

**INSTITUTE OF SPIRITUALITY
AND RELIGIOUS FORMATION
TANGAZA COLLEGE
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

EVELYN AKUOMA ARIRIATU, SND

MENTORING IN ON-GOING FORMATION

Supervisor

Loretta Brennan CSB

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

NAIROBI 2004

I dedicate this work to Sister Margaret Birketti my SND sister, a good Sister and a Mentor. May the Most Holy Trinity look upon you with love in all eternity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my profound gratitude to my parents who were my first mentors. They cultivated trust and self-confidence in me. My gratitude and thanks to Sr. Loretta, CSB my Supervisor who has spent her time and used her mentoring skill of gentleness yet challenging me. This has helped me to be focused in the process of writing this long essay. Special thanks also go to my Congregation, especially my Nigerian Unit for giving me the opportunity to participate in this Spirituality and Religious Formation course.

I cannot forget to give my special thanks also to my Sisters at Racecourse Community, Kenyan Unit for all the support and encouragement I have received from them. Thank you also Sr. Carolyn Bush, my sister SND for your patience, generosity and time spent to sort out from the community library all the books I used for this work. I also wish to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to Sr. Agnes Solomon SHCJ who in the midst of her own tight schedule was able to proof read my paper with interest and dedication.

Finally, to all those who in one way or another contributed to this work, whose names have not been mentioned here, I say thank you your contributions are highly valued and appreciated.

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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

Signed: Amiathy SND

Name of Student: S. Evelyn Amiathy SND

Date: 17th March 2004

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

Signed: Loetta Brennan CB

Name of Supervisor LOETTA BRENNAN CB

Date 17th March 2004

INTRODUCTION

During my studies I constantly heard people talk about the ministry of mentoring, thus, my interest and choice of this topic. In this long essay I would like explore the meaning, the depth and application of this ministry. In the process of my writing, I hope to focus on mentoring and its place in Religious life after final vows. The reason for this is that, this aspect of mentoring seems to be neglected or overlooked by many religious congregations, concentrating, as they do, on mentoring only in Initial Formation.

The other strong motivation for my choice of this topic is the fact that on-going mentoring was very much valued and encouraged by St. Julie Billiart our Foundress. From her writings I have discovered that, she spent most of her time mentoring her sisters during her lifetime. She encouraged and mentored our early Sisters in love and friendship. The success of this small group of women was due in no small amount, to her constant attention to their spiritual and professional development.

Today I feel there is a need for our sisters to review, and reclaim this aspect of our heritage of mentoring. We need to read again her letters to her young sisters and allow ourselves to be once again inspired by her gift of mentoring. For the need of our sisters to have a spiritual and a professional companion in their life journey is still relevant today as it was then. These are the issues this long essay hopes to address.

I will start with the definitions of mentoring, and will also look at the general foundation of mentoring, as it appears in the Old and New Testaments. Central to this is Jesus who is model and mentor par excellence. No discussion of the role of mentors

could ignore its place in African Traditional Culture where it is a long established tradition and is intrinsic to the development of young Africans. Finally in the last chapter I will deliberate on the importance of on-going mentoring and make some recommendations. So I welcome all my readers to join with me in this reflection of my long essay on mentoring, perhaps my story may not be different from yours.

CHAPTER I

THE PROCESS OF MENTORING

1.1 Definitions

Before we begin to discuss the above topic, I feel it is appropriate that we take a brief look at some authors' definitions of the word 'mentoring,' so that we can have a clear understanding of the subject. Different authors and writers have different names for it.

According to Daniel Levinson, a Yale psychology professor, as quoted by Edward Sellner, "the basic mentoring relationship is simply friendship with someone a little more experienced, a person who acts as a guide in regard to a new career, profession, job or developmental stage."¹ Levinson gives his own definition, which says that, "Mentoring is defined not in terms of formal roles but in terms of the character of the relationship and the functions it serves."² For example, an uncle can mentor his nephew in his trade or profession such as carpentry or mechanics or a complete stranger can be a mentor such as a football coach with a young footballer.

The Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines "a mentor" as the person who is "mentoring". The mentor is "an experienced person who advises and helps someone with less experience over a period of time."³

According to Sellner, the concept of mentoring is by no means a recent phenomenon. He quotes, the Oxford American Dictionary that defines a mentor as 'a trusted adviser,'

¹ EDWARD SELLNER, *Mentoring: The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship*, 25

² DANIEL LEVINSON, *The Seasons of a Man's Life*, 98

³ SALLY WEHMEIER, ed., *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*

This definition finds its origin in ancient Greece, in the *Odyssey*, “Mentor is the name of the trusted friend who in Ulysses’ absence protects, nurtures, educates, and guides his son Telemachus into adulthood.”⁴ A mentor may act also as a teacher to enhance the young man or woman’s skill and intellectual development. He acts as a guide or host, to welcome the initiate into a new occupational and social world.

1.2 The Role of a Mentor

In the Christian experience a mentor is someone who can help us read God’s fingerprint in our life’s journey. St. Augustine puts it well in his *Confessions*, the mentor is one who “forces me to look into my own face.”⁵

Mentoring is a relationship of trust, as such, it is a sacred and precious relationship. This trust involves seeing something in someone else, that one would like to develop in oneself, that is, seeing the mentor as a role model or seeking out someone because of his or her expertise or wisdom.⁶ In mentoring trust is the nucleus of the relationship. A mentor therefore has the responsibility to be honest and sincere to prove him or herself trustworthy. To use McNamara’s words, “as a relationship of trust, mentoring is a form of love. This relationship is often one of great affection and care. It is a relationship of giving without expecting anything in return.”⁷ Whitehead also states, “that as a form of love relationship mentoring offers a model of adult intimacy that is non-genital”⁸ In other words it is not a mutual give and take relationship. It is a selfless

⁴ EDWARD. SELLNER, *Mentoring: The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship*, 24

⁵ EDWARD. SELLNER, *Mentoring: The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship*, 23

⁶ JAMES. MCNAMARA, “Mentoring: A Costly Form of Love”, *Human Development* XIII (1992) 22

⁷ *Ibid.*, 23

⁸ EDWARD. SELLNER, *Mentoring: The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship*, 27

sort of service, for a mentor does not expect a reward. The only reward of a mentor however, is the joy he or she gets on seeing the progress of his or her protégé.

In the light of the above definitions, we can say that mentoring can be formal or informal. For example, looking at mentoring in terms of the character of relationship it serves, an apprentice or student may not receive much mentoring from the boss or teacher, but may receive much more from an older co-apprentice or fellow student. He or she may receive very little mentoring from the teacher or adviser but very important mentoring from an older friend or relative. The quality of the relationship and not the role determines the value of its mentoring. A mentor must have the experience of mentoring; in other words he or she must have been mentored in a meaningful way. Otherwise one cannot give what one does not have.

1.3 Qualities and Skills of a Mentor

Listening to self so as to listen to the other. To be a mentor the person must have had the experience of being guided in his or her own spiritual journey, and must have reflected on his or her own experiences and relationships of finding God. She or he should be at home with her /himself and not be ashamed to admit his or her, own weaknesses. A mentor has to have a listening ear, not just listening but a good listener, an attentive listener, committed to be with the person, fully present to the person. The mentor must be one who listens to him or herself and be able to understand the inner movements within him or her knowing his or her needs. He/she cannot see to the needs of others unless the person is able to listen to his or her own needs, because the unmet need will be a barrier to the mentoring relationship.

1.4 Listening to God

The person has to have knowledge of listening to God in the scriptures and solitude. As it was said in the scripture, "he wakes me up every morning to hear what he is going to teach me."⁹ It is only when a person is able to recognise the voice of God that he/she will be able to help others in their faith journey.

A mentor has to have the quality of openness that will attract or draw people to him or her. A mentor has to have the skill of helping mutism and should avoid quick judgement of seeing it as a lack of intelligence. A mentor also has to acquire the skill of asking the appropriate questions that will help the mentoree to be in contact with her/himself in order to find the answer within. Fritz observes that through asking appropriate questions, he was able to help his soul friend to make meaning out of his dreams that were relevant to his faith journey.¹⁰ The mentor can be a good listener and at the same time be able to study the movements or situations that lead to truthfulness without embarrassment. The mentor works to maintain the friendship with the mentoree while being able to get to the bottom of things. Above all a mentor should have discernment skills, to discern when a mentoree is resisting the Spirit and be able to challenge him or her without distorting the relationship.

My reflection on mentoring reminds me of the common saying of my people that, "Anyone who says he or she knows, must have been taught by somebody else."¹¹ This implies that mentoring is a process, which many people experience, be it a

⁹ cf. Isaiah 50:4

¹⁰ EDWARD SELLNER, *Mentoring: The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship*, 104

¹¹ An Igbo proverb, Nigeria.

philosopher or a scientist, a theologian, or an archaeologist all have been mentored either directly or indirectly, even by studying other people's work or writings. Sometimes people may be inspired by private divine revelation, even then they cannot claim to be the sole author or master of their own knowledge. In our journey of life we each have a call or responsibility to carry out. Sometimes we are not sure or clear of what this call is. It is in moments like this that we need the help of a mentor to guide and to listen and to help us to see clearly to be able to respond.

CHAPTER II

THE BIBLICAL AND TRADITIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF MENTORING

2.1 Old Testament

In the creation story we see God as a mentor to Adam. God empowered Adam to give names to all the creatures of the earth. By naming them Adam had the confidence to care for and direct them.¹² God was not possessive of creation, even though it was his intention to create; he shared the authority and control of creation with Adam. He affirmed, empowered and guided Adam from self-doubt through self-acceptance, to interdependence and freedom of spirit. This way Adam was able to take the consequences of his own action. In a sense, mentoring is affirmation and empowerment that enable one to trust in him or herself, which leads to the trusting of others and trust in God. God mentored Adam and did not abandon him when he failed but promised to be with him.

God mentored the Hebrews in their journey out of Egypt and into the desert. In the Exodus, we see God mentoring them to be his people. This mentoring of God continues right through the history of Israel to the kings, to the judges and the prophets. All the time God is forming his people. Of course there are many other individual mentors, for example, King David mentored his son Solomon into being a king and Elijah mentored Elisha into being a prophet as he was.

¹² cf. Gen. 2:19-20

2.2 The New Testament

In the New Testament, the most significant mentor is Jesus Christ. He himself was mentored; perhaps it was from his own experience that he learnt how to mentor others. As a child he was mentored and apprenticed as carpenter. Later, he went to the synagogue and learnt scriptures from the rabbi.¹³ Jesus submitted to the normal human experience of being guided by the elders. As a human being Jesus needed to be mentored into his Jewish faith community.

He learnt from both parents the basic Jewish rituals and prayers. Mary, the ‘handmaid’ of God and mother of Jesus inculcated her availability to God and her resignation to the will of God in her son. Ahern in his book about Mary questions, “on what was Jesus basing the Beatitudes when he proclaimed them”? He suggests that,

“He ‘Jesus’ was recalling verses from the Psalms from the prophets...But there was a way much more simple. All He had to do was to think of His mother in the poor little house at Nazareth and to put into words the beautiful spirit He saw in her – the lowliest and the loveliest of the anawim.”¹⁴

Jesus recognised Mary as a mentor and that was the reason he entrusted the disciples to her, so that she would encourage and empower them.

2.3 Jesus Mentors the Disciples

Jesus as a mentor was in constant communion with God.¹⁵ Since he came to do the will of his Father, he therefore had to consult the Father before and after any action. He had a remarkable mentoring skill and a pleasant approach. For example, in mentoring Peter into ‘a fisher of men’, he first used the knowledge Peter already had.

¹³ Lk 2:41-52

¹⁴ BARNABAS AHERN, *Mary Queen of the Poor*, 23

¹⁵ Mk 1:35, Mk 3: 13

He was never judgmental in his relationship with those the world considered sinners or outcast.

Arbuckle made the same observation in his writing, “Reflect on the ways in which Jesus sensitively relates to known sinners or outcast of society, example, his warm approach to Zacchaeus. (Lk. 22:61).”¹⁶ He also pointed out Jesus’ respect for people’s freedom, which was manifested, in his avoidance to impose his power on people. The sick man at the Pool of Bethesda, Jesus knew had been ill for decades, he still had to obtain his consent, and ‘Do you want to be well again?’ (Jn. 5:1-9).

As a good mentor he explained things to the disciples. He was aware of his disciples’ need of faith. He encouraged them to trust him, also to recognise that as his followers they were God’s people and that this identity of belonging had to be shared with the whole human race.¹⁷ By his own life, he taught his disciples through his open disapproval of the social and cultural injustices of the world.

Jesus instructed his disciples that as members of the reign of God, they should be the light of the world. In other words, they should be a model for the people in the world (Matt. 5:13-16). He helped them to understand that the Spirit leading them should be different from the spirit that leads the Pharisees (Mt.5:17-20). Jesus helped his disciples to see the contrasts between his and their Old Testament way of prayer. He mentored them on the right attitude to prayer, fasting and almsgiving; the right way to relate to one another, to creatures and to God. As we all know, Jesus devoted his entire

¹⁶ GERALD ARBUCKLE, *Earthing The Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for the Pastoral Worker*, 216

¹⁷ MICHAEL DOWNEY, ed., *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*

life to teaching and mentoring his disciples and those who followed him. The Apostles learnt the art of mentoring from Jesus.

2.4 The Early Church

There are a number of mentoring situations in the Acts of the Apostles, e.g. where Philip mentored the Ethiopian eunuch.¹⁸ From this account we could see the place and the importance of the Spirit in a mentoring relationship. It was because Philip had the listening skill and experience of the movement of Spirit that he could help the Eunuch. Another lesson this passage offers to mentors is that in a faith journey, the mentoring focus is God. Mentors in this way are meant to help the mentorees to find God. There was also another incident where Paul helped a group of disciples to understand and receive the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ In general, all his letters are a powerful way of mentoring.

For example, Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, encouraged them to “put on the armour of God, to stand firm against the cunning of the devil,” because they are not contending with flesh and blood, but with principalities.”²⁰ He also instructed them in the understanding of love as ‘the fulfillment of the law.’ “Love”, he says “does no wrong to a neighbour”. Mentors can also be models for their mentorees so Paul enjoined Timothy to pass on to others what he had learnt from him (2 Timothy 2:2).

¹⁸ Acts 8: 26-39

¹⁹ RAYMOND BROWN, JOSEPH FITZMYER, ed., *Paul's Anthropology, The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 1403

²⁰ Eph. 6:13

2.5 African Traditional Way of Mentoring

Mentoring has always been part of African Traditions. African traditional belief was that every human being had a responsibility to continue to hand on life through procreation. Therefore, preparation of the young to assume this responsibility is an important concern in the mind of everybody in an African traditional society. The major process in preparation for this task is the Rite of Initiation.

As Africa is a vast continent, different communities have diverse ways of performing this rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. In any case, the meaning and values it inculcates in the young are the same in most communities. For example, if it is in a community where circumcision is the norm, a guardian is chosen to mentor the initiates on the traditional values and morality of the community.

The initiates are mentored to respect their elders and they are taught all the necessary things involved in making a home: the entire “do’s and don’t’s” of being parents. Not everybody can be asked to mentor the young people. The guardian has to be a person of integrity, who keeps secrets, and who is respected by the community, who of course had undergone the same process of initiation. For young women, a responsible woman with the above qualities is chosen.

The rite of passage is a very important stage in the life of an individual and is the deciding factor when it comes to matrimonial relationship. In the same vein, Mugamu and Kirima observed in their writing, that,

“African initiation is the process by which one is admitted to a new status. It is the passing from one state or situation to another. At birth the baby passes from its mother’s womb to life in the world of the society. Later the child passes from adolescence to adulthood. All these are intersections of relationship between God, the ancestors, and spirits, and man.”²¹

²¹ JESSE MUGAMBI, NICODEMU’S KIRIMA, *The African religion Heritage*, 39-44

Mentoring is valued so much in African tradition that until one has passed through the mentoring stage-initiation-he or she can not become engaged or be involved in marital relationships without a subsequent repercussion.²²

2.6 Conclusion

For anyone to attain his /her potential, a person needs someone who is more experienced to mentor, guide, encourage and affirm him/her in his life vocation/dreams. So we have seen from the above that mentoring is part of human experience in African society. We also observed God caring and mentoring human beings in particular the Jews. God's mentoring relationship with the Jews reached its climax and fulfillment in Jesus, a mentor par excellence.

As a mentor, Jesus shares and passes on to us all he learned from God. He empowers and commissions us to go out and mentor one another in love, (cf. Jn. 15:15-17). Jesus is our model when we see his fidelity, patience compassion and forgiveness we are called to do the same. In response to this, the disciples continued the ministry of mentoring and passed it on to us.

In the 18th century Julie Billiard, Foundress of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur used the ministry of mentorship extensively as she founded her small community: the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. The focus in the next chapter will be on Julie's unique and effective mentoring of her fledgling community.

²²JOMO KENYATTA, *Facing Mount Kenya*, 130-154. "If it happens, a man or a woman must go through a ceremonial purification, korutwo or thahu gotahikio megiro -namely, ritual vomiting of evil deeds".

CHAPTER III

A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF JULIE BILLIART

Rose Mary Julie Billiard of Cuvilly was born in 1751, in the family of Jean Francois Billiard and M.Louise Antoinette Debraine. She was the sixth child of seven siblings; because of the previous infant death of her siblings, she was baptised on the same day as her birth.²³ As a child she showed outstanding virtue and love of God, that drew the attention of her parish priest who arranged for her to receive first Holy communion at the age of nine which was unusual for children of her age at that time.

3.1 Julie, A Charismatic Mentor

Mentoring in the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur finds its origin in Julie Billiard the Foundress. As a young lay woman she was deeply in love with God. She used every opportunity to share with her age mates, stories about God. She also taught them catechism. Her desire as she said was “to rob the devil of much of his prey, to instil into them true religious principles, to strive to gain them for the good God.”²⁴ She mentored many people who came to her for spiritual guidance even as an invalid. Even people of noble birth would be found around her seeking spiritual guidance.²⁵ I would say mentoring was a natural gift to her. By her way of life she passed on this natural God-given skill of mentoring to her sisters.

²³ MARY LINSKOTT, *St Julie and the Joy of Hope*, 2

²⁴ MARIE HALCANT, ed., *The Education Ideals of Blessed Julie Billiard*, 19

²⁵ SND, *Mother St. Joseph*, 45 Julie had a nervous breakdown, which in 1782 the clumsy intervention of a surgeon who bled her foot resulted in complete paralysis.

3.2 The Art of Mentoring of Julie Billiart

Julie was faced with a lot of responsibilities in the early days of founding the congregation. She made a lot of journeys in response to invitations, visits, negotiating and arranging for the openings of new houses. Besides, Julie had to mentor her sisters to lead the new communities and schools. Since she could only be in one place at a time, her mentoring therefore was mostly done by letters. Julie's mentoring focused on the integration of the whole person. She not only mentored the sisters in their spiritual and professional development, she also mentored their formation of character and physical health.

Here are examples of some of her letters: "Many kind regards to all my daughters. I ask them to be well informed in the spirit of our holy institute and learn as much spellings as possible. Here it is done at evening recreation."²⁶ To another sister she wrote, " My dear good daughter, be of good heart. Above all, consult your good director about holy abandonment and you will have all the strength, necessary to you on any occasion for the holy work the good God had confided to you."²⁷ In the same letter, she expressed her concern for the sister's workload and encouraged her to make use of the other sister in the community if she needs her. She also instructed her about a sister who was sick. She said, "leave her in bed all the time she needs it."²⁸

She went further and counselled her in these words,

"Let us all do everything for the greater glory of the good God! My dear daughter, do not be frightened at the difficulties the good God allows us to encounter. You know now that our holy Institute is still in the beginning of its work. It requires very courageous souls for the labour the

²⁶ FRANCIS ROSNER, LUCY TINSLEY, ed., *The Letters of St. Julie Billiart*, 437

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 426

²⁸ *ibid.*

good God has designed to confide to us. But it is important that we should not be fainthearted: we can do all things in him who strengthens us”²⁹

As a good mentor she was able to affirm them when she saw they were making effort and improvement. This is clear in the following letter. “I am very satisfied with the letter of my good daughter Gabrielle and her writing. It is most important for her to practise it everyday.”³⁰ She stressed the importance of her sisters being well informed. For example, she wrote and enquired about a particular sister if she had some knowledge of the principles of religion.³¹ She was of the opinion that before a sister goes out to teach she first has to be well informed. “She makes the sisters learn their catechism by heart; then ask one another questions. After that comes the explanation of the articles.”³²

Julie is a woman who has tremendous interest in friendship. She applied this in the mentoring of her sisters. Like Jesus she addresses her co-Foundress Mere St. Joseph and the sisters as friends. This encouraged openness and trust of the sisters in Julie. She mentored the sisters in their prayer life. This was evident in her writings, where she stressed the importance of prayer. She emphasised that they should pray so that their instructions would carry graces to the children. She says, “Remember all your life, if you are not truly interior you will not be able to find God in the depth of your heart.”³³ Of course it is from the depth of her own experience of prayer life that she shares all this.

²⁹ FRANCIS ROSNER, LUCY TINSLEY, ed., *The Letters of St. Julie Billiart*, 426

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 428

³¹ *Ibid.*, 64

³² *Ibid.*

³³ SND, *Mother St. Joseph*, 45

3.3 Conclusion

Julie reveals in her letters so many qualities of a good mentor. Julie demonstrated the need for ongoing formation in the spiritual life as well as in the professional life. She was not of the opinion that mentoring the young finished with the novitiate. She not only expressed this in her letters, but also showed it by her actions.

She handed on to our earlier Sisters her belief in the goodness of God through her prayer life, 'contemplation in action'. She modelled for them in friendship, often addressed them as 'my dear good friends. Without Julie mentoring her sisters in friendship and love, her belief and her union with God, there wouldn't have been the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

CHAPTER IV

ON- GOING MENTORING

Our discussion on this chapter is going to be based on the importance of on-going mentoring for people in religious life. However, before that, I would like to say a few words about mentoring in initial formation.

4.1 Appointed Mentor

By initial formation, I mean the period from when a person enters an institution or a religious congregation until the final commitment or final vows/ priesthood. During this period of formation usually there is an appointed mentor. This is someone elected or delegated by the institution and entrusted with the responsibility of initiating or mentoring the new members into the culture of a particular institution.

The responsibility of the appointed mentor could be referred to as ‘coaching’, which Fr. Tom explained as “a specific action such as encouraging, reinforcing, giving feedback and demonstrating”.³⁴ An appointed mentor has to see to the candidate’s spiritual, human maturity, as well as the intellectual, apostolic and community life formation of those entrusted to his/her care. At the end of the prescribed period of the formation Programme, the candidates are evaluated, affirmed and approved or advised to leave. In other words, these candidates have been found worthy to live the life and carry out the ministry of the congregation, they have responded to the mentoring they have received.

³⁴ TOM O’HERN, Lecture Notes, *Planning Formation Programme*, Tangaza College, 2003.

According to Tom O’Hern, “everything done in formation has the goal of sending forth a young man or woman who is capable, willing and equipped to participate successfully in your community life and work”³⁵. Whenever any formator is able to accomplish this, he/she sees him/herself as successful. There is no doubt about this. But after that, so what? Is initial formation the end of formation? These questions are what we are going to explore in this chapter.

4.2 On- Going Mentoring

I feel it is important right from the beginning to instil into the minds of candidates the importance of on- going formation. It is very necessary to let them know that initial formation, first profession or priestly ordination is only the beginning, if you like, it is the beginning of the life. It is at this time that mentoring or formation begins. This is because some people may think that first profession or ordination to the priesthood is a permit or license to self-mentoring or guidance.

4.3 African Instance of On-going Formation

To illustrate initial formation, I shall equate it to a young newly married couple in the African traditional society. Although they have been recognised and incorporated into the community, they still have to be guided by the elders as they take up their new role of making a home. For example, a newly married, pregnant woman has to be mentored by an elder person, either her mother or the mother-in-law. She has to consult

³⁵ TOM O’HERN, Lecture Notes, *Planning Formation Programme*, Tangaza College, 2003.

them for advice. This elder person has to listen to her concerns, help her to discover or clarify things that may seem ambiguous to her.

This is exactly what Sellner means when he writes, “Each of us can recall a time when he/she wanted someone to talk with, to listen to our concerns, to help us clarify a barely perceived direction in which we need to go”.³⁶ In fact mentoring is part of human experiences as I mentioned in the previous chapter. There is no stage in life when one would claim he/she has outgrown the need for it.

On-going mentoring was paramount in Julie’s time. This was evident in the letter she wrote to inquire the progress of a sister. In it she wrote, “I should also like to know if my daughter Rosalie has some knowledge of the principles of religion to instruct others.”³⁷ Julie believed strongly that one has to have a good understanding, a clear idea and knowledge of oneself before he/she can teach or mentor others. In the same letter she expresses that somebody is needed who is older than those to be guided, “somebody with white hair, my good daughter- that is why you are going to labour wholeheartedly at the Lord’s work.”³⁸

Mentoring is still as crucial today as it was in Julie’s time. Her concern over the need of an older and experienced person to mentor the young was echoed by Jung as quoted by Sellner when he wrote, “while older people in primitive tribes were almost always recognised as the guardians of the mysteries and customs, our modern culture

³⁶ EDWARD SELLNER, *The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship*, 19.

³⁷ FRANCIS ROSNER, ed. *The Letters Of St. Julie Billiart*, 64.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

seems to have set that aside.”³⁹ He expresses displeasure over the modern society’s old people’s nonchalant attitude towards imparting the traditional customs to the young. He says that the old people, instead of mentoring compete with the young. What a misfortune and loss to the modern society! Could Jung’s observation of the contemporary society be true of Religious life also? Do all elders of Religious communities today always give good example to the young? I think when we talk about mentoring it is about giving good example to the young and inexperienced.

4.4 Mentoring After Initial Commitment

For me I agree, mentoring is very important in our lives. We need mentoring at different stages of our lives, especially at a period such as the end of initial formation, when the young woman moves from a structured and protected environment of formation house into the reality of life. At this period the person is torn and pulled in many different directions, to fit and adjust to community life, ministry and a new environment.

At this stage of life like the newly married couple I cited above, there should be an elder, an experienced well-mature person to help, guide and mentor the person to assume his/her new responsibility. Mentoring does not always mean learning a new skill. It requires someone to listen to you, to talk out your concerns and doubts with, someone to help you clarify issues, someone to help you adjust to the culture of the new place. This entails someone to ‘nourish’ you, encourage you to build confidence and

³⁹ EDWARD SELLNER, *The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship*, 30.

belief in yourself. If we want to enjoy a happy community life, we should all assist and make the transitional period of every new member of our community pleasant. Sellner shares the same opinion when he writes; “older members of the human family must contribute to the process as mentors if they are to experience any sense of well-being, happiness and personal enrichment.”⁴⁰

So far we have been discussing mentoring in a general sense. Now I would like us to explore spiritual mentoring, which some writers call by different names spiritual guidance, /spiritual direction /accompaniment /soul friend.

4.5 Spiritual Mentoring

I want to focus a little more on this because some people today tend to neglect spiritual mentoring and pay more attention to professional mentoring. Some also find professional mentoring easier to discuss than spiritual mentoring. “Spiritual mentoring is a form of empowerment that helps others discern their vocation, acknowledge their gifts and begin to give shape to their dreams.”⁴¹ The mentoring relationship has to be built on trust. It is only possible or worthwhile if the mentoree really wants to have a mentor and is able to allow the mentor access into his /her spiritual journey. The mentor too must be willing and available to accept the responsibility to journey with the person in his or her spiritual journey.

A true and genuine spiritual mentoring fosters conversion, transformation and integration of the whole person. The real mentoring relationship does not count on

⁴⁰ EDWARD SELLNER, *The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship*, 30.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 57

physical meeting but on the depth of communication and transformation of the soul. This is exactly St. Julie's own philosophy of mentoring. Spiritual mentors are facilitators of spiritual growth and inner healing. To be a spiritual mentor, one must have been mentored too. For personal experience is important if the mentor is going to be able to understand the mentoree.

4.6 Qualities of Spiritual Mentor

A mentor must have the ability to listen attentively, rather than preach and lecture. It must be someone who can keep confidentiality, not a person who will go out and tell tales about his/her mentoree. It should be someone in readiness not to impose his / her own idea method, but to attend to the mentoree's own needs and concerns. It has to be someone who can challenge. A mentor has to have a warmth and personality that encourage a mentoree to share his /her difficulties. It should be someone who can share his/her own self when it will be helpful to the mentoree, not for his/her own self- gratification ego.

4.7 Personal Reflection

For me, spiritual mentoring has been a very helpful experience. It has often been a source of inspiration, enlightenment and insight. It has been a source of strength and courage, a moment to stop, listen to the inner self and voices within, a time to reflect and discover where God has been at work in my life experience. It has helped me to reevaluate my stand before God and between others and myself. It is an experience I would encourage everybody to have. It is important that we make use of every opportunity of being mentored.

If we deny ourselves the opportunity of being mentored, we may expose ourselves to the temptation of being compelled to compensate the need in a negative way, such as exploitation /abuse of a mentoring relationship we may be responsible for. It is on this note that P.Muraya advised during her lecture that spiritual guides have to have someone to talk and share with to avoid the temptation of abusing the mentoree.⁴² Unfortunately some people may feel that they do not have the need of a mentor or that they can mentor themselves. Anyone who thinks that he /she can mentor his/herself has to be careful and watchful before pride or self-ego ruins or misleads the person. As G. Jeff in quoting St. Thomas Aquinas states “he who makes himself his own teacher becomes the pupil of a fool.”⁴³

This can rightly be applied to anyone who makes himself his own mentor. He would not only become the mentoree of a fool, but will also lose the focus of his own life and become a stranger to himself. It also resonates with a proverb, which my people say, “anyone who says he will bury himself will end up with his hands hanging on the earth.”⁴⁴ We all need spiritual mentoring at one time or the other in our life. It is a life-long process experience. For anyone to refuse to have a spiritual mentor means the person cannot mentor someone else either, because we cannot give what we do not have. Otherwise it will result the blind leading the blind. Of course as the scripture says both being blind will end up in a ditch.

⁴² PHYLLIS MURAYA, Lecture Note, *Spiritual Guidance*, Tangaza College, 2003.

⁴³ GORDON JEFF, *SPIRITUAL Direction for Every Christian*, 8.

⁴⁴ An Igbo proverb, Nigeria.

4.8 Conclusion

Spiritual mentoring is essential in the life of professed religious. If we are to be effective in our ministries and relationships with God, others and self, we have to have someone to listen to us, someone to help us in our spiritual journey.

We need a mentor to help us listen to the inner voices in order to be able to understand and respond. By doing so we would be well integrated and be able to guide others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As Beha quotes Levinson in her writing, "One of the continuing quests in the formation and development of the young adults is the search for contemporary, practical role models."⁴⁵ This is exactly the point I intended to make. The mentoring need for our sisters at the moment is not a theoretical one. We need wise elderly people with understanding and respect for privacy and confidentiality.

We need people who can encourage and empower others. Mentors who will not only share their life experiences, but also can demonstrate their capacity through practical examples. As St. Julie says, we need people with 'grey hair', not only grey hair but also wise and warm hearted mentors. These are people who can rejoice in the progress of their mentoree and not be threatened that she/he is going to excel him/her.

There is need for integrated mentors who are at home with themselves and will not exploit or manipulate the mentoree to satisfy his /her own need. Who is capable to take up this noble and important responsibility today? May be leaders or superiors perhaps! Or could they appoint people to carry out this job for the care of the young religious.

Unfortunately, sometimes, some leaders and superiors are not confident and free to mentor the young. How then can we be the light of the world, which we are called to be? (Mt. 5:14). They are caged in fear that their shroud of prestige and power will be taken away if the young know what they know. Is this not sad? If this is the case I then wonder what makes our religious community different from the contemporary society.

⁴⁵ BEHA MARIE, *The Feminine Mentor in Women's Development*, 31

On this note therefore we are challenged to wake up and be transformed. We are challenged to mentor the young, because we received without cost, we therefore have to give without cost (Mt. 10:8). If we still cherish and appreciate the spread of the Gospel message, if we still value the continuation of our distinctive spirituality for the reign of the Kingdom of God, we have to accept in humility that the young will increase while we decrease. We like John the Baptist know that our joy will be complete on seeing the progress of our mentorees. However, the other side of the coin also is that the young have to respect and be humble enough to accept the mentoring of the wise and experienced elders.

Finally, I wish to recommend that a workshop for on-going mentoring be organised, although, currently arrangements are in process for a workshop on mentoring. What I envisage is for us to review and reclaim Julie's way of on-going mentoring. A friendly mentoring relationship, yet challenging, a mentoring relationship where both a mentor and mentoree are open to the Spirit for transformation. So let us pray, "God our Father help us to accept the reality to be transformed that through your grace we may be an instrument of transformation for others your greater glory Amen".

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I	3
THE PROCESS OF MENTORING	3
1.1 Definitions.....	3
1.2 The Role of a Mentor.....	4
1.3 Qualities and Skills of a Mentor.....	5
1.4 Listening to God	6
CHAPTER II	8
THE BIBLICAL AND TRADITIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF MENTORING	8
2.1 Old Testament	8
2.2 The New Testament.....	9
2.4 The Early Church.....	11
2.5 African Traditional Way of Mentoring	11
2.6 Conclusion	13
CHAPTER III	14
A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF JULIE BILLIART	14
3.1 Julie, A Charismatic Mentor	14
3.2 The Art of Mentoring of Julie Billiard	15
3.3 Conclusion	17
CHAPTER IV	18
ON- GOING MENTORING	18
4.1 Appointed Mentor	18
4.2 On- Going Mentoring.....	19
4.4 Mentoring After Initial Commitment	21
4.5 Spiritual Mentoring.....	22
4.8 Conclusion	25
RECOMMENDATIONS	26

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

AHERN B., *Mary Queen of the Poor*, St. Louis 1960.

ARBUCKLE G., *Earthing The Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for the Pastoral Worker*, New York 1997.

HALCANT MARIE, ed., *The Education Ideals of Blessed Julie Billiart*, London 1922.

JEFF G., *Spiritual Direction for Every Christian*, London, 1993⁴.

KENYATTA J., *Facing Mount Kenya*, Nairobi 2000¹².

LEVINSON D., *The Seasons of a Man's Life*, New York 1978.

LINSCOTT MARY, *St. Julie and the Joy of Hope*, Ipswich 1988.

MUGAMBI J.- KIRIMA N., *The African Religious Heritage*, Nairobi 1991⁹.

ROSNER FRANCIS- TINSLEY LUCY, ed., *The Letters of St. Julie Billiart*, Rome 1974.

SELLNER E., *Mentoring: The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship*, Indiana 1990.

SND, *Mother St. Joseph*, Glasgow 1964.

Articles

BEHA MARIE, "The Feminine Mentor in Women's Development", *Human Development* IV, 4 (1983) 31.

MURAYA PHYLIS, "Spiritual Guidance", *Lecture Notes*, Tangaza College, Nairobi 2003.

O'HERN T., "Planning Formation Programme", *Lecture Notes*, Tangaza College, Nairobi 2003.

MCNAMARA J., "Mentoring A Costly Form of Love", *Human Development XIII*, 2 (1992) 23.

References

- BROWN R.- FITZMYER J.- MURPHY R., ed., "Paul's Anthropology", *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, New Jersey, (1990) 1403.
- DOWNEY M., ed., *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, Collegeville 1993.
- HORNBY A. -, WEHMEIER SALLY, ed., *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Oxford 2001⁷.
- ZINKURATIRE V.- COLACJAI A., ed., *The African Bible*, Nairobi 2000.