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**COMMUNITY LIFE A TOOL FOR PERSONAL GROWTH AS LIVED BY
CARMELITE MISSIONARIES IN KENYA**

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An integration paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirement for
Certificate in Spirituality

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all the Carmelite Missionaries especially those living and working in Kenya and all those working in the formation houses that this work may be useful in facilitating growth in the formation houses and all those who follow the Carmelite spirituality.

EPIGRAPH

Community life is a tool for personal growth and so formation of the human person is also a conscious being with an ability to make free choices, to grow and become fulfilled in responding to the call of God and formation help us to be available to be sent out for mission.

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STUDENT’S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this Integration paper is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and personal reflection. It is submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Certificate in Spirituality. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All the sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed.....

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Jackline Moraa Kibagendi CM.

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This integration paper has been submitted for the examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

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Rev. Fr. Fredrick Omollo, Contemplative Evangelizers.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CM Carmelite Missionaries

Fr Father

Mt Matthew

St Saint

Sr Sister

Cf Confer

LG Lumen Gentium

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Community living is a tool for personal growth, as living together has a great impact on our growth as it helps us to discover more about our weakness and strength. Interacting and sharing life in common we discover ourselves more than when we are alone. Fr. Francisco Palau the founder of Carmelite Missionaries wrote in letter 7 to the sisters in Lerida and Aytona that, how he wish that all of us be of one heart animated by one and same spirit.¹

The ideal fraternity for Fr. Francisco Palau is to form “uniones de fraternidad” (which means unity in fraternity) whose base should be the spiritual strength that everyone offers. In the community we are able to give up our likes and dislikes for the sake of others. It is through living together that I am able to transcend and go beyond myself. Living together we become women of the spirit capable of letting ourselves be lead and then guide others with genuine love, where we desire the good of others rather than our own, we become all to all by taking care of each sister as ourselves and each day we try to overcome our limitations with maturity for the good of the fraternity and letting ourselves be helped. Palau cherished community life since living in communion with each other we become the keeper of each other.

The work of formation primarily is as an inner journey towards transformation and conversion that becomes the basis of the free choice to follow Jesus in religious life. Formation is both a divine as well as a human process since the one calling the individual is God; it is also human because it is lived within the limits of a human experience both by the individual and the congregation which one enters. This means that the person has to constantly be attuned to God, the initiator of the call.

¹ Cf. F. PALAU *letters, in Francisco Palau writings page 1054*

The primary objective of formation is to prepare people for total consecration of themselves to God in the following of Christ at the service of the Church's mission.²

Formation is a process that begins with desire to become a religious and ends with death; commitment to formation does not end. Formation has to prepare the formees to be effective in the Church so all through our lives we are undergoing formation nobody is fully grown. We continue to learn and grow daily so community life facilitates all this process towards personal growth.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Community living is an important tool for personal growth this is through experiences and challenges the researcher experienced which helped her in her personal growth. So she appreciates the community life which fostered her growth. We need to grow so that community life will be heaven on earth and growth is a daily process which is a basic need to all of us be it in formation houses or not in formation houses we need to experience growth daily. This growth to be effective we need to be patient with one another keeping in mind that growth is gradual, one can't grow to maturity at once but is a process which one need daily. Our Father Founder says that the greatest work of man takes place in the interior.³

Community helps us to discover ourselves since if one is living alone she/he cannot discover the giftedness and weakness⁴. It is through interaction that one will discover the true self. As people interact there are some masks that need to be shade off from oneself to the community. Community living helps people to integrate and evaluate their weak point in order to achieve strength and this

² Cf. Sr. M. GITAU *class notes*

³ Cf. F. PALAU, *letters 38.2, in Francisco Palau writings page 1134*

⁴Cf. JEAN VANIER, *Community and growth page 6*

is possible by the help of the grace of God as St. Paul encourages us that the grace of God is sufficient for us. These graces will strengthen us and one will say like St Paul that I am proud of my weakness that when I am weak then I am strong (Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:10). We are also called to be docile to the action of the Holy Spirit for our growth to be effective.⁵

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study investigates how community living is an effective tool which facilitates personal growth and this growth is the daily process where we need to be aware and be patient. The study aims at investigating the importance of growth in formation houses with the purpose of empowering all of us created in God's image and likeness and God loves us as one is and therefore, self-appreciation and acceptance is very necessary. Sometimes growth is not easier but we need to make effort each day and grow with the help of God's grace and since we love our vocation, we move towards interior unity a vital center that attracts and integrates all and the researcher will investigate the challenges encountered during personal growth.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As human being we have treasure and potentials within ourselves but many of the time we are faced with the problem of taking time to grow and appreciate that true self God placed within ourselves, sometimes we take time to open up and share our true selves because many of us fear rejection, to be judged, lack of understanding from the community, lack of genuine prayer life and one feel that he/she will not be appreciated nor loved as one is, this makes us to mask in the formation which prevents one from entering within oneself and discover who truly we are. Sometimes instead of formation taking place we are deformed and community living becomes a

⁵Cf. CONSTITUTIONS *of the Carmelite Missionaries number 16*

burden to live instead of living in joy as one family, sometimes we are afraid to grow and this may lead us not to pray and trust in God.

We need to know that one alone growth cannot take place and so we forget that community helps us to grow. So this study seeks to address the danger the Carmelite Missionaries may face due to lack of personal growth which may contribute to problems of community living which help us to grow at the end becomes a burden because I am not well integrated. This problem needs to be addressed so that as religious we may be effective in living community life, where we are called to make our communities heaven but we make it hell instead of trying to live as saints we become devils. By this kind of life community becomes a burden so let us try to work on ourselves so that we live in that communion.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To investigate how community living is a tool for personal growth looking at the scripture and the influence it has on growth.
2. To investigate how the Carmelite Saints, the Constitutions and incarnated way on the cross how they overcome the problem.
3. To explore apostolate and prayer how they contribute to growth as a Carmelite Missionary.

RATIONALE/ JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

This study will serve as a call for the Carmelite Missionaries and others who find themselves struggling with the challenge of personal growth as it is a very important tool for all of us. It will also help as a motivation and a waking call for those still in formation to see personal growth as very important. It will also help the researcher as she is still in formation to continue making this

personal journey towards an integrated person. The researcher having gone through challenges to discover that personal growth is very important and all of us need to grow since growth helps us to be integrated in our relationship, we become mature in our daily living, learn more values, we stand firm in our daily challenges, become more determined and always focusing a head. This research will help all the Carmelite missionaries who are in formation and all the sisters since each one still need to grow as growth is for all as we need to grow in different aspects to reach to that maturity. Growth only stops when we die even at the age of 80 we still continue to grow.

SCOPE AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research will focus on how community living is an important tool in personal growth in the Congregation of the Carmelite Missionaries in Kenya. It will explore the need of growth the sisters need; it will also help all of us to evaluate our growth to see whether there is growth or regression. To be aware of our attitudes towards growth and discover our fears, values and limitations,⁶ which will help one to make a step to work on oneself.

DIFFICULTIES AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

Due to busy schedule the researcher might experience some difficulties to meet all the Carmelite Missionaries in a common arena in the community for interview, due to different apostolate carried out by CM it will be difficult to meet the sisters at common place and the time allocated for the research is little this may not exhaust all at once. The researcher will overcome these challenges by sending the questionnaire to all the sisters where they will fill in without writing their names and the researcher will assure them that all is confidential.

⁶Cf. CARMELITE MISSIONARIES, *An Incarnated grace on the way* page 36

POSSIBLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The researcher will be guided by the following questions to carry out the research;

1. How community living is a tool for personal growth looking at the scripture and the influences on growth?
2. How the Carmelite Saints overcome this problem?
3. How the Carmelite constitutions, apostolate, prayer and incarnated grace on the way promote personal growth?

METHODOLOGY

The researcher will use church documents, ask the formators the challenges they face during accompaniment of the sisters which is to help them to grow, the formees, also she will use her personal experiences since she is also in formation and by using the congregation books on formation to collect data.

CHAPTER ONE

COMMUNITY LIVING A TOOL FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

1.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the meaning of community life and the impact it has on our personal growth. It has different sections; section one gives the meaning of community life according to the scripture and how it help in the personal growth, section two elaborates different views looking at the scripture and finally the challenges facing personal growth in the community living.

1.1 Christian Teaching on Community

In the New Testament, especially Acts of the Apostles the first Christians are presented as those who cherished community, brotherhood and sisterhood each person feels a sense of belonging. We read;

The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great favour was accorded them all. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale and put them at the feet of the apostles and they were distributed to each according to their need (Acts 4: 32- 35).

Community living is a place where we experience growth even Jesus encouraged his disciples to live in that communion and support each other as brothers. Personal growth is the journey made by a person to grow in all aspects of life. Community living is a tool for personal growth. In Genesis 1:27 it says that God created humanity in His own image and likewise. As God created us we are to grow into his image and likeness, to be holy as our heavenly Father is holy. (LG 40) Our weakness as St. Paul says in (Cf. 2 Corinthians 12:9) that the grace of God is sufficient for our growth so we are to be always connected to our Father. So left to ourselves we cannot grow. We

are called to cooperate with the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sends to us to be our guide (Cf. John 14: 26, 16:12).

Through prayer we express ourselves and Jesus helps us to explore our capabilities, weakness and talents in the face of God. By the help of the Holy Spirit and our collaboration we are to grow to the perfect creature God meant us to be. This is clearly seen and lived in the community. As we interact with others daily we became aware of our strengths and weakness. It is only when we are conscious of who we are, who others are, with all our wealth and weakness, so when we are conscious of the call of God and the life He gives us that we can build something together.⁷ In the community we need to be sensitive to each other, the love we have towards each other the value of fraternal corrections which is done out of love. This helps us to become aware of our limitations and we look for ways of growing and so community living is the best tool for our growth.

In the community there is a sense of belonging to each other and a desire that each one of us goes further in our own gift to God and to others, a desire that there is light in us and a deeper truth and peace.⁸ So community becomes a place of growth because each one is always concerned about other person. Each one is happy when one is moving closer to God and is making effort to grow and reach that perfection. Any community is made up of people with all their richness, but also with their weakness and their poverty, of people who accept and forgive each other, humility and trust are more at the foundation of the community life than perfection and devotion.⁹ So the cement that unites us in the community is the part of us that is the weakest and smallest, from what is small

⁷ Cf. JEAN VANIER , *Community and growth page 18*

⁸ Cf. JEAN VANIER., *Community and growth page 6*

⁹ Cf. JEAN VANIER., *Community and growth page 6*

when it is nurtured it will grow to something big and as we reflect on the mustard seed it is smallest of all the seeds but it grows up to be big scrub where birds come to enjoy and settle.

In John 15: 1-8 Jesus says I am the true vine you are the branches and in order for us to produce fruits we need to be pruned so that we will produce fruits that are mature and tasty. As human beings we need always in our lives to be connected to Jesus so that we draw from Him all we need for our growth. If we are disconnected we will dry up. So connected and being pruned is so vital. The word of God when it is well lived in the community our communities will be heaven on earth. The beatitudes are good guide to help us in our daily evaluations to see if I am growing to what God is calling me daily. If I am not growing I need to change the direction so that I will start growing. The beatitudes they are supposed to be applied daily in our relationship with God, my neighbor and creation.

We are called to take risks and journey into ourselves daily. Reflecting on Peter he was a man with many weakness but because of faith, when he fall down he made the effort to rise up and go back to Jesus. (Cf. Mt 14:28) when he saw Jesus coming he took risk and jumped into the water not knowing what was ahead of him. So we are called to take this example that for us to enter within ourselves one need to take risk for it is only in taking risks that one will learn and know oneself. Sometimes we will fall but we do not need to be discouraged but to gather our energy and stand again that it is only in falling we learn our mistake and by rising we are motivated to move ahead as we learn from our mistakes.

In personal growth one alone cannot go far but with the help of the community one will reach far. Faith and courage they are to be our guiding aid in the journey. To be always focused and determined that we will grow. Community is made of the gentle concern that the people show each other daily, small gestures of services and sacrifices which say, “ I love you” and “I’m happy

to be with you” it is letting the other to go in front of us not trying to prove ourselves.¹⁰ Some gestures we do in the community will help others be themselves and feel encouraged and continue growing in our weakness and not pretending nor feeling discouraged.

In the parable of the Sower (Cf. Mt.13:1-23) we see that sometimes in our lives we resist formation and therefore we don't need to loss heart but make effort and to pray for the grace of God to soften our hard soil to be rich soil which is fertile where formation and word of God will grow into maturity until we enjoy the fruits.

Reflecting on St. Paul who was a persecutor of the church but because of his openness and flexibility to God's grace, on his way to Damascus he received his conversion and this changed his life completely he did not go back but forged ahead. So this is a call for us that conversion it is for us to remain faithful to God and never look back again but forger a head and hold tightly unto him whom we know will never leave us.

In 1 Corinthians13:4-7 we are encouraged that; “Love is patient, love is not jealousy and love does not insist on its way, love is not resentful, love doesn't rejoice at the wrong but rejoices at the right. Love bears all things, hopes all things and endures all things.” If we replace love with Jesus it become Jesus is patient, Jesus is love so is a call for us to turn jealousy to love, lack of forgiveness to love so let us imitate Christ. As we live in the community it takes our hearts to move from egoism to love. So to love we need to die continually to our own ideas and comforts and all this will be experienced in the community.

¹⁰ Cf. JEAN VANIER., *Community and growth* page 19

1.2 Challenges facing personal growth in the community living

Formation is not an easy process – it is difficult. It involves struggles and sometimes resistance to the values presented to the individual. Growth happens but resistances can also take place and how an individual copes with this makes the difference between maturity and immaturity in religious life especially at the human level.¹¹

Community life when well lived we enjoy life to the full but when we miss the essence of it community life becomes a burden for us. When are not open to face our inner emptiness and due to lack of openness we miss the chance to enter within and discover the true self at the end we live pretending and not practical lives as it is meant to be lived. When we don't look within the self and see the enemies within ourselves whom we need to address we start only seeing the enemies outside the self while in the actual sense my enemy is within me. We have all the power within us to change and make the choices to grow. Sometimes the challenge of being authentic witnesses for those in initial formation remains. Sometimes one finds religious who are so strict and impatient with small failures of those in initial formation but are blind to their own bigger mistakes and failures. Such dynamics enhance a sense of compliance as people wait for perpetual vows to be assertive.¹²

At the same time, formators themselves have to be a model for those in formation. They are invited to live the values they are preaching and teaching in order to avoid a situation where they give double messages to those they are forming. It is important for the formator to model the kind of behavior they want their formees to have. This is a challenge to those who work in formation but it is worth noting. People are affected more by the example of our lives rather than by what we preach to them. Therefore the formator needs to be a person of deep faith, one willing to listen to

¹¹ Cf. Sr. M. GITAU *Class Notes*

¹² Cf. Sr. M. GITAU *Class Notes*

the will of God always even as he/she expects this of the formees. Formators need to be people who are spiritually well grounded in order to accompany others.¹³

Fear can also block one not to open up and share who truly we are because we fear to be judged by others, we do not want to be known with this we block ourselves and we put masks not to know our real self but we live in the ideal self. So at the end we are not integrated in our formation. We start playing the game of pretending and pleasing the formators and only passing the years so that I reach final profession. When I have reached final profession now my true self comes out and communities becomes heal instead of making it heaven on earth but when we are truly objective with ourselves, one will not put mask instead we open and share openly about oneself and it is only by this we will grow up maturely and integrated. So it is a call for formators to have a heart willing and open to journey with formees to foster growth and not to discourage growth, to heal their wounds and not to increase their wounds, to form them and not to deform them.

When one is not aware of oneself knowledge it becomes a block for our growth because one will be projecting what one is to others because I do not know who am I? So self knowledge is very necessary which will also facilitate my growth in the community. When one lacks self knowledge is like treating what we don't know but when one knows herself is easier to address the problem.

Lack of appreciation from the community and more important from the self will be a block for growth. Whenever we make mistake in the community since I do not appreciate myself and I have low self esteem when there is confrontation from the community I feel that everybody is against me. In all the things I do the feelings that the community does not appreciate me will start arising in me. But it is not the community it is what I have put in my mind that the community is not

¹³ Cf. Sr. M. GITAU *Class Notes*

appreciating me, so I need to see what kind of information I feed my mind with. It is good to think positively and have positive attitude towards oneself with this growth is possible.

Discouragement is also very strong especially when one is working on her weakness and one feels that there is no improvement. Sometimes one feels to give up and stop striving to make effort, when we are discouraged by those we live together in the community whom are supposed to encourage and support us when we fail to rise up and continue with the journey of growing. This is the time to have inner peace and be strong in prayer with this the discouragements from outside will not have effects on us.

Openness will help the individual to cooperate with the grace of God at work in his/her in responding to the call of God; it will challenge the internal dispositions so that one can grow in vocational journey. Such an inner disposition will help the individual to avoid being coerced to respond or being persuaded to respond positively as Eli helped Samuel to discover that God was calling him. 1 Samuel 3: 1-19. So I need to be Eli to those I am forming. As a formator am I helping others to discover their call or I am an obstacle? Am I helping others to follow Christ or I am directing them to myself?

1.3 Responding to the challenges one may face in personal growth

It is always advisable that when one feel discouraged it is important to share with someone we trust and in the community we have accompaniment, where one shares her life both the joys and challenges in personal growth. Accompaniment is an important tool when it is carried out in the light of the gospel without judgment because one will see her/his weakness from the different angle. Accompaniment, counseling and discernment are important as the community is the school of formation which completes personal accompaniment. It offers the opportunity to mature in a human way in following of Christ, the accompaniment of the community needs friendly

relationships with true communion, wherein mutual acceptance, dialogue, participation and discernment take place.¹⁴ To form somebody is to accompany the person throughout his/her life both in joys, struggles, painful moments and the whole things person is going through.

Prayer is very crucial tool especially when we face some struggles in our growth. The grace of God is always at work in us, so it is for one always to be open and pray without ceasing because human beings we have no power to work on ourselves if we do not cooperate with his grace. So as we make effort we need his grace to accompany us so that the journey will be fruitful.

St Teresa of Avila would stress of determined determination.¹⁵ We need to be determined so that we persevere in our personal growth she continues to tell us that our soul need to realize that in order to give delight to the Lord, He is starting to cultivate on a barren soil, full of abominable weeds, His majesty pulls out the weeds and plant good seeds so the soul needs to be determined.¹⁶ In formation freedom and responsibility are built up simultaneous. One is responsible if she can plan ahead and choose, commit herself to her option consciously assume it up to the last consequences. Formation should help one to assume her fears and limitations within the dynamics of the group.¹⁷

Personal commitment will help us to continue being consistent in our growth. Since nobody can take that journey for me it is I to take it and let the desire flow from within myself. When there is desire then growth is possible. As Carmelite Missionaries we stress on consolidating what we are learning so in personal growth we have three agents who need to work hand in hand for this

¹⁴ Cf. CARMELITE MISSIONARIES, *An incarnated grace on the way* page 44

¹⁵ Cf. K. KAVANAUGH- O. RODRIGUEZ, *The Collected work of St. Teresa of Avila* page 117

¹⁶ Cf. K. KAVANAUGH- O. RODRIGUEZ, *The Collected work of St. Teresa of Avila: Book of her life* chapter 11.6

¹⁷ Cf. CARMELITE MISSIONARIES, *An incarnated grace on the way* page 36 number 33

consolidating to take place, person himself, Holy Spirit and the community.¹⁸ The main work should be done by the person.

Formation process presumes a change of attitude and ways of doing things. This requires a lot of flexibility in the person being formed. So rigidity, inability to be led by anyone and a constant refusal to allow the values of Jesus to affect one's life are aspects that people in formation need to face early in their journey. One needs to be open and flexible to the ways of God in formation.¹⁹

Appropriate training of formation personnel is so crucial because the congregation entrust them with the work of forming others and they are to point others to Christ not to themselves as John did there is the Lamb of God and disciples followed Jesus. (Cf. John. 1:35-42.)

1.4 Conclusion

In conclusion from this chapter it is necessary to note that personal growth is enriched with other different important agents like community and help of Holy Spirit. So the journey is not complete with the person alone we need other sources to facilitate the growth. This gives us strength that alone I can't grow I need community to help me to see what I can't see. Community life when well lived will help each other to grow to the person whom God meant us to be. So let us cherish our communities as they are small churches and they help us to grow and be integrated person.

Formation is a process that involves growth in one's vocation. As one goes through the different stages in his/her life, grace will abound, challenges will be faced and these will offer one the chance to grow in his/her vocation, commitment to the charism and mission of the Institute.²⁰ We need to touch lives of the people we are serving, so even if one dies the person will be remembered by

¹⁸ Cf. CARMELITE MISSIONARIES, *An incarnated grace on the way* page 37

¹⁹ Cf. Sr. M. GITAU *Class Notes*.

²⁰ Cf. Sr. M. GITAU *Class Notes*.

people that once upon a time I was formed by so and so with this you receive a blessing it is not when one is remembered, if one is suffering or you are sick people are rejoicing and celebrating your suffering because you made people suffer when you were forming them or you lived with them in the community and they were living hell on the earth. This is a call for us to reflect on our relationships with each other, am I a source of encouragement, inspiration and strength or I am a source of block for them not to encounter Jesus or I become a discouragement for them not to live gospel values. So let us form others not deform them to help them find God in all that they are doing and being. With our close accompaniment we all give glory to God.

CHAPTER TWO

COMMUNITY LIVING ACCORDING TO THE CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY

2.0 Introduction

This chapter elaborates how the Carmelite saints overcame personal growth as they were living community life by exploring more about St. Teresa of Avila, Father Francisco Palau founder of Carmelite Missionaries and St. John of the cross. They had their difficulties but they overcame them.

2.1 Words of St Teresa of Avila

St. Teresa is the Doctor of the Church she not only taught us prayer but also practiced what she taught. Her words were in conjunction with what she lived. We, like Saint Teresa, know that by our own efforts we will not attain the precious gift of peace. Therefore, with our petition let us hold tightly to the power of the redeeming Cross of Christ: “Oh my Lord and my Mercy, my only good! What more do I seek in this life than a union so close to you, that there can be no distinction between you and me? With such a companion, what can be difficult? With you so close to me, what dare I not attempt for your sake?”²¹

It is only by being in union with God that we will be able to overcome the difficulties we face each day. St. Teresa went through a lot but since she was close and always asking for His grace all was possible. Christ is always near to help us to grow to the person he meant us to be. When Jesus Christ is close to us we are motivated by His love and when one put love in all that she/he does we will see Christ in all the things until we will be Christ like as we carry our daily activities. So let love be our driving force even in our relationships with one another.

²¹ K. KAVANAUGH- O .RODRIGUEZ, *The Collected work of St. Teresa of Avila: Book of her life chapter 12.6*

2.2 St John of the Cross

St John of the cross has great influence on the Catholic spirituality. His life is marked by service through prayer and penance. He went through tough life with his friars who arrested him and put him in prison. He was scourged and humiliated by his fellow friars but he never reacted back or took revenge on them. He said,

“Do not let what is happening to me cause you any grief, for it does not cause me any. What greatly grieves me is that one who is not at fault is blamed. Men do not do these things, but God who knows what is suitable for us and arranges things for our own good. Think nothing else but that God ordains all and where there is no love put love and you will draw out love”²².

Love is a gift before being a demand. It is not an imposed precept by God to man but gives new life and divine capacity to the human spirit. He encourages us to always reflect on our lives and how we are living the gospel values. That when our evening comes we will be examined in love so learn to love as God desires to be loved and abandon your own ways of acting.²³ So love should be our driving force in all that we do and love as Christ has commanded us to love. John aware of his love for Christ on his sickness and he was asked where he will go to seek for medication he chose to go where the superior did not welcome him instead treat him with contempt and welcomed him coldly and placed him in the worst cell. As his health was growing ill he called his prior. Francisco Criso'stomo and St John of the Cross with humility begged pardon for any faults he may have committed and for the bother he has caused those who cared for him in his illness and the prior in return asked for pardon from John and he blessed him and he went out of the room of John weeping from then on he was a changed man.²⁴ This lead the prior after noticing the holiness of

²² K. KAVANAUGH- O. RODRIGUEZ, *The Collected work of St. John of the Cross* page 22

²³ Cf. K. KAVANAUGH- O. RODRIGUEZ, *The Collected work of St. John of the Cross* page 90 number 60

²⁴ Cf. GOD SPEAKS IN THE NIGHT, *The life, times and teaching of St. John of the Cross* page 367

John he wept. When we know ourselves and the struggles one passes to reach to maturity in the community it helps us to know how to carry ourselves.

According to St. John of the Cross in the first precaution he says that: “it is to understand that you have come to the monastery so that all may fashion you and try you. Thus, to free yourself from the imperfections and disturbances that can be engendered by the mannerisms and the attitudes of the religious and draw profit from every occurrence, you should think all in the community are artisans as indeed they are present there in order to prove you, that some will fashion you with words, others by deeds, and others with thoughts against you and that in all this You must be submissive as is the statue to the craftsman who molds it, to the artist who paints it and to the gilder who embellishes it.”²⁵ John is telling us that it is in the community that we will be only fashioned because living in the community it is the best place for us to grow as we are from different places different personality and so the best chance for growth.

In our daily living when our refuge is in God and we hide ourselves in Him. Those who are seeking us will first find God before finding us so this will lead to their conversion. It calls us that always our lives should lead people to Christ. John had all the opportunities to revenge on his brothers but since he was motivated by love he reacted back with love in his dealings with them. He was living the gospel values where he drew his energy from. His reaction to how they treated him made others grow and repent. This gives us courage that though we are striving each day not to lose hope but to imitate and be inspired by the saints who passed through what we are passing now but because of their faithfulness they are glories in heaven.

²⁵Cf. K. KAVANAUGH-O. RODRIGUEZ, *The Collected work of St. John of the Cross* page 242

2.3 Blessed Francisco Palau founder of Carmelite Missionaries

He wrote in our constitution that, “The Holy Spirit calls us in our special vocation to live fully the grace of baptism and to form the community in the name of the Lord and follow more closely poor and obedient Christ.”²⁶ As we follow the footsteps of Christ we will reach maturity despite our weaknesses. Each of us must strive to foster a community atmosphere of joy and trust by promoting friendship, mutual understanding and sisterly support.²⁷ As we live together nobody is without weakness when we understand and trust each other it will help as to feel that sense of belonging and be oneself and with much effort strive to grow into the image Christ want us to be.

Palau emphasized more on growth especially in living community life. In his letter to Juana Gratias he advices her and said, “Engage yourself for the good of others, to direct all her energies, virtues, time and her life for the salvation of the neighbor, these virtues in order that they will be real pearls and precious stones that glitters in the temple of God, is necessary that they pass through the hands of many artists to be refined by fire and strokes of hammer, so that what we do for the good of others will be the work of solid virtues.”²⁸ This gives us the courage that as we live in the community we are to work for the good of others, to go out of ourselves and place the needs of others before our own. To form is to accompany. A good formator should be approachable, understanding, good listen both to God and to the one she is forming, open minded, welcoming, he/ she must inspire the ones she is forming, trust God and transmit faith to the ones he/she is forming.

²⁶ Cf. CONSTITUTIONS *of the Carmelite Missionaries number 2*

²⁷ Cf. CONSTITUTIONS *of the Carmelite Missionaries number 31*

²⁸ F. PALAU, *letters, in Francisco Palau writings page 1051*

Fr. Palau says, “I wish that all of you will be of one heart animated by one and the same spirit, if that heart is animated, vivified, and guided by the Spirit of God, with what abundance God will shower his graces upon you.”²⁹ When we are guided by God we do all according to His will. We are called by God to live as brothers and sisters in the community. Jesus is to lead us and be our model as we relate to each other in the community and strive each day that we live in peace with each other.

When we practice love, it helps us live in that unity which Christ called us to. Love is very crucial since we are called by Christ. Nobody chose whom to live with but it is the plan of Christ. Palau says, “Our communities must be united by sisterly love which is like that of the college of Christ we must strive to understand one another by carrying one another’s burden.”³⁰ As we relate with each other we need to show our unity by loving all the sisters with the same love. Love does not look at the weakness of others but we love all as Christ calls us to be source of love to all without discrimination.

Francisco Palau a witness and prophet of an experience of communion was converted into a vessel of grace that enriched his whole being and made him a fruitful evangelical voice in the Church. He knew that grace did not end in himself but it was an initial seed called to grow and develop.³¹

2. 4 Personal experiences

I feel that community life is truly best tool for personal growth, looking at my own experiences I can say that from the time I joined CM and since we value community life it has contributed to my

²⁹ Cf. F. PALAU , *letters, in Francisco Palau writings page 1054*

³⁰ Cf. CONSTITUTIONS *of the Carmelite Missionaries number 50*

³¹ Cf. CARMELITE MISSIONARIES, *An incarnated grace on the way page 27*

growth. I am still in formation and as St. Paul says I have not reached but I am still striving so that I can get hold of the prize which Christ has won for me. (Cf. Philippians 3:12-13)

It is because of living in the community that I was able to become aware of my own strengths and weakness. In the community I have learnt a lot in different dimension, it is not the same way I came. The contribution from different sisters since I started has been so enriching for each has played different role in my growth. Daily experiences both joyful and painful have really formed me, looking at the negative ones I learnt that there is need to be molded. I discovered that we are all special with unique talents and abilities.

Never to allow myself to be discouraged and never think that my life cannot be changed, I always remembered that the most important part of who I am is what is inside me. So in the difficult moments it is good to think that after that there is better and joyous life waiting for me. When the interior is well grounded the experiences from outside will not destroy my inner peace. Inner peace, love, perseverance, hope, patient, prayer and understanding were my esteemed values in challenging moments in my formation. In all the painful experiences I tried to learn from it and take positive lesson from it and leave other things to God. Holding to God daily since He knows us through and through with all our weakness and strengths He knows what is best for each one of us as we journey in life.

2.5 Conclusion

We are encouraged that we are not the only ones who are experiencing difficulties but also our saints who handed us this spirituality. They are our models who were in communion with the Father who gave them that grace to face life with a positive attitude. When we read their writings, the life was not easier but they remained focused, determined, convinced, and reflective, always

in dialogue with the Father who gave them the strength in those difficult moments to always remain in his love.

As the followers of Christ when we read lives of the Saints we are motivated that life is a gift which we need to appreciate and live. St. Teresa of Avila was opposed by her own sisters in different moments and she says that the best gift we can offer to those we find difficult to relate with is our prayer. She did not revenge but she related with them. This is also what Jesus tells us that forgiveness is a daily process and it is important in the community living. Though it is easier to say I forgive you but coming to reality it is not easier to live it. With the grace of God and prayer we are called to forgive. Reflecting on the life of Jesus, He was able to forgive those who crucified him to the cross, He said Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing. (Cf. Luke 23:34).

Life is a matter of making decisions and having positive attitude in all that one is going through because sometimes one can feel that the process of growth is stunted but when there is focus and positive attitude things will start taking shape and journey to self will experience progressive growth and willingness to cooperate with the process of formation which remains one's personal responsibility.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CARMELITE MISSIONARIES RULE OF LIFE AS A FACILITATING FACTOR FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explores how the Carmelite Missionaries are living community life. It has different sections; section one deals with community life according to the constitutions, section two elaborates different apostolate, section three focus on importance of prayer in our growth and finally section four elaborates the incarnated grace on the way how to promotes growth as a Carmelite missionaries.

3.1 Some insights from the Constitutions of the Carmelite Missionaries

Following closely the constitution it encourages growth in all aspects as a human person. Formation is an integral part of religious life, looking at the stages followed especially from the time one is searching which way one wants to serve God. There are different stages which helps one in discernment. Since from the first stage which is aspirancy, to postulancy, novitiate, Juniorate and ongoing formation. In all these stages there are programs which are followed to facilitate the growth of formees.

3.1.1 What we are following as our plan of formation looking at the incarnated grace on the way

Formation is the process that inspires, stimulates and directs the person's growth in her vocation and helps her to develop her capacity to assume and realize her own identity with free and responsible option. Formation becomes a vocational commitment of the Carmelite missionary who, from a well motivated and responsible choice, keeps herself permanently open to the initial

grace, to God's creativity and to the ever new demands of the church in her salvific history.³² The person in the formation is called always to be open to listen to the grace which God gives freely to each one, so that one will be able to discover the will of God who called us. The person and the Holy Spirit are the key people in formation. The person is the principal protagonist of her growth and vocational maturity.³³ Every integration entails crisis so we need to be open to the Holy Spirit who guides us in the journey.

Facing crisis one becomes more mature and when we face difficulties and struggles in a positive way we grow because this is the time one learns something new which will help us to change our attitude towards life. So it depends on how one takes the challenging moments. We are invited to take them positively they will help us to grow. Our growth is supposed to be progressive and maturity though one is growing either slowly or fast there must be a progress growth which means step by step and one is making effort to grow daily. Formation aims to cultivate what is in each person as a vocational gift of God, to discover and develop according to one's own capacity and possibility. It is a process attained through well principles marked with our own identity. The formative process of the CM is based on the following criteria:³⁴

3.1.2 Personalized formation in the community

It is God who calls and manifests His love for each one of us and gives us grace to help us in our formation. Formation is a work of discovery and liberation in one's innermost being in a way that the response will be free and responsible. The community helps us to grow, confront ourselves, develop our values and live our vocation. The community and the person join hands in the search,

³² Cf. CARMELITE MISSIONARIES, *An Incarnated grace on the way* page 13

³³ Cf. CARMELITE MISSIONARIES, *An Incarnated grace on the way* page 33

³⁴ Cf. CARMELITE MISSIONARIES, *An Incarnated grace on the way* page 34

for all which helps us to live the gift of vocation in its fullness.³⁵ As we all live in the community we complement each other and become responsible of each other where we support and encourage growth.

3.1.3 Formation in unity and pluralism

Formation ought to cultivate and develop the spirit of unity. As our Fr. Founder says that we are called to live united in love with only heart animated by one and the same spirit.³⁶ Our community must be ‘unions of fraternity’ as we live as family all are striving to grow so that we all live the same project, we open ourselves to complementarity that comes from others then unity becomes strong.

3.1.4 Formation in freedom and responsibility

Freedom is a gift and needs affirmation and growth. Freedom and responsibility are build up simultaneously. One is responsible to plan ahead and chooses to commit herself to her option and so community is always available to help us through formation to grow in freedom and responsibility only when we are open to cooperate and ready to grow. In order to live as brothers and sisters a true journey of interior liberation is necessary; the love of Christ poured in our hearts urges us to love our brethren even to the point of taking on their weakness even to the point of giving our very selves.³⁷

³⁵ Cf. CARMELITE MISSIONARIES, *An Incarnated grace on the way* page 34

³⁶ Cf. F. PALAU , *letters, in Francisco Palau writings* page 1053

³⁷ Cf. CARMELITE MISSIONARIES, *fraternal life in the community number 21* page 23

3.1.5 Progressive and continuous formation

The process of formation is progressive. Slow maturation fruit of integrated experiences, acquired skills, assumed skills and assumed failures enable the person to carry out her obligations better.³⁸

As we are in the journey in order for us to grow our journey needs to be continuous not stopping as we grow or move to another stage in our formation but is a call for us to let it be continuous.

Even when we face difficulties on the way the Holy Spirit is always available to strengthen us to continue with our journey.

3.2 Prayer life and different forms of apostolates

3.2.1 Prayer life according to St. Teresa of Avila and Fr. Palau

According to St. Teresa, “prayer is an intimate sharing with friends, it means taking time frequently to be alone with whom we know loves us.”³⁹ According to Palau, “prayer is the assent of our soul to God or better an interior act inspired by religion through which a person asks God for graces recognizing Him as the author of all good.”⁴⁰ This shows us that we cannot separate prayer from life. Prayer helps us and strengthens us to go out and serve people of God. As we carry out this mission we go back to the community and we have time of our prayer where we share our challenges we face and then one is given energy to go out again and serve in love.

Fr. Palau in his letter to Eugenia Guerin he told him to enter into the temple of her soul, to remain there in silence and listen to the voice of her king Solomon who always speaks to her from the throne of the altar that is deep in her heart.⁴¹ He continues to say in one of his letter that the greatest work of God takes place in the interior.⁴² In the silence, meditation and interior

³⁸ Cf. CARMELITE MISSIONARIES, *An Incarnated grace on the way* page 36

³⁹ Cf. K. KAVANAUGH- O. RODRIGUEZ, *The Collected work of St. Teresa of Avila: Book of her life* page 67

⁴⁰ Cf. F. PALAU, *School of Virtues* 33 in writings page 312

⁴¹ Cf. F. PALAU, *letters*, in *Francisco Palau writings* page 1039

⁴² Cf. F. PALAU, *letters* 38.2, in *Francisco Palau writings* page 1134

recollection this is the time God communicate with us. So we are to value prayer time since this is the proper time we commune with God.

We will discover ourselves more fully when we enter deep within ourselves and when we discover our weakness Gods grace is always at work to help us to grow so that we carry out the mission entrusted to us by Him. Though we are weak God does not call the qualified by He qualifies the called. This encourages us that our God is always ready to help us to grow. So lets us not be afraid to approach him and share with Him.

3.2.2 Different apostolates carried out by the CM which fosters growth

Christ, by sending his apostles as the Father had sent him and by sending the Holy Spirit the giver of life, established the Church as a universal sacrament of salvation to make known the mystery of his love for mankind and to bring that mystery to fulfillment in time, we are sent like the apostles to proclaim the kingdom to all people.⁴³ So the apostolate we are carrying is not ours but for God we are only servants so mission is supposed to benefit the people of God. The mission is for God and it goes back to God. We are formed so that we will carry out the mission entrusted to us in union with Christ who called us and is sending us out and He is with us until the end of time (Cf. Mat 28:10). When the mission becomes hard we do not need to loss heart but to know that He is with us. According to St. Teresa of Lisieux, “For me prayer is the search of the heart, it simply look turned towards heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.”⁴⁴ Church declared her the patroness of the missionaries though she never went out of the convent only because of her prayers. We are formed so that we will carry out the mission entrusted to us

⁴³ Cf. CONSTITUTIONS *of the Carmelite Missionaries number 94*

⁴⁴ Cf. JOHN. *Story of the soul, page 242*

in union with Christ who called us and sending us out. The congregation of the Carmelite Missionaries carries out the following apostolates:⁴⁵

- i. Health care
- ii. Christian Education
- iii. Missionary activity
- iv. Evangelization in the social sphere
- v. Catechetics
- vi. Promotion of the spiritual life and other needs of the church

Looking at the above apostolate we all need to go through formation so that we are able to give out to the people of God what is the best. We cannot give what we do not have so it is necessary that we are formed and equipped so that we are ready to help all in needy of different kinds. We carry all in love and we direct people to God so formation is so crucial for us before we go out to serve. It is in formation that we learn what one need to carry on the journey and let go of unnecessary baggage as Jesus instructed his disciples to carry what they needed not extra things. (Cf. Luke 9: 1-10).

3.3 Conclusion

The purpose of formation is as it is in Mark 3: 13 Jesus called his disciples first to be his companions then to send them out. So joining life in the community it is to learn what it entails to be in religious life and then to be sent out when we are formed. Formation is not a tunnel where I am only passing and I come out in the other side and counting days to pass so that I reach the final profession but see that one is being formed, internalized what formation offers and one is well

⁴⁵ Cf. CONSTITUTIONS *of the Carmelite Missionaries number 3 page 18*

grounded in values.⁴⁶ Even when one faces challenges since one has strong and solid ground one is able to withstand and be the prophet to proclaim Jesus. As Pope Francis calls religious to be to be prophets in our world,⁴⁷ as one yearn to grow what formation presents one takes them personally and uses them for her/his growth. So let's cherish what formation offers to us.

3.4 Summary, Recommendation and General Conclusion

3.4.1 Summary

The aim of this work is to deepen the understanding of community life as a tool for personal growth as a CM who is still in formation. In order to achieve this we looked at community living a tool for personal growth, the understanding of Christian teaching on community life, challenges facing personal growth in the community living, responding to the challenges one may face in personal growth as we live together and we are human beings with weaknesses, community living according to Carmelite spirituality focusing on words of St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, Blessed Francisco Palau founder of Carmelite Missionaries, I also focused on my personal experiences as one who is still undergoing formation. In our Carmelite missionaries rule of life is also a facilitating factor to spiritual growth looking at the Constitutions of CM, What we are following as our plan of formation looking at the incarnated grace on the way, Prayer life and different forms of apostolates. All these give us a picture that we need to be formed so that we will be sent out by Jesus. Since we cannot give what we do not have.

Formation is not an easy process, nevertheless, it is possible. It invites us to fall in Love with Jesus, leave all for him and to allow his message to affect us, to determine what we choose, who we

⁴⁶ Cf. Sr. M. GITAU *Class Notes*.

⁴⁷ Cf. VITA CONSECRATA (The Consecrated life) Pope John Paul II *Apostolic Letter given on March 25, 1996*.

become and what ministries we engage in. To fall in love with Jesus so that he becomes the centre of our lives is possible. To be immersed in the Exodus process is possible – leaving behind our “*house of slavery*” for the deep attachment with Jesus based on love. As we continue to reflect on formation as a process, let us remember that the challenges, questions, issues, problems abound but so does grace and this is our greatest hope for all time.

3.4.2 Recommendations

Having reflected on Community life as a tool for personal growth the researcher makes the following recommendations which I feel are important for Carmelite missionaries.

Since we are Missionary congregation, from different cultures, family background and as we believe in unity in diversity. Each of us enriches the Church with her specific qualities and values. We are to cultivate this uniqueness and giftedness in our communities and missions. We are to form young Carmelites who nurture their talents and put them at the service of others. We cannot live and promote the beauty of the Church if we are not open to accept and nurture our differences and put them at the service of each other and the Church.

In the mission the CM should promote this beauty of the Church in each sister we live with. Formation should be a continuous process of growth. In it we are to be prepared to have an openness and willingness to be sent to any place where the Church needs us just like Mary who through the invitation of the angel left in haste to her cousin Elizabeth.

Thus I propose continuous study of Palau’s writings in the different levels of formation, especially in the novitiate and Juniorate in order to deepen and internalise Palau’s spirituality. The sisters in charge of formation should try as much as possible to play the role of accompanying the formees. The model here is that of Jesus with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus (Cf. Luke 24:13 -

35). This encounter helps the two disciples re – evaluate their experience and prepare them for the discovery that their companion is the Risen Lord Jesus Himself. This discovery gives them energy to go back to Jerusalem and share this Good News. In the same way, the formators share the life of the formees thus observing their behavior and attitudes. This helps them to understand who their formees are at a certain depth. In accompanying the formees, the formators share and celebrate the experiences of the formees thus even deepening their own faith in God. As it were, the formator walks with the formees on their faith journey just as Jesus does in (Cf. Luke 24: 13 – 35).

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The researcher has been exploring community life as a tool for personal growth and the human person is a conscious being with an ability to make free choices, to grow and become fulfilled in responding to the call of God, The human person experiences him/herself within the context of interpersonal relationships with others and with God. This ability for interpersonal relationships makes it possible for one to live with others, engage with them and abide by the rules that guide the group.

At this level, one’s ability to relate with oneself (intrapersonal relationship) becomes the foundation for the interpersonal relationships since as human beings we can only give to others what we have.⁴⁸ The person who enters a formation house to begin the process of formation brings many experiences, many attitudes already formed, cultural and family ways of thinking and expressing him/herself and many needs that have been enhanced over a long period of time. This is both a grace and a challenge for an individual. A grace because formation builds on what one has and a challenge because many times, one has to change some of these attitudes and take on

⁴⁸ Cf. Sr. M. GITAU *Class Notes*

those of Jesus and this is not an easy thing to do. An appreciation of this complexity is necessary for formation to be effective.⁴⁹

Growth in religious life is a grace and a choice. For those in formation, there is a need to constantly choose aspects of human maturity that are desirable. For example, the ability to accept feedback, to take responsibility for one's choices and decisions, the ability to relate with others in a healthy manner devoid of excessive aggression or childish dependence; the ability to express one's emotions in a balanced way; an ability to reflect on one's experiences and learn from them; and finally a willingness to be lead by the Spirit of God. These are aspects that those in formation need to cultivate and the freedom available to us to transcend our immediate, self-centered reactions, and to choose on the basis of our values and our deepest desires. Developing these habits is desirable in formation.

Formation invites us to renounce certain things. For example one is invited to renounce certain attachments to their family, cultural ways of doing things that are contrary to the ways of Jesus, attitudes that are not in keeping with the way of life chosen. This renunciation within the context of formation can be painful sometimes. But people involved in formation need to understand that this pain is not an end in itself – it is not the work of formation to inflict pain; pain is a side effect of letting go of what is unacceptable and not in keeping with the values of Jesus and taking on of what Jesus presents to us in the firm believe that this brings us greater freedom and new life.⁵⁰ We are still being invited even today to allow the message of Jesus and his life to take us up so much that we can do nothing else but donate the totality of who we are in religious life. This needs time, energy and wisdom but it is achievable. We need to cherish community life as it is a useful tool

⁴⁹ Cf. Sr. M. GITAU *Class Notes*

⁵⁰ Cf. Sr. M. GITAU *Class Notes*

for us to know who we are, by the help of our community members whom God uses to communicate Himself to us and make effort to grow to the image God want us to be by the help of His grace.

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