

**INSTITUTE OF SPIRITUALITY AND
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**THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EAST
AFRICA**

**DISCIPLESHIP OF THE CANOSSIAN
RELIGIOUS WOMEN IN AFRICA**

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diploma in Religious Formation

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STUDENTS' DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material used herein has not been submitted for Academic credit to any other institution. All sources have been cited in full.

Sr. Imelda Simon

Sr. Imelda Simon, FDCC

DEDICATION

I dedicate this Long Essay to my parents, brothers and sisters and to all my sisters of the Canossian Province Queen of the Apostles – East Africa with love.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank God with all my heart for granting me the strength and courage in many ways to write this Essay.

Many thanks fly to my ex-provincial of the institute of the Canossian Daughters of Charity Mother Antonietta Crippa, who afforded me the opportunity to study spirituality and formation at Tangaza College. This has given me new vision. I also thank the present Provincial, Sr. Margaret Peter for her support and words of encouragement whenever we meet.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS ___ ___ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

AMECEA ___ ___ Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa

DRC _____ Democratic Republic of Congo

FDCC _____ Figlia Della Carita Canossiana, (Canossian Daughters of Charity, Servant of the Poor).

HIV ___ ___ Human Immunodeficiency Virus

LRA ___ . ___ Lord's Resistance Army.

NGOs ___ ___ Non Governmental Organisation

TKK _____ Toa Kitu kidogo (Bribery)

TV ___ ___ Television

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

It has been a great pleasure for me to write this paper concerning women discipleship because the call of women to discipleship is one of the major concerns of today's society. This long essay is divided into four chapters. The first chapter explains to us the historical foundation of the discipleship of Canossian women in the 18th and 19th centuries. It gives the information of how our Mother foundress, St. Magdalene of Canossa, started the Congregation of the Canossian Sisters Daughters of Charity. It tells us about her call to religious life, the struggles she went through for the service of the poor. It also deals with the political situation of her time in Italy and the spread of the congregation in other parts of the world and especially in Africa.

The second chapter introduces the main issue of women discipleship in the Bible. The main insights of the vocation of women to discipleship are taken from the New Testament. It helps to understand the call of women to discipleship, the cost, mission and dedication to discipleship. The last part of the chapter includes the call of the Canossian women to discipleship in the world of today. Therefore it calls all the disciples of Jesus to make him known and loved, especially among those who don't know him.

The third chapter gives us the picture of the troubled life situation of the African people. It underlines the social problems that have come up in Africa due to the rapid social change and technological development, which is growing faster in the African world today. It expands on the increase of evil in our African society like: political upheavals, poverty, and an increase of slum dwellers and sicknesses like Aids.

In order to respond to the needs of the people, the last chapter focuses on the importance for the religious to have an integral human formation, whereby the whole person is involved. For the religious to become true disciples of Jesus Christ, they should be able to acquire profound human and spiritual formation. They should be well informed about the concrete issues taking place in their society. Therefore the Canossian Sisters are called to prepare the social ministers, counsellors, and the ecologists to read the signs of the time.

To enable formation to take place in the hearts of those in formation, they should get in touch with the suffering of people around them. I have concluded that both human and spiritual development should be the prerequisite in our formation houses.

CHAPTER ONE

THE HISTORICAL FOUNDATION AND SPREAD OF THE CANOSSIAN RELIGIOUS WOMEN IN THE WORLD

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study is primarily concerned with the discipleship of the Religious Women in Africa. Within this context, it is logical then, to begin with a brief introductory survey of the historical foundation of the Canossian Religious Women. This will help to shape our general understanding of the call of women to discipleship in Africa. Therefore the first chapter gives us a brief historical foundation and spread of the Institute of the Daughters of Charity, which was founded by Magdalene of Canossa.

1.1 THE LIFE AND VOCATION OF MAGDALENE OF CANOSSA

1.1.1 Her Life

The foundress, Magdalene of Canossa, was born of the noble family of Canossa in Verona Italy on March 1, 1774. She was the third child of Mr. Marquis Ottavio and Countess Teresa Szluha. Being their third girl, her birth was not a moment of joy for her parents because it did not fulfil their expectations. They had been expecting a son and heir for all their patrimony. However, there was a gradual acceptance, especially with a son being born after her. Then, came two more girls. The children spent many happy moments with their parents.

The harmonious tranquillity of the Canossa family was interrupted by the sudden death of the beloved father at the age of 39.² With her husband's death, Magdalene's mother felt out of place, estranged and unwanted by the family and succumbed to the desire to make a new life for herself. She left the Canossa place leaving her five children behind, and re-married. After the departure of Countess Teresa Szluha, a governess was brought in to raise and take care of the five children.³ Magdalene suffered much harassment under her. When the governess finally left, the young Marchioness suddenly became very ill, almost to the point of death.

²M. Giacon, *Magdalene of Canossa. Humility in Charity* (Verona: Novastampa, 1988), p. 12

³ *Ibid.*, p. 13

In her difficult battle, her spirit had become like steel, but her body, once the obstacle had been removed suddenly broke down. However, God's ways are usually surprising. In her sickness, Magdalene discovered her call to serve the poor and the marginalised in her society.⁴

1.1.2 Her call

After recovering from her sickness, Magdalene felt stronger than ever before about her vocation that she had already experienced during her childhood. She revealed that she had felt the first invitation to give herself totally to Christ in a strict religious order. Fr. Modesto Giacon in his book entitled *Humility in Charity* stated that: "She desired or sought no other than Christ and she wished to make his love known to all those who suffer in life. Thus she wrote, "the inclination" of showing charity towards the poor, the sick, the orphans, those without love, consumes my heart like fire."⁵ With the lesson of pain, Divine Providence was preparing Magdalene for the pressing apostolate of charity, at a time in which old Europe and, particularly, Italy was plunging into war and misery, social and religious unrest. In this situation, the young and the poor were the most numerous and defenceless victims.⁶

As time went on, it was not easy for Magdalene to discern well her vocation. She had to open herself to different spiritual directors who assisted her in discovering God's will. She found her strength and courage in prayer, in frequent visits to church, in daily communion. Her faithful maid, Stella, at one point even remarked on this to her noble mistress. She felt that in the circumstances, her mistress was devoting too much of her time to religious practices. "Because we are in exile", answered Magdalene, "we have to pray more. And anyway, do you feel that I am failing in my duties?"

Magdalene showed a lively and concrete concern for all and was especially devoted to her family. As Brescian, one of Magdalene's contemporaries, and her first biographer, writes during the Venetian sojourn:

Magdalene had a dream, which had the form of a supernatural vision through which the Lord revealed to her the ideal of her future Institute. She saw a lady in the company of six young women, dressed in brown habits with black shawls on their heads. Around their neck, each had a medallion of our Lady of Sorrows. At a certain point, the Lady summoned two of the young women and sent them amid crowds of girls to teach catechism.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 14.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 25

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 30

To two others she indicated the wards of a hospital, inviting them to assist and comfort the sick. And finally into a large room, where there was a bunch of poor, dirty unkempt children. And she indicated the school as their area of work.⁷

1.1.3 In the service of the poor

In her memoirs, Magdalene wrote that one day, as she was attending Holy mass the priest read a passage from the book of Tobit, extolling charity. The words had a striking effect on her and she was stirred to practice those works of charity, which her status permitted her.⁸ She was happy to look after the poor children and did not disdain to wash them, combing their hair and removing the lice. To those who were surprised in seeing the Marchioness of Canossa performing such humble tasks for her little ragamuffins, she would answer: “Just because I was born Marchioness does that mean I cannot have the honour to serve Jesus in the poor”?

As the months went by, the young girls to whom she gave refuge increased in number. Both teachers and pupils felt a growing need for her presence. Therefore, her urge to leave Canossa palace was stronger than ever. Freed from her ties, the old dreams started to grow strong again within her and she felt the urge to start a big project. She felt that she should establish an institution where one could instil a true spirit of union with God and at the same time detachment from everything, while engaging in all those works of charity suitable to the circumstances.

In listening to the word of God, Magdalene felt herself inspired to put into practice the works of charity, dedicating herself to the most urgent needs of the society. She was absolutely convinced that “the Lord was not loved because He was not known.”⁹ Amidst these feelings, her family members would never allow anybody of their household to take up residence in a hovel among dirty, ignorant girls in the most infamous part of the town because it would be an insult to the family. In spite of this situation, they would place no obstacle between her and what she called “her vocation”, provided she found a more suitable dwelling place and settled her economic affairs there. Moreover, she would be free to spend more time with her girls.

Finally, Magdalene was free to follow “her path”. She lovingly, but firmly, took leave of her family, turning her back forever on her princely palace, and going to live poor among the poor.¹⁰ Other women felt inspired to come and live and work with her. So she now found the need to lay down the rules for living.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p 33

⁸ E. Pollonara, *Memoirs of St Magdalene of Canossa*, (Della Stazione di Ottavia. 70 Roma, 1998), p. 35.

⁹ M. Giacom, *Op.Cit.*, p. 74

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p 76.

She drew the rules from her many mystical experiences through which she increasingly saw the crucified Christ as being the model “of the two precepts of charity” which were to form “the total object contemplated by the institute”.

1.1.4 The Rule

“The Rule,” as Magdalene wrote in the introduction in the constitutions, “are divided and so to speak, applied to the virtues of which our great model gave us special example on the cross”. In him she contemplated the model of prayer, humility, stark poverty, obedience unto death. The spirit animating all the rules, is the love of Christ on the cross. Hence the commitment on the part of the institute to imitate Him.”¹¹

Burning with ardent charity for God and for her fellow people, Magdalene felt the need to extend her apostolic activity beyond the sphere of girls and women. Men and boys also were in need of fatherly guidance, above all for their moral and spiritual growth. There were too many stray children on the streets, uncared for by parents or teachers. Many young people found themselves unprepared to face life.

In 1800, while in the prime of her youth, Magdalene had drawn up a plan for the establishment of a congregation with a twofold family, male and female, which would operate separately practising “almost all works of mercy, for boys and girls respectively. It would be of a religious nature and not only philanthropic, like many of the associations which were being formed at that time.”¹²

The Marchioness was worried by the fact, that she and her Daughters were not able to reach lovely country or mountain villages and help those in need. So she decided to train some young women of better-off families in rural areas for her mission.¹³ After a course, they returned to rural areas, to work, for the cultural amelioration of the people, most of whom were illiterate. They carried with them not only professional knowledge but also the spirit of the institute, thus becoming collaborators of the Daughters of Charity in their service to others.

Well ahead of her time, through her rural teachers, Magdalene was among the first to promote the education of the people and encourage the laity to collaborate generously in the apostolate of the church. Magdalene’s social and apostolic plan was extremely vast. She did not stop at drawing up programs, but uplifted the people through her works:

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 113

“schools for the poorest, teachers for the countryside, oratories, recreation centres, parish catechisms, assistance for the sick and the needy, monthly retreats and spiritual exercises, tertiaries and pious unions. Through these, the population was helped to improve both materially and ever more so, spiritually.”¹⁴

As she was dying, she earnestly recommended herself to the prayers of all. She urged them to observe the Rules and to love obedience and humility. She concluded with a final loving remembrance for those who had constantly occupied her thoughts and for whom she had increasingly toiled in her apostolate as she said: “I recommend my beloved poor to you as much as I possibly can. Try to ensure that one day they will be able to enjoy the Lord, and do so through your instructions, prayers, charity and hard work.”¹⁵

1. 2 THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION IN MAGDALENE’S TIME

1.2.1 Magdalene and the Political Culture in the 18th Century

To be acquainted with the spiritual world in which Magdalene of Canossa lived, one cannot help referring to the political, military, economic and cultural air the church was breathing towards the end of the 18th century onwards. Being involved in the social life of the people, Magdalene became aware of all the sufferings of the poor.

An increasing number of people became defenceless victims of the new political situation. There was a tendency to preach a revolution against God and against the church.¹⁶ Although Napoleon had affirmed in the concordat of 1803 that no suppression of Ecclesiastical foundation would take place without the authorisation of the Apostolic see, a decree was issued on June 6, 1804 on forfeiture to the state of properties belonging to religious orders.¹⁷ During this period of Napoleonic domination, a new system of administration within the church was introduced in Verona and Venice. Loise wrote:

A new board of churchwardens was introduced. It was an organism composed of lay people, subject to the governmental trusteeship that administered the revenue of the sacred buildings and the parish functions. The government did not touch this new institution; rather, the board of the churchwardens was consolidated.¹⁸

The city of Milano was not exempted from the burden of the political upheaval. Baraldi gives us a sketch of the life situation of the capital of Lombardy when he wrote:

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 123.

¹⁶ Loise Giugni and Marilun Lim, *Magdalene of Canossa, Catechist of Her Time*, (Roma, 1992), p. 12.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

We remember far too well the calamities of Milan, Italy and Europe. We saw the two phantoms of republic succeed by the fleeting shadow of the Italian kingdom, a deluge of ecclesiastical laws swallowed the institutions of our most revered ancestors, and aroused the most impetuous passions, the most insatiable cupidity, and the most atrocious persecutions. We saw the churches converted into stables and theatres, external worship banished, bishops and parish priests evicted, solemn vows and pacts made mockery by the wicked, monasteries of religious emptied, the world of apostates filled up.¹⁹

1.2.2 A New Apostolic Impetus

After these most sorrowful events of the French Revolution and Napoleonic reign, the church, through the work of her "finest children," among whom we also find Magdalene of Canossa, rediscovers new vigour and new impetus. Giugni writes:

Having been hit in her material interests, in her freedom and often in the life of her priests, the church was able to give new martyrs and through their witness to acquire new authority and new prestige in the awareness and diverse sensitivity in the pastoral action of the Italian Bishops after the trying experience of the Revolution and the Napoleonic domination. In spite of the principles of legitimism with which the restoration supported itself both in Italy and in Europe, there were a number of Bishops in the first half of the 19th century who gave proof of intelligent zeal, adapting new methods to the challenging situation with regards to sacramental pastoral care, the peoples catechesis and the formation of the priests in facing the new exigencies of religious society."²⁰

In the first half of the 19th century Verona could count on one group of great and generous persons who gave rise to a wonderful variety of works directed to providing for humanity. The re-establishment of religious orders, after the fall of Napoleon, signifies the start of a more ample religious restoration. Among them, those dedicated to youth and to some social work were preferred. Institutions were set up with the following aims:

- To provide for Christian education of youth.
- To stem the disorders derived from frequent and long wars.
- To defend, especially the people, from errors and from the ideologies with preaching, missions, spiritual exercises, catechetical instruction given in the form of dialogue with all, and with special categories, increasing the catechetical discussions.²¹

Speaking of the foundation of the Institute of the Daughters of Charity by Magdalene of Canossa, Giovita Riva writes that it:

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p 18.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p 19

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20

was active... that it improved the moral standards of the growing generation, that it gave itself to helping the orphans, the fallen and the miserable. The only Institute, which could be established according to the character and the needs of the time, was that which, with the most sincere philosophical attitude, would attain to education and serve the country and humanity. This was the only aim of great and pious souls, to be able to put together the dominant systems and social innovations with the many unjustly abhorred and persecuted religious professions. This is precisely the thread, which in her wisdom, Magdalene of Canossa would seize from the very hands of the enemies of the cloistered life.²²

1.3 THE DICTATES FOR FOUNDING THE CANOSSIAN RELIGIOUS

1.3.1 The Needs of the time: “School of Christian Doctrine”

The Church can boast of a most ancient tradition in the field of catechesis, which traces back to the apostolic time. She increasingly enriches herself to be able to answer the needs of the Christian people according to the demands of the Magisterium. The greatest preoccupation of the church in every age has been the transmission of faith. In fact, the church is very faithful to the divine mandate: “Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples, baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). With this command, the church continues her mission of evangelisation till the end of time.

The schools of Christian Doctrine were open to children and adults but part of the population, for various reasons, could not attend them. In this way, the possibility to draw from the gift of truth was open to all. The parish priests were invited to solicit the masters to allow their servants to attend religious instruction. This initiative of catechesis would give Magdalene of Canossa a chance to promote and instruct some servants and maids who could not go to Church. “... She [Magdalene] felt moved to instruct the neighbours and for this, we began to teach doctrine every Sunday and to explain [it] to the maids [who where not allowed] to [attend] church.”²³

1.3.2 The Venetian and Milanese Churches

The catechism of Bellarmino was also the text most used by Magdalene of Canossa and suggested even by her spiritual director Msgr. Pacetti. In a letter of 1814, he wrote to her: “With regard to the Doctrine, you may use the text of Bellarmino, which is the only one approved.”

²² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 23

As we can read from the chronicles, it was during lent 1818 that the Daughters of Magdalene of Canossa started their catechetical activity in the parish of St. Stefano. Msgr. Fransce Maria Zoppi had been the parish priest from 1808.

His concern, during the 15 years spent as parish priest at St. Stefano, was to open Sunday school for children, re-structure the school of Christian doctrine and make his Sunday preaching a true and real catechesis. Seven years after the arrival of the Daughters of Charity in Milan, on the occasion of the canonical erection of the institute, Msgr. Zoppi in his sermon to the people on September 14, 1823, said:

The Daughters of Charity dedicate their cares and fatigue to the good of the lowest classes. Every Sunday, each of them instructs in the church the group assigned to her by the parish priest or by the directress of the school of Christian doctrine. Then each one takes them to the convent with other girls who want to join and continue until evening, the useful teaching made pleasant by a good recreation.²⁴

1.3.3 The Establishment of the Institute of Charity in Verona

In 1808 together with some companions who shared her apostolic passion, Magdalene started in Verona the Institute of the Daughters of Charity, Servants of the poor. She left the wealth of her noble family to become one with the Poor, thus transmitting the love of Christ, which was so alive in her, into a life of dedication to God alone, for the good of her neighbours and, above all, for those who were most in need. Magdalene was a most devoted and faithful Christian. She had put everything at the service of others and placed the kingdom of God above every other human interest. She became a living witness of divine love in the world, making herself a companion to others all through her life.

She urged her companions to make Jesus known and loved through the specific ministries of charity: education, evangelisation, and pastoral care of the sick. She answered the most urgent needs of the society of her time with the tenderness of a mother and with intelligence.²⁵

In her work Magdalene was always spurred on by her passion “to make Jesus Christ known and loved above all.” Her passion found its expression in a dedication which was boundless, open to the world and in a style of life that was humble, simple, gratuitous, as well as creative and welcoming. She was ready ever to lose her life for the sake of the kingdom of God, following the example of Mary, the mother of Jesus, towards whom she nourished a most tender love.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 58

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 77

Catechesis has always been the primary apostolic activity carried out by the Daughters of Charity from the beginning of every foundation. Within this context and around it, all the other ministries are articulated and have the same goal, to bring souls to the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

1.4 THE CHARISM OF THE CONGREGATION

1.4.1 To Follow Jesus Crucified

In 1795, on one occasion during the Holy Week, Magdalene was reading a book during meditation. As she was reading, she came across this phrase: "*Inspice et fac secundum exemplar*" which literally means "Look and do accordingly." Look at how Christ loved while hanging on the cross. Love as He loves. In a second, she is urged "to take some of the virtues of Christ crucified, to draw up the Rule of the Daughters of Charity. With this statement, she experienced a very strong interior urge to follow Jesus crucified. It lasted several days, but from it she did not understand anything in particular. Surprisingly, Magdalene experienced the same urge six or seven months before she went to Venice. However, this interior urge was not the same as the former one.

At this particular instant, the urge became so vivid that she no longer doubted the reason why, when drawing up the Rule of the Daughters of Charity, she thought of taking the virtues of Jesus crucified as the characteristics of the Institute of the Daughters of Charity."²⁶

1.4.2 Her Charism Alive in Us

We too, like Magdalene, are called and empowered by the charism to contemplate Christ crucified, and to communicate his love, seeking only the glory of the Father and the salvation of every human being, through a life of consecration, of communion and of humble service.

The name we bear Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor, indicates the two aspects of the commandment of love, which we are committed to live. As daughters of God who is Charity, we owe him a filial tender and profound love in unconditional availability to his will. As servants of the poor, we dedicate ourselves to serve all our needy brothers and sisters, showing them, through the ministries of charity, the same love with which the Lord loves us. All our care, labour and thoughts are, above all for the poorest among them.

²⁶ A. Grogan and N. Tasca, The Rule of the Congregation of the Daughters of Charity, (Roma: Topographia S.G.S., 1981), p. 26

The original inspiration, "*Inspice et fac secundum exemplar*" is the unchangeable norm of life for us in our exercise of charity. Attentive to the love, which shines forth from the cross, we learn to love in the way the Lord Jesus loves, that is, in humility and radical detachment. We seek to feel as he feels and to let every action of ours be animated by his spirit, "a spirit of charity, gentleness, meekness, and humility, a spirit of zeal and fortitude, a most amiable, most generous and most patient spirit."²⁷

The charism, which the Spirit has entrusted to our Institute, shows us who the persons are to whom our mission is directed, that is, the beneficiaries of this gift. The Sisters should open free schools for poor girls in the houses of the Institute. In the Rule, Magdalene specifies what kind of girls we should prefer, "rough, ignorant and very poor... since they have been brought up either in the street without any moral principles or without parents to discipline them."²⁸

The followers of Magdalene of Canossa have always the needs of the neighbours before their eyes, as it is to these that the Institute has to give itself. Their aim is to care for, and educate poor girls and boys, help in Christian Doctrine schools and assist the sick. These kinds of needs are to be found everywhere but they cannot be met in every place in the same way. "The Daughters of Charity, aware of and open to all the initiatives that favour education in the faith, are dedicated to the proclamation of the Good News and to human promotion through works of charity indispensable for creating the atmosphere and preparing the ground for receiving the Good News."²⁹

1.5 THE SPREAD OF THE CONGREGATION

1.5.1 Heeding the Command of Jesus

Jesus commanded his disciples to go out to bring the Good News to the nations. "Go into the whole world..." (Mk 16:15). That call of Jesus has echoed and re-echoed in the minds of believers with the heart of the church down through the centuries. Some ardent believers, among whom was Magdalene, the foundress of the Daughters of Charity, have dared to venture out in response. They have started spreading the Good News of love to the whole strata of humanity following in the footsteps of the apostles.

²⁷ Pollonara, *Op. Cit.*, p. 36

²⁸ Grogan and Tasca, *Op. Cit.*, p. 26

²⁹ *Institute of the Canossian Daughters of Charity*, (Roma: Topographia S.G.S., 1972), p. 11.

1.5.2 The Expansion of the Institute of the Daughters of Charity

On the death of the foundress in 1885, the Institute of the Daughters of Charity was only within Italy. The Holy See chose Angela Bragato to succeed her, as Magdalene had already predicted.

With her, the institute began a period of great expansion, with the foundation of numerous houses in Lombard and Veneto. In 1880, the first five Italian Missionary daughters of Magdalene of Canossa led, by the joyful and courageous mother Lucia Cupis, arrived in Hong Kong, after an eventful voyage of over two months. The initiatives met success and, in a few years there were schools, orphanages, hospitals, catechism classes and catechumenate for adults.

Barely eight years after the arrival in Hong Kong, the Canossian Sisters entered the immense Chinese Empire, setting up a wonderful array of houses and activities, up until 1949, when the communist revolution destroyed everything. In 1889, they set foot in India and gradually, in the course of the early decades of the 20th century, they spread to Latin America, the United States and Australia. In 1956 they arrived in Africa. The first place was Bukoba in Tanzania, where they built a hospital, taught catechism, Sunday school, built a primary school, and taught other subjects without forgetting catechism.³⁰

The Canossians are now present in twenty-one nations of the five continents with a numerical strength about one thousand sister's both final and temporary professed. Without counting novices and postulants. The Daughters and Sons of Magdalene of Canossa, mindful of the words of their mother, "Jesus Christ is not loved because He is not known", continue her apostolic work in the world of today, amidst the poor and lowly, thus keeping alive her spiritual heritage.

Conclusion

This chapter introduces us to the birth, life and death of Magdalene. We have seen the socio-economic and political situation that affected the church during the 18th century. Within the socio-political upheavals of that time, the Institute of the Canossian Daughters of Charity was founded and it spread to the five continents. This congregation of women draws its formation from the Gospel of Luke and this will be reflected in the next chapter.

³⁰ Giacon, *Op. Cit.*, p. 141.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN DISCIPLESHIP

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws upon biblical resources to explore the elements of discipleship as it has come to be understood in the New Testament. There will be two major sections in the chapter. The first will consider the call to discipleship during the historical lifetime of Jesus. This includes the vocation, cost and mission of the disciples. The second will discuss the call of women to discipleship in the New Testament.

2.1 THE CALL AND COST OF DISCIPLESHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

2.1.1 The Vocation of the Twelve as the “followers” of Jesus Christ

Throughout his ministry Jesus formed around himself a band of people who were fascinated with what he was doing and left everything to “follow” him. This group was a growing group, not limited to the number of the “twelve apostles” although they, of course, were members of it. To an external observer, the disciples spent time going around with Jesus on his itinerant ministry, listening to his preaching, witnessing his conflicts and his acts of power, enjoying his table companionship, and at times helping him to preach.

When Jesus himself was yet living and ministering on this earth, he began to call and send forth other persons to minister also. This was the beginning of Christian ministry. Jesus himself determined the nature of this ministry: who he was, how he himself ministered, his call to follow him and his sending forth.³¹

It was at Antioch in Syria that the followers of Christ were first called “Christians”. The term Christians designates “those of the household of Christ” or “Christ-followers” (Acts 11:26.) The title was probably first used in mockery and derision to distinguish believers in Jesus from Jews who did not believe in Jesus.

However, believers seem to have quickly accepted the term as expressing well the core of their own consciousness as followers of Jesus Christ (Acts 26:28; 1 Pet 4: 16).

In the four Gospels and in the Acts of Apostles, the most common term used for those who were committed to following Jesus is “disciple”. In its narrower sense the term designates the “pupil or learner” relationship.

³¹ Elisabeth Meier Tetlow, *Women and Ministry in the New Testament: Called to Serve*, (New York: University press of America, 1980), p. 55.

The term comes from the Greek verb *manathanein* that means, to learn. In this sense, the Twelve followers of Jesus are frequently called “disciples”. In a broader use of the term “disciple” in the gospels, signifies those who accept the person and the message of Jesus. “The disciples of Jesus, according to the gospels, are those people who hear and respond to his call to follow him.”³²

In the call narratives of all four gospels Jesus is portrayed calling persons to follow him. Jesus called men and women to follow him and they became his disciples. Those persons whom he called left their previous occupations and possessions and became his disciples. When the persons heard the call, they left their previous existence and followed him. People like Peter, Andrew, James, and John, left their families, occupations, parents and followed Jesus (Lk 5: 1-5, 27-28). The following of Jesus required detachment from anyone or anything other than him.

What precisely did it mean to be a “disciple”? In the NT discipleship of Jesus is presented within the framework of ministry of the word. However, this is qualified as, more importantly, ministry of service.

2.1.2 The Meaning of Discipleship

Each of the four Evangelists wrote the gospel to tell readers the story of Jesus, which included the story of his disciples. They had in mind that their readers should identify, in various ways, with the Twelve, and so to learn from them what it meant to follow Jesus. However, each of the evangelists portrayed the Twelve disciples somehow differently.

Matthew uses the term “disciple” to refer to the followers of the earthly Jesus. It was his preferred term to designate the “Christians”, that is, all those who have become disciples as a result of the Lord’s command, “make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19). As Matthew shares with his readers the story of the twelve in their experience with Jesus, he wants to guide them to understand what discipleship will mean for them.

In fact, he wants the reader to see discipleship as a state of following Jesus and that it requires dedication, self-denial and a continuing need to comprehend the significance of the teaching of Jesus. Mark’s story about Jesus and the Twelve concentrates on Jesus’ mission because the disciple is called to follow Jesus’ example of commitment to mission.

³²ibid., p 93.

Mark begins his narrative with Jesus' baptism because baptism is where the life of discipleship begins. Then the last words of Mark's narrative, though spoken to the Twelve, are addressed also to future disciples; they are a call to follow Jesus beyond the pages of the narrative. "He is going before you to Galilee, it is there you will see him, just as he told you"(Mk 16: 7).

In Mark, Galilee was the place of Jesus' mission and so his disciples will meet him in the course of their mission, because in their discipleship they will be "with him" as he "sends them out to preach with power over evil spirits" (Mk 3: 14). The ministry of Jesus, then, is the "beginning" (Mk 1: 1) of the message and mission to which all future disciples are summoned.

In Luke's Gospel and in the Acts of the Apostles, the theme of discipleship is more developed and radically expressed. Luke highlights the characteristics of Christian discipleship: the new commitments, orientations, and life style that disciples assume because of their association with Jesus, their master. Disciples are not only to take up their cross and follow Jesus, but also to carry it daily (Lk 9: 23). They must love Jesus more than father and mother and in a radical sense "unless they hate father and mother," they cannot be his disciples (Lk 14:25-26).³³

Luke views the Twelve as modelling the essential characteristics of Christian discipleship. Those who have accepted the call of Jesus should have new attitudes towards wealth, poverty, and the use of riches for the sake of others, and a new radical life style that puts the following of Jesus before every other allegiance. "No one who takes hold of the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk 9:61-62). Thus Luke sums up his radical view of discipleship by presenting Simon of Cyrene as the symbol of the attitudes and conduct of the Christian disciple who carries the cross after Jesus in daily life (Lk 23:26).

The Gospel of John emphasises the quality of personal relationship with Jesus as the characteristics of every disciple. Through the figure of the "beloved disciple" John's narrative places much stress on the relationship of friendship. "I have called you friends" (Jn 15:15). The "new commandment" continues the quality of this relationship with the Lord into relationships among the disciples themselves, "that you love one another, just as I have loved you, you also must love one another" (Jn 13:34-35).

³³ In the Semitic language there was no way for Jesus to express preference except to state that he loved one thing and hated another.

2.1.3 Some Characteristics of Discipleship in the New Testament

2.1.3.1 Vocation and Personal Freedom to Discipleship

Unlike the custom of our time that a pupil should approach a teacher or a rabbi in Palestine asking to study with him, in Jesus' style the pattern is reversed. Being a disciple of Jesus depends first of all on his call. He chooses his own disciples, often people with seemingly little to recommend them, and sometimes with obvious disqualifying characteristics. The person called is put in a situation where a response must be given in all freedom. Therefore, Jesus' compelling call and the personal response of the one approached distinguishes this kind of discipleship from other forms of call of that time.

2.1.3.2 Faith in Jesus

In the New Testament, discipleship begins with a call to follow Jesus, a call that gradually through presence with Jesus and through listening to his teaching and seeing his works evokes a response of faith in Jesus as the Christ. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and your household will be saved" (Acts 16:31). It is faith that constitutes the basic point of departure for all Christian discipleship. In the Gospel of Mark, Peter spoke up and said to Jesus, "you are the Christ" (Mk 8: 29). With this confession of Peter on behalf of the others, the journey of discipleship begins. Thus, the true meaning of discipleship is faith in a suffering Messiah whom God will raise from the dead, something the disciples fail to understand.

In Matthew, discipleship requires following Jesus in a relationship that involves both commitment and cost. They must be prepared to expect hardship (Mt 8: 20), to leave house and family (Mt 10:37; 19:27-30), and to deny themselves, take up their cross, and even lose their lives for Jesus' sake (Mt10: 38-39). We see that closely following on these demands of discipleship, the response to Jesus is faith. In Matthew, we see that the unwavering faith is presented more as a goal of discipleship than as a prerequisite.

In John's Gospel, the disciple is the one who believes that Jesus was sent by the Father and is the Son of God, as confessed by Peter (Jn 6: 68-69), by Thomas (Jn 20: 28) and by Martha (Jn 11: 27). The disciples are called to make their journey from no faith to full faith. They are to be like Nicodemus or the Samaritan woman who through conversation with Jesus became his disciples.

2.1.3.3 Disciples as "Followers" with a Close Relationship

The call of Jesus is a call to "follow me" (Mk1: 17), thus involving the disciple in a unique attachment to his person. It is to be a relationship of family intimacy and belonging. It is a relationship of familiarity, as between those who belong to one family (Mk 3:31-35). Joining his band meant binding oneself to this person in a spirit of allegiance and concretely following him in the unpredictable ups and downs of his ministry. Matthew also insists not just on the relationship of the disciples with Jesus, but also on the relationship of the disciples to other disciples in the community. The disciples are family members together in the family of Jesus (Mk 3:31-35).

2.1.3.4 The Cost of Discipleship

Following Jesus brings with it an extraordinary demand that requires a wholehearted and total response. One has to abandon everything else in order to be a disciple. Parents and family ties, nets and other means of livelihood, religious duties such as burying the dead, wealth, social status, pious customs are to be relinquished. Thus, discipleship engages one in a radical personal transformation, in a conversion process, so that one turns from egocentricity to letting go, dedication and self-gift.

2.1.3.5 The Importance of Prayer in the Life of the Disciples

In the gospel of Luke, prayer in the life of Jesus is very central. The evangelist refers frequently to the central place of prayer in Jesus' ministry (Lk 3: 21; 6:12; 9:28-29). Furthermore, we see Jesus exhorting his disciples to prayer (Lk 6: 28; 11:2; 18:1).

The Lucan Jesus not only prays himself, but also teaches his disciples to pray (cf. Lk 1:2-4). Jesus insists on prayer and that disciples must never give up on praying. In all of this one notes Luke's concern that to join the disciples' activities one needs prayer which acts as an ongoing communion with God himself. That has to be the source of vitality of the disciples."³⁴ Actually, the early community followed Jesus' practice of assiduous prayer in its missionary activity in an impressive way (Acts 1:14, 24; 2:42).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.136

2.1.4 The Mission of the Disciples

Luke makes the mission of Jesus and the disciples the central point of both his Gospel and Acts. Quoting from Prophet Isaiah, Jesus announces his own mission as one of liberation for the oppressed (Lk 4:18-19). He describes his own actual mission to the messengers from John the Baptist in the same terms, “the blind see again, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the good news is proclaimed to the poor”(Lk 7:22).

Discipleship in the company of Jesus brings the follower into association with Jesus’ own mission. That mission is to proclaim the nearness of God’s powerful and loving reign and to reach out in healing, liberating ways to overturn oppression and to reconcile all in the light of this dawning reign of God. Jesus makes his disciples co-workers in this service of the coming God, even sending them out on their own to preach, to heal, to drive out the “demons” that hold people in bondage. “Having received this great vocation of being disciples to follow Jesus they are also called to share in his task to spread the Gospel of the kingdom.”³⁵

Discipleship was to be in a deeper relationship with Jesus, to follow him, listen to him, love him and live like him, by one’s thoughts, words and actions. It meant participation in the mission and authority of Jesus. However, the mission of the disciples only makes sense if it is seen and understood by the disciples as an involvement in the task of Jesus. All that they do is done because of their relationship with Jesus (cf. Lk.3: 14-15). The emphasis in the Lucan writing reveals an everyday concern for discipleship. Luke’s demand of Christian involvement can be summed up under three main headings:

- (a) The response expected from people to the Christian kerygma
- (b) The demand of Christian living
- © The community aspects of Christian life.

The disciples are given authority to preach and have power over evil because of their association with Jesus. Luke makes it very clear that not only the Twelve but “the others” are also called to this task. “After this, the Lord appointed seventy others and he sent them on ahead of him, two by two...Heal the sick...and say to them “the kingdom of God has come near to you” (Lk 10: 1, 9-10).

As we have seen the logic seems to be that Jesus calls his disciples, associates with them as he presses relentlessly on, preaching God’s kingdom in word and deed, and then, when they are ready, he sends them on their way to carry out his task.

³⁵ Francis J. Moloney, Discipleship and Prophets, (Bandora: Bombay), p. 138

This activity would be a regular part on the life of the disciples. From now on, one would expect a closer association and understanding of Jesus' person and message, and consequently a deeper understanding of their mission. The mission of the disciples only makes sense if it is seen and understood by the disciples as an involvement in the task of Jesus. All that they do is done because of their relationship with him

(Lk 9:1-9).³⁶

To sum up, the characteristics of discipleship include vocation and free response, personal commitment, abandonment of all other priorities, participation in the mission of Jesus and communal life. These qualities form the distinctive features of following Jesus. The disciples of Jesus were brought into personal association with his person, mission, and destiny in the company of one another, an association which demanded a conversion and self-giving to an unparalleled degree. No one is a follower in isolation, but is supported and challenged by others with a similar commitment of love.

2.2 THE DISCIPLESHIP OF WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The discipleship of women in the New Testament can only be understood within the framework of the Jewish traditions in which Christianity originated. This section considers the New Testaments' evidence concerning the discipleship of women in the time of Jesus and in the early Christian community.

2.2.1 Women in the Time of Jesus

As a matter of introducing this subject, let us look back to the Old Testament and cite the names of some women who were called by God to share their specific ministries in the society of their time. We find that there are indications of many women who are seen as models of ministry in the Old Testament. There we read the stories of prophetesses, such as, Miriam (Ex 15:20f), Deborah and Jael (Jdg 4:4-5, 1-22). There were some women who glorified the Lord like Hannah (1 Sam 2), or the beautiful, chaste, prudent, active woman, Judith, and, in the wisdom literature of the symbolic figure of divine Wisdom seen as a woman.

We have seen in the first section that the technical expression denoting discipleship in the gospels was the "following" of Jesus.

³⁶ Moloney Francis J., *Discipleship and Prophets*, (Bandra: Bombay, 1980), p.141.

Although in the gospels the majority of disciples named are men, all four gospels, each in its own way, also portrays women, following Jesus during his itinerant ministry in Israel.

2.2.1.1 Jesus Cares for Women

One of the greatest testimonies to the call of women is found in the Gospel of Luke in which Jesus is consistently seen as “the One who cares especially for women.”³⁷ Forgiveness, healing and the gifts of salvation are given to women. “On seeing her, Jesus called her and said, “woman, you are freed from your infirmity.” These infirmities of women are healed not only by word, but also by “laying his hands” on them “on the Sabbath day” (Lk 13: 10-17).

Jesus is concerned for the widow of Nain, for her present and future life (Lk 7:11-17), since the widow’s plight in society was often very difficult if she did not have the support of a son. Jesus recommends women on the spiritual and human levels, as we read (Lk (7:36-50), about the woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee. This woman is recommended for her love and faith, while Simon is reprimanded for his lack of hospitality. The care and love of Jesus for women prepares them to follow him in his ministry.

2.2.1.2 Women Were Called to “Follow” Jesus

In Israel, there were a lot of cultural and religious biases regarding the role of women in the society. However, Jesus championed cultural “derailments” by calling women along with the twelve disciples. Thus, Jesus overturned custom and tradition when he allowed women to follow him.³⁸

There are some women disciples who are mentioned early in the gospel of Luke and are named with the Twelve. “Jesus walked through towns and countryside, preaching and giving the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve followed him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases: Mary called Magdalene, who had been freed of seven demons; Joanna, wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward; Suzanna and others who provided for them out of their own funds” (Lk. 8:1-3). Luke tells us that women are important and are remembered as disciples of Jesus. These women have been given physical and spiritual health by the intervention of Jesus in their lives (v.2). They now put their material resources at the disposal of Jesus and the disciples.. Jesus depends upon the help of women.

³⁷ Howard Marshal, Luke: Historian and Theologian, (Grand Rapids. Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), ,p.139-140

³⁸ Joachim Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus, (Philadelphia. Fortress Press, 1969), p.360.

On this issue Hans Conzelman reflects, "The Galilean women and Mary seem to stand in a similar relation to one another as the Twelve and the Lord's brethren."³⁹

Peter's mother-in-law serves as does Martha, but Martha's sister, Mary, takes another step and listens directly to the Lord's teaching. Other women followers also must have listened, for Luke says that the women "remembered his words and returning from the tomb, told all this to the eleven and the rest. Among the women who brought the news were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James" (Lk 24:8-10).

These ministering women are the first to believe in Jesus and to proclaim the Good News of the resurrection. Another comment made by the disciples on the road to Emmaus, "Some women in our company amazed us," shows that the women may have been more insightful than the men in understanding the experience of the paschal mystery which they shared with others later.

2.2.1.3 Mary, the Mother of Jesus, represents Women of Faith and Obedience

Luke begins with Mary and portrays her as a Jewish woman of faith. She is the fruitful one, the virgin, the instrument of the Spirit for Elizabeth, and the glory of her people, Israel. Mary is portrayed as a symbol and prototype of the believing woman who has transcended her cultural and even religious milieu by taking a qualitative leap in her Fiat. "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said" (Lk 1:38). Mary's yes represents the 'yes' of all women and men in the history of salvation. She, the person and the woman, will be present in the upper room at the birth of the Church. "All of these together gave themselves to constant prayer. With them were some women and also Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers" (Acts 1: 14). Luke tells us that women were in fact present at Pentecost and that this was well known to his readers. Pentecost was the event of the birth of the church. It was also the event of the empowering of the members of the Christian community for mission. It is of great theological importance to the society today that women were also empowered by the Spirit of Jesus at Pentecost.

The Gospel of John as we know it, is the 'Book of Signs'. It is structured around seven miraculous signs of Jesus' glory. The first sign is the story of the wedding at Cana. The mother of Jesus was present. It seems Jesus is dissociating himself from her personal request and addressing her as "woman" rather than "mother." She is important in John because she is Jesus'

³⁹ Hans Conzelman, *The Theology of St. Luke*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p.48.

disciple, and not because she is his mother.⁴⁰ Mary becomes a disciple because she believes in her son. John 2:12, shows Mary accompanying Jesus and the other disciples to Capernaum. Journeying with Jesus in his ministry activities is one of the ways discipleship has to be portrayed.

Towards the end of his gospel, John again presents Mary in the role of disciple in the scene of the crucifixion. According to Raymond Brown, the figures in John who are most symbolic of Christian discipleship are Mary and the 'beloved disciple'⁴¹. The two are brought together in the scene at the cross. Mary is given the role of mother to the beloved disciple, thus becoming part of Jesus' true family through her discipleship. At the same time the evangelist showed the beloved disciple becoming Jesus' true brother through his discipleship. "When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple, he said to the mother, 'woman, this is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'There is your mother.' And from that moment the disciple took her to his own home" (Jn 19:26-27).

Mary and the beloved disciple stand together in the scene as disciples and as equals. The stories of the wedding at Cana and that of the presence of Mary at the cross demonstrate her all-pervading presence and influence in the life ministry of Jesus.

2.2.1.4 The Samaritan Woman Represents Women in and for Mission

In the Book of Signs, we see another important woman who represents other courageous women who take the missionary spirit of Jesus seriously. John, chapter, 4 gives us a vivid scene of a Samaritan woman. She comes to the threshold of understanding that Jesus is the messiah. However, she does not end with believing in him only, but also becomes a missionary and evangeliser to her own Samaritan people.

The Samaritan woman is portrayed as proclaiming and bearing witness to Jesus. "So the woman left her water jar and ran to the town. There she said to the people come and see a man who told me everything I did! Could he not be the Christ?" (Jn 4:28-29).

People came to believe in Jesus because of her missionary zeal. Thus the disciple for John is the person who brings others to belief in Jesus through the witness of the word.

In the story of the Samaritan woman, John seems to say that the missionary zeal of this woman prepared the harvest that the apostles reaped later. Thus, women seem to have played a role in the Samaritan mission and in the founding of churches.

⁴⁰ Luke also reverences Mary in the same way (cf. 11:28).

⁴¹ Raymond Brown, *Mary in the New Testament*, (Philadelphia/New York: Fortress/Paulist, 1978), p. 698-699

2.2.1.5 Women in the Early Christian Community

We have seen that women in the time of Jesus were recipients of a new life and were involved in an active ministry unknown in their day. In the early church, women are present in the upper room and seem to take part in the election of Matthias (Acts 1:12-14). There are outstanding women like Dorcas, “who never tires of doing good or giving in charity” (Acts 9:36f), and who are highly valued in the local Church. Right from the start, there are women like the mother of John Mark who offered her house for meetings. This is to be distinguished from the concern and hospitality of others such as Lydia (Acts 16:11-15). The mention of Priscilla in the ministry of the word, Luke wants to tell us that women had full participation in the mission of the Church. This was contrary to the normal trend of the time and may indicate that she was considered more important in the church ministry than her husband.

In the letters of St. Paul, the local church is identified with the home-meetings of Aquilla and his wife Prisca (I Cor 16:19), and with Paul’s fellow workers (Rom 16:3-4), including Mary, Tryphaena and his wife Tryphosa (Rom 16:6-12), and Phoebe, a deaconess (Rom 16:1). The missionary role played by women is certainly evidenced in the early church. In addition, women performed ministerial activities in catechetics, liturgy, and prophecy in the early centuries.

2.3 THE DISCIPLESHIP OF THE CANOSSIAN WOMEN TODAY

2.3.1 Canossians, Women of Faith and Obedience

Like Mary the mother of Jesus and the other women found in the New Testament, the Canossian women are called to discipleship. From Mary and all the women in the Gospels, we learn to do God’s will with love, and strong faith. And like women disciples of Jesus in Luke’s Gospel we are always ready to make Jesus known and loved among his people. We are always available and we are conscious like Mary that obedience requires a solid mentality of faith. Thus it does not diminish our dignity as persons but rather gives us the freedom of the children of God.

According to the Canossian discipleship, our mother foundress urges us to recognise and honour Mary as first disciple of Jesus to learn from her to love, her humility, availability and total surrender to God. Our mother foundress insists that:

As Daughters of Charity we should entrust ourselves and all we do to her, who becomes mother of charity at the foot of the cross.

From Mary we learn to do the will of God, with ardent love and unwavering faith. We spread devotion to her by making her known and loved as Mother of God and our Hope.⁴²

Like women in the gospels, we are called to spend time in prayer. All the disciples of Christ are called to spend time in prayer. As daughters of Charity, we are called especially to spend some time in prayer contemplating Christ crucified in order to foster in us a passionate desire for God's glory. Through apostolic zeal, as we search for God's will, we come to a deeper communion with Christ and the people we meet and serve.

Today women disciples contribute a lot to alleviate suffering in the world. The present world of change requires the disciple's touch. A woman disciple, in her participation in society, avoids conformity with the prevailing negative trends e.g. dishonesty, corruption, etc. In politics, a gifted woman disciple with the power of leadership can raise her voice in situations in which the level of children, woman and men are threatened.

2.3.2 Discipleship Requires a Listening Heart

Discipleship implies listening and learning at the school of Jesus. According to the Canossian discipleship style of life, we listen and learn in prayer in order to draw inspiration and strength from the Father. "Through mental prayer of the heart, we receive from the Holy Spirit, the grace to be open to the word of God, to contemplate, in a special way, the mystery of Christ crucified, to penetrate his unfathomable riches, to be enkindled to love Him more and make Him loved."⁴³

Every disciple of Jesus is expected to proclaim the risen Lord. We are not following the dead Jesus but the one who died and was risen. Canossians, just as the women disciples who proclaimed the Easter story and witnessed Jesus' resurrection, follow Jesus crucified and risen. We, too, are called always to be signs of Jesus among our brothers and sisters, both those who know him and those who do not know him. Living our life faithfully, we become the living witnesses and signs of the resurrection of Our Lord.

The missionary spirit of the Canossian women derives from the example of the women of the New Testament. Canossian women dedicate themselves to the mission of Jesus in the Church today. They are to be the examples of courageous women of our time.

⁴² A Grogan and N. Tasca, The Rule of the Congregation of the Daughters of Charity, (Roma: Topographia S.G.S 1981), p 36.

⁴³ *Ibid.* . . p.33

2.3.3 Today's Religious as Disciples of Jesus

It is clear that all the baptised are called to discipleship, and that religious also are called to the "following of Jesus" primarily through their baptism. Discipleship is not a prerogative of religious, but a call to all the baptised. "As such, vowed religious publicly commit themselves to search for the truth without ceasing, to struggle for justice and right for those who are oppressed, to be honest with themselves and to share the burden of those who suffer, as well as comfort those who mourn."⁴⁴ We are called to share the life of a genuine Christian community, which in turn gives us genuine Christian life.

The disciples were able to do what Jesus did because they were with him (Mk 3:14). Our consecrated life is a privileged means of evangelisation. This will happen if we are courageous enough to accept the challenge of the call to serve the church and the people entrusted to us in the world. Always, there will be conflicts and misunderstandings between who we are called to be and what we are doing.

We must take courage to take risks and learn to accept them as facts of life, knowing that Jesus is in our midst forever. To be disciples is to accept challenges of everyday.⁴⁵

Religious are called to be courageous disciples who love and lead the people of God to Jesus. They are called to die for their faith by imitating Jesus and following the ways of the disciples of Jesus who were faithful to him till the end of their lives. As African religious, we are called to look at the example of the Ugandan martyrs. We are called to find Jesus in ordinary things of every life day and not only in particular or special times. We are called to change of heart, that is, conversion.

We are called to be with Jesus always like the first disciples, to be aware of his presence, in prayer and this is essential in our lives. To serve and recognise Jesus in the ignorant, the poor, marginalised and oppressed is a part of our mission. We are called to encounter him and recognise him in the Eucharist, to experience his love and to go out to preach about him to those who do not know him. Christ is not loved because he is not known by all people. We are called to make him known by sharing his love and kindness to others. All this is done for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

⁴⁴ Francis Moloney J., *Op. Cit.*, p.133.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 163

Conclusion

In the second chapter we have seen in general the call of the disciples, the cost of discipleship, mission and women's discipleship in the New Testament, their faith, their disposition of prayer, their zeal for ministry and in particular, preaching and evangelising.

In chapter three we are going to see "signs of the time" based on the African countries where the Canossian Sisters are working. They are trying to avail themselves in order to answer the needs of many people of today. The reflection will mostly be based on the life of the Kenyan people.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Within this complexity of worldwide transformation, we see also a painful and worrying “sign of the times” emerging with clarity in Africa: the abandonment of a whole continent to its tragic future. To help the Disciples of Christ in their missionary efforts in Africa, chapter three gives us the brief summary of some of these critical events that affect African people today.

3.1 SOME SOCIO-POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENTS IN A DEMOCRATIC AFRICA

Generally, anyone arriving in Africa for the first time feels a combination of joy and confusion. Joy because of the many human qualities of the African communities, e.g., their solidarity and hospitality. There are other strengths and achievements, which Africans can rightly be proud of since the attainments of their political freedom in many countries. There are successes in the fields of education, health, agriculture, transport, industrialisation, technology, communication (mass media), and urbanisation. All these developments occupy a more important and meaningful place than they ever did in the past.

In many countries, people can be proud of good records of human rights and freedom, national unity and stability, and a good role in international policies. These successes have come by the efforts of the African people through hard work in offices, homes, fields, factories, classrooms, and hospitals.

While acknowledging the many successes in some African countries, we can not turn a blind eye to the realities of grave social, economic and moral crises that threaten our life in Africa today. African people are beset with almost insurmountable problems too well known to warrant full enumeration here.

3.2 REALITIES THAT THREATEN THE LIVES OF AFRICAN PEOPLE TODAY

3.2.1 Political Upheavals

It is very difficult to write or talk about Africa, which is more often than not, “overwhelmed” by violent take-overs, and other dark forces responsible for this malfunctioning continent. The record of our African governments, as everyone is well aware, has not been impressive.

It is almost four decades now after independence from colonialism, and few of them can honestly boast of the maturity of their democratic institutions, such as the sovereignty of parliament, independence of judiciary, and freedom of the media. We see man made hostilities that have created a refugee situation whereby Africa has more than half of the world's homeless and the crippling poverty that grips Africa today is frightening.

In most of our countries, we Africans are living in historical and political struggles of enormous proportions. Democracy is still a dream for most of the countries of the continent. The acceptance of multiparty system of governance remains theoretical for many political officials because they are reluctant to grant licences for political rallies of the opposition, especially outside their political zones. "Top political leaders have not rejected democracy, at least not explicitly; yet they resort at times to very undemocratic procedures of government."⁴⁶

Many of us were very happy when we attained political independence from the colonial masters. However, little did we know and realise that the leadership of African countries would, in the main, soon turn out to be corrupt, power drunk, oppressive and discriminating. The words, "bribery and corruption," "nepotism" and "intimidation" have become a common phenomenon. The Malawian Catholic Bishops witnessed this in the Pastoral Letter of 1992 as they said:

Bribery is growing in political, economic and social life. This practice is growing among those with power who keep on favouring their relatives and friends by giving them jobs while the rest of the citizens go hungry and with no future. This causes violence, and harm to the spirit of our people.⁴⁷

We are aware of the television news bulletins which tend to carry pictures of dead corpses littering streets, and soldiers brandishing an assortment of deadly weapons of war, like the grizzly pictures seen during the Rwandan, Liberian and Burundian conflicts. "The horrors of refugee camps have become too common on European and North American television screens since the conflict between Hutus and Tutsis began in Rwanda."⁴⁸ All this ethnic strife and military rule produce the endless lines of pathetic refugees. Political instability and apparent non-existent viable alternatives seem to be the main cause for such a situation.

⁴⁶ Nichlas, Segeja and Matthew, Ojara, *The Prophetic Role of the Church in the AMECEA Countries: Pastoral Challenges and responses*, in *New Trends for Empowerment of the People*, (Nairobi: Kolbe Press, 1997), p.53.

⁴⁷ Pastoral letter of Bishops of Malawi (ECM) "Living our faith" as found in Trevor Cullen's book, *Malawi: A turning point* (Urban: The Pentland Press, 1994) p 121.

⁴⁸ Mario, Aguilar I., "*Social and Religious Outcasts*," (Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, Spearhead, Nos. 138-139, 1995), p 11.

Thus, political violence characterises the life situation of African people. Civil wars, tribal rivalry, coups and counter coups are life in Africa. These lead to tension instability, assassinations and refugee problems. Professor Wole Soyinka said: "Wars of greed, naked lust for power and refusal by leaders to understand that they are there for service are tearing the continent apart...the continent is undergoing brutal and senseless wars which are not prompted by any ideology."⁴⁹

The love for life is giving way gradually to what Pope John Paul II calls "Culture of Death." Human life appears not to be protected and respected anymore as evidenced by the incredible massacre of human beings in 1994 in Rwanda and also the killings in Algeria, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi, the land clashes in Kenya in 1992, the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to name a few instances that have become daily news. Most recently, on 15 January 2001, President Laurent Kabila was assassinated in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Indeed, political violence and its accompanying tension have shaken the life of many African people.

On 22 March 1992, the Catholic Bishops of Kenya issued a Pastoral letter, "A Call to Justice, Love and Reconciliation," in which they cited the political unrest faced by many Kenyans. The Bishops could no longer tolerate the violence which not only occurred in clash areas where thousands of Kenyans were displaced, dispossessed and several hundreds killed, but also the violent incidents that were prevalent during rallies in towns and cities of the country. The Bishops wrote:

Since October 1991, we have experienced the existence of "intertribal conflicts," especially concentrated where Nyanza and Western Province border with Rift Valley Province. Initially those in authority did not treat the situation with the seriousness it deserved. This resulted in an escalation of violence...Eye-witness accounts strongly suggests that the arsonists and bandits are well-trained and are transported to the scenes of crime from outside the area, so that they cannot be identified by local people.⁵⁰

We were told that the 1991 clashes resulted in at least 1,500 deaths and more than 300,000 internally displaced victims. It was out of concern that in 1992, the Bishops issued the letter to the Christians on the third Sunday of Lent, calling all the faithful and people of good will to reconciliation.

⁴⁹ Wole Soyinka, *Soyinka blames leaders*, Kenya's Daily Nation, No. 12571, (February 8, 2001).

⁵⁰ Rodrigo, Mejia, (ed), The Conscience of Society, (Limuru: Kolbe Press, 1995), p. 134.

However, a year later, there were threats, violence and eviction at Enoosupukia. The unpublished narrative account on the displacement of Kenyans from Enoosupukia and Maela had this to say:

The October, 1993, clashes in Enoosupukia and subsequent displacement of over 10,000 in Maela mirror, in large measure, the broader issues of the clashes... political struggle, state-sponsored violence and the government's continuing disregard of human rights and international conventions regarding the treatment of displaced people. Closely associated with these issues are corruption, lack of accountability, and transparency, and the willingness of many leaders to put their interests and ambitions before the welfare of their constituents and country.⁵¹

Nine years later, the insecurity and brutal acts continue to escalate in the country. For instance, the police attacked the supporters of Muungano wa Mageuzi as they planned to hold rallies in Kisii and Kisumu towns on 9-10 February 2001. Reacting to the brutality of the police, James Orenge, one of the leaders of the movement exclaimed, that the police had used excessive force on Muungano wa Mageuzi (Movement of Change) supporters and he condemned the acts of violence in these terms, "police brutality on innocent Kenyans" at both Kisii and Kisumu... People were beaten up in Kisumu, Kisii, private business premises were invaded... the Government has really gone bananas."⁵²

Reacting on the same issue, Mr. Shadrack A. Bulimo, of Mageuzi's Co-ordinating Office in London said, "The violence against Mageuzi supporters is an unforgivable sin committed by a failed leader pursuing failed policies and whose vision of the Kenya we want is impaired by greed and self-aggrandisement."⁵³

The acts of violence in Kenya are in parallel with the increasing number of refugees who are fleeing from a political crisis in the exotic Spice Islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. Reports said that the number of refugees, who had fled to Kenya by 12 February 2001, had risen to 500, and the human tide seemed to continue flocking to the neighbouring country. They are avoiding the harsh reprisals by the dreaded Field Force Unit, which the locals referred to as "Fanya Fujo Uone."

⁵¹ Deception, Dispersal and Abandonment: A Narrative Account on the Displacement of Kenyans from Enoosupukia and Maela based upon Witness, Church/NGO and Media Accounts, reported by The National Council of NGOs, (Nairobi, January, 1995), p. 6.

⁵² Reported in Daily Nation, No. 12575, (February 12, 2001), p. 2.

⁵³ Ibid . p.2

According to the ruling government, the people killed in these skirmishes have reached 50. However, the refugees reported that the number of dead people could be more than 200 with macabre details of corpses rotting in the streets of Zanzibar and Pemba.⁵⁴

Thus, people are always unsettled, insecure, unstable on their own land. "The nations of Africa are facing many challenges in the political arena. People are undergoing deep pain and unbearable suffering as the result of our political situations. Can we remain indifferent? Is there something we can do?"⁵⁵ All these are signs, which demonstrate that Africans are politically still crying for liberation, for peace, security, freedom, and stability. The political crisis in Kenya is only one country among the many African countries devastated by tribalism, nepotism, insecurity and violence.

3.2.2 Socio-economic and moral Crisis

Apart from global and environmental problems, i.e., the climatic phenomenon "El Nino," drought with its consequent famine, disturbed social conditions, upset economic patterns, instability and manipulation of world finances, ethnic, regional, and tribal conflicts consume energies of most African people. People have no security in owning property or businesses outside their own ethnic areas. This gives a negative impact on the economic growth in most African governments. Here are some of the examples of the socio-economic problems facing some of the African governments today.

3.2.2.1 Corruption

Corruption involves the perversion of the normal working and outcomes of institutions and process of the community. To say that corruption is endemic in all human communities, including our African societies, is no longer a matter for debate. We do know that many governments have been toppled in Africa on charges of corruption, while equally numerous public enquiries have been carried out into allegations of corruption.

The end of colonisation only gave way to serious abuses of human rights in Africa. Economic injustices and heavy debt burden in the continent continue to be forces of oppression. What we see in Africa today is the unequal distribution of goods and this crippling wound stifles the development of Africa.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3

⁵⁵ Rev. Festus Rucigitaramo: "Building good governance: Everybody's task" *In the mediator fostering Godly peace in Africa*: The Role of the church in politics, Issue No.2,(Nairobi, 2000), p.1.

Colonial bureaucrats have been replaced by corrupt African officials, who feast on their own nations' resources, while common people stand in line to secure meagre basic commodities at inflationary prices. It is not a secret that most African leaders stash money away in their personal foreign accounts. The Representatives of the Zambian Christians had this to say over corruption:

The ordinary person, meanwhile, sees the rich getting richer. The socio-economic structure of our society is such that there is an acute disparity in our levels of income and opportunities. Over a period of twenty years, many of the rich have attained a standard of living that does not correspond with just, human and Christian development.⁵⁶

In this economic arena, there is political corruption, bribery and nepotism, which blindfold our political leaders and rich people, resulting in the loss of any sense of the common good and their public responsibility. For instance, Maliyamkono describes how corruption is serious in Tanzania, "Corruption is a disease more contagious than tuberculosis, killing more people than malaria and Ebola, and is more dangerous and destructive than cancer. It is as pervasive as an epidemic and as impossible to cure as AIDS."⁵⁷

It is common knowledge that the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have withheld aid to Kenya citing corruption and lack of accountability and transparency. There has been the embezzlement of public funds. There are so many malpractices in connection with public funds, for instance, the practice of securing employment on the basis of whom one knows rather than on the basis of one's ability to perform a job. There is waste of public funds on useless projects, and misplaced priorities. In Kenya, there is a deliberate ambiguity and uncertainty about land ownership, which is combined with bribery. This leads to displacement of people from their homes and businesses.

Often times we hear of the acquisition of unsecured loans by well placed people while the poor go home empty handed. It is nearly impossible to win a lawsuit, whether in public or private without offering "chai" bribery. The Catholic Bishops issued a Pastoral Letter in 1999 which was entitled "For the Truth Shall Set You Free," and in it the Bishops summarised the economic problems facing Kenya today:

Looking at the current state of the country, at a time when HIV/AIDS is killing hundreds of people daily, poverty, insecurity, corruption, hunger, collapsed infrastructure, downright theft of public land, property and funds, and lack of genuine political will, the situation can easily lead to civil strife which nobody would like to see happening. ...

⁵⁶ Christian Liberation Justice and Development, *Op Cit.*, p. 6.

⁵⁷ T.L., Maliyamkono, *The Race for Presidency*, (Dar es Salaam: Tema Publishers Company Ltd, 1995), p 8.

They therefore should not take the silence of Kenyans as a sign of contentment or defeat. The Kenyans of today are only too aware of the above issues compared to the Kenyans of yesteryears.⁵⁸

At the African Synod that took place in Rome in 1994, the Synod Fathers acknowledged that the African governments did not establish the appropriate policies that needed to increase economic growth. That was why Pope John Paul II in his exhortation said:

Africa's economic problems are compounded by the dishonesty of corrupt government leaders who, in connivance with domestic or foreign private interests, divert national resources for their own profit and transfer public funds to private accounts in foreign banks. This is plain theft, whatever the legal camouflage may be.⁵⁹

Thus, corruption has pervaded all levels of our African societies. Whatever the case, corruption remains and efforts to curb it have had a very slow start. It has become a part of life in Africa, encouraged by the belief that when one is in office that is the time to profit. The consequences of corruption are numerous: public health services have collapsed, school systems have continued to worsen, the gap between rich and poor is growing in towns and villages, the civil service lacks discipline and the youth are pessimistic about their future, and the AIDS infection continues unabated.

3.2.2.2 Poverty

In the ordinary sense, we may understand poverty as lack of means of subsistence, for instance, food, shelter and clothing. Sigismund defined it in this way "poverty also connotes helplessness, when faced with the demands of life: ignorance, weakness, bondage, isolation, and defencelessness against injustice".⁶⁰ This connotation of poverty is very general because it may stand for material as well as spiritual.

Poverty in Kenya as well as in other African countries, is a social fact and strictly speaking, it refers to "material poverty" which actually means people lack the bare necessities of life and means to meet them. Most people in Kenya are destitute and do not have food, leave alone no good shelter and clothing. The Kenyan Bishops expressed this point:

We are aware the existing and widening gap between the rich and the poor need everybody's attention. Great contrasts co-exist in Kenya today, and the real problem of tribalism is not only based on ethnic origins, but also the basis of the two "opposed

⁵⁸ For the Truth Shall Set You Free, Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops of Kenya, (29 September, 1999).

⁵⁹ Pope John Paul II, The consecrated Life: A Simplified Text, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata (Limuru: Kolbe Press, 1996) No. 113.

⁶⁰ D. Karl Rahner, Encyclopedia of Theology, Concise Sacramentum Mundi, (Seabury 1975), p.65.

economic tribes," namely, the tribe of the rich, who have amassed their fortune through dubious means, and the tribe of the poor.⁶¹

The definition of poverty and its causes vary by gender, age, cultural, social and economic context. In Kenya, people in both rural and urban areas associate poverty with lack of material assets and with food insecurity. "Destitution is inherent to slum since rural poverty is inevitably shifted to the city. Most rural migrants to the city are landless and jobless. They come to the city because they are haunted by hunger, lack of funds and shelter. But in their view, poverty in the city is more bearable than in the rural areas. The anger of starving in the city is less because there are better chances of surviving".⁶²

Again in 1997, the National Development Plan brought this fact of the growing poverty in Kenya into the light as it stated:

Compared to the bright picture of Kenya's economic potential, the actual state of economy is discouraging in the extreme. We are faced with widespread poverty and increasing disparity of income and wealth. Some 60% of the population live below the poverty line, and about 22% of the country's labour force are unemployed.⁶³

Many African people are living in inactive rural areas and shanty towns. Large numbers of city dwellers remain unemployed and if they work, they are underpaid. They are badly fed, poorly housed, illiterate and lacking minimum educational, medical and other health requirements. Due to this problem, most people are unable to live a moral, dignified and responsible life. Increasing numbers of children suffer from malnutrition and many of them are unable to attend school. The minimum of ordinary workers remains unjustly very low although there is always an increase of prices in basic commodities such as sugar, cooking oil, soap and other essential items. Thus, the rich get richer and the poor become poorer.

Absolute poverty, which most Africans experience, is measured not only by low income but also by malnutrition, poor health, clothing, shelter, and lack of education. Thus absolute poverty is reflected in low living standards of people. Mostly, African people use cereals and other starchy foodstuffs in the absence of nutritional foods, such as meat, fish, and dairy products. Commenting on the poverty situation in Malawi based on the report of the World Bank Msusa wrote:

⁶¹ Pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops of Kenya: On the Present Situation in our Country, Nairobi: St. Paul Press, 1990), p. 9.

⁶² Daniel Moschetti, Urban Ministry in Africa: Need for New Model, (Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publication, Spearhead, Nos. 145-147, 1997), p. 19.

⁶³ National Development Plan 1991-2001, (Nairobi: Government Printers, 1997).

The 1995 World Bank analysis of poverty in Malawi showed that poverty was characterised by severe deprivation of basic needs and limited access to social services. The basic needs that the majority of Malawians lack are in terms of food, water, health, shelter, education and serious lack of means and opportunities to fulfil these basic needs... The poor are those who are unable to meet minimum nutritional requirements and essential non-food requirements equivalent to US \$40 per capita/per annum.⁶⁴

Thus, Africa's most ruthless killer and the greatest cause of suffering is the extreme poverty. Poverty is the main reason why babies in Africa are not vaccinated, clinic and sanitation are not provided, curative drugs and other treatments are unavailable, and why mothers die in childbirth. Poverty conspires with the most painful diseases to bring a wretched existence to all African people who suffer from it.

3.2.2.3 *The Youth and Street Children*

The understanding of the phenomenon of street children requires a clear idea of who these children are. Undugu defines a street child as any child who is out of school and lacks basic needs such as shelter, food, clothing, health, security and love. These children are deprived of protection that is normally offered by the parents, or guardians. This presents a serious human problem because, in the long run, such children do not grow up well physically, morally, socially and psychologically. Many of the street children are affected by diseases and are vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous individuals in matters of sex and labour.⁶⁵

In Africa, where an estimate of 70% of the population lives below the poverty line, the specter of street children is an increasing one. In cities and towns, this percentage may be even higher due to age-group imbalance among migrants. Experience tells us that the youth and children in Africa are fast losing sense of identity and purpose. Young people are vulnerable to radical changes taking place in the continent. They experience a high degree of frustration in the search for employment. This basic insecurity encourages immorality and self-destructive behaviour.

In the modern African social setting, the traditional structures of the extended family are declining and no longer provide a safeguard for young urban migrants. Since they are socially deprived, there are prone to drug abuse. Factors that lead to this drug involvement can be poor parenting, curiosity among the youth, and the lucrative nature of drug trafficking.

⁶⁴ Thomas Msusa, unpublished thesis on *The Survey and Evaluation of Catholic Print Media as the Means of Pastoral Communication in Malawi*, (Nairobi: Catholic University of Eastern Africa, May, 1998), p.20.

⁶⁵ Arnold Grol, Chair person, *Survival Undugu Society*, (Nairobi, 1993), p. 6.

We see high levels of violence among the youth, which can be influenced by action movies and television. In Africa, young people are also recruited by politicians as members of what are virtually private armies. We can give examples of young people being abducted in the northern part of Uganda to join the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) as the New People reports:

Thousands of Ugandan children and young girls are continually being abducted by the rebel movement the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and forced through the most brutal methods imaginable to become child soldiers and sexual slaves. Their story, told with their own words, speaks of a brutal end to their normal lives.⁶⁶

It was reported that almost 90% of the LRA force were made of abducted children. In one of the Kenyan daily newspapers, the March 19, Sunday Standard, reported on the front page about the Kenyan street boys joining war in Congo. The journalists wrote:

An unknown number of Kenyan street boys have been lured into Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and into the ranks of rebels fighting to topple President Laurent Kabila... The boys are offered money and are promised well-paying jobs and good living conditions in neighbouring Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania and in fact, sometimes they are even told that they will be sent to France.⁶⁷

Thus, the major needs of the African youth can be identified as employment, sense of belonging, higher levels of community participation and education. The youth suffer from insecurity because they are marginalised in decision making, have no authority, no powers. They are simply left in the periphery. Worse still the system of education that African youth have inherited does not prepare them for life but only for employment. While seeking for greener pastures in urban centres, the youth end up being frustrated because they fail to fulfil their potentialities. Judith Mbula Bahemuka summarises it well:

A combination of 'runaway parental aspirations,' irrelevant education, and poorly managed economies make the youth very vulnerable. Their sufferings, frustrations, fear, and anxiety may partly explain why they sometimes engage in antisocial activities.⁶⁸

To sum it all, the African youth have so many needs which range from food, clothing, shelter, security, education, appreciation, love, concern, and employment. At the same time they need to socialise in leisure activities, communication and consideration in communitarian activities.

⁶⁶ Ida Tomasi, *Uganda End of Innocence*, art. In New People Magazine, (Nairobi: Comboni Missionaries, March-April 1998), p. 4.

⁶⁷ Kenyan Street Boys Join War in Congo, in Sunday Standard, no. 1053 (Sunday, March 19, 2000).

⁶⁸ Judith Mbula Bahemuka, *What Hope does the Church offer the Young People of Africa?* in The Gospel as Good News for African Cultures, (Nairobi: CUEA Publications, 1999), p.111.

Estimates of Nairobi street children run as high as 130,000. As stated above, these are the children who cannot meet their basic needs. Children of this kind are forced to put themselves in situations like drug abuse, robbery and sexual behaviour. They roam here and there searching for food in the street or move to the pathways to shelter themselves. They live a miserable life that cannot be imagined as a condition in which a human being lives. This is a very serious problem in Kenya.

Unlike before, when people were caring for each other and the child of one member was regarded as a child for the whole community, today that is no longer the case. We have become too individualistic and selfish. Street children are undergoing many difficulties to the extent that one can read these difficulties in their faces. In our societies, no one seems interested in them. We find them lying in dirty places, too dirty to look at and we turn away.

3.2.3 AIDS Pandemic

Looking at the situation of Africa, and especially in the slums, there are no hospitals, but only small clinics that are very far. Yet in slums, we have many diseases and specially AIDS. Over the radio, TV, Internet, Newspapers and magazines each day, we are informed about people who are dying of AIDS. According to Dr. Munlolenle Kameng:

There was in Africa in 1992, 4 million HIV infected women. 1million children will die within two years, 3 million or more will become orphans in a few years. Since there are as many men and women who are contaminated, we can convince ourselves that in 1992, there were about 4 million HIV infected men, 9 million infected persons all together.⁶⁹

In Kenya, the number of HIV infected people is increasing rapidly. In the Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops of Kenya, we read the figures of the report made by the Ministry of Health:

The Ministry of Health in its strategic plan for 1999-2004 states that since the beginning of this epidemic in 1984 a projected 760,000 of our brothers and sisters had developed AIDS and that most of these have since died. The ministry further informs us that this year alone 200,000 people are projected to die of AIDS – that is 500 people daily. The total now infected is estimated at 2,000,000 but may be more due to underreporting. ... AIDS will also have a great impact on the population growth which may stagnate and even reverse if the 8 million Kenyans projected to die of AIDS by 2002 [sic] do in fact die.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Bernard. A. Joinet, *The challenge of AIDS in East Africa*, (Tanzania, Dar-es-Salaam: Mindustree, 1990), p. 47.

⁷⁰ Catholic Bishops of Kenya, *The AIDS Pandemic and Its Impact on Our People*,:Pastoral Letter, (Nairobi: Paulines Training School, December 1999), pp. 3-4.

Aylward Shorter has this report to share with us about the alarming situation of the prevalence of AIDS in Kenya:

Adult HIV prevalence in Kenya as a whole is projected to increase from 7.5% in 1995 to 10% in 2000. If this happens, then the number of HIV-infected people in Kenya will be around two million. In the year 2000 the annual number of adult deaths in Kenya in the age range of 15 to 49 will be around 200,000. Five years later it will be around 300,000.⁷¹

Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa, saw the need to address and urge Tanzanians to change their sexual behaviour in order to curb the spread of AIDS in the year 2001.

He said:

How many of us have changed our behaviour, eschewing completely those ways of life that contribute to the spread of HIV? It is the New Year's message to the people to rethink their ways and behaviours, which can lead us into the disaster of death. The latest official figure from December 1999 showed that 8.850 people were suffering from fully blown out Aids in Tanzania. Another 1.75 million people, almost six percent of the country's population, were infected with the HIV virus, which causes the disease. It is estimated that 600,000 Tanzanian children have lost one or both parents to Aids by the end of 1999.⁷²

The World Bank's annual report in 2000 said that Africa's future would depend on its success in dealing with the HIV/AIDS. The pandemic is so great that the matter has to be looked at critically to determine its consequences on the continent, and especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The report says that out of the more than 33 million people infected with HIV/AIDS worldwide, 90 percent of them are from Sub-Saharan Africa alone.⁷³

3.2.4 Contemporary Critical Issues Affecting Women

In a continent characterised by many changes, revolutions and political upheavals, the African woman is indeed affected by these rapid changes and she is in a dilemma. How does she continue to contribute her best given the severe constraining we have in our present society? Our concern is on certain aspects that are affecting women in Africa today, namely: patterns of power and authority, taboos, customary laws, child and women abuse, sexual exploitation/sex tourism and single parenthood.

⁷¹ Aylward Shorter and Edwin Onyancha, The church and Aids in Africa: A Case Study: Nairobi City, (Nairobi: Kolbe Press, 1998), p. 20.

⁷² Benjamin Mkapa "Warns over Aids." In The Daily Nation, (Nairobi: Tuesday, January 2, 2001).

⁷³ Tom Nyamache "Why Aids Figures Are Shocking". In The Daily Nation, Nairobi Sunday, (December, 31, 2000).

In the social structures of African countries, we see the long-standing forms of discrimination, which are no longer considered private matters. Here are a few enumerations of the critical issues facing the African woman today.

3.2.4.1 *Power and Authority Struggle*

We know that authority gives one a chance to make decisions and to go ahead to implement them. In our societies, the power and authority are often in the hands of men. Even where women are the majority, a small number of men get top positions. Linda Semu and Lucy Chande Binauli wrote this in their research:

During colonial rule, European administrators viewed the position of women as being in the private sector. Independent African governments have assigned secondary importance to women's issues.... The result of both trends has been the political marginalisation of women, their invisibility at various levels. Generally, in Africa, politics is viewed as a male sphere in which women are unwelcome and ineffective. Potential female candidates are often harassed, deterring their activism.⁷⁴

The right to education and other family related services are still crucial for women. Civil, religious and ethnic strife, underdevelopment and economic reversals are a real obstacle to women's development. It is noted in Zambia that:

Women are in a specially difficult and insecure position as the burden of looking after their families become heavier and heavier. In particular, we note with anxiety the increasing number of single parents in our society. Thus, women who head households must bear the burden of working and providing for their families without easy access to jobs, to land and to credit.⁷⁵

Indeed, the African woman toils and struggles to win bread for the family. However, she is generally not respected or is not treated on equal terms with men.

In African traditional societies the concept of taboos were common, i.e., those things which were forbidden. The taboos ranged from not eating certain foods to what should not be eaten at certain times of the year. In many cases, these taboos were and are affecting or touching women more than men. In matters of freedom applied to customary law, a woman does not enjoy equal opportunities as a man. A young woman is denied the chance to marry the man of her choice because custom requires her to marry within the ethnic group.

⁷⁴ Linda Semu & Lucy Chande-Binauli, *Women's Status in Malawi: a Case for Gendered Development*, article in *Bwalo*, editor: Wycliffe Chilowa, (Zomba: Assemblies of God Literature Press, 1997), p.94.

⁷⁵ Christian Liberation Justice and development, by CCZ, EFZ, & ZEC, (Ndola: Mission Press, 1990), p.6.

Hence Pope John Paul II had no choice but to deplore and condemn, “the customs and practices that deprive women of their rights and the respect due to them wherever these are still found in Africa.”⁷⁶ Although these taboos may not hold water now, especially for the educated and urban dwellers, but still the concept of that which is forbidden can be linked to the modern job sectors. There are jobs that are believed to be more suitable for men than for women.

This is not the case in Africa where it is risky to raise children as a female single parent. The solitude and anguish of such a woman are not always understood. It is not only in the society that women are discriminated against, but even in the Church. For the most part, they become socially and religiously discriminated against. When a single woman has a baby, not only are there questions about her social status, but she also becomes suspect as a Christian and as a member of a particular community. It takes a while before members of the Christian community accept her.

We do not exaggerate when we say that in almost all aspects of the traditional and contemporary African culture, African women are portrayed as inferior to men and as objects to be manipulated. As early as their childhood, young girls are told to respect male figures (in authority) and thus when they become adults, they easily accept male domination.

In the media (radio, videocassette, films and TV) we see women portrayed as commercial objects to be used and manipulated for various reasons. In commercial adverts on television, a woman appears sometimes with parts of her body uncovered for purposes of displaying the effect of the particular item being advertised.

3.2.4.2 Sexual Exploitation

When people talk about prostitution, it is unfortunate that at the background of it all, it is only women that come to mind, for men also are involved in prostitution. Prostitution is entirely heaped and blamed on women. In our cities, we see that women are not only used and underpaid, but also they are exposed to health problems, which interfere with their life.

Very often we see young girls being abused by what is known as “sugar-daddies”. Money and other material things lure the girls for sexual pleasures with young men.

⁷⁶Pope John Paul II, *Op. Cit.*, No. 121.

More often than not, we hear of girls being pregnant and abandoned. There are many foreigners who come to Kenya for various reasons and unfortunately, many of them are out for sex tourism with the local girls. Young women rush to seaport cities, like Mombasa and Dar es Salaam, to take advantage of the tourists who visit such historical and magnificent places. This is a sign of how rampant and inhuman this cheap sex is. Worse still, we hear that some of these girls are taken for sex with pets.

Reading through newspapers, we often hear of women and children subjected to abuse. There are stories of women being raped and children being stolen. Thus, traditionally and even in modern society, African women are regarded as inferior to males and harbour certain weaknesses by virtue of their sex.

3.2.4.3 The Rise of Single Mothers

While we are acknowledging that the rise of single mothers is due to personal choice, we can also attribute this phenomenon to other factors. In many cases rape, ignorance and sexual exploitation may lead to single parenthood. The consequences of single motherhood are numerous. Single mothers are looked down upon by the rest of the African societies as cheap, immoral and or prostitutes. There are financial constraints, and children lack a father figure in their lives.

In African cities, prostitution is on the rise these days. Normally, when young girls move to the urban centres in search of better opportunities, they end up becoming prostitutes. They may come to a town hoping to stay with a relative only to discover that the person may have suddenly migrated and cannot be traced. Eventually, they may drift to the slums where they live in subhuman conditions because they cannot afford to live in a better place this is a fact that creates dependency towards the city and its social and economic structures.

The girls then begin to work as prostitutes or are pressurised into doing so. Soon they become pregnant, give birth and are eventually driven to prostitution so as to feed their child/children. They are no longer looked upon as decent people because they are not in relationship with others. In order to earn a living in the big cities they become objects of pleasure for men who have resources, time and status.

In cities such as Nairobi, Kampala and Dar es Salaam, one has to be blind not to notice prostitutes sitting at tables in respectable hotels.

3.2.5 Mass Media

Public opinion in our age is shaped by the media and in a democratic society, the press, radio and television give a wide sector of the population the opportunity to exchange ideas. It is very essential and necessary for citizens to have the right of information. Yet, many African governments control the media. Journalists and broadcasters have a difficult job because they find it difficult to uncover the truth because of repressive structures. There are obstacles presented by the censorship and by those interested in concealing the truth.

The impact of television on viewers in Africa is alarming. Most of the pictures shown on some television channels teach people to feel rather than to think, and rob viewers of the power to make critical responses. Television is mainly preoccupied with violence, consumerism, sex and romanticising of gangland 'heroes' and outlaws. Most of the western television shows an anti-religious bias, which sometimes we see in the print media as well. We see that religious events are given a low priority unless they are scandals or conflicts, and mostly the Church is considered or depicted as conservative, authoritarian and anachronistic. Pope John Paul II said:

Echoing the preoccupation of the Synod Fathers I express my deep concern about the moral content of very many programmes with which the media flood the African Continent. In particular I warn against the pornography and violence that are inundating poor countries. In addition, the Synod rightly deplored "the very negative portrayal of the African in the media and called for its immediate cessation."⁷⁷

When faced with such modern African way of thinking and living, religious people are forced to take a stand, to have a more critical way of judging things. In this entire challenging context, it becomes a big problem when we contextualise the Gospel values, especially when liberty is not always well understood. The most challenging thing is when the African philosophy sees a human person as an end in herself, as the only creator and director of her history, leaving God on the side. What could be the mission of the religious, amidst these African philosophies?

CONCLUSION

As we have enumerated in this chapter, today's African situation is truly, a "challenging one", where undoubtedly we find many factors hostile to the Kingdom of God, such as misery, exploitation, oppression, injustice, discrimination and tribalism.

⁷⁷Ibid., no 124

At the same time, there are also “signs of the times” which offer great hope, such as, solidarity in the human family, a keener sense of liberty, of justice, of human dignity and equal rights. Some committed Christians, men and women of goodwill join in the struggle against inhuman forces. The last chapter, will give some guidelines in the way to respond to “the needs of our times.” It mainly stresses the importance of deepening the formation given to candidates entering the Congregation of the Canossian Sisters in Africa.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INTEGRAL HUMAN AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION ON DISCIPLESHIP

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Is religious life relevant in Africa today? As people of God, we are increasingly aware of the fact that religious life must be situated within a given context to which it must continually respond. This is our biggest challenge, our greatest task – to respond to the ‘signs of our times; to touch the lives of the people we are called to serve; to be relevant, credible and authentic to the society.

This last chapter emphasises the relevance of religious life in Africa, which can respond to the difficult ‘signs of our times’ facing the continent. The Canossian Sisters of the Daughters of Charity will be relevant to the African situation if they focus on the importance of a strong human and deep spiritual formation on discipleship. Thus they are called to focus on the integral human formation.

4.1. RELIGIOUS LIFE AS A FORM OF DISCIPLESHIP IN AFRICA

4.1.1 Becoming Women Disciples in Africa as a way to Love

In chapter two we spoke of Jesus calling his disciples (women and men) to be with him and later to be sent for a mission, to preach the Good News of salvation. An important theme of following Jesus (discipleship) found in all the New Testament writings is that of single-minded commitment to Jesus which is expressed in keeping his word and his commandments. All who keep his commandments abide in him (1 Jn 3:24) and his commandments are not burdensome (1 Jn 5:3). Jesus also gives a new commandment, which will be the characteristic sign of his disciples and will distinguish them as his own, “Now I give you a new commandment: love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:34-35). Thus, Jesus’ disciples are called to be ‘doers of the word and not just hearers’ (James 1:22).

The new commandment, which Jesus gives to his disciples, is appropriate for the advent of a new era. He tells his disciples that the love of God is the highest law. This love of God aims at liberating our neighbours and enabling them to fully develop their God-given gifts. The Love of God helps the neighbours become what God wishes them to be.

Time and again, Jesus points out the unique importance of Christian love. Later his apostles and the Church would sum his teaching on love.

Thus, the love of God is shown through love of neighbours and love of our neighbours depends on love of God. To love God is to do what God wishes at each moment of our lives. And what God wishes of us regarding our neighbour is that we render loving service. Sister Helen Mwalye says:

The world does not need our vows, to put it rather crudely, especially if our vows enslave us and make us unapproachable. The world needs our love and compassion. That is what people need. That is what Jesus is asking us to do. And this is where we can be able to touch others. If there is any vow to take, it is the vow to be compassionate and loving. If our three vows do not portray the love and compassion of God, we are wasting out time.... The aim of religious life is not just to promote the 'Church'...but to promote the kingdom of God... We religious are called to serve humanity, and to put before us this humanity the values of the kingdom. We are called to be salt to earth, and to be yeast in the whole world.⁷⁸

The Canossian women religious will fulfil their call to discipleship when they continue to radiate that human and divine love to the African people. Their true aim to carry out the mission of Christ is not just to promote the 'Church', but also to promote the values of the Kingdom of God. They are called to serve humanity and to put before this humanity the values of the kingdom of God.

4.1.2 The Prophetic Mission of the Daughters of Charity in Africa

The Old Testament prophets were men and women raised up by God and inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak to the people in the name of God. They were to remind the people of the great works of God; especially at those moments when people seemed to forget that He was their Creator and Liberator, when people had turned from Him to false and worthless idols. The Prophet Isaiah warns his people, "Good for nothings are all idol makers and useless are the works they prize so much. Their witnesses, blind and ignorant, will be put to shame. Who ever fashioned a god or cast an idol without hope of gain? See how its devotees will be ridiculed, for its craftsmen are but men. Let them all assemble, let them come to court; they will be both terrified and scorned" (Isaiah 44:9-11).

The prophets were called sometimes to denounce the corrupt lives of the people, and especially their neglect or oppression of the poor, the weak, the helpless, the orphans and the widows.

⁷⁸ Helen Mwalye SSF, "The Formation of a Religious Woman as an Agent of Evangelisation for the Church in AMECEA Countries", unpublished paper presented to the AMECEA Bishops in the Plenary Assembly, (Nairobi: 1999), p.1

They were sent to the leaders of the people because sometimes, instead of guiding and feeding the people, the leaders had become false shepherds, who looked only for their own interests. These prophets were sent as teachers to guide the people in the ways of God. They were sent to speak to the problems of particular people, place and time. Amos says:

Yahweh says this, 'Because Israel has sinned, not once but three times and even more, I will not relent. They sell the just for money and the needy for a pair of sandals; they tread on the head of the poor and trample them upon the dust of the earth, while they silence the right of the afflicted (Amos 1:6-7).

Jesus was anointed for his prophetic mission by the Holy Spirit and he made his prophetic mission clear right from the start of his ministry: "I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom... This is what I was sent to do" (Lk 4:43). He called all to submit to the reign and rule of the Kingdom of God. He called his disciples to the same prophetic mission as they too received and were anointed by the Holy Spirit. The whole community was prophetic and was called to proclaim the Kingdom of God to the ends of the earth and to the end of time.

Within this community of disciples is the Canossian Congregation. Our responsibility as prophets in the African situation is not limited to the enunciation of general biblical, social and moral principles. Neither is it to be unduly restricted to observations concerning individual Christians or church organisations. In view of close contact, which we continually maintain with the people, we believe that we have a significant contribution to make in our own way towards the development of the African society.

As mentioned in chapter three, Africa is increasingly divided in many ways – politically, ethnically, with growing divisions between the rich and poor, between the better and the less educated, between citizens, refugees and displaced people within the country, between young and old, women and men. Within the Church, there are also divisions between priests and bishops, sometimes between priests themselves in a single diocese. There is a division between religious and diocesan priests, between expatriate religious and local members, between international and local religious congregations, between clergy and laity.

The challenges cited above need prophets and there can be no prophetic voice among those who are not united. Through the call of Christ we received the inner freedom to overcome our divisions and commit ourselves in communion in order to build a more just society. If we, the Canossian Sisters are to fulfil our prophetic mission in Africa today, we ourselves are called first to conversion, to overcome our internal divisions and then to raise a credible voice calling for unity and harmony among the people.

It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustices and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action. It is too easy to throw back on others responsibility for injustices, if at the same time one does not realise how one shares in it personally, and how personal conversion is needed first.⁷⁹

4.2 HUMAN FORMATION FOR THE REALITIES OF AFRICA TODAY

The purpose of human and spiritual formation is to prepare people for the total consecration of themselves to God in the following of Christ at the service of the Church. Formation must include every aspect of Christian living, for instance human, cultural, spiritual, material preparation, psychological and theological. Pope John Paul II reminds us that the key to new evangelisation is 'formation.' He points out that "the whole people of God ... needs to be trained, motivated and empowered for evangelisation, each according to his or her specific role within the church."⁸⁰

We believe that the context to which we have referred above also gives some guidance on what kind of formation is needed for all agents of evangelisation in Africa today. There is a need for a strong human and a deep spiritual formation, in a word, "integral human formation." In this integral development of the whole person, candidates should undertake several facets such as, spiritual, physical, social, pastoral, intellectual and theological directions. These will be the foundation on which all pastoral formation must be based.

4.2.1 Forming Disciples Who Have a Personal Encounter with Jesus Christ

Personal conviction and a personal relationship with Jesus characterised the members of the early communities. They wanted to live a life of witness to what it meant to be a follower of Jesus and to continue to celebrate his continuing saving presence among them so that they should respond to it adequately. Together, they struggled to listen ever more faithfully to the implications that had brought them together into discipleship in the Christian community so as to incarnate it in lives of faith and dedicated service (Acts 2:42-47; 5:12-14). It was often a costly and painful struggle to give expression to their transforming experience of coming to faith in and following of Jesus as Messiah.

⁷⁹ Avril Reynolds & Anselm Prior, (Eds.), Discipleship in God's Family, (Natal: Interpak, 1996), p. 11.

⁸⁰ John Paul II, Op. Cit., no. 53.

People called to discipleship in the Canossian Sisters must go through the similar struggle if they are to follow Christ in the particular social, religious, cultural and political circumstances of their society.

They must undergo *a conversion* from their former way of life to the following of Jesus in *his* own way. Here, we rejoin the African Synod, which insists that the life of every Christian should be the result of “a transforming encounter with the living person of Christ...an overwhelming and exhilarating experience of Jesus Christ who calls each one to follow him in an adventure of faith.”⁸¹

Those undergoing formation today should allow themselves to have that transforming encounter with the living person of Christ who calls each one to follow him in an adventure of faith that alone makes true disciples. A call to discipleship should be a real conversion, a sustained and transforming encounter with Jesus Christ through the scriptures. Discipleship is an ongoing experience of Jesus Christ in a personal relationship that will lead a person being able to say in a deep personal way what Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6: 68).

People are not born disciples; they become disciples through an ongoing experience of Jesus Christ in the unfolding situations of their lives. Therefore, the first concern of the Canossian congregation in relation to those who wish to join it, is to know what personal experience of Jesus Christ each one has and how to foster and encourage an ongoing encounter with Jesus in the particular circumstances of each one’s life.

Most often, in our prayers and beliefs we utter orthodoxy and well-articulated formulas. This does not mean that we are Christian disciples, followers of Christ. No formula, no doctrine is the mystery of Jesus Christ. Doctrines and formulas are merely attempts at expressing the mystery. As is the situation in Africa today, too often, among Christians we substitute words for deeds. However, those who want to become disciples today must listen to Jesus, remain with him in prayer and allow his words to enter into their lives, change their way of thinking and acting, often painfully, admitting that these are ‘hard sayings’ like, those about forgiveness, or about loving our enemies. Thus, the way to discipleship requires a continuous conversion of a person on the way of Jesus Christ, who reminds us, “Repent and believe the good news” (Mk. 1: 15).

⁸¹Ibid., no. 57.

4.2.2 Forming Disciples through Human Experiences

The formation of disciples in our congregation should not be different from that of the hand-in-hand human and spiritual formation of Jesus' disciples. Jesus helped the disciples through their daily experiences, especially in the testing time of his passion, death and resurrection, to come to know themselves, their deepest desires as well as their strengths and weaknesses. Above all, the disciples of Christ experienced his love and trust, which they knew they did not deserve. So, the art of formation today will still be the accompaniment of young people in their daily experiences of themselves and others, in helping them to discover, understand and discern their various human reactions to situations in the light of the call, teaching and example of Jesus Christ.

The young religious must experience their natural reactions, discover who they are and what moves them at the deeper levels of their being when they come into contact with the Jesus of the gospels who calls them to be disciples. They should experience in their lives the understanding, compassion, forgiveness, love and trust of Jesus.

One of the central elements of formation today must be an ongoing experience of being with, listen to and observing Jesus in his earthly life, his passion, death and resurrection. In order to arrive at this stage, we need an integral human formation that prepares the good soil in which the scattered seed of the word may yield a hundredfold or sixtyfold.

4.2.3 Forming Disciples Who Work with and for the Poor

Right from the beginning of his mission, Jesus made his manifesto very clearly in Luke 4:16-19. It was the option for the poor and the disadvantaged. Pope John Paul II never ceases to remind us that in a world that is divided between the rich and the poor, oppressors and oppressed, the proclamation of the gospel calls the religious to a preferential option for the poor. He writes:

*The preferential option for the poor is a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole Tradition of the Church bears witness ... The motivating concern for the poor – who are the very meaning of the term 'the Lord's poor' – must be translated at all levels into concrete actions, until it decisively attains series of necessary reforms.*⁸²

⁸² *Ibid.* , no. 44.

Kenya, as well as Africa at large, is certainly a society that is divided between the rich and the poor, oppressor and the oppressed, and therefore, we as religious who have taken the vow of poverty, should commit ourselves to the cause of the poor.

Oftentimes, the option for the poor demands that we ask ourselves questions like: How do we live in our communities? How much contact do we have with the most needy? Do we know how the poor and the weak are affected by the daily mishaps of the Kenyan society today? How do the poor see us on their side? Indeed, option for the poor is not only a choice for the poor, but also a choice to be poor and to struggle with the poor.

One of the signs of the times which religious are responding to is solidarity, which is expressed among other things, in sharing what one has and what one is. This solidarity is mainly expressed and rooted in the “supernatural solidarity” of Jesus Christ and humankind. This solidarity manifests itself in having a spirit of poverty, and in being close to the poor. It is in this way that the Canossian Sisters will demonstrate their solidarity with the poor and be free to speak out in their defence. We believe that at the present time, solidarity with the poor and with all those who are in any kind of need, is seen not only in terms of sharing what one has, but also, more deeply, in terms of “being with”. A.C. Hughes gives us the following guidelines:

Christ’s call to become poor, then, is a call to simplicity of life. It involves a growing purity of heart and the developing art of letting one’s inner contemplative love of the Lord shine forth in a graceful and simple approach to personal life as in genuine love of God’s poor. This poverty of spirit opens the heart of obedience to God’s Word wherever it may be spoken.⁸³

It is often said that charity begins at home. Option for the poor needs to begin within the community. It is very clear that before option for the poor can be made manifest to the world, it must be shown inside the community, among its members, among different communities of a province or of a region and finally within the congregation. In a community, the religious sister has the duty of sharing what is best in herself. Therefore, to practice this virtue of solidarity or sharing, community meetings are indispensable. Community meetings bring out not only the sharing of what one has, but of what one is, and of the communion that exists between the members, collectively and individually, and thus manifests community sharing and solidarity.

⁸³ Hughes, A.C., *Preparing for Church Ministry: A Practical guide to Spiritual Formation*, (Denville:New Jersey 1979), p. 95.

Jesus himself said that by these acts of sharing and solidarity, which is a kind of love, everyone will know that we are his disciples, if our love for one another is genuine and concretely manifested in our communities (Jn 13:35). Therefore, solidarity goes from external sharing of what one has to the deeper, internal sharing of what one is, in order to arrive at sharing in the very life of God in prayer.

4.2.4 Forming Disciples Who Live the Charism and the Evangelical Counsels

Our Institute, the Canossian Daughters of Charity has its proper charism, that is, its own distinctive way of following Jesus. The young religious are called in their study, prayer and contemplation of Jesus in the gospels, to dwell especially on those aspects of his life and ministry that constitute the grace of our foundation, our special charismatic grace of vocation. The young are to be helped to struggle daily to live those special characteristics within the context of their lives. Each candidate needs to be helped to open herself to that grace, which will be in continuity with and have an identity with the grace of our foundress, St. Magdalene of Canossa.

Our charism qualifies and characterises discipleship and gives each religious a particular identity as a disciple of Jesus Christ in this place and at this time in Africa. That identity has to be assumed and experienced day by day, and formation must also provide special occasions and situations in which it can be experienced and lived strongly in a particular missionary context of each community.

Living the charism of the congregation the young religious will show their love for the Lord by living the evangelical counsels. They will be able to understand love that is at the core of the vow of chastity. This vow liberates one to love effectively, the poor, rich, male and female, old and young alike.

The vow of poverty focuses on the poor Christ who had nowhere to lay his head. The young religious will learn to abandon everything in order to cling to Christ's love. Surrounded by materialism and living in a consumer society, the religious challenges this lifestyle by her simple lifestyle and her going out to the poor, standing for them and liberating them from that poverty which robs them of their human dignity.

In living the vow of obedience, the young religious will learn to obey the Father's will made known to her by her legitimate authority. In the Bible, we learn that even Jesus Christ learned to obey through suffering. Therefore, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the individual engages with the community in dialogue, discerning the will of God together.

With the vow of obedience, there is no contradiction with personal freedom. The consecrated person loves God so much that she has an indwelling freedom based on faith to say yes to whatever God may ask of her.

4.2.5 Forming Disciples Who Work for Integral Human Development

Generally, a committed Christian life is possible only if we can form our people, our religious sisters, to make freely motivated Christian choices and decisions based on Christian values that have been personally and freely chosen as guiding principles of life. We know that the heart of evangelisation as stated in *Ecclesia in Africa* is, “integral human development- the development of every person and of the whole person, especially of the poorest and most neglected in the community.”⁸⁴

We all know that in the design of God, every human person is called upon to develop and fulfil herself / himself, for every life is a vocation. Everyone is granted a set of aptitudes and qualities for her to bring to fruition right away from birth. Their coming to maturity, which will be a result of education received from the environment and personal efforts, will allow each person to direct herself / himself, towards the destiny intended for her by God.

Tarcisio Agostoni writes:

Man and woman were not created to remain static but to develop into more capable, more sociable, more interactive beings, each one individually and also as couples. Their task is “to have dominion” over the other created beings and “to cultivate the garden.” Every person then, is by vocation committed to advancing the common good of all. The goods of creation belong to all mankind who must bring creation to fruition for the good of all mankind.⁸⁵

Thus, human development means bringing out the capabilities and potentialities inherent in every human person to a more advanced state. It is therefore progressive to advance from the less human to the more human. In a word, we must say that integral development is the humanisation of life and the liberation of the human person from all that impedes, subjugates and reduces a person to less than fully human conditions, with progress towards humanisation. In his encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, Pope Paul VI gives a very good description of human development by saying that development should not be limited to mere economic growth.

⁸⁴ John Paul II, *Op. Cit.* P. no. 68.

⁸⁵ Agostoni Tarcisio., *Every Citizen's Handbook*, Limuru: Kolbe Press (Paulines Publications, 1997), p.79.

In order to be authentic, it must be complete, integral; that is, it has to promote the good of every person and the whole person.⁸⁶ Therefore development is the promotion of the good of people, every person and the whole person. The Pope in his view of integral development focuses on the human being - poor men and women.

This will be achieved by a deep formation of the human person to freedom and maturity based on Christian principles.

For a candidate wishing to become a disciple of Jesus, it will be as *Ecclesia* in Africa rightly insists, by meeting with Jesus Christ who will totally transform her life, just as the lives of Jesus' disciples were changed. The idea of integral evangelisation takes on the same footing of integral human development as described above. It is the person's whole life, which needs to be changed by the Gospel of Jesus. The Good News must touch every aspect of human life, all the experiences of African people, namely poverty and injustices, tribalism, racism, the internal debts, unjust structures of society, AIDS and health care, refugees and displaced people, cultural values and illiteracy. Nothing should be foreign to evangelisation as it is stated in the document *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

But evangelisation would not be complete if it did not take account of unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both personal and social. That is why evangelisation involves an explicit message, adapted to different situations of life and constantly being realized, about the rights and duties of every human being, about family life without personal growth and development is hardly possible, about life in society, about international life, peace, justice and development - a message especially energetic today about liberation.⁸⁷

Integral formation to religious life is a call for a deeper conversion on the part of Christians so that they become disciples and followers of Jesus Christ, who commit themselves as he did, to be concerned for every aspect of life of people. Jesus showed a preferential care for those in most need: sinners, outcasts from society, the poor, the sick, the hungry, and the bereaved. Jesus liberated us from the consequences of sin.

Integral human formation, which is the context of our discussion, points to the "engagement" with life into all strata of humanity proposed by Jesus Christ, the dynamic founder of the church. Jesus Christ tells us that he came so that all may have life and have it in abundance, (Jn 10:10), and commanded his followers to "love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34).

⁸⁶Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, *Populorum Progressio*, (26 March 1967), no. 87.

⁸⁷Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975, no. 29

Logically, it follows that all evangelisers in the church must follow in his style, a style of evangelisation which 'brings about an inner transformation in people making them new creatures.'⁸⁸

The church's ministry today is the way that the entire Christian community carries on the work of Christ, in teaching, caring, healing, reconciling, comforting and transforming the social structures of the African situation.

Thus integral human development is part and parcel of evangelisation that "touches the very concrete situations of injustice to be combated and of justice to be restored. They include links of the eminently evangelical order, which is that of charity: how in fact can one proclaim the new commandment of love without promoting justice and peace the true, authentic advancement of man?"⁸⁹ Those who join religious life should be given an integral human formation so as to meet the challenges of life of today.

As Canossian disciples, we are called to seek and feel as Jesus feels and to let every action of ours be animated by his "spirit of charity, gentleness, meekness and humility, a spirit of zeal and fortitude, a most amiable, most generous and most patient spirit."⁹⁰

This kind of spirit will help us to witness his love and more in mission, becoming mothers and sisters to the whole of humankind.

Pope John Paul II insists on an integral formation, the formation that touches every aspect of life, without concentrating on spiritual aspects and neglecting the human aspects of cultural, theological and pastoral formation for mission. Formation is a process in our day-to-day life. We should renew our lives, led by the spirit and become new creatures. Pope John Paul II reminds us on the need for formation:

[formation] should involve the whole person. In every aspect of the personality, behaviour and intentions, it should be characterised by wholeness and committed attitude, which never ends. Initial formation to be whole, must provide a human, cultural and pastoral preparation which pays special attention to the harmonious integration of all its various aspects. Sufficient time should be given to it since it is a process of development which passes through every stage of personal maturity.⁹¹

In our African countries, formators are encouraged to help young people to deepen their relationship with the Lord.

⁸⁸ Okolo, C.B., The African Synod: Hope for the Continent's Liberation, (Eldoret, Top-Line Products Ltd., 1994), p. 66.

⁸⁹ Pope Paul VI, Op. Cit., no. 31.

⁹⁰ Rule of Life Opt., Ocit. P. 26.

⁹¹ Pope John Paul II, Op. Cit., no. 65.

There they will find their path and guided by the Holy Spirit who is the first formator. By contemplating the Greatest Love on the cross they will be able to cultivate daily virtues, which are necessary for a Canossian Sister and her life in mission.

It is important for a Canossian Sister to pray for that “spirit of faith, authenticity and serene relationships, respectful and honest inter-dependence, ability to forgive and accept forgiveness, joyful and responsibility for service, and the sense of belonging.”⁹²

4.2.6 Forming Disciples Who Work for the Promotion of Justice and Peace

In the past, human development was focused on initiating projects to generate more income for the poor, the orphans, women, and the marginalised of the society. It was thought of as an extension of health facilities to take health care to the poor, thus building hospitals, clinics and maternity homes. However, the message of the African Synod states clearly the mission of the Church is to transform humanity from within and make it new.⁹³ The church of Africa carries her mission of evangelisation through an option for the poor (justice and peace) and human transformation.

One of the signs of the times, often put forward by the Church with a view to the promotion of solidarity, is the commitment to justice and peace. This is also a commitment to the poor, since they, above all others, suffer from injustices and oppression. Father Joseph Njino writes:

A prophetic Church should not be silent in the face of ethnic strife or nepotism or corruption. A prophetic Church must say “NO” to corruption – the Church or individuals in it must say that to give or to receive TKK is a sin. To “eat” while in power or in a leadership position is wrong! It is a sin! To amass wealth in virtue of an office is a sin! It is not uncommon to hear one say “It has always been like this. I am only doing what has been done before!” Such is the dominant culture that the prophet has “to tear up and knock down, to destroy and to overthrow!”⁹⁴

The young religious in formation needs to be aware that work for justice is looked upon as an integral part of the proclamation of the good news, and therefore of the mission of the religious. Thus, working for justice is part and parcel of the pastoral activity of the young religious. This commitment is closely linked to the needs of the most disadvantaged classes in the society.

⁹² The plan of Formation of The Canossian Daughters of Charity, (Roma: S.G.D.B 1996), p.40.

⁹³ A Simplified Text, *The African Synod Comes Home*, (Limuru: Kolbe Press,1995), p. 15.

⁹⁴ Joseph Njino, “Prophetic Mission of the Church, Especially in Kenya,” In *Mutual Relations Workshop for Bishops, Clergy, Men and Women Religious of Kenya*, (Nairobi: St. Joseph Printing Press, 1995), p. 43.

People in formation need to know that justice itself is a fruit of the Spirit, and it cannot be promoted without proclaiming Jesus as revealed in the Gospels. Without justice, love cannot attain its full realisation, because it is an integral part of the spreading of the Good News. However, the promotion of justice must not be seen as an end in itself.

The ultimate aim of the promotion of justice is salvation. It is part of the total liberation, which has already started here below, but it must look forward to the complete liberation of the whole person.

Candidates to religious life need to learn that the promotion of justice and peace demands enthusiasm, for it is not an easy task. It requires a deep and objective, up-to-date knowledge of the situation. It can exact a price, even the price of one's life, and it must be transformed all through life into a continual solidarity with the poor.

It becomes clear then that for the religious, justice and peace, and their promotion and realisation, are not simply signs of the times, but are also an obligation of the mission of the religious, by virtue of her fidelity to the Gospel. Pope John Paul II emphasised this particular point when he wrote:

If the proclamation of justice and peace is an integral part of the task of evangelisation, it follows that the promotion of these values should also be a part of the pastoral programme of each Christian community. That is why I urge that all pastoral agents are to be adequately trained for this apostolate. The formation of clergy, religious and laity, imparted in the areas of their apostolate, should lay emphasis on the social teaching of the Church. Each person, according to his state of life, should be specially trained to know his rights and duties, the meaning and service of the common good, honest management of public goods, and the proper manner of participating in political life, in order to be able to act in a credible manner in the face of social justice.⁹⁵

To proclaim God is also to commit oneself to struggle against all that hurts human dignity. The glory of God demands that his image - man and woman - in our society of today should be respected, promoted, made free from all oppression and sin. The glory of God is the living human person.

We believe and share the views of the Apostolic Exhortation which holds that transformation, both individual and society, is not only a part of the church's mission of evangelisation but its core:

The church may be said to truly evangelise when, solely in virtue of that news which she proclaims, she seeks to convert both the individual conscience of men [and

⁹⁵ John Paul II *Op.*, *Cit* pg. 79 no. 107.

women] and their collective conscience, all activities in which they are engaged and finally, their lives and the whole environment which surrounds them.⁹⁶

It is precisely this kind of formation that is transformative of the lives of people and the environment in which they live, that is what the African context demands. There is a need of social transformation because:

The evil of corruption, bribery, embezzlement of public funds, tribalism, unproductive wasteful spending and other woes, which characterise the human condition in Africa, originate from the mismanagement of African politics by local politicians. Efficient leadership is lacking in African politics. Many leaders do not live up to the moral ideals expected of them.⁹⁷

If total human transformation is to take place in Africa, the religious must really engage in eliminating the root causes of the social evils, should eliminate the obstacles to the faith, which penetrate the heart and cultures of the people. They need to learn to promote the activities that will renew their spirit. Evangelisation has to transform people and their cultures to be more humane so that they will be committed to peace, justice and development. Consequently, the renewed society will destroy the unjust systems and structures that breed poverty, hunger, diseases, violence and oppression.

The young religious who are formed for Africa need constantly to reflect on the mind of a God who intervened on behalf of an oppressed people in Egypt (Exodus), whose adherents (believers) are called upon to emulate the life and work of Jesus Christ who came to liberate the oppressed (Lk. 4:18). Thus, the formators must be conscious that the main causes of poverty in Africa are social injustice. In 1971, representatives of the bishops of the world met in Rome and in their deliberations came up with this daring statement:

The mission of preaching the Gospel dictates at present time that we should dedicate ourselves to the liberation of people even in their present existence in this world. For unless the Christian message of love and justice shows its effectiveness through action in the cause of justice in the world, it will only with difficulty gain credibility with the people of our times.⁹⁸

Thus preaching the Gospel involves an action for justice as the bishops said once more:

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or in other

⁹⁶Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, In : Austin Flannery (ed), *Vatican II*, Vol. II, (Nagasandra: St. Paul Press Training School, 1982) pp. 718-719.

⁹⁷Okolo C.B., *Op. Cit.* p. 40.

⁹⁸*Synod of Bishops, "Justice in the World"*, ed. by David J. O'Brien, (New York: Image Books, 1970), p. 398

words, of the church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from oppressive situations.⁹⁹

Thus true integral development takes into consideration the humanisation of social structures which amount to conditions that are more human. Development, if genuine, must go beyond cosmetic changes in the society. In situations of structural injustice, development demands "transformation and innovation" that go deep into the life of the people. It is not just a matter of pouring on aid (gifts), not just a matter of eliminating hunger nor reducing poverty those would be cosmetic changes, as Pope Paul VI says:

It is a question of building a world where every man, no matter what his race, religion, or nationality can live a fully human life, freed from servitude imposed on him by other men or by natural forces over which he has not sufficient control; a world where freedom is an empty word and where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich.¹⁰⁰

Finally, we may say that our love for peace needs continually to promote justice for we cannot be at peace without justice. Therefore, to promote peace in Africa, we as Christians must be able to make other people conscious of the importance of justice. One of the ways to promote justice and peace is to talk about it not only to young religious but also through seminars and offering courses on justice awareness in dioceses, parishes and schools. It was Pope Paul VI who said, "Many people look to us not just for charitable handouts but for support in their legitimate struggle against all forms of injustice and oppression."¹⁰¹ He continued to say that the most effective witness the church could give to her concern for justice is in its own life - style. Her words should always match her actions.

4.2.7 Forming Disciples for Pastoral Work

Pastoral studies are not a loss of time. They are to have top priority in the formation programs because they are absolutely essential to the African Church with the growing complexities of its problems. Young religious need to be helped to have contacts with the society by having field work, frank discussion of problems and bold experiments which are necessary in Africa as anywhere else, if they really wish to make the Church relevant to the new Africa.

⁹⁹Ibid p.381.

¹⁰⁰Pope Paul VI, *On Development of Peoples*, (Washington D.C. United States Catholic Conference, 1967), p. 35.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 36.

Whether directly or indirectly, the work of religious is pastoral. In the congregation, some religious are involved in parish ministry (catechetics, preaching and liturgical worship), youth ministry, in schools, administration, social institutions, mass media institutions and in political fields.

There are a multiplicity of levels in which religious sisters can exercise their pastoral work. For the fruition of this self-giving service, preparation must fully start in their formation period. The pastoral preoccupation, which must characterise every feature of the candidates' training, also, requires that they be carefully instructed in all matters that affect human life. The work of religious people cannot be isolated from the social structures in Africa today. That is why the *Social Teaching of the Church* is one of the documents in which religious are supposed to acquire a firm foundation for their daily living of the Gospel of Christ.

Pastoral training aims at imbuing the candidate with art and skill to perform her duties conscientiously. It helps to develop her human and spiritual abilities so that she can serve God's people by following the example of Christ, the Good Shepherd. This will only be possible if a young religious accepts to be formed into a committed person who is ready to give herself for the service of God through others. This demands that she opens up to the reality of life in the spirit of the gospel and accepts that she is God's instrument.

A solid spiritual formation is the basis for effective pastoral work, which has to be extended even to non-believers as well. The main thrust in this area is to aim at change of attitudes, which the religious sister has to exemplify by showing love to all the people. A change of heart and attitude does not come easily and many pastoral workers have spent hours, days, and years preaching, teaching and engaging themselves at all levels of pastoral care without any visible change. Instead, we see that hatred; racism, competition, discrimination, corruption and tribalism prevail in our societies today.

There are other areas, which the religious 'as pastoral agents can serve in the society. They need to be well informed of the political and economic fields, the plight of women, the AIDS pandemic, life in the slums, the street children, the problems of the youth, the impact of mass media, the environment and globalisation issues. To effect a radical change in such situations, we need religious who themselves are spiritually and pastorally oriented, religious who believe with the help of prayer, that change is possible.

4.2.8 Forming Disciples who are open to Pluralism and to Inculturation

We know that in Africa, there are new challenges, which need much consideration of the actual situation of people and their needs. Our struggle to stay relevant must always spur us to attempt to understand our context: our current political, economic, social, moral, and cultural situations and plight of the poor. These situations demand and force us to think of new ways of responding.

The relevance of the Canossian Daughters of Charity in Africa today will be experienced if they radiate authentic African values. As they are called to discipleship in Africa, they together with the people, of God must continue to struggle in portraying before the society the “essential and authentic values of life” which everyone in Africa yearns for. We can take the idea of Professor George Hagan as he underlines this scope:

The good news is that, in comparison to gospel values, African values need to be enhanced and modernised through sympathetic and critical appraisal of their meaning and significance. So close, I believe, are the revealed truths and mysteries of our Catholic faith to the cardinal social values and religious revelation of our cultures, that Africans can affirm our commitment to the best African values by a genuine conversion to and an intimate living of our Catholic Christian faith. Convinced of this truth, the church now demands and considers it as a blessing that the African should be both fully Christian and fully African.¹⁰²

Aylward Shorter describes culture as that which “embraces the whole context of life, and is as relevant to modernity and modern problems, as it is to traditional beliefs and values...”¹⁰³ Thus culture is simply, a way of life of people. The African Synod made an attempt to draw attention to the African continent with its values. The exhortation of Pope John Paul II, “Ecclesia in Africa,” affirms that the African milieu has many positive elements, which, in the light of the gospel, can form the basis for an authentic African Christian life.

These good African values can be useful in the preaching of the Good News of Christ in Africa. The values such as the concept of the ideal African family, the African religiosity, common allegiance to spiritual powers, solidarity and togetherness, hospitality, a spirit of sharing and caring, love and affection especially for the sick, the disabled and the aged. With these good values, “Ecclesia in Africa” insists that the Good News, the word of Jesus Christ proclaimed to the nations, must take root in the life situation of the hearers of the word.

¹⁰² George Hagan P., *The Good News for Africa's Cultural Institutions and Traditions*, in *The Gospel as Good News for the African Cultures*, (Nairobi: CUEA Publications, 1999), p. 53.

¹⁰³ Aylward Shorter, *Christianity and the African Imagination: After the African Synod Resources for Inculturation*, (Nairobi: Pauline Publications, 1996), p. 16.

In this case, there is a call for inculturation, which is precisely the insertion of the Gospel message into cultures.

Inculturation is living the Christian faith in our own cultural perspective. The Gospel or the charism of our congregation will become better understood and lived by each member if African values are included. Inculturation in today's church is not a choice, but an obligation. It is because we as Africans ought to go back to our roots of understanding God and deepening our relationship with Him.

Inculturation has to be understood properly by all of us and we have to clarify our values that unite us as an international congregation. We have to love accept and take pride in our cultural values, that are ^{Consonant with the Gospel.} We feel that much of our formation programs in Africa are more idealistic than practical. If some of our cultural values had been inserted and implemented in the programs, our congregation would be very different today in Africa. Jesus used the values and culture of his society in order to make people of his time and our time understand the process of evangelisation.

Inculturation should be taken as one of the most important tools of evangelisation. There is no way we can use the spiritual ideal, which does not touch our lives. We might end up living a life without meaning. Pope John Paul II challenges the church in Africa with these words:

I put before you today a challenge. To reject a way of living which does not correspond to the best of your traditions, and your Christian faith. Today I urge you to look inside yourself. Look at the richness of your traditions, look to your faith, here you will find genuine freedom; here you will find Christ who will lead you to the truth.¹⁰⁴

The inculturation of the church in Africa should lead us to Christ and his Gospel and make us enter deeply in his love and become more his disciples and true witnesses of his love. In his address at the African Synod, Pope John Paul II said that faith should be rooted in our culture.

¹⁰⁴ John Paul II, The African Synod, Comes Home : The Church in Africa, (Limuru: Kolbe press, 1995), p.24, No. 48.

CONCLUSION

Our main concern in this chapter has been to focus on two central elements: (a) the relevance of the Canossian women religious in Africa and (b) the importance of human and spiritual formation for the laity and Canossian religious which will prepare them to deal successfully with the increasingly troubled African society. Consequently, religious life must be situated within a given context to which it must continually respond.

The religious in Africa are called to be as *Prophets* who challenge others; as *teachers* who bring light and truth; as *healers* who unite and heal divisions; as *servants* who walk humbly with others; and as *witnesses* who struggle to imitate Christ. In a word, we are called to be salt to the earth, and to be yeast in Africa. Our relevance, credibility and authenticity will shine forth if only we radiate essential and authentic human and divine values before the entire people of God in Africa.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The pre-Vatican model of the discipleship of religious life is no longer applicable today. Obedience without dialogue meant to obey no matter what was asked. Formation was limited to the external in which uniformity was stressed. The disciples of that time in religious life were thought to be better than their lay contemporaries. Things were not all perfect in the old way of forming religious. People grew in fear, putting on masks and were not open to dialogue. It was difficult to know themselves. Their formation was not holistic. It was concentrated on the external. The above pre - Vatican II formation style of formation watered down most of the values expected in formation.

These ways of formation are not supposed to be imitated today. Vatican II focuses more on people's individual needs rather than on what to be done. The community of disciples is to take up their cross and follow Jesus through charism, the apostolate, common projects and community prayer. Discipleship in formation is to share and take personal responsibility in the community and in the church as mature people. In this way, those in formation will grow holistically and get in touch with the self and the world around them.

Discipleship of the Canossian women is not a mere personal choice. It involves a call by Jesus and the response of the women disciples to follow Him. Discipleship goes beyond "following." It involves service, personal sacrifice and self-sanctification. The one who is following should carry her own cross and follow Him. Discipleship involves building a foundation and listening to Jesus daily (Luke 6:46-49). It also involves dying for others.... "Unless a grain of wheat falls and dies, it never bears fruit" (John 15:13).

Today our Canossian formation to discipleship is trying to form disciples according to the Canossian Charism of St. Magdalene of Canossa, to the service of the church. It is a big issue for the entire church and the entire institute. Our Pope John Paul II does not stop reminding us about the importance of formation, which must gear us towards true African discipleship, according to the signs of the time.

My expectation for formators is that they be both psychologically and spiritually mature, open for dialogue and ready to accept other cultures. With this balance they will be ready to evaluate the program with those in charge, have vision for the future and go with the signs of the time. They need to know the charism and the spirituality of the congregation so that they are able to discern God's will according to the prompting of the Spirit.

My expectation of those being formed is that they be open to learn, share their perceptions with those who accompany them and treasure what they learn.

Openness to the formators and readiness to accept and receive what they are taught will help them to abandon themselves to God and be able to listen to the inspirations of the Spirit. They will be happy in the call they have chosen to follow, and in turn, this will nourish their faith so as to be able to make a free and conscious decision in their vocation. The candidates need to be people of love, ready to accept hardships and be able to interact with people in their apostolate. It is love that will enable them to help people and love them, especially those who are suffering.

My hope for the people with whom we work in mission is that they may encounter Christ, grow spiritually by following the example of Christ who accepted death on the cross to save all people everywhere.

It is the call of the Second Vatican Council and the papal encyclicals that integral human formation embraces the cultural values of people. This is to enable both the formators of international congregations and the formandees to know where their formation is geared. As it is now, the formation guidelines seem to be universal but I feel that in this universality, diversity is needed. This will help the faith of the Canossian disciples to grow even stronger in their cultural perspectives.

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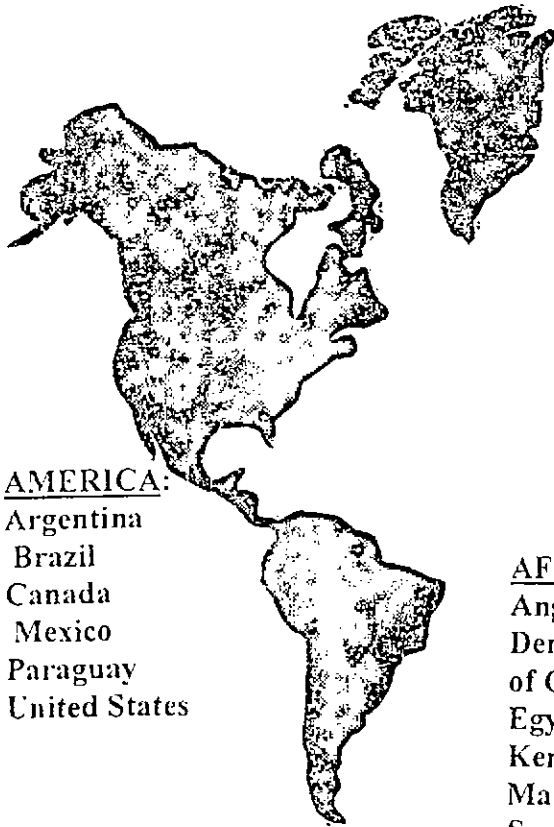
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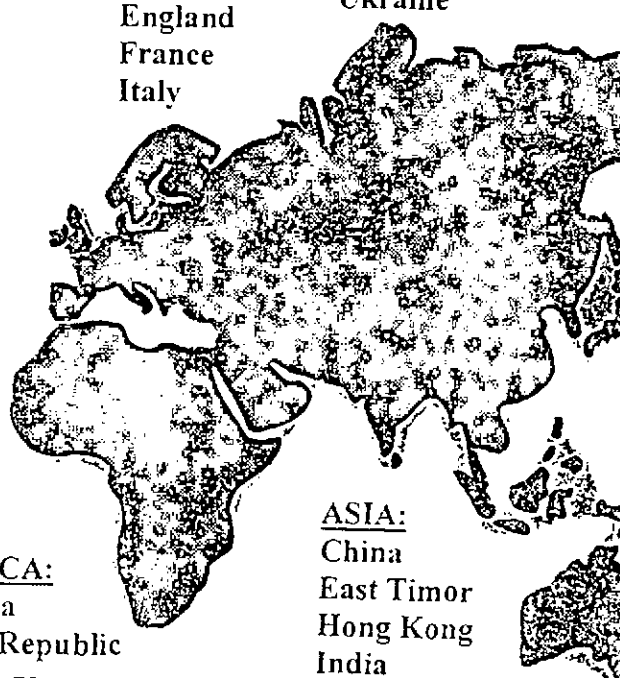
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CANOSSIAN WOMEN DISCIPLES IN THE WORLD



AMERICA:

Argentina
Brazil
Canada
Mexico
Paraguay
United States



EUROPE:

Albania
England
France
Italy

Poland
Portugal
Ukraine

AFRICA:

Angola
Dem. Republic
of Congo
Egypt
Kenya
Malawi
Sao Tome
Sudan
Tanzania
Togo
Uganda

ASIA:

China
East Timor
Hong Kong
India
Indonesia
Japan
Macao
Malaysia
Myanmar
Papua New Guinea
Philippines
Singapore

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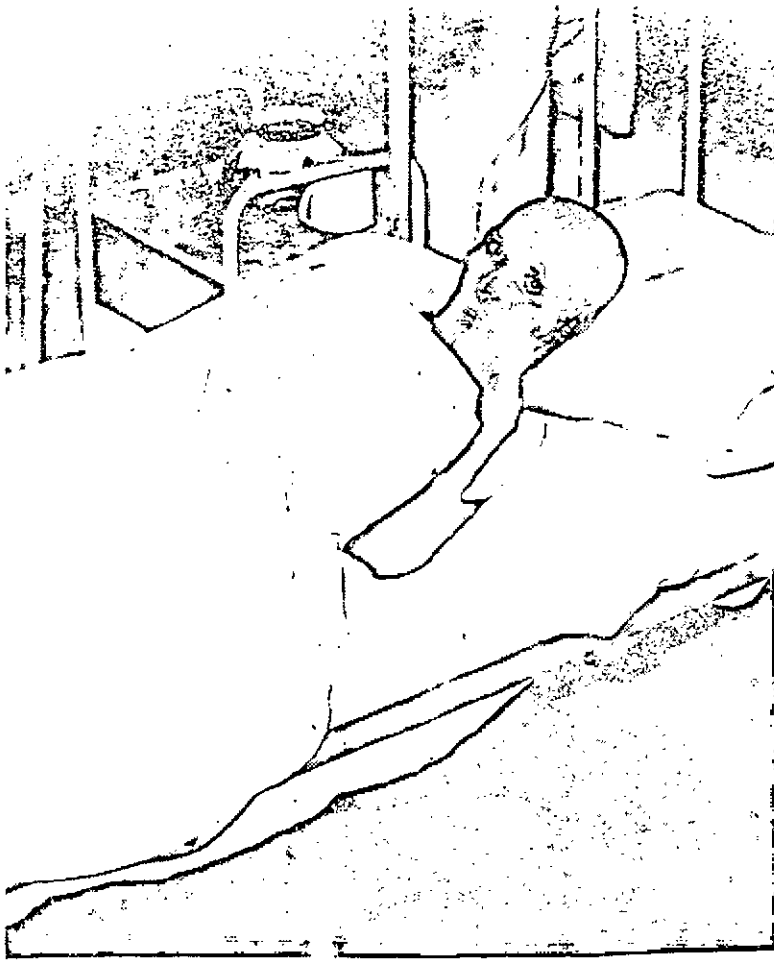
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THE SIGNS OF THE TIME



STREET CHILDREN NEED THE DISCIPLES' LOVE.





AIDS PATIENTS ARE IN NEED OF THE DISCIPLES' CARE AND LOVE.





POOR PEOPLE FACED BY FAMINE CALL FOR
THE DISCIPLES' ATTENTION.





HOMELESS PEOPLE NEED THE DISCIPLES' LOVE.

