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CATHOLIC TEACHING ON THE FRUITFULNESS OF CONSECRATED

CELIBACY: A CASE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS FROM NYANSIONGO

PARISH – KISII DIOCESE

Supervisor

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A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award
of Diploma in Religious Formation

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STUDENT’S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned hereby declare that this research is my original work achieved through my personal reading, research and reflections of my experiences of the Catholic teaching on the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy: A case study of the Religious from Nyansiongo parish- Kisii diocese, where I hail from.

This research is submitted in partial fulfilment of the award of diploma in Spirituality and Religious Formation at Tangaza University College. I declare that this work has never been submitted to any College or University for academic credit other than Tangaza University College. All sources of materials for this work have been fully cited and acknowledged.

Signed.....

Name of the student: Chrisantus Makori Osiemo

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This long essay has been submitted with my approval as the college supervisor:

Signed.....

Supervisor: Rev.Fr. Dr. Omollo Fredrick

Date.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved late mother Mrs. Margaret kemunto Osiemo who laid the foundation of my Christian faith to come to understand the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy. It is also to my siblings through whom my human relationship has been developed and deepened. I also wish to dedicate this work to all members of the Hospitaller Brothers of Saint John of God (O.H) for their invaluable help and support in this noble work. May the almighty God bless all and may your relationship with Him be deepened in hope and love all the days of your lives.

EPIGRAPH

In the consecrated life as celibates, we meet Christ: the source and summit of the Christian life and centre of Christian worship, the celibate per excellence. Informed by this reasoning, the religious from Nyansiongo parish – Kisii diocese offers an important platform in understanding of the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy based on the Church teachings and Gusii culture and traditions.

The fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy from a well enculturated perspective, has the power of love to unite even enemies when they accept it. It is from this backdrop that the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy is understood and appreciated as source of holiness in the Roman Catholic Church.

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Table of Contents

STUDENT'S DECLARATION.....	i
DEDICATION	ii
EPIGRAPH.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	vi
ABBREVIATIONS	viii
General introduction.....	1
i) Background of the study.....	1
ii) Statement of the problem	3
iii) Study objectives:	4
iv) working hypothesis:.....	4
v) Justification of the study:.....	5
vi) The significance of the study	5
vii) Limitations foreseen in the Research	6
viii) Method	6
ix) Research questions	7
CHAPTER ONE	8
UNDERSTANDING OF CONSECRATED CELIBACY AMONG THE ABAGUSII COMMUNITY	8
Introduction	8
1.1 Christian teachings on consecrated celibacy	8
1.2 Doctrine and Practice of Celibacy Among the Religious in Nyansiongo Parish- Kisii Diocese	12
1.2.1 How was Christianity introduced in the Abagusii community?	15
I. The Catholic Church	16
1I. Other Christian Denominations	18

1.3 Catholicism Among the Abagusii Community Today	20
CHAPTER TWO	22
CHALLENGES FACING THE CONSECRATED FROM NYANSIONGO PARISH – KISII DIOCESE	22
Introduction	22
2.1 The Consecrated Celibate	23
2.2 The Religious from Nyansiongo Parish – Kisii Diocese.....	25
2.3 The Consecrated Celibate in Old Age.....	29
2.4 Questionnaire:	30
Conclusion.....	35
CHAPTER THREE	36
RECOMENDABLE STRATEGIES TOWARDS BETTER REALIZATION OF CONSECRATED CELIBACY	36
Introduction	36
3.1 Consecrated Life: Retrospect’s and Prospects.....	37
3.2 Strategies towards better realization of Consecrated Celibacy.....	41
3.2.1 Helps to Living Consecrated Celibacy Among the Religious from Nyansiongo Parish.....	44
a) Forging Solidarity Among Themselves.....	44
b) Harmonious Relationship Between the Religious and Local Clergy.	46
c) Forming Eucharistic Communities and Living Eucharistic Life styles.	48
Conclusion.....	49
General Conclusion	50
BIBLIOGRAPHY	53

ABBREVIATIONS

Brs	Brothers
cf	Confer/Confirm
Cor	Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians
ed	Editor
ISRF	Institute of Spirituality and Religious Formation
Jer	Book of Jeremiah
Jn	The Gospel of John
MHM	Mill Hill Missionaries
Mk	The Gospel of Mark
Mt	The Gospel of Mathew
O.H	Order Hospitallier
OCD	Ordo Carmelitarum Discalceatorum; Order of Discalced Carmelites
PC	Perfactae caritatis
Pg	page
Rev. Fr.	Reverend Father
SC	Sacrosanctum Concilium, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 1963
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
Sr.	Sister
St.	Saint

General introduction

The researcher aims to unveil the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy with reference to professed religious from Nyansiongo Parish, Kisii Diocese. This study will assist in outlining Church teachings that relates with consecrated celibacy, challenges as well as solutions that can be borrowed to enhance practice of female consecrated celibacy.

The first chapter will examine the teaching on the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy. The second chapter will find out some of the challenges facing living consecrated celibacy. The third chapter will recommend some strategies for a more authentic life of consecrated celibacy. Finally, the contextual consecrated celibacy and its spiritual fruitfulness among the professed religious from Nyansiongo Parish, Kisii Diocese.

i) Background of the study

The Modern Catholic Dictionary defines celibacy as, “the state of being unmarried and, in Church usage, of one who has never been married”. Catholicism distinguishes between lay and ecclesiastical consecrated celibacy, and in both cases a person freely chooses for religious reasons to remain celibate.” Pope Paul VI highlighted the need for celibacy in his encyclical, which was written at a time when some people questioned the need for mandatory celibacy. The Holy Father pinpointed three senses to celibacy: “the Christological, the ecclesiological and the eschatological which all directs Christians to eternity in the kingdom of God.” (*Sacerdotalis caelibatus*, 45)

According to Carter Heyward, “Setting our heart on God’s kingdom” is more an invitation to disengage ourselves sufficiently from our producing, controlling, result-seeking selves to create a “Sabbath heart’ - a whole, spacious, full, and open heart that reaches out to engage and participate

in co-creative actions.”¹ To be sure this means stepping out of our individual and collective egos and the internal structures that keep us fearful, squeezed and tight in order to make room, it is factual that the vow of celibacy is one of the elegant healing choices that the religious make in response to the prophetic summons of our time. This elegant choice should be a lived attitude, a habit of the heart that acknowledges a desire to go deeper into God and our celibates’ lives to discover how they can be partners in the healing of the present hurting world.

The Plenary of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes mentions the importance of spiritual and human formation for consecrated persons which can ensure a “mature presence capable of renewed relationships.”² John Paul II, (VC, 65), asserts that formation programs should integrate all aspects of the consecrated person’s life. Formation content and process bears in mind “the character of wholeness” thus “involving the whole person, in every aspect of the personality, in behavior and intentions” providing for “a human, cultural, spiritual and pastoral preparation” and “aiming at the transformation of the whole person.”³ John Paul II whilst acknowledging the importance of the “analysis and reflections of sociology and other human sciences” information content and process, stresses the centrality of the “spiritual, theological and sapiential dimension of the life of faith” which, he underlines, should grant “the ultimate and decisive keys to reading today’s human condition and for choosing priorities and authentic life styles.”⁴

¹Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 1990,45.

² Plenary of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, 45.

³ JOHN P. II, *Vita Consacta*,65

⁴ JOHN P. II. *spiritual, theological and sapiential dimension of the life of faith*, 21

Through consecration, celibates in a special way, share in the Church's spousal relationship with Christ, by being exclusively set apart for Him. Consecrated celibacy is a way of life, a gift, a charism that comes with the dawning of God's Kingdom. "Not all humans can receive this precept but only those to whom it is given."⁵ (Mt. 19:11) A gift is something gratuitously and freely given, and freely accepted on the part of the recipient. Thus, Jesus underlines the gift of character of celibate chastity when He further says: "He, who is able to receive this gift, let him receive it."⁶ (Mt. 19:12) Like Christ, celibates vow chastity for the sake of the Kingdom of God that is their response to Christ to follow him intimately in his virginal life. I propose that it is celibacy that makes us free to love God and all people with an undivided heart. Through reading of this materials, I feel there is need of the religious from Nyansiongo parish, Kisii diocese to be informed and act as reminding tool in the parish group to help them live celibacy to its fullness. Some may have opportunities of revising the documents, but some no, adding to the point of the researcher.

ii) Statement of the problem

Consecrated Celibacy is an issue that is debate even among the catholic faithful. It has been embraced throughout the history of the church by various communities. It is not hard to observe that consecrated celibacy is a contentious issue in the Christian divide. Same is an issue among the Abagusii community where is taken negatively. Consecrated celibacy is meant to be a way of total and loving dedication to God and neighbor, but a number of people interpret it negatively. These

religious people who maintain illegal relationships with opposite sex are forced to lead double life which is contrary to the Roman catholic teachings and practices.

The central question of investigations is; can a religious remain celibate and pure and yet be not only fulfilled but also fruitful in their ministry? Additionally, the fact that there are laid down Church norms to govern the conduct of consecrated celibates does not in any way mean that everyone follows the norms to the latter, this therefore call for a study to find out the real situation on the ground mostly in the Abagusii community.

iii) Study objectives:

1. To examine the understanding of consecrated celibacy.
2. To find out the challenges facing the consecrated religious from Nyansiongo parish, kisii diocese.
3. To recommend strategies towards better realization of the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy among the religious from Nyansiongo parish.
4. To contextual spiritual fruitfulness within the consecrated religious from Nyansiongo parish.

iv) working hypothesis:

1. There is a relationship between the life of consecrated celibacy and marriage.
2. Those who have embraced consecrated celibacy are freer for the things of God.
3. There are challenges facing living the life consecrated celibacy.
4. spiritual direction and exercises are some of the best means safeguarding the consecrated life.

v) Justification of the study:

The rationale of the current study is premised on the fact that the researcher realized that many religious and other members of the Church in the Parish are faced with myriad of challenges regarding consecrated celibacy practice, the researcher therefore intended to bridge the gap by conducting this study. The justification of the study is also based on the fact that to the researcher's knowledge, no known study has been carried out on the same topic on Nyansiongo Parish; this therefore led to a research gap which needed to be bridged by the study at hand. The study is also driven by the fact that the researcher intended to understand the true picture of celibacy practice on the ground thus the most effective and realistic means is to carry out a study that explores the true catholic teaching on celibacy for the more authentic life of consecrated celibacy among religious from the Parish. The findings of the study will also enhance the understanding of sisters and any other members willing to practice celibacy on Church position or doctrinal belief on celibacy.

vi) The significance of the study

The study will be of significance value to the following groups of people;

Catholic Church; the challenges faced by religious in relation to celibacy that will be unearthed will help the mainstream Church come up with possible solutions that could lend a hand in the prosperity and the realization of true practice of celibacy among the sisters in Church. To the members of the Parish; they will gain more knowledge and insight on the need and benefit of embracing celibacy as a step towards full and or total dedication for the service of the Lord. Future researchers and academicians: the findings of this study may be used by future researchers and

academician as an area of reference point for further research on the same study or in a relevant field.

vii) Limitations foreseen in the Research

In the course of this research, the researcher will be faced by challenges. These hurdles manifest themselves in many ways. Culture is a crucial part of any community; the Abagusii culture has been mostly transmitted orally. Most of these oral traditions have not been put in writing, hence not readily available in libraries. It is even harder to get elderly people to transmit these oral traditions. This is informed by the decrease in life expectancy. The researcher will experience difficulties in getting the Abagusii material on culture.

Financial constraints are the major hindrance in the compilation of this research. There is a lot to be bought like the writing materials, pens and printing of the final draft.

Time is a major factor and a limited resource. There is a lot of interplay between collecting research material as well as class work and my religious community life. The research work is limited to the catholic teaching on the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy: A case study of professed religious from Nyansiongo parish – kisii diocese.

Viii) Method

On the methods, the research work is limited to print an electronic published works. These are based on the library material: books, dictionaries church documents, articles, electronic sources and magazines. These materials will be selected based on the understanding of the catholic teachings on the fruitfulness of the consecrated celibacy and the Abagusii cultural understanding

on celibacy. The above outlined method will be enriched by the researcher's personal experience and reflections.

viii) Research questions

1. What is the understanding of celibacy among the Abagusii community?
2. What are the challenges facing the consecrated from Nyansiongo parish?
3. What are the possible recommendable strategies for the realization of the consecrated celibacy for the religious from Nyansiongo parish?
4. How to contextualize the spiritual fruitfulness within the consecrated celibates from Nyansiongo parish, kisii diocese

CHAPTER ONE

UNDERSTANDING OF CONSECRATED CELIBACY AMONG THE ABAGUSII COMMUNITY

Introduction

Chapter one gives a general overview of the church documents and the Abagusii world. This is reflected in the teachings of the church on consecrated celibacy in her documents, the origins and distribution of the Abagusii people. Besides, their perception of consecrated celibacy is brought out in the light of meaning of a female/ woman as a mother in their culture.

This chapter is separated into sub topics. The researcher uses these sub topics to explore and drive home the context and the spirit of consecrated celibacy in the church and in the Abagusii community. The introduction of Christianity – Catholicism in the Abagusii community and its state today, is also tackled in this section.

1.1 Christian teachings on consecrated celibacy

Consecrated religious life has been practiced in the church right from the beginning. In every value to live entirely to God. However, we can say that it is a call to enjoy the earthly things with moderation, a way of helping people to bear the cross of Christ with commitment.

It gives the reason why celibacy in the church is fundamental. It says that Jesus Christ being the only son of the Father, through the power of the incarnation became the link between heaven and earth, which is between the Father and mankind. Jesus Christ, in his mission on earth, remained in the state of celibate as a sign of total dedication to the service of human race because Jesus is the role model of celibacy in the church.

Pope Paul VI states in the encyclical letter, *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* that the “son of God, who assumed a perfect human nature and raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament, remained throughout his own earthly life in a state of perfect virginity, to signify his total dedication to the service of God and the human race.”⁷ Chastity and virginity are not simply additional or secondary to Christ’s priestly existence, but belong to its very essence. “Don’t you see,” St. Ambrose writes, “that Christ is chastity, Christ is integrity.”⁸ In becoming a priest by virtue of hypostatic union, the son of God committed himself to the Father, offering him his total and exclusive love, and consecrated himself entirely to performing the work of redemption.

Hence, ecclesiastical authority will certainly not try to impose a “charism on anyone to which he has not been called; but it does have a right to lay its hands exclusively on those who have received the free gift of chastity in the celibate life from the Holy Spirit.....”⁹ These consecrated celibates are called to live the life given by God through the Holy Spirit.

Pierre Hermand in his book, *the priest celibates married*, argued that “religious life is essential to the only in so far as it is the community of believers, but not just a mere institution.”¹⁰ This will imply that, religious life would not vanish even if they decide to authorize priests to marry.

Consecrated celibacy is love relationship in which “the Holy Spirit becomes the primary bond of union and great gift in the exchange of love.”¹¹ This love in self-giving offers a deep fulfilment

⁷Archbishop Cresencio Sepe., <http://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/congregation>, 18/12/2017.

⁸St. AMBROSE, *De Viirginitate*, 18, PL 16- 271.

⁹A. W. RICHARD SIPE, *A way of loving, living and serving*, 67.

¹⁰P. HERMAND, *The priest celibacy or married*, 139.

¹¹G. A. ARBUCKLE SM – D.L. FLEMMING SJ, *Religious Life*, 26.

prerogative.”¹² Consecrated celibacy carries with the holiness by virtue of their baptism. Even if it is not that she can lead a celibate life, yet Christ invites us all to observe the virtue of chastity as one way of giving ourselves to God.

Being able to relate to this can help our local people to understand the concept of consecrated celibacy in religious life. All Christians, lay, religious men and women, are called to love one another in a more open way just as the greatest commandment inspires us to do. But consecrated people are called to this life in a radical way. Jesus invites us to love one another when he said, “this is my commandment: love one another as I love you.” (john 15:12) thus consecrated celibacy is a call to a life of warmth and involvement with others as children of God.

In becoming the children of God, we see that those who opt for celibacy are called consecrated celibates. These are people who do not attach themselves to any particular person and remain for others. “Their relationship with God is the beginning, source and goal of human destiny. Consecrated celibacy helps the celibates to make their lives into a visible witness to God as their first priority in life, and also as a gift to all people.”¹³

Consecrated celibacy cannot be based on male superiority over women or some kind of understanding or something a community or its leaders demands. It is not also a demand for those who “divorce for the reason of infidelity,” (Mathew 19:9) but it represents the teaching and example of Christ. It is found in the revelation of the messiah as having a special function in the kingdom of God.

¹²G. A. ARBUCKLE SM – D.L. FLEMMING SJ, *Religious Life*, 27.

¹³D.T. MAHONEY, *Touching the Face of God*, 74.

The virtue of consecrated celibacy has attracted many debates in the church. The priests, brothers and sisters find it difficult when they are told that in the history of the consecrated life in the church, there have been married men with their wives and children who were also catholic priests in full communion with the pope in Rome.

Culturally, Otene Matungulu, in his article in the spearhead journal, “*Celibacy and the value of African fecundity*,” quotes pope John II’s speech when he visited Africa (may 3 1981 in kinshasha); that there is a relationship between African value of fecundity and spiritual fecundity. The pope added that it is in spiritual respect that religious chastity, faithfully observed stands out clearly as a preferential “love of the Lord in prayer and complete availability for others.”¹⁴ In the same way, Otene adds that African parents are very happy when their sons and daughters get married but are very much inclined to oppose them when they wish to join a life of consecrated celibacy.

The second Vatican council, in its decree on the priesthood among the religious and clergy despite opposition that was there (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 16). Pope Paul VI, in his encyclical letter, *Sacerdotalis Caelibates*, also invited all people of God to continue encouraging the practice of consecrated celibacy.

The revised Code of Canon Law of 1983 also supports the continuation of the practice. “The catholic church made celibacy obligatory for the consecrated religious and clerics of the Latin rite to observe continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. This gift needs to be appreciated for

¹⁴ D. MONTGOMERY, *Gods will and your personality*, 97.

it is grounded in the grace of God”¹⁵ that all African religious men and women and priest receive as consecrated persons.

1.2 Doctrine and Practice of Celibacy Among the Religious in Nyansiongo Parish- Kisii

Diocese

Nyansiongo parish – kisii Diocese is found in the kisii highlands of the western region of Kenya. Its people are the abagusii community who are the indigenous though of late there are some of other ethnic people also who are there either through intermarriage or working and settled there. Due to this, cultural practices are much affected by the abagusii ways of living.

The Abagusii ethnic group is part of the major Bantu speaking group. According to Ayodo, “the Abagusii tribe claim Mogusii as their founder, and have taken their name from him. Mogusii’s great-great-greatgrandfather Kintu (alias Muntu, Mundu or Wantu) was the leader of the migration of the Bantu. The ancestral Gusii population entered western Kenya from Uganda and later moved from the foothills of Mount Elgon towards their present lands.”¹⁶

Then, presumably to flee the advance of the Nilotic-speaking Luo, they finally moved to their present location in the Gusii (Kisii) Hills. The other version suggests that the Gusii came from the south of Lake Victoria, settled for a while in the Kano Plains where they presumably merged with the Gusii that had come from Mount Elgon, and together they then moved into the Gusii Hills. Due to their history of almost constant migration, Gusii culture is inevitably a mixture of various

¹⁵ T.G. GBETONJII, *The Understanding of Celibacy and its Challenges*, 13.

¹⁶AYODO, *The Heritage library of African peoples*,150.

influences, combining original Bantu elements with aspects borrowed from or imposed by contacts with Nilotic-speaking peoples, notably the Luo, and to a lesser extent the Maasai and Kipsigis.

The Abagusii tribe constitutes one of the largest ethnic groups in Kenya. This group; that of interest for the research work is classified under the large Bantu people. “This classification is based on the language type and place of origin. It is proper to note that the Abagusii arrived at their present an in Kenya between 1730 and 1760, as outlined by Ayodo.”¹⁷

Celibacy in Gusii culture and traditions is not much regarded. Unmarried people in Gusii culture and traditions are disregarded and considered even out cast or un worthy in the community. Consecrated celibates from Nyansiongo parish face the same confrontation as they hail from this area which has all these aspects in mind and practice. Keeping in mind that the Abagusii people passed through other ethnic places before settling their Gusii land, these not only affected their culture, but also their mentality. Nyansiongo parish to a greater length being on the metropolitan side is much affected.

The consecrated celibates from Nyansiongo parish have gone through this and still bear with faith the fruits of their consecration as celibates. Majority hail from families that have both Catholics and protestants members. These not only affect their disposition as fully consecrated celibates, but influence a lot the life they endure later in the church and society. Protestants majority are ant - celibates and hold it firm that one has to be married. These consecrated celibates from Nyansiongo have with faith showed that, their love is not only for marriage, but for all. They treat both with

¹⁷A. AYODO, *The Heritage Library of African people*, 9.

dignity and human respect not regarding the held perceptions on them. For many love and charity is for the family and society, but for the consecrated celibates is for all regardless who you are.

Celibacy in Nyansiongo parish is seen as a waste of resources. To the greater extent one is seen as a cast in the society in being a consecrated celibate. People from this area they don't imagine how one can live without a family, or how one can do with all human feelings like the rest unless impotent or cast by the gods. Celibates are seen as the cast ones and they have no space in the society. They are neither given respect and consideration in both families and the community. A celibate should not contribute anything to the family and the society at large as they are casted people. People with no profit to the families and the society. Their generation is considered done once they die.

Unmarried people in Nyansiongo parish are considered as the ones running from responsibilities either as husbands or wives. Once one joins a religious congregation, is seen as a way of running from family responsibilities. A celibate is an irresponsible person and therefore is neither a model or an example to the family or society. This goes to the length during the renaming of the newborns in the families. Many consecrated celibates are not renamed as they are not responsible people and no one would like his or her child to fall in the trap as the child might copy the traits from the person.

Celibates are foolish or less intelligent in the family and the community. An intelligent person is the one who is married and is able to bring up the family. A married person is seen to be of value in intelligence as he or she can outsource for the needs of the family and the society at large unlike the celibates. One who can give life to the family by giving birth is wise as he or she keeps the

commandment of God, “go and multiply” as seen by most protestants and traditionalists. One who is able to answer the quests of life by living it in giving birth is intelligent and wise.

Which value can a celibate add to the family and the community? This is the most and popular questions that a consecrated celibacy from Nyansiongo parish always bear in mind as the celibates are already regarded as of less values in the families and the society. A celibate whether rich or poor, his or her wealth / poverty is not of value unless he or she has children. The children are of great value in the poverties or richness of an individual. One may have wealth, but once a celibate, all is regarded as nothing. Think of a consecrated celibate who now has nothing, of which value does this community or family see in him or her?

Being a metropolitan place, ideas and technology has much affected the people in Nyansiongo parish. A celibate is seen either as lesbian or a gay as the world of today they are the ones who can live together of same sex. Many suffer this perception, but with faith they still show what the church teaches and practices is possible and not what the world thinks or sees.

1.2.1 How was Christianity introduced in the Abagusii community?

Before 1909, “the Abagusii people believed in their god *Engoro*, it is this time the first missionaries started coming to Gusii land as stated by Bogonko.”¹⁸ This was immediately after Abagusii were overwhelmed and colonized by the British. These Christian missionaries were mainly from the catholic and protestant denominations- mostly seventh day Adventists.

¹⁸S. BOGONKO, *Christian Missionary Education and its Impact on Abagusii of Western Kenya*,75

Below is a brief historical discussion of the coming and settlement of these Catholics and protestant (seventh day Adventists) missionaries in Gusii land, their influence on the Abagusii community culture and traditional beliefs. The catholic missionaries were mainly the mill hill missionaries.

I. The Catholic Church

“The Roman catholic Mill Hill Missionaries arrived in Gusii from England in 1911.”¹⁹ Discussing the catholic foundations in Kenya, Baur “reveals that the Mill Hill fathers first arrived in western Kenya in 1903. In 1906, they moved to Ojola in Luo land and opened a station in Gusii at a place called Nyabururu near kisii town and Asumbi among the Jo’Luo in 1913.”²⁰ “The catholic church in Gusii was led by Fr. Mathew who became popular with the British colonizers.”²¹ Baur “states that the Mill Hill fathers did not have a clearly defined method of evangelization in Gusii.”²² They employed the school method of evangelism which was started by Fr. Bouma. The missionaries could identify one bright and obedient boy from a home or village, convert him and teach him the catechism for three years. Then he was sent to evangelize the people. The method was also used by the Anglicans but was not as successful as for the Catholics. The girl child was not much put into considerations.

Abagusii resisted the British administration but they did not manage to stop their social-political influence. The people’s efforts were overwhelmed by the British governors who had weakened Gusii traditional government by dividing up and colonizing the minds of the council of elders.

¹⁹ S. BOGONKO, *Christian Missionary Education and its Impact on Abagusii of Western Kenya*,98.

²⁰ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 258.

²¹S. BOGONKO, *Christian Missionary Education and its Impact on Abagusii of Western Kenya*,18.

²²J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 57-58.

With the British ruler's success in taking over the administration of Abagusii, they recalled the Euro-American missionaries who had gone back to their countries of origin during World War I. In the post-war period, Abagusii were as eager to respond to the Christian message as the Luo and the Luyhia communities.

In spite of conflicts and altercations between Catholics and Seventh-Day Adventist missionaries and early converts to Christianity, the Catholics were able to open many stations and churches in Gusii. "They built many churches sponsored and self-maintained schools, dispensaries and colleges in Gusii. These institutions made the Catholic Church to maintain its influence in Gusii. The Catholic Church has the second largest number of converts to SDA in Gusii."²³

When the Catholic missionaries came to Gusii, they found Abagusii already a united and peaceful people and inherently religious in their belief in Engoro. Based on their misinformed understanding and superiority complex of their religion, they considered all Gusii traditional religious practices irreligious and backward. They considered the education system the people gave to their children as primordial and irrelevant. They took Gusii bright boys to their seminaries, taught them the catechist and separated them completely from Gusii traditional priests who could have taught them Gusii traditional concept of God. This weakened family bonds between children and their parents and blocked the transmission of Gusii traditional concept of God in their oral tradition. They targeted the young generation so that they could teach them a 'new God' and the 'correct' manner of relating to God.

²³S. BOGONKO, *Christian Missionary Education and its Impact on Abagusii of Western Kenya*, 218.

The Catholic missionaries were very harsh to the converts. “They could physically discipline or slap those who came to the mass late.”²⁴ These missionaries claimed that they were God’s representatives of the new religion in Gusii. Their brutality made Abagusii perceive God as hostile and cruel. Most of Abagusii returned to their former belief in Engoro and Gusii traditional representatives of Engoro who were tolerant and humane in their dealings with people.

II. Other Christian Denominations

The Catholic missionaries were followed by the Seventh-Day Adventist missionaries (SDA) in Gusii whose influence on Gusii traditional concept of God was not in any way positive. The Seventh-Day Adventists according to Nyaundi, “first arrived in Gusii in 1913 and their first station was in Nyanchwa near Kisii Town. The other stations prior to Nyanchwa were in Were in Gendia and Wire Hill among the Luo community which were opened in 1906 and 1907 respectively”²⁵

After the World War I, “the SDA and the Catholics returned to Nyanchwa and Nyabururu stations respectively in 1919. Zealous work started to radiate to all parts of Gusii from these two stations. The SDA and Catholic missionaries began determined campaigns to gain more converts to their denominations.”²⁶ Both the missionaries and their first converts developed a spirit of competition and hatred against each other which led to dividing people along Adventist and Catholic denominational lines.

²⁴S. BOGONKO, *Christian Missionary Education and its Impact on Abagusii of Western Kenya*,25.

²⁵N. NYAUNDI, *Seventh Day Adventism in Gusii*,65

²⁶S. BOGONKO, *Christian Missionary Education and its Impact on Abagusii of Western Kenya*,95

The Seventh-Day Adventist missionaries and early converts were forceful and highly skilled in evangelism. “They conducted many public evangelistic campaigns, employed door to door evangelism, ordained the local people as elders and deacons and employed the local people as pastors on permanent employment. They opened churches almost in every village, started schools, dispensaries and colleges in the area. They targeted the young people by creating a strong youth department in the church and encouraged the youth to join Adventist schools where they could be taught Adventist doctrines and strict observance of Saturday as the day of worship.”²⁷ These are the reasons why the SDA church is the dominant denomination in Gusii.

Abagusii had specific places where they went to worship God from. Places like on the hills and under some trees like omotembe, omosasa and omogumo. These places and trees were considered sacred and God was believed to stay in or on those trees and places. Most ceremonies, vows, reconciliations and covenants were made under these trees and hills. These trees were never fetched as firewood and nobody aimlessly went to these sites. “The SDA missionaries taught the people that the only place where God dwells is in the church. They also taught the people that all birds, animals, hills and valleys are equal and ordinary. observes that the SDA missionaries encouraged people to cut the sacred trees and built churches on every hill where people were formerly worshiping Engoro from. This was deliberately done so that people may divert their understanding of the sanctity of the hills as places of worship to points of convergence for worship of the Christian God.”²⁸ This disoriented the people’s concept of God and sacred places of worship.

²⁷N. NYAUNDI, *Seventh Day Adventism in Gusii*,108

²⁸S. BOGONKO, *Christian Missionary Education and its Impact on Abagusii of Western Kenya*,38

1.3 Catholicism Among the Abagusii Community Today

Today, most Kisii people claim to be followers of some form of Christianity. The Roman Catholic takes second in number of the faithful as compared to protestant churches - seventh day being the dominant among them. "This is due to some of the facts that were hard for the Abagusii people to easily understand modern God in the catholic faith as compared to their traditional god Engoro and way of life as Catholics. Some of the old members in the society still believe the white missionaries were the only Catholics either as priests, brothers and sisters who truly practiced the faith."²⁹

Christianity- "Catholics presents the Biblical images to Abagusii wholesome while others are not relevant to Abagusii in their day-to-day understanding of the image of God. Some of the images make it difficult for Abagusii to understand who God is."³⁰ Mostly the images of the saints in the church have become debatable among the Abagusii people because the seventh Day Adventist don't believe much on the saints.

Christians address God as a constant friend. "Friendship was highly valued in the Greco-Roman world. Friendship among the Jews as Stagg reveals was of basic pleasure and one was considered popular if he/she had many friends."³¹ Catholics and in Gusii traditional religion, God is considered a constant friend for protection, comfort, provision and companionship. This is the

²⁹P. SCHINELLER, *A Handbook of Inculturation*,24

³⁰S. BOGONKO, *Christian Missionary Education and its Impact on Abagusii of Western Kenya*,86.

³¹F. STAGG, *New Testament Theology*, 90-91.

theory that has helped many vocations to survive more each day in the church among the religious hailing from Gusii land.

Christians address God as a husbandman, vinedresser or a farmer, Christ as the true vine and themselves as the crops or the branches and their character as the fruits (John 15:1-8). The word vine-dresser as Wagner, “states more properly expresses the sense of the original word than husbandman.”³² It means one who has the care of a vineyard whose office is to nurture, trim and defend the vine, and who of course feels a deep interest in its growth and welfare (Matthew 21:33).

Gusii people find it easy to live the catholic faith in regarding God as the husbandman, mostly the women. This has led to increased female vocations in the church, as it is a consolation in looking at Jesus as their husbandman. It has changed their mentality from looking God as the farmer in Gusii background, who was to farm and feed the family, but now as the spiritual husbandman.

The Christian image of God as a shepherd lacked the local concept of a shepherd. A Gusii shepherd as Bogonko “illuminates stayed very close to the flock and even slept in the same room with the flock to protect them from the attack of the enemies and wild animals.”³³ The Biblical shepherd appears only concerned with the closing door when all the flock has entered into their house but a Gusii shepherd goes beyond a door and sleeps in the same room with the flock. This helps Gusii shepherd to understand the condition of the sheep all the times. When God is presented

³²P. WAGNER, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, 52-53.

³³S. BOGONKO, *Christian Missionary Education and its Impact on Abagusii of Western Kenya*, 78.

in the image of a Gusii shepherd it implies closeness and concern with humanity than the Biblical shepherd.

CHAPTER TWO

CHALLENGES FACING THE CONSECRATED FROM NYANSIONGO PARISH – KISII DIOCESE

Introduction

In chapter two, the researcher explores the challenges facing the religious from Nyansiongo parish – Kisii diocese. The religious understand consecrated celibacy based on both the Christian teachings and their individual cultures and traditions. Despite this, they undergo certain challenges in living the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy.

The Gusii culture and tradition has a different perspective when it comes to celibacy. This is true, but this religious from Nyansiongo parish still continue to bear the fruits of consecrated celibacy in the Church. Celibacy in Gusii culture is as well as impotency, someone who is just a waste in the society. The society cannot rely on him or her. By extension, this shows how culture has a lot of impact on one's vocation and the Church at large.

2.1 The Consecrated Celibate

The chastity "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:12) which religious profess should be counted an outstanding gift of grace. It frees the heart of man in a unique fashion (cf. 1 Cor. 7:32-35) so that it may be more inflamed with love for God and for all men. "Thus, it not only symbolizes in a singular way the heavenly goods but also the most suitable means by which religious dedicate themselves with undivided heart to the service of God and the works of the apostolate." (*PC 12*) In this way they recall to the minds of all the faithful that wondrous marriage decreed by God and which is to be fully revealed in the future age in which the Church takes Christ as its only spouse.

Perfectae Caritatis explains: "Religious, therefore, who are striving faithfully to observe the chastity they have professed must have faith in the words of the Lord, and trusting in God's help not overestimate their own strength but practice mortification and custody of the senses." (*PC 12*) Neither should they neglect the natural means which promote health of mind and body. As a result, they will not be influenced by those false doctrines which scorn perfect continence as being impossible or harmful to human development and they will repudiate by a certain spiritual instinct everything which endangers chastity. In addition, let all, especially superiors, remember that chastity is guarded more securely when true brotherly love flourishes in the common life of the community.

Since the observance of perfect continence touches intimately the deepest instincts of human nature, candidates should neither present themselves for nor be admitted to the vow of chastity, unless they have been previously tested sufficiently and have been shown to possess the required

psychological and emotional maturity. “They should not only be warned about the dangers to chastity which they may meet but they should be so instructed as to be able to undertake the celibacy which binds them to God in a way which will benefit their entire personality.” (PC13)

These consecrated celibates encounter several challenges despite the formation they undergo. As mentioned in the religious of Nyansiongo parish, all celibates encounter similar challenges despite their different apostolates. The responses also insist on offering a realistic view of today's society which can help one to understand the most difficult challenges to the consecrated life, especially in the area of the great values at the basis of their involvement, and in a special way the threefold counsel and evangelical charism of chastity, poverty and obedience.

Profound cultural changes have corroded the authentic meaning of sexuality, the idea of the family and the value of virginity and celibacy. If on the one hand, a healthy view of human sexuality has contributed to a better appreciation of the corporal and spiritual integrity of the human person, other trends have banalized the understanding of it and disrupted its balance. The technological possibility of separating the unitive and procreative dimensions of sexuality create grave challenges to the authentic meaning of human life.

In the plan of salvation, voluntary celibacy for the sake of the kingdom and Christian marriage, in the light of the mystery of Christ the bridegroom and of the church, by their complementary nature show the power of love which integrates, gives of itself and is committed. It is the alternative offered by the good news of love to a sexuality that in its hedonistic expression's confines man and woman to a fleeting experience, consigning them to loneliness.

Fidelity to marriage and the commitment to celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven are perhaps more difficult to assume today, but in their complementarity, they have become a privileged sign which must be restored to the project of true love and be seen as a mutual example of fidelity. Celibacy in particular must be a prophecy of the future definitive kingdom (cf. Mt. 22:30). However, how can we teach today a commitment as demanding as that of celibacy?

2.2 The Religious from Nyansiongo Parish – Kisii Diocese

Nyansiongo parish is one of the parishes in Kisii diocese that has mixed cultures and technology, in other words, a metropolitan area. It carries people from all sorts of Gusii land with different perceptions of the Kisii tradition. moreover, technology has also set in. The religious from this parish live with all this and still try to keep, faith and the moral teachings of the Church in regard to consecrated celibacy. An area where people see the religious consecrated as the sexual abusers, gays or lesbians. This is what they can see in the internet sites and culture considers them as cast people.

Despite numerous challenges mentioned earlier above, these religious have shown to be an example in the diocese of Kisii and maybe a model of the people to the society in this present time. Many congregations have gotten a lot of vocations from the parish, this include; Franciscans sisters of St. Joseph Asumbi, Blessed Virgin Sisters of Tabaka, Little Sisters of St. Joseph, Dominicans friars and sisters, Camillian fathers and Sisters, among others.

Several schools and other teaching institutions in Kisii were founded and are run by religious. The people regarded as less intelligent and un wise in the community. Going above this challenge, various Orders have done quite a commendable job in education, right from nursery, primary and

secondary school levels. The religious involvement in education in Kisii District started when the Church was established in Nyabururu, three miles from Kisii town. This was in the year 1936.

Nyansiongo parish is a complex place full of institutions, all these are run by religious who hail from the parish and outside. The work of the religious in the area of education has been appreciated greatly because it seems to encompass the whole life of mankind. It wasn't easy for most families to accept their children go to these schools to be taught by the religious who are less intelligent, but later with the perseverance and persistence of these religious, they have accepted. This is so because it does not only deal with class work but with almost every aspect of life. It touches the nation in its entirety. Women and girls are taught to be good cooks, good dressmakers, generally good home-makers. Religious also toil to bring Christ to their fellow country-men and to save them from ignorance and disease. This has to the greater end made the community of Nyansiongo parish to change their perception in seeing them as an intelligent or unwise people.

Today material progress could offer the possibility to improve the condition of humanity regarding nutrition, education, health care and housing, and to make earning one's bread a more humane task. This has helped to solve the problem of these consecrated celibates being at first seen as the irresponsible people and of less value to the community and families. However, the poor continue to be poor and new forms of poverty emerge, while paradoxically it is the poor who often show a greater sensitivity to the human values which a secular society does not esteem. Negative symptoms such as extreme tribalism and increased violence are on the rise. This not only affected the locals where this religious work in Nyansiongo, due to Kenya's 2007-2008 post-election

violence at most of its tribal borders, but also the country.³⁴ Their value and responsibility has been seen in caring for the poor and the post- election victims. The considered irresponsible now are seen as responsible.

The means of communication and transportation, which technology now offers, allow us to think of humanity as one large family which, while respecting different ethnic identities and cultures, is tearing down the walls of separation and moving closer toward reconciliation under the gaze of the one Father of all. This has not yet happened in Nyansiongo and most parts of the country at large, hence hindering a proper process of reconciliation mostly after the ethnic clashes that has happened in this area for long and which the religious are expected to facilitate despite them being close to the people more. These consecrated celibates face the challenge to reconcile people with whom consider them as cast by the gods, not to have any human feelings to bear children and bring up families. One without a family cannot reconcile families, as their reality is different, same to the cast person who might bring curses.

The opportunities offered to Catholicism today are great, responding to the deepest aspirations of the consecrated life. Today we can think of a world of solidarity where borders do not put people in opposition as enemies, where the interchange of goods, knowledge and services can assume global dimensions. This is still a story in many of the people of this parish making the apostolic missions and vocations for this religious to be of great challenge.³⁵ How can a celibate with no child share equal opportunities offered in the society? They find it hard to work with the

³⁴ Cf. O. MOSES, *post-election wounds in Kenya*, 85.

³⁵ Cf. O. MOSES, *post-election wounds in Kenya*, 57.

community in solidarity as their benefits are less regarded by the society. Their inputs are only for the community to embezzle and take away. But with strong support of one another they manage to get the solidarity merging.

Today's insistence in culture on personal autonomy and on fulfilment, as understood by one's subjective conscience creates difficulties affecting obedience, the acceptance of traditions, the objective limitations created by law, sacrifice and the mortification of one's own will for the sake of the broader common good. Frequently the very idea of solidarity is debased by the prevalence of an individualistic logic, thus presenting new problems threatening the meaning of obedience and leading to risks of individualism, hence reduced vocation from the area as compared to the past.

Today it is difficult for many people to make fundamental and lasting commitments. There is also a crisis in the idea of vocation and of giving oneself in a lifelong manner. Some ask if it is possible to consider the possibility of a consecrated life made for a temporary period of commitment with a view to more mature choices, as can be found in other forms of religion or other cultures. This has affected not only the Church but also families which are the sources of consecrated vocations. Nyansiongo parish not left aside, these consecrated celibates face it from families to the society. Many have left due to this, but many still join and persevere the life with fruitfulness.

The choice of an absolute ideal, and an offering of self to God and the service of others, is a source of meaning which humanizes and is a gift of self to humanity. For this reason, persons consecrated to a single ideal, which does not pass away, are living signs of those transcendent values for which a person lives and even dies. In our day there is no lack of persons who have followed Christ to

the point of sacrificing their life, rendering through their martyrdom a sign which is the supreme proof of love, mostly in Nyansiongo.³⁶ It is mostly seen during the post- election violence. It still stands a challenge for many come out with courage and say the truth to the courses of this violence. Confront the reality with courage so that same will not emerge again in the future as the consecrated celibates. Suffer up to the cross for the truth and salvation of many as consecrated celibates following Christ footsteps.

2.3 The Consecrated Celibate in Old Age.

Old age is a challenge to the consecrated celibates not only the ones from Nyansiongo parish. Most find a great challenge to integrate themselves with the juniors in communities. At times, most of the superiors are forced to send them to formation houses as in Africa most of the congregations do not yet have retirement houses to care for them. The congregations that have these houses some of the old members find it difficult in being there. The question is; how are they prepared themselves for this unavoidable age? Is the African culture ready for this?

Many experience times of negligence from the juniors. This mostly happens as they find themselves occupied in their apostolates hence nobody finds time for them in the communities. This has led to employment of the workers to care for them, forgetting that they are to live in fraternal love with all the members including the old and not leaving them be served and cared by the workers. Aged religious are to be in the communities as sources of wisdom to the young.

When the aged fall sick, it becomes hard for themselves to be cared well. Most of them are suffering from chronic diseases. This is the time they need the young consecrated to look after

³⁶ Cf.D. MONTGOMERY, *Gods will and your personality*,45.

them who are never available. Psychological accompaniment is very essential during the ailing time as old person. The desire of the people around them is always there, but they don't find. This is mostly on the male congregations as compared to feminine congregations.

Jesus being the model of this life, gave many examples to live as a consecrated celibate. He gave the disciples examples through being with him and learning from him, but he never lived to death in old age to give it fully. The disciples too followed but many were martyred before old age. The Church fathers and the monks of the consecrated life tried in the hermits in the desert in total isolation to give an example, but still it's not to its fullest of old age. Through the ages, this has given reasons why Europeans adapt as their culture and Africans same, still leaving a lot to desire.

2.4 Questionnaire:

Key; 1-strongly disagree (SD), 2- Disagree (D), 3- Undecided (U), 4- Agree (A), 5- Strongly Agree (SA)

The questionnaire consists three parts. They are meant to collect data on the Catholic teaching on the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy. A case study of the religious from Nyansiongo parish – Kisii diocese.

Part A:

Here, the aim of these questions is to find out how the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy is present among the religious from Nyansiongo parish – Kisii diocese.

Statement	1strongly Disagree	2 disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
There are is fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy in Nyansiongo parish				3 = 30%	7= 70%

I share a lot of difference				4 = 40%	6 = 60%
I know people's culture, tradition and technology.			2 = 20%	2 = 20%	6 = 60%
I appreciate the different cultures, traditions and traditions			1 = 10%	1 = 10%	8 = 80%

Part B: cultural, traditional and technological impacts in a multicultural society on consecrated celibates

As people interact, there is always some effects in their life. This part is exploring the impact of culture, tradition and technology in the community life and the life of the consecrated celibates.

Community level:

Statement	1 strongly Disagree	2 disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
The cultures, traditions and technology affect the community life positively				6 = 60%	4 = 40%
Active participation in the community spiritual life			1 = 10%	3 = 30%	6 = 60%
Good insight given by consecrated		1 = 10%	1 = 10%	6 = 60%	2 = 20%

celibates culture					
In prayer time of the community/ activities		1 = 10%	2 = 20%	4 = 40%	3 =30%

In the community activities

Statement	1strongly Disagree	2 disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
Recreations outings				6 = 60%	4 = 40%
Social evenings	1 = 10%			4 = 40%	5 =50%
Creativity			1 = 10%	5 = 50%	4 =40%
Apostolates		1 = 10%	3 =30%	3 =30%	3 = 30%

At the personal level:

Did my culture, tradition and technology help me personally to grow as a consecrated celibate?

Statement	1strongly Disagree	2 disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
My culture, tradition and technology help me to be a fruitful religious			1 = 10%	4 =40%	5= 50%

It enhances my relationship		1=10%	1=10%	2= 20%	6= 60%
To be enriched by other cultures, traditions and technologies				3 =30%	7 =70%
To enrich others by my consecration			1= 10%	1 =10%	8 =80%
It disposed me to internalize my consecration as religious		1=10 %		6 =60%	1 =10%

In the Church mission:

Statement	1strongly Disagree	2 disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
My culture, tradition and technology help me in the Church mission				8 =80%	2= 20%
With the relationship with			1=10%	6= 60%	3 =30%

the community/society					
To be formed in the Church mission			2 =20%	7 =70%	1 =10%
To be enriched and enrich the mission of the Church				5 =50%	5 =50%
To be in touch with the suffering world			2 =20%	7 =70%	1 =10%

Part C: Challenge in a multicultural community as consecrated celibate

When tensions and challenges come, what are my reactions or how do I do to cope with them.

Statement	1strongly Disagree	2 disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
Am excluded because of my consecration		1 =10%	3=30%	6= 60%	
I fight for my identity		1 =10%		7 =70%	1 =10%
I start crisis/ vocational challenges		8 = 80%	1= 10%	1 =10%	
I avoid the other person		7 =70%	1=10%	2 =20%	
I isolate myself from the group		8 =80%	2= 20%		

I decided not to participate in activities	1=10%	6 =60%	3 =30%		
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From the questioners answered by this group of the religious from Nyansiongo parish, it clearly shows the challenges they encounter as consecrated celibates from Kisii culture and the impact on their apostolates, and community life at large. The percentages show how they have managed and become fruitful in their consecration as religious celibates.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth noting that it’s not only in the universal Church that the religious encounter challenges, the religious from Nyansiongo also encounter these challenges in their contexts. The challenges may seem to be same but the experiences are different due to cultural and traditions of the area. As already noted above, the challenges which they encounter within their daily lives in living their vocations as consecrated celibates, to the length strengthen them from the hope of the Gospel where Jesus is the center of all.

CHAPTER THREE

RECOMENDABLE STRATEGIES TOWARDS BETTER REALIZATION OF CONSECRATED CELIBACY

Introduction

Chapter three gives a detailed information on how the consecrated celibates have managed up to date, their challenges and way forward. The researcher aims at treating this information with care not only for class work, but also for many religious who may want to better their religious experiences. The researcher also analyses some of the recommendations drawn from the entire work, taking into great consideration from what the religious from Nyansiongo parish recommend most to the Church. This work opens the way for further researches.

3.1 Consecrated Life: Retrospect's and Prospects.

As during the year of the consecrated life, Pope Francis not only mentioned the challenges the consecrated are either facing or have faced, but he encouraged them by proposing many recommendations to better the life of the consecrated celibates:

To embrace the future with hope should be the third aim of this Year. We all know the difficulties which the various forms of consecrated life are currently experiencing: decreasing vocations and aging members, particularly in the Western world; economic problems stemming from the global financial crisis; issues of internationalization and globalization; the threats posed by relativism and a sense of isolation and social irrelevance... But it is precisely amid these uncertainties, which we share with so many of our contemporaries, that we are called to practice the virtue of hope, the fruit of our faith in the Lord of history, who continues to tell us: Be not afraid... for I am with you” (Jer 1:8). (To all Consecrated People, 3)

The consecrated life has faced a lot of challenges, but with hope, faith and love the kind of life they have devoted themselves to, they have managed. That is why the Pope Francis still insists on this hope and faith in God who is always present in all circumstances. “Recalling our origins sheds light on yet another aspect of consecrated life. Our founders and foundresses were attracted by the unity of the Apostles with Christ and by the fellowship which marked the first community in Jerusalem. In establishing their own communities, each of them sought to replicate those models of evangelical living, to be of one heart and one soul, and to rejoice in the Lord’s presence.” (PC, 15).

Our founders like the Church fathers also persevered to live in a radical way of following Christ, but it’s through generosity and self-sacrifice that they all achieved. “The same generosity and self-

sacrifice which guided your founders – Saint John Paul II once said – must now inspire you, their spiritual children, to keep alive the charisms which, by the power of the same Spirit who awakened them, are constantly being enriched and adapted, while losing none of their unique character. It is up to you to place those charisms at the service of the Church and to work for the coming of Christ’s Kingdom in its fullness.” (*To all Consecrated People, 5*)

They have lived with passion all the years to arrive at communion in the world and the Church. “Living the present with passion means becoming ‘experts in communion’, witnesses and architects of the ‘plan for unity’ which is the crowning point of human history in God’s design. In a polarized society, where different cultures experience difficulty in living alongside one another, where the powerless encounter oppression, where inequality abounds, they are called to offer a concrete model of community which, by acknowledging the dignity of each person and sharing their respective gifts, makes it possible to live as brothers and sisters.” (*To all Consecrated People,7*)

Not only by following the spirituality and the charisms of the specific congregation, they too imitate the specific life of the founders or foundress to present. “Our founders and foundresses shared in Jesus’ own compassion when he saw the crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd. Like Jesus, who compassionately spoke his gracious word, healed the sick, gave bread to the hungry and offered his own life in sacrifice, so our founders and foundresses sought in different ways to be the service of all those to whom the Spirit sent them. They did so by their prayers of intercession, their preaching of the Gospel, their works of catechesis, education, their service to the poor and the infirm... The creativity of charity is boundless; it is able to find countless new

ways of bringing the newness of the Gospel to every culture and every corner of society.” (*To all Consecrated People*,6)

Consecrated life challenges them to examine their fidelity to the mission they are entrusted to. Are their ministries, works and presence consonant with what the Spirit asked of their founders and foundresses? Are they suitable for carrying out today, in society and the Church, those same ministries and works? Do they have the same passion for the people they serve? Are they close to them to the point of sharing in their joys and sorrows, thus truly understanding their needs and helping to respond to them?

Once again, they ask themselves: Is Jesus really their first and only love, as they promised He would be when they professed their vows? Only if He is, they are empowered to love, in truth and mercy, every person who crosses their path. For they have learned from Jesus the meaning and practice love. They are able to love because they have His own heart.

As it is in *Perfectae Caritatis*: “From the beginnings of monasticism to the ‘new communities’ of their own time, every form of consecrated life has been born of the Spirit’s call to follow Jesus as the Gospel teaches.” (*PC* 2). For the various founders and foundresses, the Gospel was the cultivation of mere nostalgia, it calls for following in the footsteps of past generations in order to grasp the high ideals, and the vision and values which inspired them, beginning with the founders and foundresses and the first communities.

In this way they come to see how the charism has been lived over the years, the creativity it has sparked, the difficulties it encountered and the concrete ways those difficulties were surmounted. They may also encounter cases of inconsistency, the result of human weakness and even at times a neglect of some essential aspects of the charism. Yet everything proves instructive and, taken as

a whole, acts as a summons to conversion. To tell their story is to praise God and to thank Him for all His gifts.

They accept the gifts given by the Holy Spirit in the body of the Church of Christ. This continues motivating them and giving hope to go on each day. “Paul himself is so enthused in his own being gifted with celibate chastity that he writes to the Corinthians in his first letter that he wishes everybody could have it. Yet he immediately acknowledges that the spirit is the one who gives...”³⁷ This has not only helped them to live the celibate chastity, but also a source of energy to search for more vocations within the parish.

Many years down the line, religious life was for the minority. Starting from the desert fathers, they were few who opted for it, to set themselves far from the world to desert place where they thought they could encounter with God, away from distractions. These religious also have followed similar example in the current world where everybody could like a life of pleasures and worldly enjoyment to set themselves to a noble life of the few. Being motivated still by the spirit of minority. “The challenge is to identify that work with ministry of the crucified Christ, and never to lose sight of the concrete, practical, individual love owed to each brother and sister we are serving. A spirit of minority keeps us aware of that very concrete principle.”³⁸

In their lives as, religious they have accepted the fact religious life will never be the same as past. Always they strive to live some aspects of the present time- signs of time. This is in respect to their unique and noble life remembering their memories. Religious life is a life of history, history has

³⁷ G. ARBUCKLE, *Religious Life Rebirth Through Conversion*, 25.

³⁸ G. ARBUCKLE, *Religious Life Rebirth Through Conversion*, 101.

to be retained and kept in some aspects, but God is the one who heals the past and shapes the future. “The former means allowing God to heal and give meaning to the past; the latter means surrendering control of the future as well. It means allowing God to shape our dreams as God heals our memories.”³⁹

3.2 Strategies towards better realization of Consecrated Celibacy.

The Church's social doctrine can and must be met with a more profound response. Indeed, it broadens the meaning of traditional apostolates to include the horizons of the integral development of every person and all peoples. This plan must evoke a profound reflection which leads to the search for a new humanism. The consecrated life is often at the crossroads of values and activities promoting not only the dignity of the human person, the orientation of the spirit of poverty, cooperation for the common good and the desire for peace, but also the recognition of supreme values, above all the faith, whose source and end is in God.

The recent social encyclicals of John Paul II, “*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*” and “*Centesimus Annus*,” converge in a strong appeal for development, which cannot be achieved without a call addressed to all our contemporaries, rich and poor alike, and including all those committed to and sharing responsibility for the true progress of the human family—a progress which has social, cultural and spiritual dimensions, and from which those consecrated to God's cause cannot exempt themselves. As educators and witnesses to true justice and peace, those who have experienced the newness of the Gospel in their following of Christ are called to offer their specific collaboration in this field, communicating it “to other people in their concrete difficulties, struggles, problems and challenges

³⁹ G. ARBUCKLE, *Religious Life Rebirth Through Conversion*, 82.

so that these can be illuminated and made more human in the light of faith.” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* pg 266)

Witnessing in their life to the values of peace, justice and development, and patiently teaching people while seeking to get to the root of problems, consecrated persons can be witnesses of Christ, who makes all things new. This keeps off the traditional negative perceptions of people and thus gives them more energy to go forward in the life they have committed themselves to.

A strong common witness of a holiness based on the Gospel, as well as one promoting the holiness of all the people of God, cannot but produce a more positive influence in the world. The charisms of the saints demonstrate the humanizing power of Christian holiness and point to their generous work in the service of humanity. For this reason, the new evangelization is not limited only to its initial proclamation nor to an apostolate of Christian initiation, as done by the initial Mill Hill fathers in Gusii, but a more vivid way.

Today, the Christian fabric of society needs to be repaired everywhere. The consecrated life has an urgent role and great responsibility in this work. Today, catechetical research is needed. There is urgent need for the proclamation of the Gospel truth about the greatest problems of human existence, that is: the relationship of everyone to God the creator and redeemer; respect for life and the dignity of the human person; and the universal destination of goods achieved in such a way as to make the truth of the Gospel shed light on the grave problems of morality. Many initiatives in pastoral programs of spirituality are needed so as to bring to maturity the Christian experience among individuals and groups.

Pastorally, “therefore, the liminal celibate is called to explore and mediate on behalf of the people the deeper symbolic significance, of the psychosexual agenda of today’s world.: to decipher its meaning and evolution, to probe its archetypal significance, to denounce those systems which seek to stymie and stultify erotic creativity, and to offer process for negotiating its impact on human and plenary life.”⁴⁰

Interpersonal relationships have to be marked with devotion and integrity. “In a world permeated by unredeemed sex, celibacy provides a countercultural witness, a reminder that true freedom and liberation is not found not in erotic licence nor in sexual exploitation, but in interpersonal relationships marked by devotion and integrity.”⁴¹ These interpersonal relationships are called to this dynamic of devotion and integrity in the modern world we are in as religious. They have tried it, and now they propose as a strategy to others who like to embrace religious life with joy and love.

“The ability to acknowledge, accept and internalize this mysterious and paradoxical call is essential if the religious woman or man is to live this vow of chastity with a degree of integrity and equanimity.”⁴² Why does it have to be non- married person? This question can only be answered when one accepts and internalize this mysterious call. One needs to acknowledge the changing nature of human sexuality itself, something our dominantly patriarchal culture considers stable, static and unchanging despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

⁴⁰ D. O’MURCHU, *Reframing Religious Life*, 108.

⁴¹ D. O’MURCHU, *Religious Life: A Prophetic Call*, 138.

⁴² D. O’MURCHU, *Reframing Religious Life*, 103.

*“What is needed today is the development of a psychospiritual dynamic of lamentation. More than just an emotional release of painful effect, lamentation is a disciplined articulation of one’s personal and communal pain in the heart of God. It goes beyond a spirituality of self-consciousness and moves toward a spirituality of surrender, whereby individuals and communities once again allow themselves to be confronted in a systematic way by the marvellous self-transcendent ideals of religious life.”*⁴³ The painful moments of being a celibate should be released in surrendering them to God in a self-transcendent way, not looking to share with lay people or other religious of opposite sex that may endanger the vow of chastity. It’s a sacrifice and should remain respected till death.

3.2.1 Helps to Living Consecrated Celibacy Among the Religious from Nyansiongo Parish

a) Forging Solidarity Among Themselves

“Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40; cf. 25:45). The awareness of communion with Christ and with our brothers and sisters, for its part the fruit of conversion, leads to the service of our neighbour’s in all their needs, material and spiritual, since the face of Christ shines forth in every human being. Solidarity is thus the fruit of the communion which is grounded in the mystery of the triune God, and in the Son of God who took flesh and died for all. It is expressed in Christian love which seeks the good of others, especially of those most in need. The newly professed and newly ordained, are the most fragile unless they are in communion with the others, they will easily lose way.

⁴³ G. ARBUCKLE, *Religious Life Rebirth Through Conversion*, 86.

Responding to the call of vocation, as elders or seniors religious recognize the mutual bonds of solidarity that unite bonds that have been forged through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They stand in solidarity with the newly professed and ordained, to recognize and support their courageous commitment to the life they have freely chosen. Through participating during the ordinations and professions and later thanksgiving Masses. As Africans, gifts are valued much, but presence counts a lot. Being present during ordinations and professions, the juniors feel warm and loved to the new family they have joined. Later they are integrated into communication forums.

Forming of WhatsApp groups that help in communication and unity among the members. They easily get all the information of every member and support each other when need arises. Through these forums they are able to delegate some representatives during celebrations and also set dates for social gatherings that brings the majority together. During the social gatherings they easily mingle and form friendships that help them to accompany one another in spiritual and psychological aspects other than what the congregations can offer. They too choose leaders who unite them, able to reach at least more members and can bring unity among themselves. They discuss issues that can separate them and up lift those who are in need among themselves.

They form links that help them in relating with local Kisii Diocese when need arises. Organize masses for the parents and families especially for the old parents of the members. Form groups that can do an extra apostolate in visiting sick parents and attending marriage ceremonies of member family. Help others who are involved in the management and administration of the congregation institutions by providing possible advices and links that are useful to the local and national governments. Do member contributions to raise funds to help themselves mostly during

the celebrations of ordinations and professions in buying gifts and transport. Promote peace and justice among themselves.

For the particular religious consecrated celibates' group, this is the source of a commitment to reciprocal solidarity and the sharing of the spiritual gifts and material goods with which God has blessed them, fostering in individuals a readiness to work where they are needed. Taking the Gospel as its starting-point, a culture of solidarity is promoted, capable of inspiring timely initiatives in support of the poor and the sick, especially refugees forced to leave their villages and lands in order to flee violence, this was most during the post-election violence, where some member families were affected and lost properties and homes in Sotik – Borabu boundary. Since then, they have greatly intervened to bring joy to them.

b) Harmonious Relationship Between the Religious and Local Clergy.

Charity starts in our interactions with fellow members of the body of Christ. By simply living charity toward each other, we give *witness* to the sacrament of charity to the world. These religious in being in harmony by continuous reading and reminding each other on the necessity of being in harmony, has brought joy and promoted vocation in the parish.

The code of Canon Law, (*cann 678*) clearly states: §1. *Religious are subject to the power of bishops whom they are bound to follow with devoted submission and reverence in those matters which regard the care of souls, the public exercise of divine worship, and other works of the apostolate.* §2. *In exercising an external apostolate, religious are also subject to their proper superiors and must remain faithful to the discipline of the institute. The bishops themselves are not to fail to urge*

this obligation if the case warrants it. §3. In organizing the works of the apostolate of religious, diocesan bishops and religious superiors must proceed through mutual consultation.

This is their guide and always the leaders assist to solve the conflicts that might arise amongst themselves with these local clergy. During the social gathering wherever possible the leader's advice and try to bring this harmonious relationship. They remind members of the need of the relationship and refer wherever possible to other church documents when need for clarification arises. Amongst themselves are canonist who don't hesitate to intervene.

Vatican II Post Conciliar Decree the Pastoral Office of the Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus* also states: *In order that the works of the apostolate be carried out harmoniously in individual dioceses and that the unity of diocesan discipline be preserved intact, these principles are established as fundamental:1.) All Religious should always look upon the bishops, as upon successors of the Apostles, with devoted respect and reverence. Whenever they are legitimately called upon to undertake works of the apostolate, they are obliged to discharge their duties as active and obedient helpers of the bishops. (18) Indeed, Religious should consider it an honour to respond promptly and faithfully to the requests and desires of the bishops and in such a way they may assume an even more ample role in the ministry of human salvation. This they should do with due respect for the character of their institute and in keeping with their constitutions which, if needs be, should be accommodated to this goal in accord with the principles of this conciliar decree.*

c) Forming Eucharistic Communities and Living Eucharistic Life styles.

“The eucharistic mystery helps us to understand the profound meaning of the *communio sanctorum*. Communion always and inseparably has both a vertical and a horizontal sense: It is communion with God and communion with our brothers and sisters. Both dimensions mysteriously converge in the gift of the Eucharist.” (SC, 76) As mentioned earlier on the solidarity among themselves in celebrating mass for the member family, this communion not only unites them to God but also among themselves. It forms their lifestyles.

Just as there is a ‘eucharistic form of the Christian life’ for the individual, so too does the Eucharist give a unique form and way of living to the Christian community. One of its primary characteristics is being ‘clearly an ecclesial and communitarian form’ that finds ‘visible expression’ in extra-diocesan groupings, such as this group of consecrated religious of Nyansiongo Parish. That means that those who live in a way not ecclesial and communitarian in character are not living a truly eucharistic form of life.

These insights into the Eucharist lie at the heart of the Church's social apostolate. The apostolates they do as a group or individual, as mentioned earlier visiting the sick and the families of post-election violence in Kenya. The image of the servant Christ washing his disciples' feet at the Last Supper and instructing them, "I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do" (John 13:15), serves as a lens through which we can penetrate the meaning and social implications of the eucharistic mystery. This mandate to serve others is not just addressed to us individually, but to us corporately as we are, in reality, a *community of disciples*. Being close to them, assisting them, not only brings joy to these families, but love of Christ in depth. They have filled the gap that most social groups cannot.

The eucharistic sacrifice gives us the mandate to be disciples of the sacrament of charity. Charity among them and the local clergy as mentioned above. Every time we gather at Mass, we hear the words: "Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you." After telling us that he is the bread broken for us, Jesus says, "Do this in memory of me." Thus, in the same action, Jesus not only gives himself to us, but mandates us to do the same for others. They have not let his words become routine. If they do, they may become immune to the power of Jesus' mandate. Lest that happen. It has happened among themselves and now to the rest.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it's worth noting that within the religious of Nyansiongo parish, many efforts have been put to live the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy. Apart from just the general formation this religious receive in their individual congregations, they still go far into books to see what is outside the box. They have tried and can recommend some to other religious as strategy towards living the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy.

General Conclusion

Consecrated celibacy is a people's way of life. Consecrated celibacy is not easy, its challenging, but at the same time it is a life which is possible to live under the beacon of hope, faith, and love in Christ, the celibate per excellence. The main challenge in the Church has been the ability to bear witness to the life of faith, hope and love through the life of celibacy. The consecrated celibates from Nyansiongo parish – Kisii diocese have shown how this life can bear fruits with the use of Church teachings and understanding their culture and tradition.

In chapter one, the researcher gives a panoramic view of how consecrated celibacy is being understood among the Abagusii people. The origins of the Abagusii as a people, and distribution of the Abagusii. The notion of the African perspective on consecrated celibacy is employed here. This enables a better understanding of the consecrated celibacy from Abagusii point of view.

The introduction of Christianity – Catholicism in the Abagusii community and its state today. The impact of the first missionaries – Mill Hill Fathers and other Christian denominations have their relevance and significance. The importance of the Abagusii men and women, the impact on the unmarried men and women among the Abagusii community as exposed in the context of community respect based on cultural value of cohesion.

Chapter two gives a detailed explanation on the challenges facing the religious from Nyansiongo parish - Kisii diocese. These religious understands the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy both the Christian teaching perspective and their individual cultural and traditions. Despite this, they undergo challenges in living the fruitfulness of

consecrated celibacy. They have stood firm on their vocations and now they bear the fruits of consecrated celibacy among themselves and to the community.

The church understands the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy within her tradition. It gives teachings through the church documents to the consecrated celibates, mostly post Vatican II conciliar documents on religious life in the church. These religious uses both of them and their cultural teachings to integrate in their lives to bear the fruits of consecrated celibates. Inculturation has taken place in them for these fruits to be felt. These church documents have played a key role in them and to the local clergy at large. They have become as their strategy in guiding their steps and creating a harmonious environment among themselves, local church and the Abagusii community.

The final chapter gives a detailed information on the retrospect's and prospects, strategies towards better realization of consecrated celibacy, and their helps in living consecrated celibacy as religious from Nyansiongo parish. The way they have forged solidarity among themselves, enhanced their relationship between the religious and local clergy and their Eucharistic living styles. There is also need for a re-emphasis on the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy on Abagusii culture and need for more research on this area.

The researcher feels that the strategies given here are not only the way forward, but accelerates and boosts the rate at which the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy impacts positively on the

community and the church. This faithfully aids in the betterment of the understanding and appreciation of the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy by the Abagusii community, the local church and the government. It is a call from the researcher that people need to use the urgency of embracing the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy so as to appreciate the uniqueness of these noble vocation.

It is my special appeal to all the readers and researchers to bridge the gap which this work might have left out. This calls for more research and relevance in letting the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy to draw its efficaciousness from the local community cultures and Church teachings like the Vatican II post conciliar documents. This will allow cohesion and coherency in the fruitfulness of consecrated celibacy in the Church and the modern world.

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