not well grounded interiorly." The foundress saw the importance of deepening one's faith in God through the light of the Spirit so that one is able to discern and see the needs of others. Those who have few talents are to be encouraged and supported with special care. Those who are physically sick and elderly should be given the information both about the family news and apostolate to make them feel that they are part of the community. The sick members are to be looked after with gentleness and to make sure that their needs are being provided. Therefore, members should experience the warmth and understanding from their colleagues. G. Kitholil wrote, "As they all are marching towards the same goal, when they love and serve one another, they share in the love of Christ himself." The care and love for each other brings joy to the person in need and all grow together in holiness. It is a journey done in togetherness side by side.

2.6 The Family Spirit in a Canossian Intercultural Community

The person's identity and dignity comes to its realization when lived in authentic community life. The community is supposed to be a home for all the individuals who are called to live in communion, responding to God's love. For Canossians, who are international, we are challenged with the need to integrate different cultures, which each member brings. Creating better atmosphere for every member in the community

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52 G. Kitholil, Communion in Community: A Renewal Programme for Religious, 84.
requires freedom of expression, so that every individual in the community should feel accepted and loved. "They must love one another sincerely without distinction, each one wanting what the other desires and not wanting what displeases the other." Intercultural living may help people to grow spiritually, socially, culturally and intellectually; community members are free to share their cultural diversity. One good example was in 1995 - 1999 when I was in Bukoba community of Northern Tanzania. The community was composed of eleven sisters from seven nations namely: Italy, India, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania, Japan and Singapore. What I experienced was that the community was open and gave space to every member or members to express their cultural values through sharing. This sharing was either formal or informal. It could be expressed in faith sharing, recreations, and decorations, cooking a variety of foods on certain occasions, prayers or informally in personal interaction. Every member had a chance to prepare the food so that all the members in the community could share and enjoy as a family. At the time of recreation every member was free to express her cultural creativity, e.g.; a dance or how the elders in the society tell the young ones old stories, something common in African cultures. Depending on the person organizing recreation, especially on feasts, many cultural values were drawn out to enrich the members.

This kind of experience may help members feel at home and grow in cultural knowledge, so as to appreciate other peoples’ culture with their richness. It also helps

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individuals to appreciate their non-cultures, which they might have taken for granted. Community members also learn the values of communication and sharing, as A. Shorter said, "Without communication between cultures and religion it is impossible for any to survive, and it is especially difficult for a universal religion like Christianity to survive."54

The affirmation and concern, which all the members give to each other, and the promptness to learn, make the atmosphere in the community hospitable and peaceful for all the members. "Communication between cultures can only take place effectively through dialogue and participation, through listening and through readiness to learn."55

The active participation of self-giving of every member in the community gives courage to all the members to be aware and discover their different talents and share them in common.

2.6.1 Dialogue and Forgiveness

Henri Nowen desired and encouraged people to fight for peace; he wrote, "our identity is in the one who loves us."56 As Daughters of Charity, we strive for peace and unity in the communities. The spirit of dialogue and forgiveness is indispensable, especially in the life style of our institute, which is humility in charity, being servant to each other. St. Magdalene, the foundress, wrote in the rule of life that, "If a Sister had given occasion of even the least displeasure to another she must not go to bed at night

54 A. SHORTER, African Christian Theology, 139.
55 A. SHORTER, African Christian Theology, 132.
56 H. NOWEN, The Road to Peace, 192.
until she has asked forgiveness and is reconciled with the Sister she offended." Of course we are also aware of the fact that some people need time before approaching them in order to talk over things and reconcile. Dialogue in an intercultural living serves a lot in maintaining the spirit of our charism and union of heart. The spirit of openness helps the community to know one another. Hence, when conflicts arise, forgiveness is easily facilitated. The contemplation of the virtues of Christ Crucified, which are the spirit of charity, meekness humility and many others can help the members to be aware of their human vulnerability and the realization of the mercy of God. Premature judgment on others is against the growth of community in dialogue and forgiveness. In judging, a person projects one's own feelings into others. Henri Nowen calls that "putting other people into little boxes [...]. In doing this, we take the position that new life is no longer possible in our relationships with people." People can build the defense mechanism, as Henri Nowen comments, "I have lived fifty years [...] Don't expect me to change" Such people reaches the stage of avoiding taking risks in life, hence, they stop growing. Taking a risk with new ideas is like a grain of wheat, dying in the soil and later giving new life.

"Dialogue comes from our deep conviction that all human beings are members of one family." Fidelity to dialogue in living intercultural community is where a person realizes that he/she is vulnerable which needs to be cared for nurtured and

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58 H. NOWEN, The Road to Peace, 206.
59 H. NOWEN, The Road to Peace, 206.
protected. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are enlightened in community in spite of the differences of cultures and nationalities.

### 2.7 Conclusion

Living together in communion, in intercultural community as seen above, is a challenge but at the same time is enrichment. The beauty of sharing our differences and gifts gives meaning to the call of the love of God, to which everyone responds eagerly, though with daily struggles. Nevertheless, difficulties and barriers of intercultural living although the care given to each other. The encouragement and support of everyone in the community will give rise to the spirit of charity as the charism bears its name. Dialogue gives the space to see the failures done and successes achieved so that as a family journeying towards sanctity should be enriched through daily transformation. As Canossian Daughters of Charity, we have only one aim: drawing the love of God on the cross and give it to others like servants, with the goal of “making Jesus known and loved.” We witness to the world through our oneness in the community that it is possible for people of different cultures, nationalities and characters to come together and live as children of one Father in Heaven, the creator and sustainer.
Chapter III

Biblical Perspective on Hospitality and Interculture

3.0 Introduction

The identity of the Canossian Daughters of Charity (FdCC), as presented in chapter two, is The Greatest Charity manifested on the Cross. This charity, as mentioned already in the previous chapter, is lived in the Canossian community through sharing of their different cultures. The call to sharing cannot be lived fully and properly without looking into the biblical aspect of hospitality. Hospitality in this regard goes together with charity. The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship defined hospitality as, “The art or practice of being hospitable; the reception and entertainment of guest, visitors, or strangers with liberality and good will.”\footnote{P. E. Fink, ed., The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship, 558.} I will base my reflection more on the examples from both the Old Testament and the New Testament respectively looking at how hospitality was lived out in the Scriptures. Finally, I will reflect on and explain the climax and gift par-excellence of the hospitable God in the Eucharistic celebration.
It is in this Eucharist celebration that the different cultures of the Canossian community build their unity.

3.1 Hospitality in the Old Testament

"The Hebrew Scripture (OT) contain no single word for hospitality, but the activity itself is prominent especially in the patriarchal stories and accounts in books of the OT." Hospitality is defined in the book of Genesis where we see Abraham manifesting hospitality to strangers (Gen. 18:1ff). He welcomes the three strangers as he says "Sir, if I may ask you this favor, please do not go on past your servant. Let water be brought, that you may bathe your feet." Abraham kindly gives hospitality with a generous heart to strangers. Hospitality in the O.T was considered as a virtue. Lot also welcomed the two angels, "please, gentlemen, come into your servant’s house for the night, and bathe your feet [...] (Gen. 19:2)." From the Interpreter’s Bible commentary we read,

Lot, [...] cannot permit the strangers to pass the night unprotected from unchaste designs of his neighbours. He is even willing to sacrifice his daughters for the sake of the well being of the travelers, whom he treats as his own guests; and he is finally rescued from his plight only by the superhuman intervention of the strangers themselves.63

This image of hospitality shows that anyone who seemed to be a stranger or an unknown visitor was supposed to be given a warm welcome without being asked which race or nationality one came from. The speech of a Levite "[...] No one has taken me into his house," (Judges 19: 16 – 20) and the punishment given to the Benjamites shows

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62 D.N. Freedman, Anchor Bible Dictionary III, 299.
63 C.M. Laymon, ed., The Interpreter's One-volume Commentary on the Bible, 17.
that hospitality was an obligation among the Israelites. Another excellent example of hospitality can be seen from the book of 1Kings, in which the widow from Zarephath offered hospitality to Elijah at the expense for her son and herself (17:1-24). She gave out her only portion of food to prophet Elijah. The result was that she never suffered the drought, and the small portions of flour and oil did not run out. This passage manifests the power of God on the virtue of hospitality, as it is also echoed in Pope John Paul II’s Lenten message, “It is more blessed to give that to receive.”

This indeed is one of the greatest incidents of hospitality one could think of: to empty one’s whole pot for the sake of an unknown visitor or stranger at the expense of one’s family. Though the alien had no right to the food of the widow and her son, hospitality made it possible for the widow to provide for the needs of Elijah. This is the kind of hospitality that demands sacrifice of one’s own desires and will.

3.2 Hospitality in the New Testament

The NT brings no vivid themes of hospitality. Luke portrays the hospitable attitude of a Pharisee to Jesus (Lk 7:36ff). A Pharisee invited Jesus in his house to eat together. Jesus was also warmly received in the home of Mary and Martha (Jn 11: 20; 12:1-8). Jesus not only received hospitality but he also gave hospitality to all humankind. During his ministry he fed the people, he cured and finally he gave his very self by dying on the cross for the salvation of the human race.

Hospitality when offered from the depth of one’s heart definitely brings life. The letter to the Hebrews emphasized the need for hospitality. Not only human hospitality

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but also hospitality towards God through human beings, “Acting on behalf of one of the ‘least of these’ constitutes an act on behalf of God. Hospitality towards God is not simply a spiritual matter, but a response of the whole self in the midst of the quite mundane affairs of everyday life.” Hospitality is recommended to all Christians. Paul writes to the Christians that by offering hospitality to others they entertained angels (Heb. 13:1-3). Paul might be referring to Abraham’s experience, in which in offering hospitality he entertained angels unknowingly (Gn. 18:1ff) Peter E. Fink writes, “Hospitality, which is a dominant element contributing to the climate of group experience, influences architectural and environmental form. An intangible ingredient affecting how people act in groups, hospitality calls from deep within an individual a sense of identity and a feeling of being at home” St. Peter, in his letter, emphasized the need for hospitality as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be at the service of others (1Peter 4:9-10).”

Therefore, Canossians Daughters of Charity, as good Christians, should manifest this hospitality in their communities. Thus their hospitality will be lived together through the celebration of the Eucharistic meal open to other cultures unconditional love for each other and above all in taking care of the poor, the weak and the needy.

3.3 The Hospitable God in the Eucharist

From the preceding examples, hospitality does not only mean welcoming of strangers or visitors in the community. Hospitality embraces our totality as human

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beings living in communion with God and our neighbors. In celebrating the Eucharist in a multicultural community, hospitality as a form of communion helps to nourish and strengthen the bond of unity among members of the community. Eucharistic celebration as a climax of communion with God and our neighbors is the true sign of hospitality. We read in the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians that the divisions which were among them when celebrating the Lord's Supper were due to lack of charity among some of the members (1Cor. 11:17-34). Paul admonishes the Corinthians that their worship has to correspond to the sign of unity, which they celebrate as a community. Table fellowship should be a symbol of unity and hospitality, not selfish and greedy.

St. Paul's words resound the Malawian culture. In their proverb, Mwana wa nzako ndi wako yemwe ukachenjera manja udya naye. ('the child of your friend is like your own child, if you are wise enough you will eat together the fruits of that child in future). It means that if a person takes care of other people's children as one's own, in future those children will respect that person in the same way as one did to them. This proverb emphasizes hospitality among the Malawians, looking at their extended families; every family should not segregate others, especially orphans, at times of meals. This form of charity promotes unity in the society.

Jean Vanier, says, "[...] Celebration restores hope and brings us the strength to live with the suffering and difficulties of everyday life."\(^{67}\) These difficulties come due to the uniqueness of the members in the community. The celebration of the Eucharist is

\(^{67}\) J. VANIER, Community and Growth, 232.
the hospitality that God the Father gives daily to all the people of good will. It is the hospitality that expresses the true meaning of community in a multicultural living. In the Eucharistic celebration, people offer all their pains and frictions of everyday life to God, together with the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Hospitality, as a form of charity, "unites everything that is most human and most divine in community life."

The Eucharist is the greatest hospitality, which God the Father gave to us through his Son Jesus. Thus the Canossian Daughters of Charity (FdCC), have the Eucharistic meal as the center of their community living. The Eucharist is the source of the charism for FdCC, as they strive to make Jesus known and loved throughout the world. St. Magdalene emphasized the importance of the Eucharist when she said, "The Eucharist, is the center of the universal Church and each of our communities expresses and at the same time fulfills the prayer of Jesus: 'That they may be one in us, so that the world may believe.'" Like Jesus who gave us a good example of hospitality by eating with tax collectors, we too are meant to go beyond our differences, by eating together with those we do not like. When people share a meal, they become friends, more strongly united. This is the same kind of celebrations done in most of the African traditional societies. Celebrations unite people in the village in a loving way.

The Eucharistic celebration poses a challenge to the Canossians in their way of living. As members coming from different cultures, they have to be truly Eucharistic in showing hospitality to each other because they share the same unity, the Eucharistic table. Jean Vanier wrote, "We become bread for each other because God became bread..."

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68 J. VANIER Community and Growth. 238.
69 RLC: FdCC, 13.
for us; it is a meal at the heart of the community.’” Community of the consecrated people is a place where we celebrate our differences and togetherness, enriching each other with different cultural values. John Paul II in *Vita Consecrata* says, “The fraternal life, understood as a life shared in love, is an eloquent sign of ecclesial communion.”

The celebration of the Eucharist reminds all the consecrated people of the Paschal Mystery of Christ, which is the passion, death and resurrection. The Eucharistic celebration renews the relationship of one another in the community wherever the members have failed to fulfill this commandment of charity. Thus, Pope John Paul II in *Vita Consecrata* says, “[...] a love nourished by the word and by the Eucharist, is purified in the Sacrament of Reconciliation [...]”,

St. Magdalene urges her members to be prophetic witnesses of unity to the world. She wanted them to be of one heart and soul, bound in charity that should become a tangible sign in the community. Vatican II recommended all those who commit themselves to God, saying,

They who make profession of the evangelical counsels should seek and love above all else God who has first loved us (cf. 1Jn. 4:10). In all circumstances they should take care to foster a life hidden with Christ in God (cf. Col. 3: 3), which is the source and stimulus of love of the neighbor, for the salvation of the world and the building up of the Church.

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71 *Vita Consecrata*, 42.
72 *Vita Consecrata*, 42.
73 *Perfectae Caritatis*, 6.
The celebration of the Eucharist is the worship that unites all the nations and cultures, because people share the same Body of Christ. Hospitality is one of the most striking features of the early Church, whereby Christians like St. Paul could seek their help for food, lodging and other necessary needs in any Christian community house when they were on their journey for the mission. Hospitality was considered an important virtue; thus the apostles and any other ordinary Christians who were moving around had to be welcomed among fellow Christians (Heb 13: 2). All this was done in following the good example of Jesus who received people without discrimination (Luke 9:11; 15: 2).

3.4 Conclusion

Through the examples of hospitality in the Scriptures, I can say that Christians, particularly the FdCC can bring the message of love and unity through their charitable acts and warm hospitality, which they show to each other in the community, despite their cultural differences. The great model, the hospitable Father who nourishes them daily with his tender love through the celebration of the Eucharist, neutralizes the differences. In following Christ, participating in his Salvation Mission, we are called not only to share in his hospitality through Eucharist; we are called to manifest this hospitality to all peoples, regardless of our cultural differences.
Chapter VI

The Beauty and Challenges of Living Intercultural Community Life in the Canossian Daughters of Charity

4.0 Introduction

After looking at the biblical perspective on hospitality in the previous chapter, especially on the gift of the Eucharist, which is the unity and beauty of our Christian life, in this chapter I will show how the Canossian Daughters of Charity witness to this great gift given by God this charity, which means service. This service follows the consequences of bearing some of the difficulties faced and giving up one’s selfishness and doing little sacrifices. I will discuss some of the obstacles faced in Canossian community life in their attempt to witness this greatest love. Finally, I will also explain the role of authority, which is also at the service of this charity in building up the unity of the community.

4.1 Witness of Charity as a Prophetic Sign

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians urges all the Christians to maintain God’s unity in order to fulfill God’s mission (cf. Eph 4:1-6). Unity gives happiness to people and there is a maxim that says, “The strength of a rope is in its closely-knit thread pieces of jute.”
The closer the Canossian sisters are, the more significant it appears in their prophetic witness to the people and the more authentic and strong they will be in the midst of people. *Perfectae Caritatis* says, "Religious, as members of Christ, should live together as brothers and sisters and should give pride of place to one another in esteem, (cf. Rm. 12:10), carrying one another's burdens (cf. Gal. 6:12)."  

Because every member in the Canossian family has been called and chosen by God, their common life is bound by the spirit of the same God who called them, not by the blood relationship, which every individual has from their biological families. "The Church entrusts to communities of consecrated life the particular task of spreading the spirituality of communion, first of all in their internal life and then in the ecclesial community [...]". Particularly in today's society, which is divided by ethnic hatred. In John's gospel Jesus said to his disciples, "This is how they will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (Jn. 13:35). This charity is nourished by the spirit of God through the word and the daily celebration of the Holy Eucharist. It seems impossible that the members who do not know each other and with the differences of cultural backgrounds, can be the sign of love and unity to each other. But with God everything is possible. The members have to pray unceasingly so that the spirit of prayer, can lead them "[...] to discover his image in our brothers and sisters and to perceive the manifestations of his love in the daily events of life."
As consecrated persons, each member in the community must love the other unconditionally, with all their differences and shortcomings. Thus the world can see that although people come from different parts of the world they can live together in the love of God. As Jean Vanier said, "God seems pleased to call together in Christian communities people who, humanly speaking, are very different, who come from very different cultures, classes and countries."  

In my personal understanding, living an intercultural community does not mean to be equal and live in uniformity. God knows that to live in diversity is good and enriching. That is why he created each individual in a unique way. Nihal Abeyasingha pointed out, "People differ not in soundness of reasoning but in the principles and modalities that govern its exercise." Every individual differs according to one's culture that shapes and models him/her as shown in previous chapters. Nevertheless, living in an intercultural community demands the denial of one's self (cf. Mk 8:34). If every member in the community desires God with genuine eagerness, God comes in one's heart and transforms him/her. This love is witnessed in the Canossian family through the way they like each other. For instance, if a member comes from another province or member comes to any Canossian community, for whatever reason, she is welcomed and we feel that we are members of the same family with a common culture that is love. One's daily needs are met like those of any other member in the community. Prayer,

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77 J. VANIER, *Community and Growth*, 34.
78 N. ABEYASINGHA, "The Culture of Religious Life Within Asian Culture", 281.
meals and recreation are done together, so that one feels at home everywhere one goes. The disciples of Jesus, too, understood this call to community living, as Paul Molinari states, "That they would share his life and mission, not only as individuals, as free — lances, but as members of the community which his love had gathered, a community whose vitality depended wholly on its communion in him."79

The Canossian living is centered on the Greatest Love of the Crucified Christ. When every member in the community feels that warmth and enthusiasm of every individual, the members will be more open and ready to share and receive each other's cultural differences and inspirations.

4.2 The Obstacles Encountered in an Intercultural Community of the Canossian Daughters of Charity

As mentioned before, the Institute of the Canossian Daughters of Charity is international and missionary by nature. Therefore, their communities are made up of members coming from different cultural backgrounds. Their goal and identity is the perfection in charity. These are high goals to which they are called as their foundress mentioned. This encourages the sisters not to be frightened, but naturally one expects difficulties among normal human beings as they live together. As is seen in the early Christian communities, they had their struggles, which they faced as people coming

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79 P. MOLINARI, "Community, Communion in Christ", 41.
from different cultural backgrounds. The same is true of the Canossians. Because of their internationality and imperfections as human beings, they encounter challenges due to their cultural background and environment.

One of the main challenges is the generation difference, where there is a great misunderstanding between the old members and the young members in the community. The majority of our European and Asian sisters are above 40 years while the majority of African sisters are below 40 years. This generation gap poses a big challenge to intercultural living when the older sisters do not appreciate the ideas of the young sisters. The old sisters say that they are the custodians of religious life. It is difficult for them to hear and accept ideas from young sisters. It is even worse at times, if the young member is the superior of the community. The older sisters criticize her, citing their opinions as the best way of doing things. This brings tensions and conflicts in the community.

Joan Burke explains in her Case Study, "If the junior who is *Ma super* (mother superior) does not make a special effort to seek the counsel of the older sisters, the latter may increasingly withdraw their active participation, and begin to speak in allusive ways of the *baleke* (young) who do not respect their *bambuta* (the old)." Generally there are also cultural difficulties and misunderstanding between the Europeans and the Africans because they come from cultures, which are typically different. For example, the understanding of languages and other behavioral patterns, whereby some members \[80\]

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find it difficult to be detached from their own culture and learn other cultures. Some of these misunderstandings have been explained in chapter one in the use of signs and symbols.

The way that the western culture interprets hospitality is different from the way the Africans interpret it. For instance, the whites need to be informed of the day and time when one wants to pay them a visit, especially if one intends to eat with them. While for the Africans one can visit at any time; no matter how little food one has, they just share. Even if it is not a mealtime, the meal is prepared specially for a visitor to eat or a simple drink is given. There is a Malawian proverb that says, *Mlendo ndi mame sachedwa kupululuka*, which means “a visitor is like dew it drops off quickly.”

There are so many tensions and misunderstandings encountered in an intercultural setting like the Canossian Institute. The environment and situation one lives in contributes to these challenges. These struggles, I suppose, come from human weakness and the social factors that cannot be avoided. Nevertheless, I can say that the Canossian communities enjoy both human richness and weaknesses. Both the individual and the community are on a constant journey towards transformation, in the process of openness, acceptance and forgiveness, as Jean Vanier says, “There is no ideal community [...]”

4.3 The Role of Authority on Charity in Living an Intercultural Community

According to the Canossian lifestyle of humility in service, the superior exercises her mandate as a servant since our name carries it, Canossian Daughters of

Charity (FdCC) servants of the poor. The Code of Canon Law states, "The authority which Superiors receive from God through the ministry of the Church is to be exercised by them in a spirit of service. In fulfilling their office they are to be docile to the will of God, and to govern those subject to them as children of God." The superior is to be the model to the community in showing good example in the spirit of charity. The Rule of Life emphasizes the role of the superior, saying, "In relationships she fosters understanding and mutual love in a style of humility and truth, meekness and patience." The role of authority in the community is to see that the members are united and the superior is among them to maintain that unity. Authority has its source from God. This was manifested through the teaching and real examples in Jesus as he confronted the mother of the sons of Zebedee saying, "The son of Man came to serve not to be served..." (cf. Mt. 20:25-28). The people in authority have to motivate members in the community by encouraging them. The superior has to build mutual trust and confidence in each member of the community so that peace and harmony may reign. This kind of service helps members to be creative and to grow in understanding and acceptance of each other. This way of living demands a vital role of the superior: to have self-knowledge and understand human cultures, including her own culture. *Vita Consecrata* illustrates it in this way, "[...] authority must be above all fraternal and spiritual, and while those entrusted with it must know how to involve their brothers and sisters in the decision-making process [...]".

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82 *The Code of Canon Law*, 618.
83 *RLC*: FdCC, 47.
84 *Vita Consecrata*, 43.
Some of the misunderstandings arise because of ignorance of cultural diversity. The superior being the bridge builder of love and unity, has to be alert to the differences of cultural values. Furthermore, the superior, being in a position of fostering the growth of every member in the community, has to be a person of prayer so that she may be in a disposition of discerning the will of God in the lives of her members. Magdalene the foundress of FdCC, encouraged superiors to, “Seek above all to establish an atmosphere of prayer and faith, which will assist the sisters to renew their spiritual life every day.”

For the superior to maintain that spirit of charity and unity she has to give space to the sisters to be themselves, thus allowing the freedom of dialogue showing flexibility in attentive listening to all the sisters despite their age or experience. Jean Vanier expresses it in this way, “It is important for people in authority to listen to the young people who enter the community. Knowing that even the least in the group could have an inspiration which could improve the living of the community life.” The superior can be tempted into favoritism and listening only to their best friend, this can be a drawback to discernment and unity in the community. Perfectae Caritatis says, “Superiors therefore ought to listen to their subjects willingly and ought to promote cooperation between them for the good of the institute and of the Church, retaining however their own authority to decide and to prescribe what is to be done.” Therefore, the superior, especially the one exercising authority in a Canossian family, has to be well equipped

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85 BTECP: FdCC, 221.
86 J. VANIER, Community and Growth, 157.
87 Perfectae Caritatis, 14.
with community skills since her greatest task is to build unity in the community. She needs to be well versed in community mobilization.

4.3.1 The Role of Authority in Conflict Resolution and Reconciling Members in an Intercultural Canossian Community

Building a united community of love in a multicultural community is one of the greatest challenges that the superiors face. Generally, it is not easy for people to be in harmony and united and less so in an intercultural setting. Most of the time conflicts and misunderstandings arise due to cultural differences and human weakness. Martin O'reilly comments well on the challenges of building a religious community that, “Human nature, being what it is, is prone to have a natural tendency to find ways to either resist or flee the work of living and growing in a religious community, especially, one which is emphatically intercultural.”

Living intercultural community life in a Canossian family, I have experienced problems that develop because of misinterpretation, due to misunderstanding and prejudices. When a member of the community shares her personal story, some members without proper understanding of what the person really meant may judge the individual wrongly, forgetting that the person is carrying her cultural influences and values. In this kind of conflict the superior needs to come in firmly and wisely, so that she can bring better understanding and reconciliation to the victim and the rest of the members. The Code of Canon Law says, “While safeguarding the discipline of the institute, Superiors are to acknowledge the freedom due to the members concerning the sacrament of

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penance and the direction of conscience." Hence, the superior needs to have a better knowledge of cross-cultural living.

St. Magdalene, the foundress of FdCC, through her personal life experience gives advice to the sisters in authority saying, "Understanding people in moments of weakness and darkness, was the most sensitive chord in her motherly heart." It is not an easy task for a superior unless the superior herself is well integrated and liberated. Here the spirit of "charity" demands a lot in forgiving and mutual understanding. The duty of the superior is to encourage all the members to accept the differences of course with fraternal corrections, and allow people to be themselves and have time and space for growth. Even Jesus said, let the wheat and the weeds grow together, otherwise the premature weeding of the weeds will spoil even the wheat (cf. Mt 13:24-30).

Generally, Africans are interdependent, which is not necessarily so for the Westerners. Therefore, to understand one's cultural values in an intercultural community needs a superior who motivates and encourages sharing and dialogue of cultures so that all the members in the community feel free to communicate and share their cultural values. Martin O’rielly comments on this view of a healthy community saying that, "[...] is when members can speak what they feel, think and would like to happen or not without any double-talk."
Therefore, a superior will be acting as a reconciler wherever members fail to solve conflicts by themselves. When understanding each of them without judging them like the prodigal son in Luke's gospel, sisters will share freely and grow in expressing themselves. She needs to be well versed in counseling people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. She should be familiar with counseling skills and principles in a multicultural setting.

4.4 Conclusion

In this last chapter we have seen the beauty as well as the challenge and difficulties encountered in an intercultural Canossian life. How the Canossian Daughters of Charity witness charity as their nuclear call, and the heavy tasks of a superior among the community. However, in conclusion, one could say that support should come from all the members of the community, not only from the authority. Openness to one another, with respect and readiness to accept each other's differences, in an intercultural setting is highly valued. All the members must be interested in learning, despite their family background, personalities, experiences and cultural identities. In all these, the authority must be the facilitator and bridge builder for the spirit of charity and unity.
GENERAL CONCLUSION

As we have seen throughout the work, intercultural living can be a blessing or an unbearable challenge to some people in the community. The problems of intercultural living are as old as human beings themselves. Even in a family in which all the members are brought up within the same environment, differences and conflicts are inevitable. The problems of ethnocentrism are inherent in humanity. Within the family we find some members who regard themselves as better than others; even among clans and tribes categorize themselves as better, stronger and more prominent than others. We may relegate the problem of ethnocentrism together with its problems, as a manifestation of human animality, the survival of the fittest that is inherent in all animals, including human beings.

The challenge of intercultural living can be lessened if not combated only we learn to come out of cultures, our nations, and ourselves. We should learn to see other peoples as God's creation and images out of love, just as we are. There is something positive in them, since whatever God created is good, and the creation of human beings is followed by a superlative degree *very good* (Gen 1:31c). The failure to accept one
another as equal beings sharing in the image and likeness of the same one God, is a great danger to our intercultural living. If we do not accept and respect one another, it is practically impossible to accept and respect other people's cultures and values. It is tantamount to denying others' humanity and uniqueness, hence denying their imagery and likeness with God. This may lead to claiming ourselves absolute humanity and reducing others to mere creatures, hence objects of exploitation and abuse.

Human beings though rational, if left alone can be less rational than animals. That is why we need leadership and rules to help our governance. The leader or superiors in an intercultural community should be a well-integrated person, meek and humble, ready to listen and reconcile community members. She should encourage people to manifest and display their cultural heritage and let the community participate for the common good.

Intercultural living can bring a lot of richness to the community. Bearing in mind that no human being is an island. We need to complement each other both in our gifts and weakness. Intercultural living calls its members to respect each other as they are, not as somebody wants them to be.
# Abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NJB</td>
<td><em>The New Interpreters Bible</em></td>
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<td>BTECP</td>
<td><em>Biblical Theological Ecclesial Charismatic Principles</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>CCL</td>
<td><em>The Code of the Canon Law</em></td>
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<td>CCC</td>
<td><em>The Catechism of the Catholic Church</em></td>
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<td>Cf.</td>
<td><em>confer; compare</em></td>
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<td>Cor</td>
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<td>Eph</td>
<td>Ephesians</td>
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<tr>
<td>FdCC</td>
<td><em>Figlia della Carita Canossiana Canossian Daughters of Charity</em></td>
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<td>Gal</td>
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<td>MAA</td>
<td><em>Memoirs of St. Magdalene of Canossa</em></td>
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<td>MR</td>
<td><em>Mutuae Relatione</em></td>
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<td>Romans</td>
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<tr>
<td>RLC·FdCC</td>
<td><em>Rule of Life Constitutions: Canossian Daughters of Charity</em></td>
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All Quotations are From the African Bible.


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**CANOSSIAN DOCUMENTS**


**PERIODICALS**


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