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**The Formation for Discipleship in the Congregation of
Saint Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus in Bukoba
Diocese-Tanzania**

Moderator

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A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for a
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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work, achieved through my personal reading, scientific research and critical reflection. It has not been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All the sources have been duly acknowledged.

Signed: ~~SR. Stanislaus~~

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

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Congregation of St. Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus who are in a continual search for better ways to empower the formation for the discipleship in Bukoba Diocese - Tanzania.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Dr	Doctor
St	Saint
STH	Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus
Mr	Mark
Jn	John
1 Sam	One Samuel
Lk	Luke
1Cor	Corinthians
Can	Canon Law
Eg.	Example
Sr.	Sister
Fr.	Priest/Father
Cf	Confer: compare
Ed.	Edited by
Etc	Etcetera



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May the almighty God bless you all and protect you.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to know more about formation in general so as to do well in my mission of trying to present to future members of the congregation of St. Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus the real picture about formation. I also would like to present to them the life of our founder for the purpose of discipleship in the congregation. The basic reason why I want to focus on formation for the discipleship in the congregation of St Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus is to establish its relevance in the life of the sisters, to deepen their understanding and appreciation about formation for discipleship. This is through enumerating the stages of formation and finally presenting its relevance in the congregation.

Hence, it is my hope that at the end of my work I may deepen the understanding and appreciation of proper formation for discipleship among our members. The intent of this long essay is to present to future sisters the concept of formation for discipleship in the congregation of St Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus of Bukoba Diocese, Tanzania.

This work is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter I will present the historical background and the development of the St. Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus and the life of the founder. The second chapter will be dedicated to the integration of formation and the charism/ spirituality of the congregation. In the third chapter I will focus on the call and formation discipleship in the Gospel of Mark. The fourth chapter deals with the important role of the formator. The fifth chapter gives general conclusions.

The primary sources of this work are periodical literature, various people interviewed at different stages, the Constitutions of the St. Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus, and my own experience and others as acknowledged in the text.

CHAPTER ONE

THE HISTORY OF SAINT THERESA SISTERS OF THE CHILD JESUS

1.1 Introduction

The Congregation of the St. Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus, STH, is a completely new undertaking in the history of religious congregations in Africa. The STH is based on scriptural values adapted to the mentality, culture, capacity and value of African women.¹ In this, the St. Theresa Sisters try to evangelize the African people in the light of the Gospel through the evangelical vows, prayer, and work, so that Jesus does not remain an alien to African life but incarnated in their lives just as he was among the people two thousand and four years ago.

The purpose of evangelization is “transforming humanity from within and making it new.”² The call to evangelize Africa by Africans was emphasized by Pope Paul VI when he visited Kampala, Uganda on 31 July 1969.³ Jesus called us to carry out this plan of salvation to make us surrender our whole will and being to him in all that we encounter in life. At the end of his visit, the Pope confirmed this vision saying that Africans have to be missionaries to their own sisters and brothers.⁴ In one way this ideal for saving Africa by Africans has been brought to realization in the work of Bishop Burchard Huwiler. This is one of his greatest contributions to the evangelization of Africa by Catholic Missionaries. It motivated him in founding the Sisters of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus.

¹ B. HUWILER, *Diary*, 6 July 1931.

² JOHN PAUL II, *The Church in Africa: Post - Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, 42.

³ JOHN PAUL II, *The Church in Africa: Post - Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, 29.

⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *The Church in Africa: Post - Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, 30.

1.2 A Biography of the Founder

Bishop Burchard Huwiler, the founder of the congregation of St. Theresa Sisters, was born on 24 July 1881 in Switzerland. His parents were Ban Vick and Anoy. He was the last born in his family. He completed attending his primary school in 1894 in Switzerland. At the age of 14 in 1895 he joined White Fathers in Switzerland. While in the seminary, he discovered his call to be a missionary and he decided to pray so that he could be a missionary to the whole world.⁵ He managed to complete his studies and he was ordained a priest. He was a priest of exemplary life and very compassionate to the poor especially the marginalized.⁶

Historically, Bukoba Diocese first received missionaries in early 1892. They had moved southward from Uganda via Lake Victoria. The first missionaries landed in the area at *Mushozi*. These were the White Fathers Missionaries of Africa from Holland led by Bishop John Joseph Hirth. After months of inconclusive negotiations with different Chiefs for land, they were given *Kashozi* which became the first permanent mission station from 1892. The work of evangelization was started by priests and brothers in 1892. These were reinforced by the arrival of the White Sisters of Our Lady of Africa in 1902. The Bukoba vicariate was founded in 1929, which extended its boundaries to *Mwanza* and *Musoma* under Bishop Burchard Huwiler.

1.3 The Beginning of the Congregation

Since I did not live in the days of the founder, I would like to present to the future generations exactly what I read from different books about our founder, Bishop Burchard Huwiler.

⁵ B. HUWILER, *Diary* 6 July 1931.

⁶ *Ibid.*

In his diary he wrote regarding the establishment of the congregation that on 13th December 1930 at 6:30 p.m, in the parish of Kashozi in Bukoba Tanzania while praying, he said to himself: “I will teach the wicked your way so that sinners may return to you.”⁷ It is at this moment that he got the revelation to start a new congregation by the name of St. Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus. His aim was for this congregation to be evangelizers to the people and to live a life of **personal prayer** like that of St. Theresa of Lisieux in **work** and **prayer**. They themselves were to pray like Jesus and also for other people. He thought that they should also live a life of **hard work, deep study** that prepares them for their mission by producing stationery, pictures and patterns on surfaces through printing. He wanted them to be **evangelizers** at all times and **go out** from their communities to **evangelize** the people **near and far**.

After this inspiration, Bishop Burchard Huwiler saw and heard something that moved him and which caused him to start a new congregation. Bishop Buchard Huwiler wrote the first letter and a general outline of a constitution on 13th December 1931, and he chose the name of the congregation in case it was to be approved by Rome. The name was St. Theresa of the Child Jesus because of his love for St. Theresa of Lisieux. He sent the outline of the letter and name of the Congregation to Rome to ask permission to start a new congregation in his Diocese of Bukoba, Tanzania. The Pope gave him moral support and in June 1932 the founder met Bishop John Joseph Hirth who was then the Bishop of Mwanza. Bishop Hirth renewed his approval of the constitution of the new congregation. The congregation began as an Association being the first step towards maturity. An “Association” means that the institute is a pious organization, which is not yet canonically raised to either diocesan or pontifical rite.”⁸

⁷ B. HUWILER, *Letter of his Spiritual director*, no 1.

⁸ THE CODE OF CANON LAW, *The Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 53.

Bishop Burchard and his advisors, along with Bishop Hirth, who had retired, examined the draft of the constitution. They prayed together seeking God's enlightenment and so the Congregation was given a good initial foundation. The Bishop established the public Association under the guidance of Canon 312.3 that explains:

The authority which is competent to establish public Associations is the diocesan Bishop, each in his own territory, but not the diocesan administrator, for diocesan associations, with the exception, however, of associations the right to whose establishment is reserved to others by apostolic privilege. The written consent of the diocesan Bishop is required for the valid establishment of an association or branch of an association in the diocese, even though it is done in virtue of an apostolic privilege....⁹

According to one of the interviewees I talked to, Rev. Bishop Burchard got a grant of land. Bishop John Joseph *Hirth* offered twenty acres of land at Nyaigando, Kashozi Bukoba. In August 1932 the first building was started, and on 23rd November 1932 the building was completed. Bishop Burchard made a holy gesture by giving the Keys to the Sisters of St. Theresa of Lisieux to show that he had entrusted the Association to St. Theresa of Lisieux as the protector of the Association.¹⁰

1.4 The Development of the Congregation from 1933-2005

Bishop Burchard Huwiler, our founder, admitted the first five aspirants. Among them were some girls who were not ready for marriage. Some were a group of women called *Bashomesa*, meaning **teachers**. It involved women who ran away from their marriage for various reasons. The women remained as an associate group and never developed into a religious congregation with vows. However, most of the girls were those who started the Diocesan congregation of Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus. Similarly, they were the first to study and develop particular areas of knowledge and

⁹ THE CODE OF CANON LAW, No.312.3

¹⁰ SR.MARIA BENEDICTA 92 yrs, interviewed by author, 29 November, 2004, Bethania Kashozi, Tanzania, Oral

culture. It was not easy for the first group to manage themselves in a new mission and new place. The first group, encouraged by the Bishop, understood that they needed to engage themselves with courage, in skills and in prayer and be hard working. The Bishop believed more in living examples than in spoken words. He insisted to them that “the hand must be at work but the heart with God in prayer.”¹¹

Due to hard work, prayer, patience and humble disposition, they managed to finish one year and all five aspirants were accepted to go for novitiate. The following year, 1932, more girls were taken and by 1933 the first five members of our congregation were professed on 8th December 1933. The “white sisters” now known as “Missionaries Sisters of our Lady of Africa”¹² were the formators of our congregation up to 29th October 1961. On October 29th 1961 we elected our own first Mother General and from that day every five years we have a Chapter to elect our Mother General. During this time we try to discuss the development of our congregation and find new steps and ways which we can use to serve God and his people as Jesus did in his mission.

There were many challenges demanded by the life of the new association such as prayer, education, material things, work and other urgent duties. Yet it received many vocations. According to the vocations promoter, the Association expanded in leaps and bounds in terms of first profession and perpetual profession. By 1938, the second group of sisters had already professed and, in the following years other professions followed.¹³

At first, all Sisters of St Theresa of the Child Jesus were to serve the Diocese of Bukoba. These Sisters were allowed to go everywhere to different areas of the Diocese

¹¹ B. HUWILER, *Letter of his Spiritual director*, No.2.

¹² B. HUWILER, *The Constitutions of the Congregation of St Theresa Sisters*, Appendix iv.

¹³ *STII, Constitutions, Article,3.*

where they had a convent. Little by little the apostolate was extended to different dioceses such as *Mwanza*, *Dar-es-salaam*, *Rulenga*, *Singida*, *Morogoro*, *Kusini* and outside Tanzania, especially Burundi in the Diocese of *Muhinga*, Kenya in the Dioceses of *Nakuru* in Nairobi, Uganda and South Africa.

1.5 Difficulties Encountered.

In the beginning the Association progressed and was very successful but also faced some difficulties, for example, lack of trained personnel, especially teachers, nurses, and formators. Those who were there were not enough to care for the ever growing demands for a strong teaching establishment. This scarcity of personnel affected the program of establishment of the Association. There was also a great need for opening up new formation houses or convents in different dioceses to accommodate the ever-growing number of sisters for mission. During that time, the Aspirants, the Postulants and the Novices were housed in one compound in Nyaigando. This arrangement was necessary at the beginning of the congregation due to lack of funds and personnel.¹⁴

1.6 Congregational Progress up to the Present

From 1933 to 2005, the congregation has grown rapidly more and more by Divine providence. At present, the total number of sisters professed is 412. Hopefully, the Lord of the harvest will continue to inspire more and more young people to join this congregation to continue his salvific mission here on earth.

¹⁴ SR. MARIA GISELA 70 yrs, interviewed by author, 5 December 2004, Nyakahoja Convent Mwanza, Tanzania, Oral.

1.7 Conclusion

In this chapter we have dealt with the historical background of the congregation. It is clear that the congregation is growing rapidly, as shown in the total number of the members. This great development of the congregation will depend on the hard work, perseverance, and determination of its members. It will also depend on the cooperation of the diocesan ordinary, the diocesan clergy, and the faithful with whom the members are working. This chapter has shown the biography of the founder, how the congregation was founded, its development to date and the difficulties encountered.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INTEGRATION OF FORMATION AND THE CHARISM/SPIRITUALITY OF THE CONGREGATION.

2.1 Introduction

There are so many religious congregations and each with its own charism, its own ways of life and spirituality. In this chapter I will explore the charism and spirituality of the Association of the STH at each level of formation for discipleship in the congregation. The chapter will try to elaborate in detail the life of STH as lived by its members.

Religious life is lived in a community so that members may nourish their gifts of faith, hope and charity through the relationship of friendship with their sisters or brothers. As they cooperate to live out their charism, this leads to the formation of a family life style described in cc 602. Religious life is one of the important elements of the life of the Church. Community life is basic to this life; without it one may not be called a religious (cc 665).

2.2 Our Charism and Spirituality

A charism is free gift of the Holy Spirit from God for the building of the body of Christ the Church. That is why we read in 1 Cor.12: 7 that, “Now to each one the manifestation of the spirit is given for the common good.” Paul speaks of a different Charism. In this text, the word “Charism” as used by Paul, refers to the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to individual persons to be put at the service of the community.

Charism is also an experience of the spirit transmitted from the founders to the followers to be lived, safeguarded, deepened, and constantly developed by them in harmony with the Church.¹⁵ Batteli complements by saying that charism if used in reference to consecrated life, refers to the special gift the Holy Spirit gives to the Founder which, in turn, is passed on to the members in order to meet particular needs of the people of God.¹⁶ In an interview Sr. Mary Misingo argues that, “the Charism gives a specific community dynamism that defines it and provides for the future a certain constancy of living.”¹⁷

Therefore, the Charism of each religious congregation is the core of its existence. It is not static but develops according to the signs of the time. The congregation of Saint Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus follows and lives the Charisma of the founder, Bishop Burchard Huwiler. The members give religious instruction to children, youth and take care of the education of women as the way of evangelizing people. This is a starting point for everyone who comes to our congregation. This enables the members to live to the full the present, to learn from the past and to be open to the future. The Charism of St. Theresa Sisters, therefore, manifests their spirituality and mission. This kind of inspiration is a heritage and finds its new meaning according to the place and signs of the times.¹⁸

Bishop Huwiler was a hard working man with great love for God. He was efficient in his work and welcomed everyone. He was a living example for the Theresian sisters. In the same manner, the congregation practises a program of **prayer**

¹⁵ *Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated life and Societies of Apostolic life, Directives on Formation in Religious Institute, 47.*

¹⁶ G. BATTELLI, *Religious Life in the Light of the New Canon Law, 57.*

¹⁷ SR.M. MISINGO. Interviewed by author 18 December 2004, Bushangaro Convent Rulenge, Tanzania, Oral.

¹⁸ *STH, Constitution Article, iii.*

and **work**. They bring not only God's **love** and **mercy** to the people, but also **hope** of the Kingdom of God to society as a whole, especially to those who have been **marginalized** in one way or another.¹⁹ The members live **an apostolic spirituality** with emphasis on the virtues of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus that are:

- Love of God and neighbors.
- Humility and simplicity
- Readiness to serve.
- Unity and cooperation.²⁰

Theresian Sisters live a life of hard work and study in order to share with others the methods and fruits of their congregation. The Charism and spirituality of St. Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus are understood little by little as the members pass through different stages of formation for discipleship in the congregation.

2.3 The Experience of the Charism

In order to keep ourselves focused, the congregation encourages moments of **prayerful contemplation** and **meditation**, with the one principle that what one is doing is actually what God wants her to do, for example, teaching students, working in the Church, teaching women about development or taking care of the youth. The idea is to find God's presence in them. So, every moment is a prayer time in activity, for instance, sisters work in the hospital, offices, they are teaching in preparatory, primary, secondary schools, colleges, and home craft centers. Then there are different times set apart for retreats, recollections and sabbatical years, to make one renew the spirit. We join the people to the experience of the Charism when we arrange and send letters to them to come to our place. During this time they prepare the group according to the number of

¹⁹ *STH, Constitution, Article, 16.*

²⁰ *STH, Constitution, Article, 4.2.*

people. Sometimes we go to the village and have a seminar with them, and we try to visit them as well.

I believe that the Theresian Charism is a sign of the mystery of Christ and of the Trinity. God chose them and sent them to the vineyard just as Jesus sent his disciples. He sent them two by two and told them “the harvest is abundant but the laborers are few” (Lk 10:2-9).

In the same vein, “the sisters who join the congregation take vows of chastity, poverty and obedience as a basic rule of life.”²¹ Also, “the Church as a community of Trinity cannot exist if there are not sufficient number of people ready for the special services needed by the people of God in particular places. For this spirit the sisters respond daily to God’s call. This is due to the fact that the sisters hold it firmly that Jesus needs co-workers to carry out his message to the world.”²² That it is why Jesus said: “Come after me and I will make you fishers of men” (Mt 4:19). Members of our congregation move wherever they are sent in obedience and love to fulfill the call of Jesus. We serve in different places despite the conditions of the place or the demands of the people, and their ways of life.

Like the whole of christian life, the call to consecrated life is closely linked to operation and work. The Theresian community believes that the spirit chose them in order to spread the values of the kingdom. Bishop Burchard Huwiler responded to Jesus’ call when he determined to initiate the congregation of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus; the sisters treasure that spirit of the founder.

²¹ *STH, Constitution, Article, 39.*

²² *STH, Constitution, Article, 49a.*

Vita Consecrata says:

In an especially vigorous way this obedience repurposes the obedience of Christ to the father and, taking this mystery as its point of departure, testifies that there is no contradiction between obedience and freedom. Indeed, the son's attitude discloses through the mystery of human freedom as the path of obedience to the father's will and the mystery of obedience as the path to the gradual conquest of true freedom.²³

In the same light, we understand obedience as most important in our communities, a means to listen to God's voice, which comes to us through our superior who stands before Jesus.

According to *Vita Consecrata* (1996) "Chastity expresses the yearning of a heart unsatisfied by any finite love."²⁴ Indeed our congregation helps us to be attentive with open hearts in our lives through chastity. We take chastity as a gift from God for a purpose and that is service of the kingdom. It helps us to live freely, happily and have love for anyone because it is a charism to everyone.

In my experience of religious life, our poverty and commitment matter and lead us to be free and respond to the voice of Jesus, since all things we have in the community, and we share together and enjoy them as a community of Christ (Act 3:42-47). Therefore, it helps us to be humble, happy and hopeful for higher values. STH Constitution number 44 is related to the *Vita Consecrata* "poverty nourishes that hunger and thirst for justice which God has promised to satisfy" (c.f., Matt 5.6).²⁵ So, we are detached and open to share with the poor and not only with our community members.

The congregational Charism is a sign of communion in the Church. The message of Jesus helps our Congregation to follow the steps of Jesus by focusing on people's

²³ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata: Post-Synodal, Apostolic Exhortation on the Consecrated life*. 92.

²⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*, 37.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

needs. Our Charism is a sign of communion. It gives us a chance to reflect more and deeper upon the situation of people who we work with. That is why our sisters involve themselves in charitable services, which help and assist in human growth and development. We work with the people not in isolation.²⁶

All religious congregations possess a specific apostolic mission in the Church. The difference is to be found in the diverse aspects and expression of the mission.²⁷ All the formation is to be directed to prepare good and holy St. Theresa sisters. Hence, formators have to practice great patience, hope, exemplary lives and understanding of the gradual and a sense of expectation like exemplary lives.

The congregation lives apostolic spirituality with emphasis on the virtues of St. Therese of the Child Jesus which are:

Humility: The truth is, as Therese affirmed, that God is all-powerful and all-merciful. Therefore, “we can never have too much confidence in him.” On the contrary, our audacity in trusting God rather than our hesitation, due to false humility is the path to divine union. Our interior misgiving makes that leap of trust difficult unless we keep working at the little way. If we do, we begin to notice that our attitudes toward events and people are changing.²⁸

Spirituality childhood: Therese says that “If the child keeps up her helpless efforts, the father himself, because of his great love, will not be able to stand the situation anymore and will come rushing down the stairs, gather her into his arms, and carry her to the top of the stairs.”²⁹ Therese says that this is how she got where she was

²⁶ *STH, Constitutions, Article, 7d and f.*

²⁷ *G. BATTELLI, Religious Life in the Light of the New Canon Law, 61.*

²⁸ *T. KEATING, St. Theresa of Lisieux, Transformation in Christ, 36.*

²⁹ *T. KEATING, St. Theresa of Lisieux, Transformation in Christ, 9.*

in her spiritual life, not by any efforts of her own, but by the infinite mercy and tenderness of God.³⁰

This is why Therese's insight into the Gospel is a great contribution to spiritual renewal in our time, especially to the renewal of the contemplative life, which is the way of spiritual childhood--that is, of listening. "Our reactions to daily life are the gauge of the depth of our prayer and the empowerment it provides. An obvious question following from this would be why do people enter monasteries or religious life if the backyard is just as sacred as the cloister? The answer is that it is only appropriate if one has a genuine attraction to religious life indicating that God wants it to be everyday life for us, in other words, to live in a monastery is our particular vocation."³¹

Simplicity: According to St Therese of Lisieux 2001, simplicity is the circumstances of everyday life and what we do with it. The role of centering prayer or some similar method is used to bring us into daily contact with God and especially into a disposition of attentiveness to his word in scripture and to his silent word within us. Listening to God in silence and loving attentiveness enables us to let go of our preconception and over identification with the events of daily life, which tend to dominate our emotional reactions rather than invite our free response.³²

This as it is St. Theresa Sisters try to live a life of simplicity in their daily life by following the example of St. Theresa of Lisieux. The sisters live a life of simplicity between them and also outside the community where they are working. It is a challenge for each one of us who belong to the congregation of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus to

³⁰ T. KEATING, *St. Theresa of Lisieux, Transformation in Christ*, 10.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

³² T. KEATING, *St. Theresa of Lisieux, Transformation in Christ*, 12.

lead very simple lives. That is why in our lives we practise and make sure that our charism which goes together with simplicity are lived out in one's daily life.

2.4 In Formation Houses

Formation houses are where Postulants and Novices should learn the life of the STH. The goal of formation is to help the candidates to know Christ so as to identify themselves with God before they can decide to follow him freely and wholeheartedly.³³ Formation houses lay the foundation for going beyond oneself to identify with Christ.

In my experience consecrated religious life has specific demands, such as sacrificing some rights like the right to own personal property. It is also the state of not being involved in something in an emotional or personal way, or doing what one likes. That is why sufficient formation for the candidates is compulsory. I will now examine the stages of formation, pointing out the importance attached to each stage of formation, which is required for moulding each individual as a suitable agent of the mission according to the Charism of St Therese Sisters of the Child Jesus.

2.5 Aspirancy

Jesus said, "follow me" and Levi got up and followed him. " (Mk 2:14)

Aspirancy is the first stage of formation where the young girl finds a welcoming atmosphere suitable to discovering her identity and discerning her vocation to a more committed way of following Christ. The vocation director, in collaboration with the formators of the aspirants facilitates this task. A careful selection of the candidates based on their family and Christian background is very important. The family plays an important role in forming women for religious life of St. Theresa Sisters

³³ R. SYLVAIN, *Formation of Men Religious as agents of Evangelization for the Church as Family of God*, 285.

of the Child Jesus. The formators must pay special attention to the candidate's background and family history in order to help the candidate pursue her vocation. However, there are some candidates who join religious life from broken families, for example, or candidates from families where the father or mother is alcoholic, divorced, and abusive and so would find it hard to relate well with their superiors, who act as their mother in the new family. For some, the image of the mother is distorted, and they would find it hard to address Mary as a loving mother. Such candidates need special attention so as to come out of their painful experiences through spiritual direction and counseling.

According to my studies, at this stage a person who can inspire them through good example in deeds and words should be the one to carry on the formation of aspirants. For example, members who are able to keep rules and are generous and ready to walk together with aspirants will influence their minds and hearts. The formators have a great role in the growth of aspirants. It is through their good example that the aspirant would be encouraged to proceed with great assurance in their preparation for religious life.³⁴ Aspirancy is a stage which is delicate because the image of the formation that the formators radiate to the candidates will either deepen their conviction of religious life or weaken that conviction.

The specific qualities required in the aspirants to Theresian life are a clear tendency to prayer, spirit of sacrifice especially the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, peaceful living together in the community, constant fulfillment of one's duties and mission. "As a rule, candidates must not be accepted for profession

³⁴ POPE PAUL VI. *Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of the Religious Life. According to the Teaching of the second Council*, 8.

in this stage if they wish to use religious life as a way to improve their economic, intellectual, and social status.”³⁵ Therefore the candidates must be prepared not only to understand the nature of change intellectually and pastorally, but also to give evidence of the following:

- They are able to maintain an integrated human and faith balance in the midst of tumultuous change.
- They are willing and able to live their founding charism.
- They have the willingness and capacity to work collaboratively in prophetic ministries with others.³⁶

Only those who are considered to fit into the above and are the life of the sisters of St Theresa are admitted to the next stage called postulancy.

Aspirancy stage takes two and a half years during which the candidates complete spiritual studies. Only those who are determined to live a Theresian life are admitted to the next stage. Thus this stage brings us to another important step into the religious formation of the STH which is Postulancy.

2.6 Postulancy

Postulancy is a time for personal growth and discernment, paying special attention to the human and Christian growth of the candidate, gradually introducing her to share in the life of the Theresian apostolic community. She deepens her personal relationship with the Lord. It is also a period to evaluate the compatibility of her gifts

³⁵ POPE PAUL VI, *Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of the religious Life. According to the Teaching of the second Council.* 45.

³⁶ SR.M.KATABARWA, interview by author, 13 December 2004, Mwemage Formation House, Tanzania. Oral.

with the Charism of the congregation of St Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus and thus her fitness to enter into the novitiate.³⁷ It is the second step towards the formation of St. Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus' life. It is also the period in which the postulants study and observe critically the life of the congregation.

During this stage, the postulants carry on with their life of the community and spiritual studies, which they started in their Aspirancy stage. The role of the formator is to accompany the postulants in pursuit of their vocation. Candidates are admitted to Postulancy when their human, spiritual, moral, and intellectual gifts, as well as their psychological health, right intention and physical health show that they are capable of a serious preparation for the novitiate.³⁸

Experience in many congregations has shown that postulants are very much encouraged when they see the professed members who are hard working with vision and love for the congregation, and committed to their religious and missionary life. Postulancy stage has the objective, as it were, to discern the candidate's desire to become St Theresa evangelizers and to help her reach a free and responsible choice. This implies that the postulants are helped to build a realistic, self-knowledge and self-acceptance, which helps them to be in closer contact with the life, and ideals of the founder and the congregation.³⁹

The Postulancy stage takes at least six months. Candidates in this stage are prepared by a seven day retreat before entering the next important stage, the novitiate. Such an atmosphere also helps the formators to select those who are suitable candidates for novitiate. In this period, the postulants have:

³⁷ Cf. *STH, Constitution, Article, 64.*

³⁸ Cf. *STH, Constitution, Article, 65.*

³⁹ SR.M.KATABARWA. interview by author, 17 December 2004, Mwemagc, Formation House. Tanzania. Oral.

- ♦ A Weekly conference by the superior on Postulancy.
- ♦ A weekly biblical service directed by the chaplain.
- ♦ A daily examination of one's conscience for fifteen minutes in the evening, always helped by the chaplain who is a spiritual director. All this is in preparation for the novitiate.⁴⁰

2.7 Novitiate

“Speak, Lord, yours servant is listening” (1 Sam 3:10).

The novitiate is the immediate preparation to take the vows freely, knowingly and lovingly according to the constitution of St. Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus. It aims at initiating the novice to the life of the congregation.⁴¹ The purpose of the novitiate, by which the life in the congregation begins, is to give the novices a greater understanding of the father's plan. St Theresa Sisters have the great love of Jesus crucified and risen through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The goal of the novitiate is to learn and to experience the Theresian style in our ministries of charity, to discern and internalize more deeply the gifts of their vocation and to experience the joy of belonging to our congregation and thus make a free and responsible choice for religious profession and to become more aware of the social situation and the needs of the people so as to grow in Zeal for the kingdom of God.⁴²

During the novitiate, the novices are to experience both their prayer and mission life; they have to form their minds and character in the spirit of their Association. At the

⁴⁰ Ibid., 66f.

⁴¹ Cf. *STH, Constitution Article*, 90b.

⁴² Ibid., 90g

same time, their resolution and suitability are to be tested.⁴³ Superiors admit to the novitiate only those who are physically and psychologically healthy; who have a suitable disposition for community life, for a life of prayer and austerity; who have sufficient maturity to understand and to begin to practice this life' and to make a free, knowing, loving choice to bind themselves to it.⁴⁴ The novitiate in the STH lasts two years.

The first duty of the formator of the novices is the theory and practical introduction to prayer. She has to direct the meditation of the novices at least twice a week. She also has to foster an active celebration of the holy office and of the Eucharist in view of predisposing the novices to meditation.⁴⁵ During the second year, the novices are involved in some mission/apostolate specific to their Association. For instance, teaching the catechism in primary school and accompanying the sisters for apostolate.

During the novitiate stage, all formal studies as well as studies directed towards obtaining diplomas or in view of professional training are excluded, stressing more on these points, O'Reilly, *et al* in their book *The Formation of a Religious in Africa Today* indicate that a heavy schedule of classes and pastoral work are not needed in the novitiate.⁴⁶ However, some studies, which give deep, spiritual, theological knowledge of the bible, are to be done. The main subjects that are studied in the novitiate of the STH are:

- ☞ Bible and prayer services, reconciliation.
- ☞ The basic meaning of consecrated life, that is to live totally for God and his kingdom, in poverty, chastity, and obedience.
- ☞ The history of the Church.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 10d.

⁴⁴ *THE CODE OF CANON LAW*, No.646.

⁴⁵ *STH, Constitution, Article, 53.*

⁴⁶ M. O'RELLY, *The Formation of a Religious in Africa Today: A Handbook for Religious Formators*, 36.

After the second year of novitiate, if a novice is considered fit in her prayer life, community life, and apostolate, then she is admitted to the next stage, the Juniorate, after the first profession.

2.8 Juniorate

According to my congregation the juniorate starts immediately after the first profession. This stage is the period of temporary profession whereby the sister is called to internalize, integrate, and to consolidate the evangelical values and her own charism identity and prepare herself for her final commitment. It is a time when she gradually involves herself in the life and mission of the community through a formative itinerary that is acculturated and fostering growth towards wholeness. It is a time of evaluating oneself.⁴⁸

Juniorate takes place in a community that is conducive to foster the integral growth of the junior professed. The juniorate provides support and personal accompaniment. A junior STH lives evangelical fraternal relationships, fosters a sense of belonging and is fully committed to the mission. In the apostolic formative community, the young sister learns to share her gifts, to collaborate and participate creatively and responsibly in the life and mission of the community. She also grows in appreciating and accepting differences of age, culture, nationality, and temperament, knowing that true love passes through the cross. As she journeys towards the fullness of charity, the junior experiences the joy and pain of forgiveness and reconciliation.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Cf. *STH, Constitution Article, 67.*

⁴⁸ *STH, Constitution, Article, 72.*

⁴⁹ *STH, The Role of Juniorate and Final Vows, 15.*

During this period, the superior of the community accompanies the young sister in her journey to become rooted in the *charisma* so as to be able to discern and make decisions accordingly. This journey is verified through the personal project evaluated in dialogue with the animator.⁵⁰

2.9 Final vows

In the congregation of the St. Theresa, a sister's final vow takes place sometime after eight years of temporary profession. To be admitted for final vows, a thorough investigation is to be carried out in all the places where the candidate has been exercising her ministry. Such investigations are to ensure that the candidate is free from any impediment to final vows. In Canon Law there is to be a certificate from the superior of the house of formation concerning the qualities required in the candidate for the reception of the order, namely sound doctrine, genuine piety, good moral behavior, fitness for the exercise of the ministry; likewise, after proper investigation, a certificate of psychological health.⁵¹

The sister who asks to be admitted to final vows is accompanied to make an evaluation of her readiness for final vows with her community Animator who evaluates:

- Her conviction to follow Christ through the evangelical counsels.
- Her joy of belonging to the congregation and to the Church.
- Her zeal for the kingdom, love for the poor and total availability to the mission.
- Her life of service to God and His people.
- Her journey of faith, re-reading her life as salvation history.

⁵⁰ SR.MARIA KAGANDA, interview by author, 15 December 2004, Nyaigando Mother House, Tanzania, Oral.

⁵¹ *THE CODE OF CANON LAW*, No.1051.

- Her availability to continue her journey towards the greatest love.
- Her affective and human maturity.⁵²

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the formation that the candidates of the St. Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus live, stressing the importance attached to each stage. Formation, of course, is not easy work to do. Through the stages of formation enumerated above and the explanation given in each stage of formation, the candidate is free and able to discern whether or not they are prepared to lead this life. I acknowledge that formation to St. Theresa Sisters' life is a challenge. I appeal to all those called to work as formators to face the challenge with humility, trusting in the principal formator, Christ himself. However, I believe that the Holy Spirit will not cease to guide the process. The Holy Spirit will always direct the members in formation, so that whatever will happen in formation should be accomplished in the light of God.

⁵² *STH, The Role of Juniorate and Final Vows*, 92.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CALL FOR DISCIPLESHIP IN MARK 1:18: THE ROOT OF FORMATION (FOUNDATION)

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we shall try to explain the call on discipleship of Jesus, as it is understood by Mark, relating it to the root of formation in the STH.

3.2. The meaning of Discipleship (The discipleship in Mark 1:18)

According to the *Vidyajyoti* the term 'disciples' (*Mathetai*) as used in the synoptic Gospels is rather broad, and would include, on the one hand, 'the Apostles' or 'the twelve' whom Jesus had chosen. (Cf. Mt 10:1,11:1,13:10,14:15,29:22,20:17, Lk 6:40,9:16) and on the other, 'the multitude' or 'the crowd' that followed Jesus (cf. Lk 6:13,17; 19:37) In this study on discipleship in the Gospels, we take the term in its wider sense, as the offer and the invitation made by Jesus to any and everyone, not only the apostles, (Mk 1:16-20).⁵³

Discipleship is a call from God. It touches one's heart and moves one for the service of God. Through Baptism all Christians are called to be disciples. Also to be a disciple of Jesus is to follow him in a genuine and intimate relationship. "Discipleship involves listening to the Lord's teachings as well as actively showing the mercy of God to those in need."⁵⁴

As disciples of Jesus, we are expected to demonstrate our faith and commitment to him by showing hospitality to others. It is an essential attitude of discipleship. We are called in our communities to welcome each other with our differences and similarities.

⁵³ R. RAJA, "Follow me – Discipleship in the synoptic Gospels" *Vidyajyoti*, Vol.56.No.10. 513.

⁵⁴ D. SWEETLAND, *Our Journey with Jesus, Discipleship according to Luke – Act.* 110.

Doing so, we will be able to give hospitality to strangers, and the poor, who cannot repay (Lk 14:12-14) and who, in fact are the image of Christ.

Also to be a disciple is to be a servant in the way Jesus taught by giving example. It is our missionary responsibility to witness the risen Christ, acting as Christians and religious in our daily life, through our dedication to others, and to provide opportunities to share with them our faith.⁵⁵ It can be made by our mission work like visiting the families around us, and the poor, trying with them to find an alternative to their lives so that they may experience God's love. "Discipleship in this sense is an act of God, a miracle of divine grace, and one can only receive it in obedience and surrender," (cf Mk 1:16-20, 2:14-17, 3:23-29, Acts 9:1-22, etc).⁵⁶

Discipleship is a state in following Christ. Christ of our congregation is our master from whom we learn who God is for us, and we must believe in his teaching and be with him. God calls us into being to know, to love, to serve him and finally to share eternal life. As it is indicated above we can understand clearly the different implications of the term disciple both in the Gospels and in the book of Acts. In this chapter we shall use the term "disciple" to mean "the twelve or more of their members."⁵⁷

It is important to note that the theme of discipleship is very important in the Gospels. The Disciples were a central group in the mission of Jesus. The purpose for which Jesus appointed the twelve was twofold, that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach. The twelve were to be brought into the closest association possible with the Son of God. They were to live with Jesus and travel with him; much of Jesus' time was occupied with the training of his apostles. This training

⁵⁵ The call to discipleship includes a missionary responsibility or missionary – minded. Jesus says to his disciples: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and to the end of the earth." (Act 1:8).

⁵⁶ R. RAJA, "Follow me - Discipleship in the Synoptic Gospels" *Vidyajyoti*, Vol.56.No.10, 514.

⁵⁷ L. HELD, *Discipleship*, *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol.IV, 895.

was not an end in itself, but they were to be sent out to assist him in fulfilling his mission.⁵⁸

3.3 The Application of Mark 1:16-20 in our formation.

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “ and I will make you fishers of men” At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little further, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat mending their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him, (Mark 1:16-20).

In Mark’s account (1:16-20) the call of the disciples is brief, bold and unelaborated. The arrest of John the Baptist prompts Jesus to begin preaching in Galilee, where without introduction or notice he calls the first disciples. It is a command rather than an invitation, and it is presented as an exclusive act of Jesus, his own initiative. As Denis Mc Bride comments, “Jesus appears suddenly out of the blue and calls Peter and Andrew to be his disciples. There has been no psychological or other preparation.”⁵⁹

The first four disciples are identified as fishermen, and they are seen actively engaged in their normal round of work when a stranger’s imperative interrupts them. The call of Jesus offers them not only a new identity as “fishers of men,” a somewhat peculiar image, given what fishermen do to fish when they catch them but also a new direction, one that will be determined by Jesus himself.⁶⁰ Below are some of the lessons

⁵⁸ B. RAMAZZOTTI, *The Spirituality of the Pierced Heart of Jesus the Good Shepherd*. 64.

⁵⁹ D. MC BRIDE, “Reflection on Discipleship” *Scripture Bulletin*, Vol.30.No.2, 30.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

that we can learn about discipleship in our Congregation as revealed in the Gospel above.

3.4 Responsibility

In the Gospel the term disciples is applied to a group of followers, mainly the Apostles whom Jesus called to follow him, and associate with his life and ministry. “And he appointed twelve, they were to be companions and to be sent out to proclaim the message,” (Mk 3:14). Later on, the term applied to Christians in the early church as well as it applies to every Christian today.

3.4.1 The Lord has called each member to follow him more closely

Jesus took the initiative in calling the two pairs of brothers to follow him. He tells them, “Come and follow me.” Vivian says that this was technical language of a teacher to disciple. Yet Jesus goes beyond the learner teacher relationship by taking the initiative.⁶¹ He is not like the other rabbis who were sought after by disciples. He calls them himself.

Jesus’ call relates to my state in life in a different way. In my Congregation of the Sisters of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, we try to do some aspects of discipleship as well. Jesus is the one who takes initiative. The responsibility of disciples is to follow Jesus by making Jesus’ choices my own. Discipleship is an invitation to every Christian who is prepared to meet the cost of discipleship. This involves self-denial, carrying of one’s cross and following Jesus. As Jesus said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me,” (MK 8:34). Therefore, my religious community sees that all sisters try to live in this spirit.

⁶¹ B.T. VIVIANO, *The Gospel According to Matthew in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 649.

3.4.2 Call to Discipleship

Jesus call to discipleship is a vocation. Those called are to accept what Jesus tells them. They have to believe the voice of God without any problem, and they have to change from what they know to what Jesus wants them to know and do.

“As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. Come, follow me Jesus said, and I will make you fishers of men. At once they left their nets and followed him,” (Mark 1:16-18). Here, I see the call to discipleship as the action of God. They left their nets and followed Jesus without any complaint. Jesus has power that when he called the disciples they followed him without knowing him. They did not know where he lived but they followed him.

Moreover, Jesus wanted to be with them, so that they would come to know him and experience a **metanoia** from their past life. Jesus knows what they have to be and what they have to do from now on, for example, by teaching, taking care of the sick people, living the good life, prayer, reading the scripture, Eucharist and to have faith in him.

3.4.3. Relevance to our Congregation

All of those values of Jesus and the response of the disciples can be related to my congregation of Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus. God chose us to live with him in communion, that is in prayer, meditation and living together, and then he sends us to the vineyard as Jesus sent his disciples. He sent them two by two and told them “the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few,” (LK 10:2-9). This is the call to our congregation

to preach the Good News. The sisters give religious instruction to children, the youth and also taking care of the education of women, as a way of evangelizing people. It helps us to preach the Kingdom of God in a different way.

3.4.4 Preaching

Jesus sent out the disciples to preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God, to help the poor following his example and actions. They lived their new life fully and showed the people what they were living. They were struggling to overcome evil by fasting and sacrificing so that they could acquire holiness. They helped people to rebuke evil by preaching the Good news and casting out the devil. Because they lived in the presence of God, it was obvious that the Kingdom of God is found among them. They preached the Kingdom of God by their way of life, which is lived in truth, as preached by Jesus Christ. Jesus expects his disciples to practice this truth of the gospel among the people who do not yet know him. As a religious community we always see this being our task wherever we are.

3.4.5 Prayer

Jesus prayed in his life as a way to communicate with his father. He did nothing important before dedicating some time for prayer; that was done before any of his missions. For instance, before choosing his disciples “Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God” (LK 6:12). He called the disciples to live a life of prayer. He requested his disciples to pray, “watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing but the body is weak” (MK 14:38).

At this point, in relation to my congregation, we have special times for prayer and we pray five times a day. We cannot manage to live that life without prayer because Jesus whom we follow prayed all his life and taught the disciples the Lord's Prayer.

3.4.6 The work of Jesus

Jesus was a hard working man with great love for God. He was efficient in his work and welcomed everyone. He sacrificed even his meals and rest for the sake of others, the good example is his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. In the same manner the disciples practised a program of prayer and work. In this case the disciples continue to do the work of Jesus until the end of their time.

In the same manner, my congregation tries to live a life that is a good example to people, like Jesus. We work together in love and humility and everyone tries to help one another to fulfill her mission. We do the work with happiness and joy. Everybody tries hard to encourage the other in the community. No one works alone, because we need each other's support in order to serve God faithfully.

3.4.7 Christian Life

In order to lead a life that is truly according to Jesus, the disciples made Christ's choices theirs. Like Christ, they chose to live a life of poverty, chastity and obedience. They tried to live according to Christ's examples and within their living standards. The congregation of St Theresa sisters tries to live that life of Jesus by practising the new commandment of love. It helps the sisters to stay in faith and hope and it comes clear for them that faith is primarily directed by God's love by understanding whether in thought, life, in knowledge and in action. They try to give everyone the pure love in a simple way as they can.

The St. Theresa sisters understand that love is the light of the world and also part of community witness. They realize that God is often above the world and He is the center of all things. That is why they are struggling everyday to love God and neighbour because they see the neighbour as a child of God.

3.4.8 In obedience to Jesus

This is one of the most important aspects of discipleship. Without obedience there is no discipleship in Jesus. In fact Jesus' whole life shows that he was obedient to his father unconditionally. In the same light, we understand obedience as most important in our community; it means to listen to God's voice which comes to us through our superior who stands before Jesus. In prayer and meditation we discover God's will. Through obedience we are led to accept any mission entrusted to us, obey the Church, listen to the teachings of the Pope, superiors, have dialogue and give up our own wills and accept that of the superiors or community. A good example is Mary who is a model of discipleship as she said "yes" to the will of God. "I am the Lord's servant." Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said," Then the angel left her" (LK 1:38).

Jesus chose to live in poverty from birth to death. He was born in a poor oppressed race, identified himself with the poor, and he had special love for the poor, sinners and the lowly. When Jesus called the disciples "At once they left their nets and followed him" (MK 1:18). In my state of life poverty means to be free to respond to the voice of Jesus. All the things in which we have in the community we share together and enjoy them as a community of Christ. Therefore it helps us to be happy, humble and hopeful for the higher values.

3.4.9 Life lived in a state of chastity

For the Kingdom of God, the disciples chose to remain celibate. They chose to live in chastity as a gift to Christ in their whole being, body, heart and mind. Indeed our congregation helps us to be attentive, with open hearts in our lives through chastity. We take chastity as a gift from God for a purpose, as a grace and that is in service to the Kingdom. It helps us to live freely, happily, without commitment to anyone in particular, because chastity is a gift to everyone who chooses to live in poverty.

3.4.10 Communion

Jesus is a sign of communion in the Church. The message of Jesus helps our congregation to follow the steps of Jesus by focusing on peoples' needs. It gives us chance to reflect more deeply upon the situation of people with whom we work. That is why our sisters involve themselves in charitable services, for instance, hospitals, school, social work, spiritual issues, administration, domestic, agriculture, and home visits, which help and assist in human growth and development. We work with the people not in isolation.

3.5 Love

Discipleship is to share Jesus' style of life. The love of God for us is so great that God sent his beloved Son to the world in order to save all people from the bondage of darkness. Jesus came to teach us about the love of God. He let God be known to us. He practised the love of God. He brought the image of his Father to his people. Jesus' style of life was love. Therefore, "the purpose of the life of love among the disciples of

Jesus is to 'preach' and teach all men and women that behind the mystery of Christian life stands God who is defined as 'love'."⁶²

3.6 Joy rooted in the call

The center of life is joy. People want to enjoy life and avoid pain and that is very normal. In that, we are meant to enjoy life but we are also surrounded by difficulties. It is impossible for a human being to live without problems as a consequence of original sin. Suffering is a part of our life. An environment or an individual who, for the sake of pleasure may intentionally cause problems, can bring sufferings. In our life, suffering can occur for the common good. In order to attain what we are longing for we have to undergo suffering. Discipleship has its own goodness as well as its difficulties.

Following Christ has its own demands. As Jesus and his disciples went on their way, a man said to him "I will follow you wherever you go," (Lk 9:57). This person wanted to follow Jesus but he did not know the situation in which Jesus was living. Jesus answered the man, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Lk9: 58). In this situation, those who want to follow Jesus must accept any situation of life, be it hardship or easy.

A disciple is marked both by what he/she does and by what he or she is. "Jesus was not addicted to success. He clearly knew the reality of our world, namely that our real happiness lies in union with God and that nothing else, not even the conversion of the whole world can satisfy us if we do not have that union."⁶³

⁶² F. MOLENEY, *Disciples and Prophets: A Biblical model for the Religious Life*, 40.

⁶³ W. BARRY, *Now Choose Life: Conversion as the way to life*, 90.

3.7 Conclusion

It is not easy to follow the example of the first disciples in answering the call of Jesus today due to the materialistic and egoistic culture of our time. I believe we have to keep in mind that even in our days Jesus' personality is as powerful as it was in the past and continues to attract many people from all walks of life to follow him closely.

This relates to my congregation's way of life where we try hard to follow Jesus in a different way. For sure the directives of our congregation translate what Jesus says in the Gospel and the individual member or sister puts that into practice and makes them live like Jesus, for the sake of the kingdom of God.

Finally, I can say that to follow Jesus after the example of the first disciples of Jesus is a great challenge for all the Christians not only the religious. It is more challenging especially for the religious who many times are tempted to water down the demand of the Gospel.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF FORMATION: FORMATOR AS MENTOR

4.1 Introduction

Sellner comments that,

Mentoring is by no means a recent phenomenon and that the word itself is simply defined by the Oxford American Dictionary as a “trusted adviser.” It finds its origin in ancient Greece. A mentor has the function of a teacher / guide who welcomes the initiate into a new occupational and social world and acquits him with values, customs and resources. The mentor is the exemplar whom the protégé can admire and seek to emulate. A counselor who provides council and moral support in times of stress and most importantly in time of difficulties.⁶⁴

We can say that the role of a mentor is complex as well as delicate. The mentor has to play the role of a teacher, a spiritual guide, a role model to be emulated and a companion of the young people who come to the congregation trying to discover the will of God and to fulfill their life’s dream. Below are some of the functions of a mentor in handing on the traditions and customs of the congregation to the new comers, helping them to live a well-integrated life in the congregation.

Mentor may be described as a spiritual guide, a confessor or a person who fosters human growth in one’s career. It may be a religious formator, a teacher, a spiritual director, a confessor, or a counselor.”⁶⁵ (This small paragraph is taken from the notes of our lecturer Sr. Loretta Brennan).

A mentor must be a good example in helping one to realize his or her human vocation and try to discover the will of God and fulfill their life’s dream. The mentor must accompany the young people who come to the congregation to live a well integrated life in the congregation. In *Vita Consecrata*, especially the section that

⁶⁴ E.C. SELLNER, *Mentoring: The Ministry of spiritual kinship*, 23-24.

⁶⁵ SR.L. BRENNAN, *Lecture Notes*.

focuses specifically on the work of formation, it notes that God is “**Educator par Excellence.**” It is God who reveals the ministry of His abiding love for each individual and challenges us in the deepest part of our being to do the same. The document then indicates that it is sharing in the work of the Father who through the Holy Spirit fashions the inner attitude of the Son in the hearts of young women and men.⁶⁶

4.2 The Role of a mentor in our formation

A mentor has an important duty of helping the candidates accept the congregation and feel at home. It is not easy work because young people desire to be challenged in order to discover their potentialities by expressing themselves in total freedom. By looking at the role of a mentor in our formation, the document presents the work of formation in a simple and clear way. Although in reality the formators are often faced with a big challenge in this ministry. The challenges are how to lead the candidates into a condition where they, personally and corporately desire to be caught up in God’s love as they are moved to respond in love, truth and faith. Committed to this reality formation takes heart rapidly and steadily. In his book, *Strategies for Growth in Religious Life*, Gerald A. Arbuckle’s says: “It demands skilled mediators to accompany and lead the young people to Jesus. The mentor must give enough freedom to the candidates to develop their talents and to be involved in the activities of the congregation.”⁶⁷

4.3 Example and the Role model for accompaniment

In my experiences, when a young person joins a religious congregation, she is very curious to see how the older members behave. The candidates try to observe the

⁶⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata: Post-Synodal, Apostolic Exhortation on the Consecrated life*, 65.

⁶⁷ G. ARBUCKLE, *Strategies for Growth in Religious Life*, 222.

members, especially the mentors. They want to see if the one who is teaching them is living whatever he/she is asking them to live. If the mentor is a role model, the candidates learn more easily and in a more convincing way. That is why a “mentor has to be achievement oriented in her way of living. She should be an example that the protégé can admire and seek to emulate.”⁶⁸ I believe that people today, especially the youth, are more convinced by the witness of life than spoken words.

Hence, the mentor must be careful on what he/she is doing. The important thing for the candidate is to try and stress the problems which can happen in the formation and equip them with skills on how to overcome them without losing heart. In her lecture Notes, Sr. Loretta Brennan quoting a 4th and 5th century father of the Desert says

A brother asked Abba Poenen. “Some brothers live with me; do you want me to be in charge of them” the old man said to him, “no, just work first, and if they want to live like you, they will see to it themselves,” the brother said to him, “but it is they themselves, father, who want me to be in charge of them. The old man said to him, No, be their example not their legislator.”⁶⁹

This poses a big challenge in the life of a mentor. The mentor has to keep in mind often that he or she is an example in life. Whatever is taught in theory is understood better from the examples of life.

4.4 A trustworthy Leader

The candidates need someone to turn to with a lot of confidence and openness in order to be able to develop their interior life freely. The mentor has a duty of listening to the stories of these searching souls. The candidates expect the mentor to provide suitable answers for their immediate problem. According to James McNamara, mentoring, as a relationship of trust is a form of love. The relationship is always one of

⁶⁸ SR. L. BRENNAN, *Definitions of Mentoring, Unpublished class notes, 16/2/2004.*

⁶⁹ SR. L. BRENNAN, *Principles of Accompaniment, Unpublished class notes, 2004.*

great affection and care. He/she is evolving a special bond between two people. But that bond is built on trust not on friendship.”⁷⁰

Jesus in his life was a leader. We learn from him the requirements and the work of leadership, especially how the leader should be for those put under their care. “Christian leadership is effective to the degree that it is grounded in a person’s relationship with God and incorporates behavior reflecting that belief and relationship.”⁷¹

Jesus’ way of leading His people, whether in times of joy or sorrow, was always in intimate relationship with His Father. He sent out the seventy-two disciples to go in pairs to every place where He would visit. When they returned, they gave him reports of what had happened. Jesus immediately looked up to heaven and said. “Father, I thank you because you have shown to the unlearned what you have hidden from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, father, for this was your good pleasure” (Luke 10:21).

Also, when Jesus stood at Lazarus grave, He lifted up his eyes and said; “Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this, for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me, (John 11:41-42). At the same time before being betrayed and crucified, there is the same intimacy with his father. He said, “Father the time has come... (John 17:11).” This relationship, is of dependence and trust in Jesus’ leadership.

⁷⁰ J.M. MCNAMARA, “Mentoring, A costly form of love” *Human Development*, Vol.13.No.2. 23.

⁷¹ D. RODRIQUEZ, -L. SOFFIELD, “Leadership in Men’s Congregations” *Human Development* Vol.17.No.13, 29.

The formator must be conscious that God alone is the true leader and gives life. She/he must try to be in contact with God and be attentive to what God is doing in the formees. She/he might collaborate with God in fostering the life that God gives. She/he must learn from God how He treats his children. She/he must meditate on Jesus Christ and learn from him how He accomplished His mission of animating, supporting and leading the formation of his disciples.

McNamara says, "It is precisely this relationship of trust that places a unique responsibility upon the mentor. A responsibility to be honest and straightforward, being faithful to the relationship as stated and not manipulative in any way."⁷² Without any trust in the mentor, the candidates or formatees might wear masks and fail to be themselves, hence rendering the formation ineffective and vain.

On the contrary, if a mentor is a trustworthy figure for the new members entrusted to him or her for care, then he or she will be a sure point of reference for them as quoted in the constitution of STH which says that, "superiors are to be examples in cultivating behavior or attitude, especially charity and piety in fulfilling their daily duties in life."⁷³

4.5 Giving instruction about the mentor, Accompaniment of the charism, Spirituality and Prayer according to our founder Burchard Huwiler.

The mentor must be sure that candidates are well informed about the kind of life they wish to commit themselves. According to Burchard Huwiler the candidates, entering the congregation need to be enlightened on the life they want to embrace.

⁷²D. RODRIQUEZ, - L. SOFFIELD, "Leadership in Men's Congregations" *Human Development* vol.17.No.13, 30.

⁷³ STH, *Constitution, Article, 98.*

Hence, they are to be introduced to the study of the Holy Scripture and how to use the Word of God for their meditation.”⁷⁴

A formator must give the formatees the ways of using the prayer of our founder and meditating on it. Bishop Burchard Huwiler always prayed to the Holy Spirit. This prayer helped him in an on-going spiritual formation. During meditation, he felt an urge to teach. He had strong feelings that drew him to love and act more.

Formatees must follow the example of Huwiler and learn from his prayer. He used to meditate on Psalm 50. The verse that struck him most was verse fifteen which says, “I will teach the wicked your ways that sinners may return to you.”⁷⁵ Huwiler was deeply touched by the merciful love of God. He felt the need to teach others about it. Eventually, he began teaching catechism to the women, children, and youth and recommended prayer and action, which must go hand in hand.

Candidates must recite/pray this prayer with attention and meditate on it as Huwiler did. They need to be continuously in the presence of God who speaks to them through Psalm 50:15 and the Bible. They must learn slowly by slowly through prayer how they can evangelize the people by balancing prayer and action.

We read in Burchard’s diary that he knows that he hasn’t been searching for anything else other than God and his church; if this is a crime, so be it.”⁷⁶ Also in his book of prayer we read, “make my Zeal and joy grow, let me seriously want to work and to suffer for your church.”⁷⁷ Candidates must know how to pray and love the Congregation which they want to join. Another lesson they can learn is that, because of

⁷⁴Cf. *STH, Constitution, Article, 22.*

⁷⁵ B. HUWILER, *Letter of his Spiritual Director*, no 2.

⁷⁶ B. HUWILER, ‘*Diary*’ 16 January 1920.

⁷⁷ B. HUWILER, *My Prayer*, 10.

Huwiler's deep love for Christ and for the church, he saw it necessary to defend the church by witnessing to truth, justice, charity and mercy. The formatee needs to understand very well the importance of prayer and try to live by following the example of Huwiler.

Huwiler prayed for the Holy Spirit of God to strengthen him to work for his Kingdom and for the unity of the entire Christian community. Here the candidate can learn how Huwiler's petitions revealed the will of God. Hence, Huwiler did nothing without the light of God. After learning these prayers and how to meditate, the candidate can learn how Huwiler always searched the will of God in every action and responded to it generously.

We need to study the Holy Scripture more, interpret it, and teach the candidates how to pray and have good meditations. The mentor is supposed to explain to the candidates the vows, giving them practical guides on how to live them lovingly and joyfully. The mentor has a duty of being the teacher of the candidates in all aspects concerning consecration in religious life.

4.6 The Role of accompaniment, directing and correction of the candidates

In life, no one expects new people coming to the congregation to know everything. They will make mistakes which are common in our normal life. Therefore, the mentor has a duty to correct them kindly but strongly, showing them how to conduct themselves in the choices they have made in order to be part of the congregation. The mentor has to be careful when she/he corrects candidates. This must be done with a lot

of respect for the dignity of the human person who is a child of God, so that they may not feel ashamed or stupid and lose the respect accorded to them. It is good to separate formators and spiritual directors in the work of accompanying the formatees.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have tried to show the role of the mentor in a very simple and practical way. Mentoring is a very delicate issue that deals directly with the lives of other people, determining their incorporation to the congregation. Mentoring should be done with a lot of care and prayer so as to allow the Holy Spirit to guide the people in the right way. The mentor should be a person of deep spiritual life and humanity so as to allow people to be themselves in order to grow in all aspects of life.

McNamara says that “Mentoring is a transitional relationship, which lasts for a time but passes as one goes on to another stage of life, to establish oneself in one’s own right, independent of the mentor” ⁷⁸ It is very important for formators to be aware of their duties in passing on the traditions of the association in order to avoid unnecessary tensions that are caused by failures on the side of the mentor in his or her duty. It is true that the real formator is the Holy Spirit, who works in mysterious ways in individual souls, but the human instruments are equally very important; their role should never be neglected. Finally, in order for the members to do their work effectively, the candidates should also show collaboration because no one can be trained in things he or she does not value or have an interest in.

⁷⁸ J. McNAMARA, “*Mentoring, A costly form of love,*” *Human Development*, Vol.13.No.2. 23.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In chapter one we dealt with the theme: The history of St. Theresa Sisters of the Child Jesus. Here we briefly exposed the biography of the founder, the beginning of the congregation, the development of the congregation from 1933 – 2005, difficulties encountered, congregational progress up to the present and finally the conclusion of that part.

Chapter two discussed; The Integration of formation and Charism/Spirituality of the Congregation. The following are the areas we explored; our charism and spirituality, the experience of the charism, humility, spirituality, simplicity, in formation house, Aspirancy, Postulancy, Novitiate, Juniorate, final vows, finally the conclusion of that part.

Coming to chapter three of our work we elaborated more on, the call to discipleship in Mark 1:18, the root of formation (Foundation). Here we explored deeply the meaning of discipleship, the application of Mk 1:16-20 on our formation, responsibility, how each member of our congregation has been called by the Lord to follow him more closely, call of discipleship, relevance to our congregation, preaching, prayer, the work of Jesus, Christ in life, in obedience of Christ, Life lived in a state of chastity, communion, love, joy rooted in the call; finally the conclusion.

Chapter four dealt with the role of formation, formator as a mentor. This chapter is more on pastoral and spiritual implications of formation, stressing more on formator as a mentor in the congregation of St. Theresa Sisters. We explored the role of a mentor

in our congregation, example and role model for accompaniment, trust worthy leader, giving instruction about the mentor, accompaniment of the charism, spirituality and prayer according to our founder Huwiler, and finally the role of accompaniment, directing and correcting the candidates.

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- Mwemage, Formation House, Tanzania. January 7.2005. To interview a formator. She has clear

idea of the Aspirancy and Postulancy.

Nyaigando Mother House, Kashozi, Tanzania. January 2.2005. To interview a superior assistance concerning the Juniorate.

Nyakahoja Convent, Mwanza, Tanzania. December 5.2004. To interview one sister. She had clear idea of the difficulties Encountered.

APPENDIX I

TANGAZA COLLEGE

QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTITUTE OF SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOUS FORMATION

**TITLE: THE FORMATION FOR DISCIPLESHIP IN THE CONGREGATION
OF ST.THERESA SISTERS OF THE CHILD JESUS IN BUKOBA DIOCESE -
TANZANIA**

Status:.....

1. How was the congregation of St. Theresa Sisters founded?

.....
.....

2. Why was the congregation founded?

.....
.....

3. What is your understanding of the word Charism?

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4. What is formation?

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5. What is the importance of formation?

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6. What is expected of Aspirants in the Congregation?

.....
.....

7. What are the aims of Postulancy and how does one get to this stage?

.....
.....

8. What is the main focus of the juniorate stage?

.....
.....

9. How do you tell if a candidate has successfully gone through the stages of formation?

.....
.....