

**INSTITUTE OF SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOUS FORMATION**

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**THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

**MODELS OF COMMUNITY LIFE AS TOOLS FOR WITNESSING TO  
SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR: A CASE STUDY OF THE DAUGHTERS  
OF CHARITY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, ERITREAN PROVINCE**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Institute of Spirituality and Religious Formation in  
Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of a Master's Degree in  
Spirituality and Religious Formation**

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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this research is my original work achieved through personal reading, scientific research and personal reflections. It has not been presented to any other institution for academic purposes. All sources used have been correctly cited and acknowledged.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to Jesus Christ, the source of infinite love, whom the Daughters of Charity give their life to and serve in the poor. I also dedicate it to the Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul in particular and the Vincentian family in general as they celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the birth of the Vincentian Charism.

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May the almighty God bless you all!

## ABSTRACT

Since the beginning, God revealed Himself with His loving plan of salvation to humanity in the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. The life of the Holy Trinity is the perfect model of life in common for all humanity in general and in particular, for those who live in community as a spiritual family of God. Jesus and His apostles lived as a community, and this continued into the birth of the Church, after Pentecost in the community of the first Christians. The religious, who assume community life imitate the model of the community life of the first Christians, through observing their own charisms. The Company of the Daughters of Charity live community life for the sake of the service of Christ in the poor. This implies putting emphasis on the authentic community life to form a spiritual family in which God dwells and takes the lead as the Father of the community. This is an essential factor for witnessing to solidarity among the people they serve; for the Daughters of Charity, service of the poor is an expression of the love of God. This paper aims at rekindling and restoring awareness about the necessity of living true fraternal life in community, which makes visible the love of God to others; humanity, especially for those whom society rejects and marginalizes. The study examines and discerns in depth values lived by the sisters in order to re-appreciate and re-live them and identify the challenges of fraternal life in order to sensitize and motivate members of the community to overcome the challenges and work together in building up a desirable community life. The investigation uses the descriptive design and analysis. In order to achieve the purpose of the study, a mixed research design, involving qualitative and quantitative approaches is used. The study uses the Community Cohesion approach for analyzing the community life of the Daughters of Charity in the Province of Eritrea. The literature review presents in detail the understanding of the Church, the Company of the Daughters of Charity and other scholarly works, of the necessity of living authentic religious community life to witness to the love of God. The study uses the stratified and random sampling design for the selection of participants in the study. The sample includes sisters in authority and other members of communities in other types of services, including Seminary Sisters. Data is gathered through questionnaires and interview guides from the field. For data presentation, tables, pie charts, frequencies and percentages are used. For the data analysis of the qualitative findings, SPSS is used, and quantitative findings are arranged in the thematic form, and it is interpreted according to each theme in relation to the objective of the study. The findings of the data provide some insights into authentic community life in view of a boosted service of the poor. At the end, the research proposes some possible suggestions, which could build up the fraternal life of communities in view of the mission of charitable service to the needy.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

**C:** Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity

**CM:** Congregation of the Missions

**CCA:** Community Cohesion Approach

**DCs:** Daughters of Charity

**EG:** Evangelium Gaudium

**S:** Statutes

**SPSS:** Statistical package for social sciences

**VC:** Vita Consacrata

## **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

The religious common life originates from God; the Holy Trinity (Maloney, 1994). Jesus has gathered a considerable number of disciples to be one in order to be able to respond to the love of God. Religious communities are vivid, modern signs of the love of God, which was revealed to humanity by Jesus Christ. Hence, religious life is a vibrant part of the Church and it is lived to announce the good news to the world (Fraternal life in community 1).

The Church has given a great task to communities to give witness to the spirituality of communion in their common life. It provides a witness of Communion to a world as a whole that often knows only divisions, hatred and unnecessary violence (VC 5). In particular, the Daughters of Charity are sent by the Church to live a convincing community life as their way of witnessing to solidarity with the poor. The Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity express communities' and individual members' witnessing to the charity of our Lord; this charity causes them to love God with all their being, fosters and maintains communion. It urges the sisters to serve the poor everywhere, regardless of race, culture, social condition and religion (C. 18, c).

This study seeks to explore the values and challenges of community life so as to bring about a greater awareness of its cherished and visible values by members. It also wishes to re-examine the challenges which may prevent members from being shining witness to solidarity and from making a difference among the poor. It is hoped that this investigation will help the Daughters of Charity to think together about remedies to these challenges in order to build up faithful community life. A more vibrant community life will show more keenly the presence of Christ within and among the poor. It is to the poor after all, to whom the Daughters of Charity render service in the Eritrean Province.

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul says, “Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect” (Rom.12:2). As for Paul, examining one’s community life, retaining the highest values which are dear to the life of the community, and restoring the lost values and adopting new ones in order to overcome the challenges faced by community life, will contribute to the renewal of the life of the community of the Daughters of Charity in view of its mission.

This paper is divided into chapters, which are in turn divided into sections. Chapter one comprises the background of the study, problem statement, aim and objectives of the study, research questions, hypothesis, significance of the study, scope and delimitation of the study, theoretical and conceptual framework and operational key terms.

Chapter two treats Community life and reviews literature from various scholars. It comprises three sections. The first sub-section discusses the foundation of authentic community life and the building of an authentic community life among the Daughters of Charity. The second sub-section deals with the challenges of community life under the following sub-titles: Inconsistent prayer life, aggressiveness, workaholic tendencies, judgmental attitude towards others, failure in sincere love and individualism. The third section tackles remedies for the challenges of community life; it includes nurturing prayer life, forgiveness, mutual respect and acceptance, mutual appreciation and trust, self-mastery, developing a sincere spirit of dialogue, good use of moments of recreation, the witness to the life of solidarity, the poor as ‘lords and masters’ of the Daughters of Charity, and being evangelized by the poor.

Chapter three discusses the research design and methodology, which is used for the study. It includes the research design, target population, description of sample and sampling procedures,

description of research instruments, validity of instruments, pilot testing of the instruments, reliability of the instruments, description of the data collection procedure, description of data analysis procedure and finally, the ethical consideration followed by the conclusion of the chapter.

Chapter four deals with data presentation and data analysis. It consists of the data presentation and discusses the findings in a systematic manner using tables, pie charts, frequencies and percentages. Data analysis is also conducted in SPSS for the quantitative data's information and the attitudinal finding discussed in relation to the questions, objectives and the literature review. Everything is presented in thematic form.

Chapter five presents some conclusions as a result of the investigation and outlines some recommendations founded on the field findings and the general analysis of the study. The study aims at investigating the relationship between some models of community life and witnessing to solidarity among the poor in order to enhance the reliability of community life among the Daughters of Charity as they witness to solidarity among the poor. Recommendations include identifying values and challenges of community life as well as solutions to improving and building communities, which will ensure that we witness to God's love among the needy.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. Introduction

This chapter provides the background for the investigation, the statement of the problem, the aim and the objectives of the study with research questions. It also presents the significance of the study, its scope and delimitation as well as the theoretical and conceptual frame work followed by operational key words.

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

The Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul, Servants of the **poor**, was founded in **France on 29<sup>th</sup> of November** 1633 by St. Vincent De Paul and St. Louise De Marillac. Its beginnings **were simple** and unexpected. Attentive to the divine providence, St. Vincent De Paul and St. Louis De Marillac became conscious of the material and spiritual misery of their time. They devoted their lives to **the** service and evangelization of poor **persons**, whom they **called** ‘Our Lords and Masters.’ The Company Participates in the Church’s universal mission of salvation, according to the Charism of its founders. The Company is a Society of Apostolic Life in **a** Community. Its members take upon themselves to live the evangelical counsels by a bond defined by **some** Constitutions. It is of **the** pontifical right (C. 1, a, b).

The Company of the Daughters of Charity gives great importance to community life as one of the essential tools of their mission of serving the poor. For them, community life modeled on the Trinity and brings about an authentic testimony of love in their service among the poor (C. 32, a). It is the love that is experienced in community life which is to be given to the poor. Pope Francis (2013) also states that common life is an essential human quality because human beings are essentially relational and their lively awareness of their connectedness helps them to look upon and

treat each person as a true brother or sister. He stressed that without fraternity, it is not possible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace.

The Daughters of Charity are called to live out their community life according to God's will. They must be true disciples of Jesus Christ who give witness to his love through the love they have for one another (Cf. Jn. 13:35) in order to live out love in charity as Mary witnessed to it. In her letter to all the Daughters of Charity (2015), Sr. Evelyne Frank, the former Mother General, wrote that charity is sourced from the Eucharist as its fruit. She stressed remaining with Christ in order to see the world in a contemplative gaze, which enables the discernment of the presence of God's Spirit and the witness to the shining love of God following the example of Mary, a woman of the Eucharist.

It is through a deep encounter with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist (C.19, a) that the Daughters of Charity are able to live as true sisters, and charity enables them to be true disciples and witnesses of Christ's love among the poor in various ways, following the example of Mary, the first and true disciple of Jesus and servant of the poor.

This study investigates the roots of an authentic community life for witnessing to solidarity among the poor. In various ways, Jesus invites the Daughters of Charity to be true witnesses of His love in the societies in which they serve through their love for one another. It is an experienced reality that the life of members in a community affects the service they render to the poor positively or negatively. If they live a harmonious community life, they manifest it among the people they serve and become true witnesses of Jesus's love for humanity.

If the Daughters of Charity's community life is not satisfactory, it manifests itself in unhappiness in their service. A Daughter of Charity who fails to witness to solidarity does not edify others. Failing to give witness to the joy of dedicating their lives to Christ and for the sake of

the kingdom of God; contradicts the life of the Gospel, which is the good news of Jesus Christ (EG 262).

When describing the community life of the Daughters of Charity, the former Superior of the Daughters of Charity, Maloney (1994), stresses that God is the source of community life. It is God who assembles various persons into a community to witness to His love. This love is made manifest in a particular community and among those served by a community who find themselves trapped in different forms of poverty. Maloney says: “Community life is a call that comes from God; Jesus’ union with his Father is the example for the intimate bonds that link followers together in the Spirit” (Maloney, 1994, p. 131).

In a true Christian community, no one chooses members with whom to live. They are placed in the same community through the will of God despite their differences. God alone is the authentic ground of community living. It is God who calls individual persons together; their attractiveness to one another is secondary. A community embraces everybody whatever their individual differences may be, God enables them to live together as brothers and Sisters in Christ. This reality makes community living an expression of the mystery of God’s love (Nouwen, 2006). An authentic community is called to witness to God’s love among members. Community members hunger to see and know God through their religious communities.

From the very beginning, the Company of the Daughters of Charity has embraced community life as an essential means of serving Christ in the poor. Community life thus must be nourished by a holistic life of prayer (C. 32). All the necessary means of strengthening common life should be applied so that members grow in authenticity, which enables them to witness to Christ’s love and solidarity among themselves and the poor.

The founders were very conscious of the importance of community life as God's specific call for mission of service. The Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity also emphasize the importance of Community life for the service of the poor: "...called and assembled by God, the Daughters of Charity live a community life better to fulfill their specific mission of service" (C.32, a). This study provides some elements which could assist the Daughters of Charity to build up common life and reinforce lively and joyful community living, especially in the year of consecrated life and Jubilee year of God's mercy.

This is proclaimed and emphasized in the Company of the Daughters of Charity's Inter-assemblies' Document of 2014 with its beautiful motto: "Boldness of Charity for the New Missionary Momentum." It is being used as a guide for the Daughters of Charity for 2015- 2021, until the next Chapter.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Community life is an essential support to the vocation and mission of the Daughters of Charity as they bear joyful witness to Jesus Christ among those they serve (C.9). The sisters strive to build up communities of love, dedication and support the service to the poor. However, life is not always smooth. There are challenges of unity, which affect the service of the poor.

Hypothetically, this problem may be attributed to the fact that sisters possess their unique characteristics and behaviors. Each sister comes from her social environment with differences of culture and formation. Globalization may contribute to the challenges of community life (Kaitholil, 2014). This study seeks to explore some challenges of community life and propose some solutions based on the findings. To accomplish this task, there is a need to appreciate community life lived genuinely, which gives witness to solidarity with the poor. A community life well lived could revitalize communities in which the sisters serve. A community that lacks warmth must re-

examine the challenges that it faces and rekindle authentic community living. This is essential for the Province of the Daughters of Charity in Eritrea as they strive to strengthen their witnessing to the poor and solidarity with them.

### **1.3 Aim of the Research**

This research aims at rekindling and recreating awareness about the importance of authentic community living for witnessing to the love of God among the poor with whom Christ identified (Cf. Mt. 25:40). This study discerns more deeply this subject and sensitizes sisters in local communities so as to build authentic community living for the better service of Christ in the poor. It investigates the relationship between community life and service of the poor. In addition, it investigates how one builds up community life and the challenges that community members face. Moreover, the study examines how authentic community life assists in the witnessing to solidarity among the poor.

The researcher's conviction is simple: In order to witness to solidarity with the poor, the sisters must begin by experiencing solidarity among themselves in order to live a life of joyful witnessing to Christ in the community. Authentic community life opens the eyes of the sisters to see and experience the Holy Trinity which dwells among them despite daily hardships and failings.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following are the lined up research questions:

1. What is the relationship between a Trinitarian Life Community Model and witnessing to solidarity with the poor?
2. What is the relationship between the First Christian communities and their witness to solidarity among the needy?

3. What is the relationship between the vitality of the Community life of the Daughters of Charity and witness to the love of God among the poor?

### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To explore the relationship between the Trinitarian model of community life and the witness to solidarity among the poor.
2. To evaluate the relationship between the first Christian community life and the witness to solidarity with the poor.
3. To investigate the vitality of the community life in the Daughters of Charity in relation to the witness to solidarity among the poor.

### **1.6 Hypothesis of the Research**

The study intends to be guided by the following hypotheses:

1. There is a relationship between Trinitarian life and effective witness to solidarity with the poor;
2. There is a relationship between the foundations of the first Christian communities and witness to solidarity with the poor;
3. There is a relationship between the vital community life of the Daughters of Charity and the witness to solidarity with the poor.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This research is significant to the Daughters of Charity in the Eritrean Province in particular and to the Daughters of Charity in general. It is also helpful to Societies of Apostolic

Life, which live community life for the sake of their missions, and wish to deepen a sense of belonging. Authentic community life is the foundation stone for the witness to solidarity among the poor; a religious community is built in the likeness of the first Christian community (Cf. Acts. 2: 43-47). Community life forms a spiritual family, witnesses to Divine Providence, and foreshadows the Kingdom of God here on earth to those who are in need of God. True community life is a critical component to a community's witness and ensures that it bears fruit in the vineyard of the Lord.

This work seeks to understand better the ingredients of community life and its challenges among the Daughters of Charity in Eritrea. Community life is one of the most important tools, which help the Daughters of Charity show God's love for the poor. This investigation shall propose resolutions to certain challenges facing communities that wish to live authentically. The goal is to inspire a true life of witness in the community and solidarity among the poor in Eritrea.

### **1.8 Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

This study is limited to the Company of the Daughters of Charity of the Province of Eritrea. It is conducted among the Daughters of Charity of different vocational age groups. It faces a limitation in the availability of the sources. The limitation of the availability of sources limited the sampling of the study and questionnaire distribution. Most of the local communities of the Daughters of Charity in Eritrea are located in the remote areas of the country, so collecting data took more time for the researcher.

## **1.9 Theoretical Framework**

### **1.9.1 Concept and Definition of the Community Cohesion Approach**

The study utilized the Community Cohesion Approach (CCA) for its theoretical framework. English researchers created this model in 2001 at the time when the immigrants of various cultural backgrounds rocked the country with rioting (Cantle, 2013). Since then, researchers have applied the Community Cohesion Approach in a variety of English provinces.

In order to quell the disturbances, the British Government made clear its determination to establish the reasons for the disturbances and to seek solutions to the problems. The government involved local government associations, the Commission for Integration and Cohesion and various inter-faith leaders. As a result of the integral involvement of stakeholders and on-going discussions, studies, and investigations, the CCA produced marked successes.

Beider (2011) who cited the works of a variety of groups, states that the CCA contains three important concepts:

1. Common Vision and Belonging – According to the CCA, the cohesive community is one where there is a common vision and sense of belonging for all. The diversity of backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued. Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities, and strong and positive relationships are developed in the workplace, schools and within neighbourhoods.
2. Rights and Responsibilities: The second concept of CCA is that an integrated and cohesive community has a strong sense of an individual's local rights and responsibilities. People share similar life opportunities and receive equal treatment. Individuals should trust that local institutions will act fairly when arbitrating between groups when subjected to public scrutiny. More established groups must register strong recognition of the contribution of

groups newly arrived. Those who have deep attachments to particular places must focus upon what people share in common. CCA identifies and fosters positive relationships among people from different backgrounds in the workplace, schools and other institutions.

3. Department of Communities and Local Government: The third definition of CCA embraces the complexity and value of the work the Department of Communities and Local Government. Community Cohesion integration is a key contributor and must occur in all communities in order to enable differing groups to get on well together and existing residents to adjust to the influx of new arrivals.

In sum, CCA presents three ways of living together. There is a shared future and sense of belonging as well as a focus on what new and existing communities have in common, recognition of the value of diversity, and strong and positive relationships between people from varying cultural backgrounds. The CCA creates a way to bring together a variety of individuals and groups so that they feel valued and appreciated. New arrivals enjoy similar life opportunities and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds while breaking down prejudices and stereotypes. The approach instils trust so as to build a community where everyone may live in peace (Cantle, 2013).

### **1.9.2 Strengths of the Community Cohesion Approach**

The CCA has many strong points that contribute to the unity of diverse social and cultural groups living in the same area. According to the Borough Council (2010), the approach creates a strong sense of belonging in defined communities. Groups must build trust and recognize unity in the midst of diversity by focusing upon common elements that unite community members. CCA also enhances a mutual sense of respect among peoples from different backgrounds by helping them access similar opportunities and attain desired goals. The goal which most often unites

members of religious communities is the service of others and witness to the love of God for the world and for the poor.

The CCA confronts inequalities to prevent discrimination, encourages interaction to overcome barriers, and builds constructive relationships among groups from various social backgrounds. It also prevents discrimination by focusing on common values and the richness of culture rather than differences. In this way, unfounded prejudice, racial or cultural stereotypes, and common gossip among can be substituted by mutual respect and trust. The movement from fear to acceptance creates solidarity. The CCA also allows for the equal sharing of the community resources and opportunities in order to enhance the common good. This builds harmonious and stable communities.

Membership in a community animated by a sense of belonging improves the perception of mutual appreciation and acceptance. The continuous evaluation of the values of a community and the effort to live a truly common life strengthens bonds, encourages a sense of belonging, and contributes to a joyful life of witness. This is the key to authentic community living aimed at serving the needy.

### **1.9.3 Weaknesses of the Community Cohesion Approach**

According to Flint and Robinson (2008), the weaknesses of CCA is the fact that it leads community members to uniformity or sameness and causes the absence of cultural richness and diversity. The approach also does not value the history of communities and lacks concrete evidence of its effectiveness. Its link to particular interpretations of solidarity and unity represents a withdrawal from multi-culturalism, which it deems to have failed.

### **1.9.4 How to Overcome Weaknesses of the Approach**

For the study of the Daughters of Charity in Eritrea, these limitations to CCA might be overcome by re-focusing on the historical manifestations community life in the universal community since 1633 and the particular history of the Daughters of Charity of the Eritrean Province that goes back to 1878.

Particular important is the appreciation and sharing the richness of cultural values for each community member. To overcome the stress upon the sameness of its members, the Daughters of Charity might focus upon important cultural values of the community and of each of its members. In this way, the Daughters of Charity will foster unity while preserving diversity in community. By overcoming these weaknesses, CCA has the capability of establishing authentic communities by building up trust and mutual respect to ensure harmony to witness to solidarity among the needy.

The weakness of CCA in its application could be overcome by forming members as individuals in order to ensure their personal identity using the Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity and other resources which value an individual member's rich cultural experiences that contributes to the richness of a community as a whole.

### **1.9.5 Application and Justification of the Community Cohesion Approach**

The CCA is applicable to the context of building up authentic and harmonious religious communities in which individuals share the same faith vision, that is, the serving of Christ in those who are less considered by society. The approach highlights the fact that members who follow the same charism, rules and constitutions do so for the same goals. Our work will look for values, which unite communities and bring about a culture of unity that binds members together as one family of God. The unity lived among the members will become a shining witness of the beauty of

the family of God gathered for the sake of the Kingdom of God. The application of CCA implies that the cohesion of community members for the same goal binds individuals closely to their community and to one another (Yacco, 2015).

The closeness of members to their community by the same way of life and for the same purpose ensures the unity of the community. The CCA approach predicts that where there is stable community living through common creative behavior (Hasman, 2001), there is quality service. In the case of the Daughters of Charity in the Eritrean province, this service is directed to the poor and needy.

Applying the CCA to the context of religious community living, last of all, could be very helpful. This approach stresses mutual respect and understanding in the members' interaction with one another. It avoids negative thinking towards others. It also fosters provision of equal opportunities and sharing of resources among community members. This has a possibility of safeguarding unity and peace in a community of members of diverse backgrounds.

The approach calls for the continuous motivation of community members in maintaining the unity of community life (Moorman, 2005). The CCA could foster a tolerance of differences helping members to bear with inconveniences in order to foster unity and harmony. This would lead to an elevated attitude of commitment in fraternity.

## 1.10 Conceptual Framework

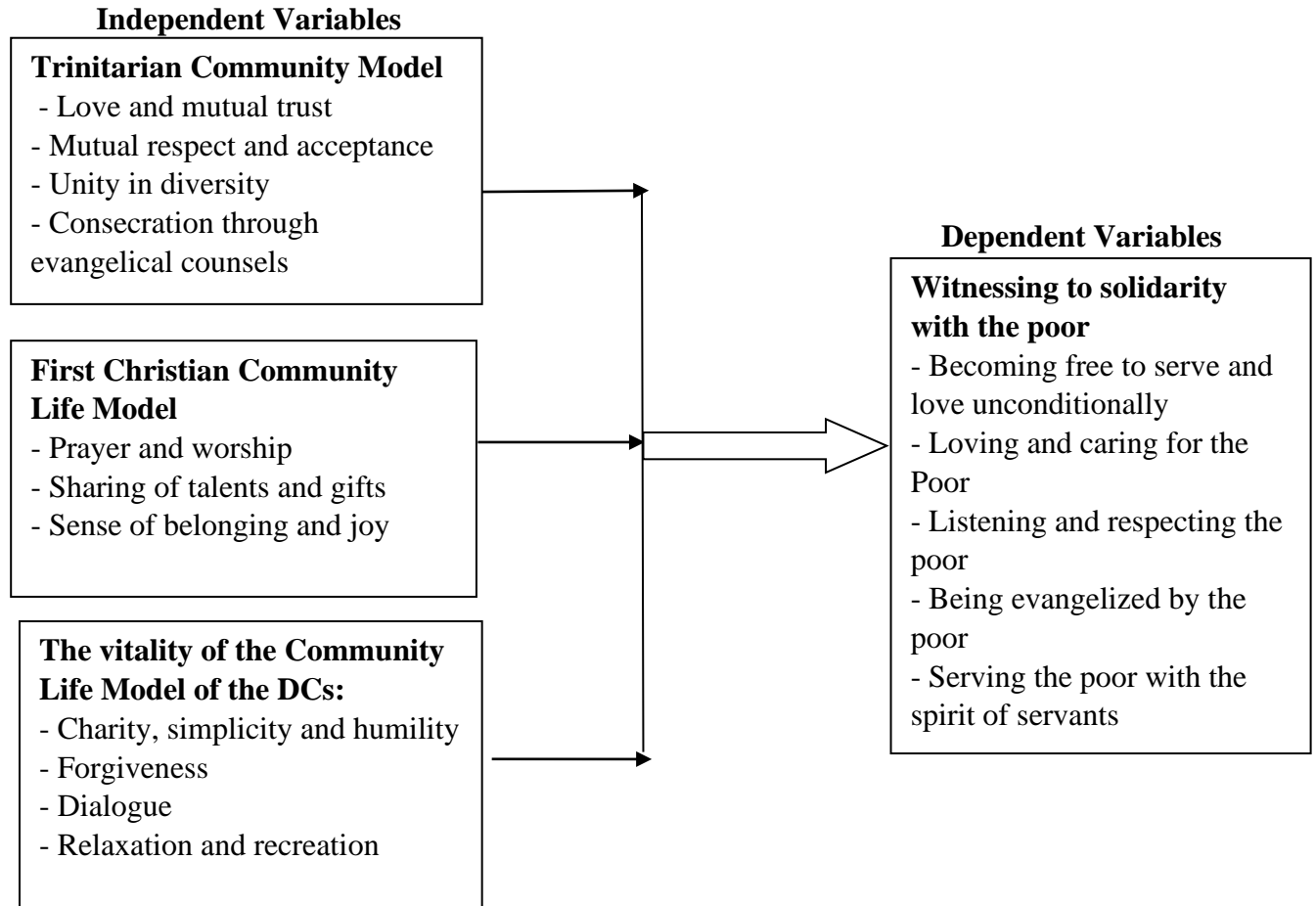


Figure: 1

The conceptual framework (Cf. Figure 1) integrates both independent and dependent variables outlined in the form of a chart. Figure 1 describes the way in which the various elements are related to one another. The first column in Figure 1 describes independent variables while the second column of the same figure describes dependent variables.

The first box of figure 1 demonstrates that the Trinitarian life has a direct relationship with the witness to solidarity with the poor. The second box in the first column indicates the direct relationship between the approach of the first Christian churches and their witness to solidarity. The third box in the first column also shows that there is a direct relationship between the vital community approaches of the Daughters of Charity and its witness to solidarity with the poor by loving care, listening, and providing for the needs of the poor.

In this study, community life is presented as an indispensable tool to witness to solidarity with the poor. The poor represents an independent variable that will be measured using important Church documents as well as the Constitutions of the Company of the Daughters of Charity regarding community life. It utilized the opportunities and resources provided by the Church and the Daughters of Charity to respond to questions about the importance link between community life and the solidarity and quality of service to the needy.

In order for the Company to achieve the desired service to the poor through community life, local communities must implement the model with its variables. Members of the community must be fully aware of common life in relation to the Company's charism and activities rendered for the witness to solidarity. In other words, all the sisters in local communities need to live out the Constitutions of the Company, which describe common life as a strong means of the witness to the love of Christ among others.

## 1.11 Operational key terms

**Awareness:** A deeper knowledge of the existing situation of community life.

**Challenges:** The problems faced by the community life of the Daughters of Charity.

**Company:** The Congregation of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul, Servants of the Poor.

**Common Rules:** Rules of the Daughters of Charity that were used to be good guide before Vatican II Council.

**Daughters of Charity:** A Society of Apostolic Life founded by St. Vincent De Paul and St. Louise De Marillac in 1633.

**Foundation:** The basis for the community life of the Daughters of Charity.

**Poor:** The needy and sometimes destitute persons who face difficulties in life who are served by the Daughters of Charity.

**Religious Community:** Group of people who have come together by divine call to live as brothers and sisters for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

**Seminary Sisters:** Sisters who are admitted to the Company of the Daughters of Charity as new members after finishing the initial stage of formation as postulants.

**Sister-servants:** Superiors of each local community of the Daughters of Charity.

**Society of Apostolic life:** This refers to consecrated people who live in a community for the sake of the mission. They are not religious in the technical sense of the word.

**Solidarity:** Sharing who you are and what you have; caring for others and being present to those in need, i.e., the poor.

**Visitatrix:** The Provincial Superioress of the Daughters of Charity.

**Vocation:** A special call from God to individuals and communities for a specific purpose.

**Witness:** Testifying to the love of God for the needy primarily experienced in community life.

**Community life:** A common life lived by the Daughters of Charity for the purpose of serving Christ in the poor.

**Vita Consacrata:** A Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on consecrated life promulgated in 1996 by John Paul II.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2. Introduction**

This chapter reviews related literature, which is helpful in responding to the research questions and the comparative analysis of the data collected from the field. The literature reviewed pertains to the authentic foundation of the Christian religious life, the challenges of community life, the remedies for the challenges, and community life as the witness to solidarity with the poor. There is a knowledge gap that is discussed in this area. Finally, it provides a summary of the reviewed literature.

#### **2.1 Foundation of the Authentic Community Life of the Daughters of Charity**

Jesus founded a community of twelve apostles. This community was an authentic community founded upon the rule of love. He shared his ideal with them when he said: “This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you” (Jn.15: 12). “God’s love and forgiveness of the members of the community of Jesus was to be unconditional” (McVerry, 2008, p. 127). During their life in the company of Jesus, the apostles were not perfect but what made them an authentic community was the forgiveness of God, which they also were instructed to practice.

Jesus “offered forgiveness without first requiring change. He was a friend of sinners, even before their conversion. That is God’s way; He does not wait for His sons and daughters to change. He starts the process by offering them forgiveness” (Jose’, 2013, p. 204). This community of forgiveness was to be a foundation for the Kingdom of God; it was a kingdom over which God in the person of Jesus reigns. It was to be completely different from any other kingdom (Cf. Jn. 18:33-37). The disciples were to renounce their hunger for earthly power to embrace the kingdom

given to them by Jesus. It is a kingdom given to the weak, and not to the strong (Eamonn, 1986). Jesus had the clear intention of choosing the twelve apostles; He chose them in order to educate and train them for a mission. To prepare them, he shared with them His experience of His Father so that they would learn how to accept God's coming. According to His instructions, the disciples proclaimed the arrival of His reign to others (Jose', 2013).

In the community of apostles where Jesus was the leader and model, the poor found acceptance, respect and true dignity. In the larger society, they were rejected, despised and disregarded (McVerry, 2008). The acceptance, dignity and respect of the despised ones by the community of the apostles were clear signs of the kingdom of God. The ideal kingdom in the community life of the apostles was, "...[the] kingdom in heaven; this is a place where everyone is equal, everyone is respected and cared for and where no one feels rejected, unwanted, marginalized" (Sobrinio, 1993, p. 69).

The community of apostles was a foundation for the community of the first Christians which was founded after the coming of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem. "After the ascension, as a result of the gift of the Holy Spirit, a common community formed around the apostles gathered in the praise of God and in a concrete experience of communion" (Acts 2:42-47). The life of that community and, even more, the experience of complete sharing with Christ as lived out by the twelve has always been the model to which the Church has looked (VC 41). St. John Paul II continued to emphasize the significance of community life as a sign of the unity of the Church saying, "The common life, understood as a life shared in love, is an eloquent sign of ecclesial communion. It is practiced with special care in Religious Institutes and in the Societies of Apostolic Life, where community living acquires special significance" (VC 42).

In our effort as religious to live lives in and with Christ, we are able to witness to the Trinitarian life. Pope John II (VC 21) tells us that consecrated persons strive to live in Christ with all their heart and give eloquent witness to the Trinity. Their life proclaims the Father desires to make all humanity one family. In addition, the incarnation and the paschal mystery of Christ brings unity; Jesus' death is a source of this reconciliation and unity. Religious life also proclaims the Holy Spirit is the source of unity in the Church.

Hence, a religious community has the Holy Trinity as its model. Members of a community are called to imitate the Trinity in their unity while respecting their diversity as well. Subsequently, "in true friendship, there has to be integration, and not absorption. There must be union, and not identification" (Larranaga, 1994, p. 30). In this way, a community imitates the life of the Holy Trinity, which is absolute union and respect for the diversity of the three divine persons. St. Louise De Marillac, encouraging the Daughters of Charity to imitate the Trinity in living out their community life said, "because of our relationship with the Blessed Trinity, we ought to be but one heart and act in the same spirit, like the three Divine Persons" (Sullivan, 1991, p. 770).

In his discussions about community life in the light of the Blessed Trinity, St. Vincent De Paul stated that the Blessed Trinity in the unity of its essence, brings out for us the distinction of the three persons in two events: in the creation of the world when God decided to create us in his own image and likeness, and in the decision to incarnate the Eternal Word (Coste, 2005, p. 98).

All of these ideas tell us that the imitation of the Holy Trinity in community life is essential to human nature since we are created in the image and likeness of God and redeemed through Jesus' incarnation. According to Kaitholil (2014), community life signifies unity in the same spirit nourished by the word of God and liturgical celebration. So the Daughters of Charity are called to

honor the unity and diversity of the life of the Holy Trinity in their community living (Common Rule, I).

To live a life in of the Holy Trinity demands constant awareness of its presence; the more we seek God in everything, the greater becomes the mystery of His presence and love in our lives (McBride, 2005). It is through the awareness of the presence of God's love in our life that we become missionaries of God's love among the people trapped in poverty.

## **2.2 Building up an Authentic Community Life among the Daughters of Charity**

An authentic community life is first built upon forgiveness. To accomplish this, consecrated person's experience supernatural love, which comes from God and manifests the fact that their call is of divine origin. The Daughters of Charity are called to follow this model of Trinitarian union. Our Constitutions §32 stresses authentic union among the sisters: "Live together as having but one heart and one soul so that by this union of spirit, you may be a true image of the unity of God." These words of St. Vincent invite the Daughters of Charity to appreciate the divine gift of community life and the important role of community living.

Griffin (2013) says that the human community is a gift from God and religious communities are supposed to be symbols of the kingdom of God in which all human beings are welcomed and made to feel at home; community life anticipates the joys and the fraternity of heaven. Even more so then, the Daughters of Charity must strive to build up an authentic community life. They should make clearer the signs of the kingdom of God within them. This shows that the "kingdom in heaven is a place where everyone is equal, everyone is respected and cared for, where nobody feels rejected, unwanted, marginalized, or looked down upon" (Sobrin, 1993, p. 69).

Therefore, “a community in which very different people are seen to live together in reasonable harmony, to be ‘for’ rather than ‘against’ each other, can be a significant counter-cultural witness in a society where differences so often cause division and war” (Widdicombe, 2001, p. 89). Larranaga (1994) expresses the importance of the contribution of each member in building up common community when Larranaga (1994), says, “living in a community is not spontaneous, but is the fruit of a conviction ... love is a criteria of faith” and that “love in common communion is universal. Brotherly/sisterly love is characterized by its lack of exclusivity.” Hence, “whatever our personal distinguishing characteristics, there are roots that unite and maintain us in a similar identity” (p. 134).

Consequently, a community becomes the constitutive element of the religious consecration and is a fundamental means for presenting the values of religious life in such ways as, prayer, the vows, religious charism, and the feeling that we are the Church, the place where charity is exercised (Serrao, 2014). Pope Francis stresses the importance of an authentic community life as a way for members to see God in all things: “It is a common love capable of seeing the sacred grandeur of our neighbor, of finding God in every human being, of tolerating the nuisances of life in common by clinging to the love of God, of opening the heart to divine love and seeking the happiness of others just as their heavenly Father does” (Francis, 2013, p.92). If community life looks to Christ unceasingly as its source, it becomes a true witness of God’s love to others who are in need.

### **2. 3 Some Challenges of Community Life**

Community living always presents challenges. The Daughters of Charity, as a people consecrated to God, seek to follow Jesus’ way of life. “Christ’s way has always been deeply challenging to his followers, whatever their calling or chosen ways of life, because it sets forth

clear ideals for living” and “all members are at various times both burdens and blessings.” However, “fortunately our salvation is in the struggle after them (ideals)” (Widdicombe, 2001, p. 88).

These ideas may provide courage to members who struggle to carry out their challenges according to the ideals of community life established by Christ. In the struggle to build a spiritual family, Pope Francis encourages us to avoid harmful actions, which injure unity in communities saying: “Communion is lived first and foremost within respective communities of each Institute. To this end, I would ask you to think about my frequent comments about criticism, gossip, envy, jealousy, hostility as ways of acting which have no place in our houses.” (Pope Francis, 2015, p.6).

### **2.3.1 Inconsistent Prayer Life**

Prayer life is a core factor in the life of consecrated persons. Saint John Paul II stated that, “the spiritual life must therefore have the first place in the program of families of consecrated life, in such a way that every institute and community will be a school of true evangelical spirituality” (VC 93). Without intensive prayer, religious communities do not have true life as spiritual families. The foundation of community life is the life of God, which is attained only through an intense relationship with God. God communicates his love to us by means of prayer that is deep and consistent. If a Daughter of Charity neglects prayer, sooner or later, community life will lack meaning and will bear no fruit. Jesus says: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, it is he that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5).

According to Widdicombe (2001), the spiritual well-being of a community is vital. It is a life giving force from which flows everything that members do. It is from community life that their life and ministry draws its nourishment and motivation. The challenge is to live a consciously communal life making God part and parcel of the journey in our ordinary circumstances.

Widdicomebe continues by saying that it is the community's concern to keep itself spiritually alive. Prayer life is the core of the religious life and the witness to the life of Christ. Each Daughter of Charity must be committed to her own individual prayer life.

### **2.3.2 Aggression**

Anger is an emotion that expresses man's response being desired something that he desires. Sarrao (2014), states that it is easy to become angry. Unless one is able to express this emotion of anger in a positive manner, one cannot advance in love. Upon becoming angry a person should admit that the anger and not justify it. In this way, one can manage and channel anger in a constructive manner. When one admits failure, in this regard, one draws closer to improvement.

While comparing anger with imprisonment, Agudo (2003) states that anger is a common emotion among prisoners. An individual who is imprisoned by for negative views and attitudes is filled with rage even if he or she decides to cover it up. Hostility is apparent to the people no matter their age. As beloved children of God, we should strive to be free of anger and aggression.

### **2.3.3 Workaholic Attitude**

Sometimes, we may feel that we need to work harder to save souls. If, however, we do not maintain a balanced life, we may end up being consumed by work. This can cause depression, irritability, and ineffectiveness in our ministries. Depression that is caused by overwork that leads to lack of enthusiasm for one's ministry and bad manners (Agudo, 2003). The Daughters of Charity must pay special attention so as not to encourage the sisters to become "workaholics" who lack balance in their busy lives Sheer (1998, p. 98) remarks: "in a very busy life, the secret of getting things done is not so much to know what to do, but rather to know what to leave undone."

Real wisdom may be found in creating priorities for our work rather than trying to do everything all at the same time. Smollin (2001, p.37), focuses on prioritizing tasks to reduce stress

and says: “If we prioritize our day and keep what is important as our focus, we will enjoy life more and decrease our stress.” Just as people are called to be witnesses of God’s love so also the love we put in doing things is greater than the act we may accomplish. Activism can keep people far from silence and the interior life. This may lead one to attempt things which are not always possible.

### **2.3.4 A Judgmental Attitude towards Others**

Having a judgmental attitude often leads to gossip and backbiting. Pope Francis (2013), clarifies that gossip destroys the unity of an ecclesial community. A fact certainly true of religious congregations. There is need for special caution to refrain from judging others. No one wise enough or innocent enough to judge another. Sheer (1998) states that the only decision we can rightly make about our brothers’ or sisters’ wrong doing is to admit it and say: “we will leave him [her] to God” (p.88). Fraternal correction performed in charity, of course, is still a Christian obligation. However, Sheer (1998) speaks of harsh and unfounded critical judgment when he continues: “To judge others keeps us at the circumference of life and away from the center” (p. 105).

Harsh judgment is the bane of religious communities: “when we pick out the worst in people, we drive them to hatred or despair; when we tell them we expect better things; they are given hope” (Sheer, 1998, p. 43). We need to avoid judging others harshly, and help them through encouragement and praise to move them to more admirable behavior. Those people who feel mistreated by others in the community should think of the words of Jesus proclaimed to the just: “Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account” (Mt. 5: 11). These are comforting words for those judged for their imitation of Jesus Christ. If someone is judged or maligned because of likeness to Jesus, the suffering and pain incurred are worthwhile (Chittister, 2011).

When talking about the good esteem of one's sisters, St. Louise De Marillac was clear. She said that strict restraint of the members' curiosity is necessary, especially when the sisters are together. Too often, one is in a hurry to discover faults and judge the moods of others in order to relate to another some fault that one knows (Sullivan, 1991). According to St. Vincent DePaul, those who embrace the consecrated life must live together in great union never to complain against one another (Conference of St. Vincent de Paul, 1643). If someone in community is filled with pride, contempt for others, bad thoughts and desires, bitter memories and revengeful plans (Gogan, 2008), these ones always tend to complain. They become pessimists who prevent the building of a genuine community life.

In community life, confusion can arise. During such misunderstandings we have all the necessary means to face problems. We have as our guide the Constitutions of the Company, the Word of God, and the presence of the Holy Spirit (McBride, 2005). These helps assist us to sort out misunderstandings and avoid harsh judgment. Members with the help of God can create communities where peace and unity of heart reign.

### **2.3.5 Failure in Sincere Love**

In community life, one of the main challenges is failing to love sincerely God, others, and certainly oneself. When asked by the Pharisee which commandment was the greatest, Jesus Christ replied: "You shall love the Lord God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two Commandments depend all the law and the prophets" (Mt. 22:37-40). In this text of the gospel, Jesus makes clear that sincere and healthy love of self must be applied to one's neighbor and the love of neighbor must be preceded by the sincere love for God.

Mostly, we fail in love even though we claim that we practice it as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Cf. Gal. 5: 22).

Love is essentially an act of the will; the love of God is a gift from the Spirit of God. It is the Spirit that moves a person to choose God and stirs in the heart good thoughts, prayers, and warm feelings of joy and peace. When someone is not willing to follow the path of love, it is a failure to respond to a gift received from the Holy Spirit (Gogan, 2008). Since love is a gift from God, we give our heart to God who asks: “Son, [daughter], give me your heart” (Prov 23:26), God will give us “a clear heart, a pure heart, a faithful heart, a loving heart, a gentle heart, a joyful heart, a heart like a heart of Jesus” (Gogan, 2008, p.65). Jesus’ power of love draws people to him; those who followed him were drawn after being convinced by his teaching; others came to him out of curiosity and remained with him (Pagola, 2013).

It is clear that they were convinced of Jesus’ teaching because it was accompanied by His loving and compassionate approach towards others despite their state of life. Jesus’ life with His apostles and with others is a powerful model for us today. It reminds us of the fact that in the ordinary circumstances of our life, the failure to love is a failure in vocation.

### **2.3.6 Individualistic Tendency**

Individualism is one of the many enemies of an authentic community life. If individualism grows in a community, there exists division and misunderstanding. When describing the negative effects of an individualistic spirit, Pope Francis (2013) says: “The individualistic temptation grows and leads to partialities and divisions in community life” (p.10). The one who is filled with pride is interested only in profiting from the community; it always causes tensions.

## **2. 4 Remedies for the Challenges of Community Life**

For life in general and for community life in particular, there are always challenges, which call for remedies when we follow Jesus Christ. Jesus says: “In the world you have tribulations; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33). Here Jesus clarifies the presence of challenges in the world for those who follow Him and encourages them to face them as he did. The most important remedy for the challenges of community life is the real encounter with God. Some of the more effective remedies include a strong prayer life, the focus on forgiveness, mutual respect and acceptance, mutual appreciation and trust, self-mastery and the good use of moments of recreation.

### **2.4.1 Nurturing Prayer Life**

Prayer is essential for members of the community of the Daughters of Charity. This is so because, “the apostolic action of the Daughters of Charity draws its strength from contemplation, following the example of the Son of God who, while remaining intimately united with His Father, often went aside to pray” (C 21, a). The Daughters of Charity’s presence is rooted in the mystery of prayer: Personal and communal encounter with the living God. It is through prayer that we keep our relationship with God. Prayer is the communication with the creator.

Becoming aware of this privilege, the Daughters of Charity who were assembled for the General Assembly in 2015 said: “All our relationships, centered on Jesus Christ, allow us to be credible witnesses of God’s mercy and tenderness” (Inter-assemblies Document (2015-2021, p, 10). A deep prayer life centered on the person of Jesus Christ that enables us to be witnesses of Christ’s love among our sisters and to the world where we are sent. As a result of our intimate encounter with Jesus, prayer becomes primarily God’s loving communication. It involves listening

and responding. Pope Francis (2013) says: “Praying is creating a space for God’s lead; it is allowing God to lead us “beyond” our stillness and restlessness” (p.171).

In other words, Prayer is the placing of our consciousness in the sacred temple of the self, where God dwells. Through this constant awareness, a person is able to establish a personal relationship with the Blessed Trinity (Agudo, 2003). From this, a person experiences true love and can offer true love to others.

During moments of weaknesses, Jesus calls us to prayer saying: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mt. 11: 28-30). With Jesus every problem finds a solution and every burden becomes light.

#### **2.4.2 Focusing on Forgiveness**

Forgiveness is a supernatural gift from God. St. Paul affirms this idea saying: “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col. 3:12-14). Forgiveness is an indispensable means to create and sustain individual and life in common.

Part and parcel of the well-integrated life includes the giving and the receiving of forgiveness. To live in harmony with others a forgiving heart because human beings possess flaws and inevitably exhibit personal differences. Forgiveness has many benefits in the life of the individual and in community (Martin, 2014). Forgiveness is a choice. When choosing to forgive oneself or others, one chooses to be free from the past and to fulfil one’s true potential.

Martin (2014) continues by saying that the one who forgives breaks free from limiting personal beliefs and attitudes. It frees up one's mental and emotional energies so that a person can apply personal energies to the creation of a better life. It also helps one to achieve personal goals. If one fails to forgive, the energy of her or his inner life is wasted in resentment, anger, pain, and personal suffering. As Daughters of Charity who have consecrated their lives to God in community, forgiveness must take first place in order to serve Jesus Christ and witness to solidarity among the needy.

Forgiveness in community life is modeled on the God's forgiveness bestowed on the human person. If God has forgiven them, then community members too must forgive one another (McVerry, 2008). McVerry adds saying: "If a community lives in love, forgiveness is the greatest expression of that love; no human community could survive without a strong willingness to forgive the sin and human weakness which are part of being human" (p. 127).

Thus, "pardon is the gift of gifts. It is certainly the most difficult gift to give... the root of all common conflicts lies in the problem of forgiveness" (Larranaga, 1994, p.169). So, anyone in conflict with others should remember Jesus' words of forgiveness on the cross to offer forgiveness: "Father, forgive them; for they not know what they do" (Lk. 23:24). In this verse, we see that Jesus excuses those guilty of his death; the great challenge for us is to excuse the fault of those who accuse us falsely.

### **2.4.3 Mutual Respect and Acceptance**

Respect in community life is one of the most significant means of growth, communion, and love for one another. It follows that "communion in community implies a profound respect for the personal mission and tastes of each member" (Kaitholil, 2014, p. 148). Therefore, "respect is the

first and essential attitude for interpersonal relationships in a community” (Larranaga, 1994, p. 152) for it makes room for mutual acceptance.

The Daughters of Charity acknowledge that “to the extent that we develop a spirituality of communion expressed in respect and esteem for others, in forgiving and mercy, in compassion and kindness, our relationships become mutually supportive and a powerful means of evangelization” (Inter-Assemblies Document, 2015-2021, p. 10). In community living, respecting our differences is the basis for unity among us since our differences demonstrate the richness, which we enjoy in our communities. In community, differing personalities, gifts and abilities are beneficial, but at times differences cause difficulties. Those who live religious life are committed to building up communities of love although they have probably not chosen individuals with whom they live (Widdicombe, 2001).

#### **2.4.4 Mutual Appreciation and Trust**

Appreciation is one of the most powerful means of unity that helps people remain optimistic and help others to grow in the love of themselves and others. Building trust is needed to create harmony in community life. “Trust is a basic ingredient of both personal and communal life. We cannot grow unless we receive trust and we are not really mature unless we can give it to others.” (Hammett & Sofield, 1981, p. 86). Trust opens people to communication and “communication in communities is intended to foster communion among members through the sharing of feelings about common experiences and values. Communication and communion involve the risk to trust. Communication evolves into true communion, in the process of developing a caring community” (p. 63). In developing true communion through appreciation and trust, basic good manners are needed such as saying ‘I am sorry’, ‘thank you’ and, ‘please,’ According to Valles (1997), these basic human gestures serve as “the spice” for our lives in

common; “they make eyes meet, hands touch, and human beings pay attention to each other in the whirl of hurried existence” (p. 167).

To create a loving community, we must grow in our appreciation of one another and build a trusting atmosphere. In the Company of the Daughters of Charity, mutual trust is a basis of all relationships. True community is founded upon respect for persons, discretion, and confidentiality (C.62). To appreciate the goodness of others, one must first be humble. In admiration of the virtue of humility, Pope Francis (2013), says: “Truly, nothing is more precious, or more important than humility” (p.29). So, humility is one of the three vital virtues of the Daughters of Charity that prompts them in gratitude to be aware of the gifts received from God.

#### **2.4.5 Self-mastery**

Self-mastery is defined as the power to control one’s actions, impulses and emotions. In other words, it is the ability to take control of one’s life without inordinately influenced by feelings, urges, and circumstances outside of one’s control. Self-mastery is a condition whereby one’s body is one’s servant and not one’s master (Harcourt, 2011). Synonyms of self-mastery are continence, restraint, self-command, self-contentment, self-discipline, self-government, self-possession and self-control. Self-mastery is one among a number of vital factors that fosters integral development in the human person.

Self-control is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Cf. Gal. 5:23) essential for every Christian, but especially so for religious. It helps religious to bear with themselves, with others and God accordingly. So, “it is not only useful but also inevitable to control the mind so as not to think in the wrong way, to control the body so as not to act in the wrong way” (Kaitholil, 2014, p. 52). To live in community is more than a group of people living together for some purpose; it requires

certain limitations to individual freedom. It requires self-control, self-discipline, and self-sacrifice on the part of individual members as part of living the principles of Gospel (Widdicombe, 2001).

#### **2.4.6 Appreciating a Sincere Spirit of Dialogue**

In community life, practicing the spirit of dialogue is essential. Creating a spirit of dialogue is important to the Company of the Daughters of Charity. As stated in their Constitutions: “The Daughters of Charity go to the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit... (they) aspire to live in constant dialogue with God (C. 17, a). This constant and sincere dialogue with God opens the hearts of the Daughters of Charity to sincere and open dialogue among themselves.

The importance of dialogue is made clear in the Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity as follows: “In dialogue experiences are shared, differences are minimized, and decisions are sought together” (C. 34). It also puts great importance on the one-to-one dialogue of members with their respective sister-servants in their local communities. The dialogue between the sister-servants and the members is an important part of common life; it is a source of dynamism in prayer life, apostolic sharing, discernment of spirits, and fosters personal examination regarding faithfulness to the charism and shared mission (C. 36, a).

The need for the spirit of dialogue among sisters who do the work of formation is also well noted: “They are open to dialogue and are capable of offering accompaniment and of aiding in the discernment process, with honesty and with respect for the person” (C.51, d). This spirit of dialogue is vital for those who exercise any sort of authority:

Those in authority are responsible for making decisions, after dialogue and discernment in order to know the will of God. They should keep close to the Sisters in order to understand them, be well acquainted with their lives and with them, be attentive to the needs of persons who are poor, as they seek ways to meet those needs with the audacity and prudence of the founders. (C.62, b).

These words indicates that the Daughters of Charity must consider the need for dialogue in community life as a requirement for those in authority with members in order to create an environment of mutual assistance.

#### **2.4.7 Good Use of Moments of Recreation**

In community life, fun and relaxation have great importance. Humor fosters harmony and prevents members from being overly serious. Just as it is important for the community to work together, so it is important for the community to relax together and laugh from time to time (Maloney, 1998). Maloney states that the enjoyment of one another's company, allows us to see and understand the differing aspects of another's personality. We must make some time for relaxation. Being conscious of the need for relaxation, the Company's statutes refer to "times of relaxation in common, in an atmosphere of joy and simple, friendly relationships, which are part of community living and are necessary for balance in the life of each Sister and the local community" (C.19).

"Hand-in-hand with learning to rest is learning to relax; it is difficult if not downright impossible, to sleep soundly in an anxious, troubled and preoccupied state of mind" (Madott, 1996, p. 111). A sense of humor is helpful to relax and to be renewed. "A sense of humor is a gift of God... all religious need this gift. With it, we keep our balance. Without it we lose our sense of direction; we become dangerous to ourselves and to those we claim to serve" (Arbuckle, 1986, p.67). When speaking about a sense of humor as a gift from God, Sanders (1994) says that a sense of humor needs to be controlled and cultivated; clear and healthy humor relaxes tensions and relieves difficult situations.

## 2.5 Witnessing to a Life of Solidarity with the Poor

For the Daughters of Charity, the poor are those with differing needs who represent Christ. In defining the poor, Dyrness and Karkka (2008), state that the poor are Christ's incarnation as he identifies himself with them (Cf. Mt. 25: 31-46). They also name the poor as those who lack love, relationships, and a sense of belonging since society despises them. Kaitholil (2014) describes the poor by saying, "all the sad, the oppressed, the sick, the destitute, those who are in need of spiritual development and progress, the illiterate, those who are ignorant of religious, cultural and social matters, backward classes, and such others are all among the poor, and all need help" (p. 83). These are the poor to whom the Daughters of Charity are sent as servants and witnesses.

In doing so, the Daughters of Charity have Christ as the greatest model and their first witness to solidarity with the poor. Christ gazes with love upon the poor. In our communities, we learn solidarity with the poor from Christ who ate and associated with the poor. To learn from Jesus, religious must be alert to a prayer life that allows God to control, guide, and direct both common life and the mission among the poor. Kaitholil (2014), says that "they [religious] have to witness to the mystical dimension of life where God does not alienate but enriches and enables our existence" (p.160). In a word, religious men and women must become friends of Jesus.

To be productive, our evangelization rooted in the preaching of the word of God must be accompanied by personal witness. St. John Paul II spoke frequently and meaningfully of the need to witness to a life of solidarity with the poor. He stated:

Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." . . . It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus—the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity (John Paul II, 1975).

Service that is given to the needy through authentic common life is a visible sign of God's reign in us. It is this witness which attracts others who come also with the desire to encounter God. We, the Daughters of Charity are called to respond to the cry of the poor. Kaitholil (2014) says that whatever work we do to lighten the sorrow and struggle of the poor is our response to the cry and tears of the poor.

### **2.5.1 The Poor as 'Lords and Masters' of the Daughters of Charity**

For the Daughters of Charity, the poor represent the very person of Jesus Christ. This is because He identified himself with them saying that whatsoever is done to the needy is done for Jesus Christ (Cf. Mt. 25:35-41). It is from this deep faith in Christ's presence in the person of the poor that allowed St. Vincent De Paul and St. Louise De Marillac to see Christ in the poor. Since Christ is in the poor, they are the 'Lords and Masters' of the Daughters of Charity: "Our passion for Christ nourishes and energizes our passion for the poor; it shapes our attitudes, directs our choices and demands of us a conversion of mind and heart" (Inter-Assembly document 2015-2021, p. 14).

It is plainly said that the poor have a special place in the life of the Daughters of Charity since the beginning as it is found in their Constitutions (C. 16, c), "The Daughters of Charity see those who suffer, those who are stripped of human rights and dignity, and in those in poor health as children of God and brothers and sisters with whom they are in solidarity." Living a harmonious community life assists the sisters to respond accordingly and witness to solidarity with those who suffer various forms of poverty. Pope Francis (2014), also said that community is a support for the whole of the apostolate; its members must have the attitude of a servant practicing the community life so that this attitude may be manifested among those whom they serve.

For the Daughters of Charity, fostering the attitude of a servant is crucial. The Daughters of Charity must look upon the poor as their masters following the example of their founders, “who preach to them by their very presence” as is stated in the ancient rules of the Daughters of Charity (1718). The poor are lords who deserve to be loved tenderly and respected highly for they are the very representatives of Christ who identified himself with them (C.16, c).

### **2.5.2 Being Evangelized by the Poor**

The Daughters of Charity accomplish the evangelization of the poor through the charitable services that they render and the witness of a life which lived in community. Nevertheless, they are not merely evangelizers but they are also evangelized by their ‘lords and masters’ the poor. This happens when they open their hearts to listen; they experience the life of the poor when fully involved in the situation of the needy and those who live in difficulty. In this way, they learn many valuable lessons which help them to become effective evangelizers and witnesses of Christ’s love.

According to Prevost (2001), the poor have their own proper qualities and values. They may be selfish but they also establish bonds of solidarity, an atmosphere of mutual assistance, and simple sharing. Those who experienced misery in their lives are more sensitive to responding to other people’s misfortunes. In this way, the poor give witness to solidarity – a great message and example for us. Their sense of appreciation for what has been done for them and their happiness truly evangelizes us.

Villar (2002) also discusses how servants of the poor may be evangelized by them. He said that poor people who live in difficult situations understand others who encounter similar difficulties. They live moments of suffering close to one another as brothers and sisters. In doing so, they evangelize us reminding us to keep close to one another during life’s more challenging

moments. In addition to this, their simple life style marks their relationship with God and with others. Their simplicity and shared suffering evangelizes us and challenges us to embrace a simple lifestyle and remain approachable in the communities where we live.

The spirit of joy and thanksgiving found among the poor, their ability to accept personal crosses, their humility and submission to God's will despite their troubles all of these things evangelizes and challenges us to examine our attitude towards God's will. They tell us by their lives of joy that we should experience the same when we offer our lives to the Lord through the service of the poor. The poor that we serve live not only where we work but also live with us in our communities, that is, in the faces of those sisters who need our help. With our brothers and sisters in community, we ought to manifest common simplicity and care by renewing our attitudes and feelings towards others (Alois, 2015). We must decide not to fear or judge another nor feel that we are being judged. We must not interpret our interactions negatively. Above all, we must never to refuse common communion.

All these things enable us to be evangelized by our own brothers and sisters whose contribution to our lives we sometimes ignore. These things cause blockages to our being evangelized by others and by the poor. Mary the mother of Jesus praised God by saying: "For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name" (Lk. 1:49). In a similar way, the poor praise God for their successes attributing them to God; they do nothing apart from God.

## **2.6 Summary of the Reviewed Literature and the Study Gap**

The available reviewed literature in this section suggests that the quality of community life influences the life of members of the Daughters of Charity and their ability to exercise their mission of serving Christ in the poor (CR, I). The Daughters of Charity are not the exception to the rule. St. Vincent frequently reminds them that the nature of their mission exposes to occasions of

sin. The sisters should grow in virtue in order to resist temptation following the example of the unity of the Holy Trinity (C. 12). Jesus Christ teaches us how to live in true communion following the model of the Holy Trinity. Jesus says: “The father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love” (Jn. 15:9).

The Company of the Daughters of Charity is international and its charism is incarnated and made visible in various cultures and countries throughout the world (C .6). So, members must pour out their energies into the fostering unity amidst diversity. They must rely on the power of the Holy Trinity in their prayer lives and examine their day-to-day efforts at community in relation to their mission. In other words, the sisters ought to reinforce their efforts at openness and acceptance of other sisters, regardless of age and ministry to strengthen the service to the poor.

Each sister has to be responsible and contribute the riches of her personality and culture to the building of community for the common good (C. 35). In the community life of the Daughters of Charity in the Eritrean Province, sisters do not necessarily hold the same values. Yet, this experience invites the sisters to appreciate and develop an atmosphere of listening to those with whom they differ.

The related literature reveals that there are also challenges and inconsistencies in the life of prayer, which cause fruitlessness (Cf. Jn. 15:5), the lack of balance (Sheer, 2014), anger linked to exhaustion (Agudo, 2003), harsh judgment, (Sheer, 2014), gossip, (Pope Francis, 2013), and individualism (EG 99). These things cause disunity in religious communities and the Daughters of Charity is not exception to this rule. This study directly investigates the challenges of common life that affect the witness and service of the poor in the Daughters of Charity.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3. Introduction**

This chapter discusses the design of the study including the plan for gathering and analyzing the data, the research design adopted to investigate the problem, the target population of the study, sampling design, the research instrument, and the validity and reliability of the instruments.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The study adopts mixed methods of the research design, which is both qualitative and quantitative. Particularly, it employs the convergent parallel method to create a triangulation of the study. This allows the researcher to use all the possible methods of finding information. A descriptive survey design is used in this study. Data is collected by administering questionnaires with open-ended and close-ended questions in order to sampled individuals. Studies like this aim to investigate attitudes and opinions quantitatively and qualitatively.

The same questions were administered in interview form to the sister-servants of local communities and to the elderly sisters. These research findings are useful because they identify the qualities necessary for authentic common life in order to witness to Christ's love to those they serve in the Eritrean Province.

#### **3.2 Target Population**

The target population for this study includes sisters in on-going formation and initial formation starting from those seminary sisters in the Eritrean Province of the Daughters of Charity.

The population of the Daughters of Charity in Eritrea constitutes of 70 sisters. The sample constitutes 58 sisters of different age groups.

These sisters from the Eritrean Province belong to various vocational groups. For example, there are groups for young sisters who are below 10 years of vocation including seminary sisters, sisters who are between 10-25 years of vocation, and sisters who are between 26 and 50 and above years of vocation. The stratification of the sisters into three levels is based on their experience in the community and the way the initial and on-going formation programs take place in the Province of the Daughters of Charity in Eritrea.

### **3.3 Description of the Sample and Sampling Procedure**

The researcher took a sample size of 58 respondents who consented to participate in the study. After stratifying the target population into three groups, the simple random sampling method was adopted in homogenous groups to offer each participant the opportunity of participating in the study and attain objectivity in the sampling of the population in the study. In the group below 10 years of vocation, there were 10 sisters. In the group from 10 to 25 years of vocation, there were 15 sisters. In the group from 26 to 50 years of vocation and above, 33 sisters were sampled.

Purposive sampling was used in selecting respondents for the interview guide from the three strata. The researcher interviewed sisters in charge of communities (Sister-Servants) and older sisters. She surveyed their feelings, perceptions, and attitudes towards community life and ask how this might witness to solidarity among the poor.

### **3.4 Description of Research Instruments**

To collect data, questionnaires were used and an interview guide was scheduled. The questionnaires contained close-ended and open-ended questions. Respondents communicated freely their opinions, views, suggestions and recommendations.

The researcher conducted one-to-one interviews with the Sister-Servants of local communities, and with elderly sisters. Some of the elderly sisters were unable to read and write. Upon encouraging respondents to express their feelings, data was collected providing the researcher with descriptions of experiences and perceptions of community life as it influences witness and solidarity with the poor. In addition, the research instruments solicited opinions and suggestions about how one might enhance community life. The information obtained from the interviews was transcribed and then analyzed.

### **3.5 Validity and Reliability of Instruments**

#### **3.5.1 Validity of the Instruments**

The validity of the instruments was ensured by using the content validity where experts in the field checked the items in the questionnaire and interview guide against the objectives of the study. Advisors and other authorities assisted in the validation of the instruments. After reviewing the instruments, the invalid ones were removed to ensure the effectiveness of the research instruments.

#### **3.5.2 Reliability of the Instruments**

Reliability of measurements can be measured to the degree that a particular measurement procedure provides similar outcomes over a number of repeated trials. It also refers to the

consistency of an instrument in yielding similar results at different times when the instrument is administered. This was accomplished this by pilot testing.

### **3.5.3 Pilot Testing of the Instruments**

After validating the research instruments, the researcher purposively selected one community of the Daughters of Charity in Nairobi for the purpose of piloting the instruments and ensuring reliability in measuring opinions regarding authentic community life of the Daughters of Charity as a tool to witness to solidarity among the poor. Data was collected, analysed and interpreted. The researcher thus knew the validity of her instruments before utilizing them on the target population.

### **3.6 Description of Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher obtained a permission paper and ensured the essential authorization of documents from the Institute of Spirituality and Religious Formation' administration and research advisors of Tangaza University College to conduct the study.

Then the researcher consulted the Visitatrix of the Province of Eritrea and Sister-Servants of the communities of the Daughters of Charity for permission to conduct the study in their respective local communities. Then the researcher, with the help of the Visitatrix, had a team of three sisters who helped with the process of questionnaire distribution and collection of the data.

In addition to this, the questionnaire papers were distributed to the targeted Sister-Servants and members of local communities. The researcher then collected data from the sisters. After collecting the questionnaire papers, the data was analyzed.

### **3.7 Description of Data Analysis Procedures**

After collecting data from the field, together conducting a literature review, the contents of the material were entered into the computer. The data pieces were inspected to identify misplaced items, spelling errors and any inconsistencies in the ideas given by the respondents.

The qualitative data was organized into themes and was coded. Then the information was synthesized according to each objective. A frequency count was made for every respondent who presented a similar argument. A descriptive survey was applied to report on the qualitative data.

The quantitative data was analyzed by the use of frequencies, tables, and percentages and pie charts. The data was presented in graphs and percentages in tables. The qualitative data was assessed, categorized into logical thematic areas constructed according to the study objectives and then coded. The data was interpreted in relation to the research questions. The analysis of the structured items was conducted through the use of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The unstructured items were analyzed according to major concepts and themes, and the results were presented using descriptive statistics.

### **3.8 Ethical Consideration**

Approval and clearance was obtained from the Institute of Spirituality and Religious Formation and Research Department of Tangaza University College. Permission was obtained from each respondent to conduct the study. Every candidate in the study was given an explanatory form about the study. The form included information about the purposes and benefits of the study, the confidentiality of information, the right to refuse or withdrawal from the survey, and other important information necessary for the study.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter attempted to present the research design which is a Mixed Methods' Research design, the target population, sample and sampling procedures, research instruments' description, validity and reliability of instruments, pilot testing, description of data collection and the data analysis procedure. The conclusions and recommendation are derived from the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and findings of the data obtained from the questionnaires administered to the Daughters of Charity in the Eritrean Province among the Sisters who were stratified into three parts according to their vocational years in the community life. The interview guide was administered to the elderly Sisters and a select number of Sister-Servants. The respondents' information was analysed. The researcher extracted important variables from the findings in accordance with the objectives of the study. These included the exploration of the relationship between the Trinitarian Model of community life and the witness to solidarity the relationship of the first Christians' Model of community life and the witness to solidarity with the poor. Finally, the study investigated the relationship between the Daughters of Charity's model of common life, its witness to solidarity with the poor, and the challenges of community life. Finally, the study presents suggested solutions to the challenges after analysis and discussion.

#### 4.2 Quantitative Questionnaires' Return Rate

In order to ensure the validation of the results, an analysis of the return rate of the questionnaires administered to the Sisters was performed according the number of questionnaires returned by the Daughters of Charity who were a part of the sample and focus groups.

**Table 1: Response Rate of the Quantitative Data**

Category	Sample	Response rate	Percentage
(1-10 Vocational Years)	10	9	90%
(11-25 Vocational Years)	15	14	93.3 %
(26 and above Vocation-Years)	33	22	66.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>77.6%</b>

Table 1 presents the results of the information of the quantitative data. A total number of 58 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents among the Daughters of Charity in Eritrea. Out of the 58 questionnaires administered, 45 of the respondents filled out and returned them, which provided a response rate of 77.6%. As Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) contend, a return rate above 70% is very good.

The first category shows contained a sample group of 10 sisters with between 1 and 10 years of vocation in the community; the collected responses were 90%. The second category which includes sisters in vocation from 11 to 25 contained a sample group of 15. The collected responses rate was 93.3%. The third category covers those sisters who are 26 and above in vocation. This sample group was 33. The response rate was 66.7%. Researchers consider a 77.6% response rate adequate for the quantitative analysis and the reporting of findings.

**Table 2: Response Rate for the Qualitative Data**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Focus-group</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
(1-10 Vocational years)	5	5	16.7%
(11-25 Vocational years)	8	8	26.7%
(26 and above vocational years)	17	17	56.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 outlines the response rate of the qualitative data collected from the focus groups. A total of 30 sisters were selected to participate in the focus group to gather the qualitative information. The respondents were from three categories: Sisters in the first category (1-10 vocational years) were 16.7% the second, (11-25 vocational years) 53.3%, and the last (26 and above vocational-years) 51.5%. Generally, 100% responded to the open-ended questions. This was adequate for qualitative analysis. The open-ended responses enabled the researcher to capture the

attitudes and opinions of the sisters about the relationship between community life models and the witness to solidarity among the poor.

### 4.3 Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were examined. Sisters were categorized into the vocational years of the members in the Company of the Daughters of Charity in order to understand particular experiences of common life in the community.

#### 4.3.1 Demographic Information about the Daughters of Charity in Eritrea

The study sought to interview the entire population of the sisters regarding common life in the community. The demographic information of the sisters is categorized according to the years of experience in the community as displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3: Demographic Information of the Population**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
(1-10 Vocational years)	12	17.1%
(11-25 Vocational years)	18	25.7 %
(26 and above Vocational years)	40	57.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Table 3 shows that 17.1% of the Daughters of Charity in Eritrea are sisters in initial formation, consisting of between 1 and 10 years of vocation. This implies that there is an experience disparity among the Daughters of Charity in the Eritrean Province. A little less than one-fifth of the sisters have lived in the community for a relatively short time. Sisters whose years of vocation in the community are between 11 and 25 constitute 25.7%, Sisters in this stage of the vocation are more than those who are in the first category. The third category constitute 57.1%,

that is, the largest number of sisters. These sisters have 26 years and above of vocation. These sisters have the longest experience of community life. The responses of the sisters regarding common life is certainly influenced by the number of years lived in community.

#### 4.3.2 Demographic Information about the Sisters Targeted

The study sought to obtain demographic information from the respondents in order to obtain information about their experiences of common life in the community. The demographic information for the respondents indicates their years of experience in the community as members of the Company of the Daughters of Charity as displayed in Table 4 below:

**Table 4: Demographic Information of the Sampled Sisters**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
(1-10 Vocational years)	10	17.2%
(11-25 Vocational years)	15	25.9%
(26 and above vocational years)	33	56.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 shows that 17.2% of the sisters in Eritrea were in initial formation with between 1 and 10 of vocation. This implies that there is some disparity in the experience of community life among the Daughters of Charity in the Eritrean Province. There is a small number of sisters who have lived in the community for a relatively short time. Sisters with 11 to 25 years of vocation constitute 25.9%. They are more than those who are in the first category. The third category constitutes the number of the sisters with 26 and above years of vocation. This group constitutes 56.9% of the total group, which is the largest group. This may imply some disparity in respect to experience of community life among members in the Province of Eritrea.

#### **4.4 The Relationship between the Models of the Community Life of the Daughters of Charity in the Eritrean Province and Witnessing to Solidarity with the Poor**

The researcher tried to understand the correlations among the Trinitarian Community Life Model, the first Christian community life model, and the vitality of the Daughters of Charity Community Life Model who wish to witness to solidarity with the poor. This is the reason that the Daughters of Charity offer themselves to God. When sisters were asked about the influence of community life upon their witness and solidarity with the poor, they answered that these realities go hand in hand. Their views were summarised in the following paragraphs.

Living in great union and harmony in the community ensures the success of the service of the poor and the witness to solidarity. Living together in great union of heart and mind, expressing a unified purpose and great joy, living in mutual trust, respect and acceptance – all of these things edify the poor more than what the sisters do materially for the poor. This kind of life witnesses to the love of God present in their communities that is transmitted to the poor. When sisters manifest God's love in concrete ways, the Company of the Daughters of Charity provides better service to the poor (Coste, 2004).

Disunion, the lack of sincere dialogue, hatred, disrespect, mistrust and an unhappy community life affects negatively the sisters' witness to solidarity with the poor. When they cannot witness to solidarity they thus lack among themselves the ability to help the poor. In fact, their lives in common scandalize the poor who observe them, instead of the witness to solidarity, even though they meet the material needs of the poor, they fail to gain the souls of the poor for God. Thus, there is a strong link between common life in the community and the witness to solidarity among the poor. To prove this reality, an investigation was conducted according to the three objectives of the research. The following table summarises the responses of the sisters of the

Daughters of Charity on the relationship between models of community life and their witness to solidarity among the poor.

**Table: 5 Relationship between Models of Community Life and the Witness to Solidarity**

<b>Community life' Models</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Trinitarian Community life	45	100%
First Christians' Community life	45	100%
The DC's Community life	45	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 5 shows the percentage of the target group who responded to the questionnaires. The survey was conducted to investigate the relationship between the three models of community life and the witness to solidarity among the poor. 45 out of 45 (100%) sisters responded to the questions related to how the Trinitarian Community Life Model affects the service of the poor. 45 out of 45 (100%) also responded to the questions related to the First Christians' Community Life Model and the witness to solidarity. 45 out of 45 (100%) respondents also gave their responses on the relationship between the Daughters of Charity Community Life Model and the witness to solidarity with the poor.

#### **4.4.1 The Relationship between the Trinitarian Community Life Model and Witnessing to Solidarity with the Poor**

The first research question investigated the relationship between the Trinitarian Community Life Model and the witness to solidarity with the poor. St. Vincent De Paul and St. Louise De Marillac, the founders of the Daughters of Charity wished the sisters to be one in heart and act in the same spirit. The local communities of the Daughters of Charity are modelled on the Holy Trinity. It is God who calls and assembles the Daughters of Charity to live a community life to

fulfil their specific mission of service to Christ in the poor (C. 32, a). To examine this reality today, the researcher gathered information for the study.

**Table: 6 Experience of Mutual Love and Care in Imitation of the Holy Trinity  
Encouragement for Witnessing to Solidarity**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly agree	19	42.2%
Agree	24	53.3%
Neutral	2	4.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 6 shows that 42.2% of the respondents strongly agreed and 53.3% agreed that mutual love and care in imitation of the Holy Trinity encourages them for the witness to solidarity with the poor. 4.4% of the responses were neutral. These sisters may be those in the initial formation who have limited experience of living in the community and serving the poor.

When the Sisters were asked to state the signs of the presence of the Holy Trinity in their respective communities that assist them to witness to solidarity with the poor, the majority said that despite their weaknesses and faults in community life, their being called and assembled by God to live a common life aims at a better service of Christ in the poor. To accomplish the purpose of the Daughters of Charity, they follow the same rules and Constitutions in the community. The General Director of the Daughters of Charity, Griffin (2013), states that as each divine person in the Holy Trinity contributes fully to the accomplishment of a single goal, the Daughters of Charity too work together for a common goal, i.e., the service of the poor. Sisters work together, live together, and pray together. As sisters, they join in a common charism and a common way of life to support one another. These are clear signs of the presence of the Holy Trinity in their midst which enable them to witness to God's love in the poor.

Respondents also pointed to mutual care, love, forbearance, dedication for the common good, respect, mutual forgiveness, making sacrifices for the good of their respective communities, and bearing with one another patiently as some of the visible signs of the presence of the Holy Trinity in their midst and witness to solidarity with the poor. According to Griffin (2013), the life of the Holy Trinity is the primary symbol of a life of unity as well as the expression of the divine life in absolute oneness and love. At the very heart of God, there is an intimate communion of the Three Persons bound in love. Taking the Trinitarian life as a model of a life in common is worthwhile for the Company of the Daughters of Charity.

The respondents also stated that it is from their harmony, love, deep prayer life and mutual acceptance that their service to the poor is strengthened. When encouraged and assisted by one another in their communities, they render effective and joyful service to the poor. In describing the reality of communion in the community life, Griffin (2013) holds that the imitation of the Holy Trinity binds the sisters together in mutual love for one another. The Father and the Son are bound by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love. The Daughters of Charity too are not simply bound by a common vision, but by the love which they have for one another. These views imply that there is a strong relationship between living the Trinitarian Community Life Model and the witness to solidarity among the poor.

Some respondents pointed out that they have challenges of union which make them unhappy with one another and inhibit them from the witness to solidarity with the poor. Sometimes, the respondents experience disunion in their communities. They fail to see any sign of God's presence in the local community. As a consequence, they fail to witness to solidarity and joy with one another and the poor. In order to be modelled on the life of the Holy Trinity as a community, the sisters must embrace a deep prayer life to be able to witness to solidarity among the poor.

**Table 7: Acceptance of each Sister as a Gift and Appreciation of Differences in the Community**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Missing	2	4.4%
Strongly agree	15	33.3%
Agree	27	60%
Neutral	1	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 7 shows that 4.4% of the sisters' responses were missing. 33.3 % of the respondents strongly agreed, and 60% agreed that they accepted each sister as a gift from God and appreciated the differences. Most of the sisters in their respective communities accept and appreciate one another highly. The Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity (C. 62), underlines the importance of appreciation. It states that the sisters should build a loving community and grow in their mutual appreciation; they must build a trusting atmosphere among themselves. By living in great love and mutual appreciation, the Daughters of Charity go to the poor with joy and witness to the joy they experience in the community as a family of God with the poor.

Their annual consecration to God through vows also ensures their bond with the Triune God, which makes them live in unity with one another and serve the poor in joy. They are strengthened by the graces they receive from God as it was confirmed by their responses in Table 8 below.

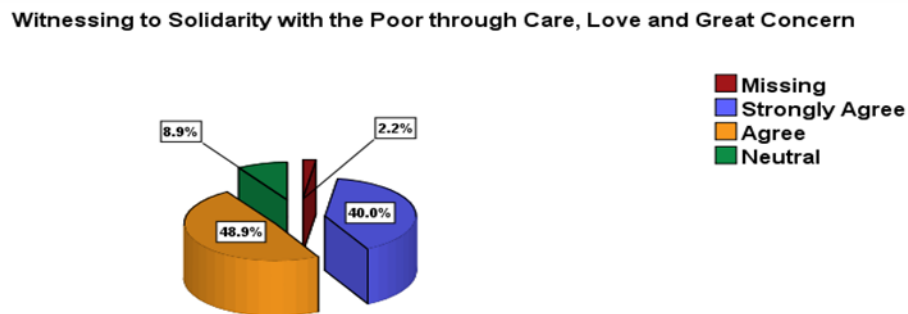
**Table 8: Annual Consecration through vows for the Joyful Service of the Poor**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Missing	2	4.4%
Strongly agree	34	75.6%
Agree	7	15.6%
Neutral	2	4.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 8 indicates that missing were 4.4% of the responses regarding the significance of the annual consecration of the members through the evangelical vows and joyful service to the poor. 75.6% respondents strongly agreed, 15.6% of the respondents agreed that their annual consecration to God through vows assists them to witness to solidarity with the poor in an undivided way. Another 4.4% of the respondents' answers were neutral. Among other factors, these responses might refer to the sisters in formation who did not yet reached five years of their vocation and who did not make their first vows.

The majority of the respondents agreed that their consecration to God through vows assist them to render joyful service to God with an undivided heart. They described their views by saying that they serve the poor more completely through the self-offering to God through evangelical counsels and life in common as sisters who serve Christ in the poor. Before being servants of the poor their belonging to God comes first. To follow Christ and carry out His mission, they choose to live totally and radically the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, which make them available for the service of Christ in the poor (C. 8, b). Service of the poor is the fourth vow of the Daughters of Charity. Through their consecration to God, the Daughters of Charity share in the life of the Triune God because evangelical counsels are gifts of the Holy Trinity to the Church (VC 16).

Because of their constant consecration to God as total gift of self, the sisters serve the poor in joy to fulfil their fourth vow, the service of Christ in those who are poor. Self-consecration to God gives the sisters God’s own heart that has a special place for the poor (EG 197). This implies that the annual consecration motivates the sisters to fulfil their mission to witness to solidarity among the poor. This reality is expressed in the respondents’ views depicted by the figure below.



**Figure 2**

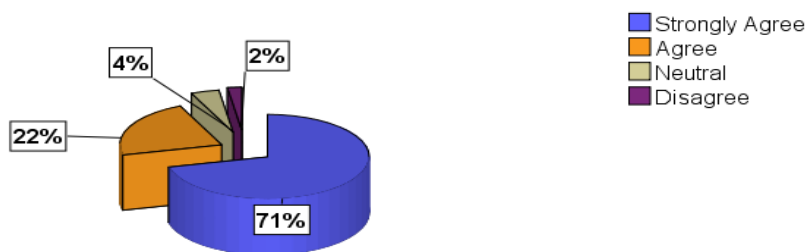
Figure 2 contains the results of the research when the sisters were asked about the witness to solidarity with the poor through their care, love and concern for the poor. 2.2% were missed responses, 40% strongly agreed, 48.9% agreed while 8.9% were neutral. This demonstrates that the majority of the sisters serve the poor with care, love and great concern. To serve the poor well in virtues indicates that the sisters are fortified by special graces, which they receive from God every year during the renewal of their vows. The renewal of their vows enables them to serve the poor with great enthusiasm and faith while overcoming inevitable challenges (C. 28, a).

**Table 9: Overcoming Differences in Behaviour with Patience, Faith and Charity for  
Better Service to the Poor**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Missing	1	2.2%
Strongly agree	19	42.2%
Agree	23	51.1%
Neutral	2	4.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 9 indicates that 2.2% of the responses were missing. 42.2% strongly agreed, 51.1% agreed that they overcome their differences in behaviour with patience, faith and charity. This shows that the sisters bear with one another well. In conformity with this reality, Griffin (2013) points out the fact that the sisters' differing backgrounds and cultures contribute to the richness of their lives together; their differing backgrounds do not separate them from one another. This sense of unity characterises their respect for one another. 4.4% of the responses were neutral, which means that they may be in the initial stages of formation such as the seminary sisters or those who were sent on mission to communities recently. When learning from the poor, most of the sisters pointed out that they learn also faith, patience, bearing with difficulties, and humility. By implication, the poor on their part show the sisters how to bear with one another. The results in the figure below show that the poor are really evangelizers of the sisters by their faith, love and hope in God. They challenge them to grow in those virtues.

**Being Evangelized and Challenged by the Poor in respect to Faith, Love and Hope**



**Figure 3**

Figure 3 above displays that 71% strongly agreed and 22% agreed that the sisters are evangelized and challenged by the poor in respect to the virtues of faith, hope and love. 4% are neutral. Those sisters expressing a neutral may be those who are not engaged in the direct service of the poor. When 2% disagreed with the statement, these respondents also said that not all the poor teach the sisters good values. Some of the poor are troublesome, deceitful and cunning and affect the sisters' innocence. They give them cause for suspicion and doubt when approaching them for service. Even the poor who exhibit such behaviour teach them to be prudent and discerning when identifying the poorest ones. According to the sisters' responses, the poor are 'Masters and Lords' to them as Daughters of Charity since they represent Christ who identified himself with them; they carry in themselves the person of Christ (C. 16, c).

Those who agreed that the poor are their evangelizers were high in number. When the sisters were asked what they learn from the poor, the majority replied that from the poor they learn gratitude, generosity, humility, trusting in the providence of God, and being remaining satisfied with the little they have. Some of the sisters also pointed out that the poor teach them patience, hopeful waiting and forbearance with challenges and crosses in life.

Taking the community life of the Holy Trinity as a model for consecrated people and for the Daughters of Charity would seem natural since human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and redeemed through Jesus' incarnation (Kaitholil, 2014). So, the Daughters of Charity are called to honour the unity and diversity of the life of the Holy Trinity in their community living by being united in the same spirit nourished through the word of God, liturgical celebrations, and praying in private and in common (C. 19). The Church states that consecrated people witness to the Trinitarian life in our effort to live our lives in and with Christ. Pope John Paul II (VC 21), says that consecrated persons strive to live in Christ with all their heart and give eloquent witness to the Trinity.

To live a life of the Holy Trinity demands constant awareness of its presence; the more someone seeks God in everything, the greater becomes the mystery of God's presence and love in its life (McBride, 2005). The responses of the sisters reflect their consecration to God through witness to solidarity with the poor. The Trinitarian Community Model and the witness to solidarity with the poor are intrinsically linked.

#### **4.4.2 The Relationship between the First Christian Community Life Model and Witnessing to Solidarity with the Poor**

The second research question investigates the relationship between the First Christians' Community Life Model and the witness to solidarity with the poor. In the community of the apostles, Jesus was the leader and model of the community, the poor found acceptance, respect and their true dignity (McVerry, 2008). The community of the apostles was a foundation for the community of the first Christians, inaugurated with the coming of the Holy Spirit. The life of that community and the experience of complete sharing with Christ have always been the model for the Church (VC 41). The Daughters of Charity as daughters of the Church take the model of the first

Christian Community as their model of community life for their mission. A number of questions were created to investigate this objective.

**Table 10: Nurturing personal and communal prayer life by each member**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Missing	1	2.2%
Strongly agree	22	48.9%
Agree	21	46.7%
Neutral	1	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 10 indicates that 2.2% of the sisters’ responses were missing. 48.9% strongly agreed and 46.7% agreed that each member in their respective communities nurture personal and community prayer. 2.2% were neutral regarding the statement. The majority of the sisters live their prayer life with great care understanding that they receive strength from it. Prayer is the life-giving force from which everything flows and from which their life and ministry draw their nourishment and motivation (Widdicombe, 2001). The sisters seem to have grasped the vitality of prayer life. According to the responses, the sisters nurture prayer life as a great means of building up a loving community life.

When the sisters were asked to give their suggestions for overcoming the challenges of unity in their respective communities, the respondents proposed as solutions the following: cultivating a deep relationship with God through communal and personal prayer, participating in the sacraments actively, praying for one another as a family of God, and meditating on the word of God especially passages that pertain to the unity among members. Widdicombe (2001), says that it

is the community's concern to consider keeping itself spiritually alive for prayer is the core of consecrated life and the witness to the life of Christ.

**Table 11: Participation in the Holy Eucharist with Watchfulness and Faithfulness**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Missing	3	6.7%
Strongly agree	22	48.9%
Agree	18	40%
Neutral	1	2.2%
Disagree	1	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 11 indicates that 6.7% of the results are missing. 48.9% strongly agreed, 40% agreed that they participate in the Holy Eucharist with watchfulness and faithfulness. 2.2% of the responses were neutral and 2.2% disagreed. This implies that they fail to participate in the Holy Eucharist with watchfulness and attentiveness. However, the majority of the sisters agreed that they participate in the Holy Eucharist with great devotion. When proposing solutions for the challenges of community life, most of them focused on participating actively in the Holy Sacraments, especially in the Holy Eucharist as one of the major means of growing in union with one another and with the Lord. The sacraments enable them to be witnesses of the love of God among the poor (C. 19, b).

The majority of the Sisters responded that they are watchful and faithful in their preparation and reception of the Holy Eucharist since they consider it one of the greatest means of building up communities where God reigns in them and they are able to do everything good. For Christ said that without Him we can do nothing (Cf. Jn.15:5). In his conference to the Daughters of Charity,

St. Vincent says that a Daughter of Charity who has made good communions do everything else well because the sister bears God in her heart. She does everything with the view of the love of God (Coste, 2004).

**Table 12: Each Sister’s Generous Sharing of Gifts and Life in Imitation of the First Christians**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly Agree	11	24.4%
Agree	26	57.8%
Neutral	7	15.6%
Disagree	1	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 12 shows that 24.4% strongly agreed and 57.8% agreed that each sister in her local community generously shares what she has in imitation of the community life of the first Christians. This indicates that more than half of the sisters share their gifts and their lives in their respective communities like the first Christian communities. 15.6% were neutral and 2.2% disagreed with this idea. This implies that there are challenges to unity in some communities.

When the sisters were asked to mention challenges in their communities, they listed insincere dialogue, the absence of mutual love, mistrust and the lack of care for one another, inattentiveness to the other, the lack of acceptance of the other – all of which affects negatively life in community and the witness to solidarity among the poor. There are considerable challenges of community life, which the sisters need to address. Respondents mentioned quarrels, abusive words, prejudices, judgemental attitudes, misunderstandings, self-interest, the disregard for community plans and the common good, and failure to keep common rules. All of these things create

unhappiness among members and hurt community life. They weaken our witness of love among the poor.

Alois (2015), recommends that the sisters should renew their minds and attitudes; they must decide not to fear their fellow sisters. They must not judge nor feel that they are being judged; they must not interpret always things negatively. Above all, they must never refuse common communion.

The majority of the respondents agreed that each sister in their local communities consistently shares what they have and do so generously. This mutual sharing mirrors the life of the first Christians where all believers shared possessions. By this practice, they increased in number each day (Acts. 2: 42-47).

**Table 13: Witnessing to God's Love with the Poor through Sincere Fraternal Love**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Missing	1	2.2%
Strongly agree	7	15.6%
Agree	32	71.1%
Neutral	4	8.9%
Disagree	1	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 13 indicates that 2.2% of the responses were missing. 15.6% of the respondents strongly agreed and 71.1% agreed that they were the witness to God’s love among the poor through their sincere common love in their communities. This kind of life was a clear sign of the Kingdom of God for the community of the apostles. The Kingdom of God is a place where

everyone is equally loved, respected and cared for; a place where no one feels rejected, unwanted, unloved or looked down upon (Sobrino, 1993).

When the sisters were asked to give their opinions about how the values of sincere love and mutual respect in their communities affected their witness to solidarity, they said that living in great loving union made their community life like the communities of the first Christians. Love and mutual respect witnesses to God's loving presence among them. They also said that sincere common love in the community enables them to enjoy the blessings of common life. Within sincere common communion, the poor are served with enthusiasm and creativity. Living common love in the community is the first witness of God's love; love for the members of the community demonstrates that love begins at home. The poor who are served by each sister when love begins at home. Loving common life is the witness of an exemplary life as the Constitutions state. While seeking to make God known to the poor; the sisters proclaim the gospel to them, explicitly wherever possible, but always through the witness of their lives (C. 24, b).

Sincere love comes from God through the Holy Spirit (Cf. Gal.5:22). Since true love is a gift from God, the sisters give their hearts to God (Proverbs 23:26), He will give them a clean heart, a pure heart, a faithful heart, a loving heart, a gentle heart, and a heart like the heart of Jesus (Gogan, 2008). Jesus commands us to love God above all and to love others as ourselves (Cf. Mt. 22:37-40). It is this love that the sisters strive to practice with one another and with the poor. The respondents observed that through their acts of loving service, the poor came to know and to love God. The poor praised Him and learned how to live honestly, lovingly, happily and truthfully. In this way, sincere and loving common life in the community becomes a key witness to solidarity.

Witnessing to sincere love is affirmed in the word of God when Jesus says: "Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father"

(Mt. 5:16). By implication, the sisters' sincere love for one another and the poor manifests the love of God within their communities and shines as a witness to solidarity among the poor. This confirms that loving common life in community has a strong relationship with the witness to solidarity among the poor.

**Table 14: Living Christ's Life through Meditating on the Word of God**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Missing	2	4.4%
Strongly agree	7	15.6%
Agree	31	68.9%
Neutral	3	6.7%
Disagree	2	4.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 14 displays the sisters' responses about living the life of Christ through meditating on the word of God. 4.4% were missed responses, 15.6% strongly agreed, 68.9% agreed that they live the life of Christ through meditating on the word of God. 6.7% were neutral responses and 4.4% disagreed with the statement; this disagreement implies that they failed to read intently the word of God regularly.

The majority of the respondents agreed that they live the life of Christ through meditation on the word of God. This implies that in their lives the word of God has a special place that helps them know Christ and his manners of living; to know Christ means that we live a common life and serve the poor. The first Christians were united in praising God by breaking bread and sharing what they had (Cf. Acts 2:43-47). The disciples were friends of Jesus Christ because they were able to listen to His words and were sent on a mission. For the Daughters of Charity too, listening

to the word of God in its various forms, meditating on it privately and communally leads them to belonging totally to God and it makes them faithful servants of Christ to the poor (Delgado, 2014).

Praying with and meditating on the word of God leads sisters to love one another as Jesus loved them. Scriptures helps them put into practice the charity of Christ, which urges them (Schoepfer, 2015). The apostles lived with Jesus, knew him, and learned His manner of serving others. After teaching and forming them, Jesus sends the apostles on a mission to do the same as He did with them (Cf. Mt. 10:5-15). In the same manner, the Daughters of Charity come to know who Jesus is by meditating on the word of God and by attentive listening. They act in their own name and in the name of all humanity whose joys, hopes, sorrows, and anguish they bear (C. 19, c).

The sharing of the sisters about their community life in the imitation of the first Christian Community Life Model affects their witness to solidarity and illustrates that there is a strong relationship between the early church and witness to solidarity among the poor.

#### **4.4.3 The Relationship between the Community Life Model of the Daughters of Charity and the Witness to Solidarity among the Poor**

The third research objective investigated the correlation between the values of the Community Life Model of the Daughters of Charity and the witness to solidarity among the poor. The investigation was based upon the research questions corresponding to specific research objectives.

Since its beginning, the Company of the Daughters of Charity has cherished community life for the better service of the poor (C. 32, a). Recognising its benefits in the life and service of the sisters, common life in community is always given priority in view of the mission: the service of Christ in the poor. Based on this foundation, the researcher studied the correlation between the

Community Life Model of the Daughters of Charity and the witness to solidarity among the poor. To explore this relationship, the researcher administered several questions and examined a variety of findings as shown below:

**Table 15: Imitating Christ in Simplicity, Humility and Charity in Daily Life**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Missing	1	2.2%
Strongly agree	10	22.2%
Agree	28	62.2%
Neutral	4	8.9%
Disagree	2	4.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 15 indicates the responses of the sisters on the imitation of Christ in simplicity, humility and charity in their daily lives. 2.2% were missed. Whereas 22.2% strongly agreed and 62.2% agreed, hence, most of the sisters agreed that they were imitating Christ in simplicity, humility and charity in their daily lives. 8.9% were neutral to the statement; these sisters may have been among those who were newly admitted to the community and had not yet experienced deeply the life of the Daughters of Charity and their virtues. 4.4% disagreed to the statement, which implied that these sisters may have been those who were facing challenges of union in their community lives.

Simplicity, humility and charity are the evangelical virtues of the Daughters of Charity; they are the path along which they allow themselves to be led by the Holy Spirit. Contemplating those virtues in Christ, which will draw them close to the most deprived, the sisters endeavour to make them part of their lives. Since they have to be identified with the poor in the imitation of

Christ who is the supreme servant of those who are neglected, the Daughters need these virtues (C. 13).

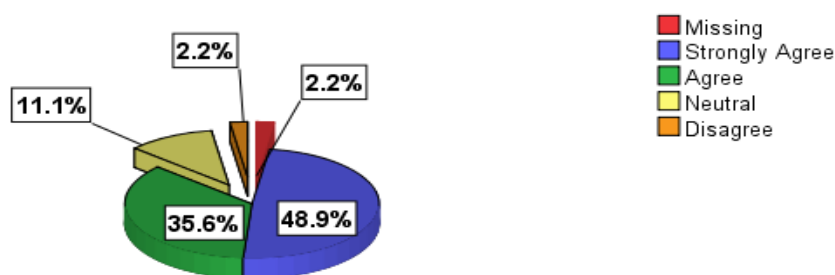
St. Vincent De Paul wanted the Company of the Daughters of Charity to be established on the foundation of humility; to be conformed as closely as possible to the manner of the life of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He also stresses on the Company's spirit consisting of the love of God, the love of the poor, love of one another, humility and simplicity. A Daughter of Charity should have these three virtues lest she dies (Coste, 2006).

Living out the virtues of simplicity, humility and charity in their respective communities and assisting one another leads one to advance towards God and serve the poor with the same virtues (C. 32, b). When the sisters were asked about the relationship of community life and service of the poor, all the respondents pointed out that there is an important connection between community life and service of the poor. When describing their views, they said that they give what they have and treat the poor as they treat one another.

This implies that if they live in simplicity, humility and charity with one another, the service the poor becomes easier. The majority of the respondents said that their love for one another, the practice of the spirit of simplicity, charity and humility, the deep knowledge and observance of their Constitutions constitute the backbone of their service of the poor. St. Vincent stressed that God wants the Daughters of Charity to devote themselves to the practice of humility, simplicity and charity (C. 18). Thus, the sisters are convinced that the desire of St. Vincent is correct. In the practice of these virtues, the Daughters of Charity become daughters of the same heavenly Father and servants of Christ in those who are poor. They must cultivate the spirit of a servant and imitate the founders and the first sisters who witnessed to the love of God through their exemplary life of holiness.

Alois (2015) said that in community, the sisters ought to manifest sisterly simplicity and care by renewing their attitudes and feelings towards others. He also holds that the poor that the sisters serve are not only those in the mission places but are those who live with them in the community; other sisters are also those who need their help. After manifesting goodness and rendering simple, humble and charitable service to members of the community, the sisters are able to do the same for the poor.

**Because of Mutual Love in Community life Serving the Poor with Compassion, Humility and Simplicity**



**Figure 4**

Figure 4 shows the results of the respondents about mutual life within the community as a means of serving the poor with compassion, humility and simplicity. 2.2% were missed responses, 48.9% strongly agreed and 35.6% agreed that because of their loving common life in the community, they serve the poor with compassion, humility and simplicity. 11.1% were neutral, whereas 2.2% disagreed to the statement, which implies that they did not have the experience of a loving community that could enable them to serve the poor in compassion, humility and simplicity through the imitation of Christ, the true servant of the poor (Cf. Mt. 11: 25-30).

Those who agreed with the statement were the majority. This demonstrates that sisters who live in loving communities express the love they mutually enjoy with one another, which makes

them loving, compassionate and humble servants of the poor following the example of Jesus Christ.

**Table 16: Happy to be a member of the community**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Missing	1	2.2%
Strongly agree	24	53.3%
Agree	17	37.8%
Neutral	3	6.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 16 shows the attitude of the sisters who report that they are happy in their respective communities. 2.2% are missed responses, 53.3% strongly agreed and 37.8% agreed that they are happy being members of the communities to which they belong. 6.7% are neutral to the statement. The reason may be that they are new to the community or newly transferred to the community when responding to the statement. The majority responded that they were happy in the communities where they were. This happiness enables them to witness to the joy and love of God among the poor as expressed by Pope Francis in number talks and documents (EG 1).

The joy experienced among the sisters was that which comes from encountering Jesus. Since Jesus loves human beings infinitely, they receive peace and joy from Him. Experiencing the love of God in their communities, the sisters in turn express it to others (Varkey, 2010). The joy of the sisters also comes from accepting one another in faith and with simple hearts that enables them to bear joyful witness to Jesus Christ and continue strengthening one another with a view of the mission (C. 9).

**Table 17: Eagerness to Give and Receive Forgiveness**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Missing	1	2.2%
Strongly agree	19	42.2%
Agree	24	53.3%
Neutral	1	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 17 indicates that the sisters are eager to give and receive forgiveness from their sisters in the community. 2.2% are missing responses, 42.2% strongly agreed, 53.3% agreed and 2.2% are neutral; those who may be newly admitted members in the communities. The majority of the respondents agreed that they are eager to forgive and receive forgiveness from their sisters in their local communities. This is perhaps the reason that they serve the poor with compassion and love. According to O’Leary (2015) forgiveness is a means of liberating oneself and becoming strong and be happy. When someone forgives, the human heart is healed and one begins to live the authentic life. Love flows to others.

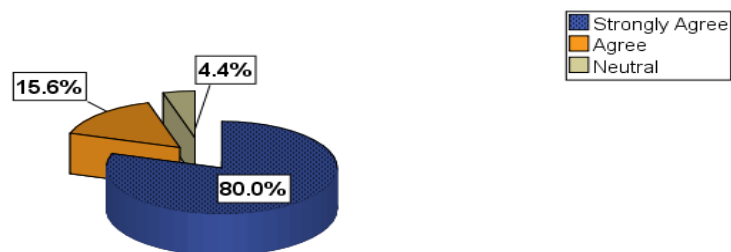
When the sisters were asked to describe ways that they might further build and strengthen life in community, they stressed the vitality of forgiveness among things. Aggressive behaviour occurs when members harbour grudges and resentments. Anger is a common emotion among the prisoners. Prisoner are commonly filled with rage no matter how much they wish to cover it up (Agudo, 2003). Resentments and the desire for revenge drain the lifeblood of a community. Those who cannot forgive and harbour resentments, cannot be happy. Resentment is a cancer that consumes the soul (O’Leary, 2015).

When discussing the benefits of forgiveness, Martin (2014) also says that forgiveness frees the person from limited beliefs and attitudes: Forgiveness is a choice and in choosing to forgive, one chooses to be free from past hurts and fulfil one's true potential. Once the mental and emotional energies are freed by the release of old grudges, they are able to apply these energies to the creation of a better and more fulfilling community life.

The respondents also stated the failure to forgive, means serving the poor with gloomy faces. Forgiveness is necessary to truly witness to joy. One can serve the poor materially while doing so in sadness. Martin (2014) states that the one who fails to forgive finds his inner life energy trapped in resentments, anger, pain, and suffering; these issues limit one's energy. Borthierie (2015) also says that giving and receiving forgiveness makes fraternity possible. Forgiveness prevents hurts and tensions among the Daughters of Charity from breeding bitterness and resentment. If a Daughter of Charity fails to forgive her sisters, she lacks energy to witness to authentic joy.

For this reason a Daughter of Charity must forgive. She must have joy in her heart to witness to solidarity among the poor. She must be the bearer of joy, love, tenderness, and hope for the poor. The following figure demonstrates this point:

**Beyond Material Needs, Expectation of the Poor for Love, Tenderness and Hope from the Sisters**



**Figure 5**

Figure 5 demonstrates the findings, i.e., beyond material needs, the poor expect love, tenderness, and hope from the sisters. 80% of the respondents strongly agreed and 15.6% agreed that beyond material needs, the poor expect from them love, tenderness, and hope. 4.4% responded neutrally. These respondents were probably sisters in the seminary who were not yet sent on mission to serve the poor.

The majority of the respondents agreed to the statement. In order to meet this expectation, the sisters need to express love, hope and tenderness to one another. These virtues come from an interior life where a relationship with God leads them to the service of the poor (EG 2).

**Table 18: Openness to Sincere Dialogue in Local Communities**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Missing	2	4.4%
Strongly agree	16	35.6%
Agree	22	48.9%
Neutral	5	11.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 18 demonstrates that the respondents are open to sincere dialogue in their respective local communities. 4.4% were missed, 35.6% strongly agreed and 48.9% agreed that they are open to sincere dialogue in their communities. 11.1% were neutral. The responses for some respondents are unknown while some may have been recently admitted to community.

The majority of the respondents agreed that they are open to sincere dialogue. Dialogue and discussion in local communities is encouraged. The sisters pointed out that sincere dialogue is a great means of solving community challenges. The Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity

stresses the importance of sincere dialogue. In sincere dialogue, the sisters share experiences; differences are minimized and resolutions to important matters are sought (C. 34).

Sincere dialogue between the sister-servants and members of their respective communities is another element that strengthens common life. It is also a source of dynamism in the life of prayer, apostolic sharing and discernment of spirits. Dialogue fosters the investigation of the sisters in the vision of faithfulness to their Charism and shared mission (C. 36, a). So, sincere dialogue among the sisters fosters union in relation to the witness to solidarity among the poor.

**Table 19: Through Faith, Seeing Christ in the Sisters of the same Community**

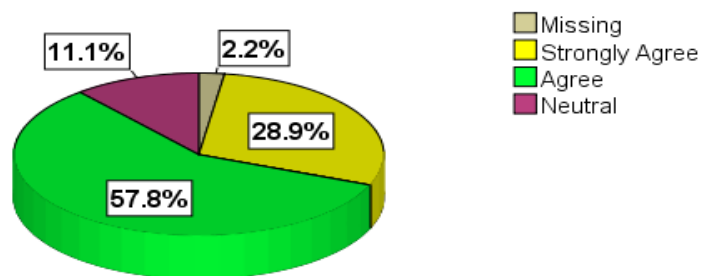
<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Missing	2	4.4%
Strongly agree	15	33.3%
Agree	24	53.3%
Neutral	3	6.7%
Disagree	1	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 19 summarizes the sisters' responses regarding faith and seeing Christ in the faces of the other sisters of the community. 4.4% of the respondents missed the answer. 33.3% strongly agreed and 24% agreed that through faith, they see Christ in other sisters of their community. 6.7% were neutral to the statement. These respondents may have been those who were new to the community and the teaching of the founders. 2.2% disagreed with the statement, which implies that these respondents failed to nurture the spiritual life. Without the life of prayer, it is impossible to cultivate faith and a perspective that can truly nourish the mission.

The majority of the respondents agree that through faith, they see the face of Christ in the faces of the sisters of their communities. The sisters are growing in faith, which enables them to see God in one another and in the poor. This is fulfilling the new commandment of Christ of loving one another as Christ loves them. Their love for one another enables them to witness to the world that they are Disciples of Christ (Cf. Jn. 13:34-35).

According to the respondents, they live out the faith by seeing Christ in one another; they are able to see the poor as their 'Lords and Masters' who represent the face of Christ despite the individuality of each person and the changing situations. In faith, the sisters see Christ in the poor, and they see the poor in Christ (C. 10, b). The respondents affirmed the ideal of treating the poor as 'Lords and Masters.' Their responses are captured in the following figure:

**Treating the Poor as 'Lords and Masters' following the Teaching of the Founders**



**Figure 6**

Figure 6 displays the results of the responses about treating the poor as 'Lords and Masters,' following the teaching and example of St. Louise and St. Vincent. 2.2% were missed responses, 28.9% strongly agreed and 57.8% agreed that following the teachings and example of their founders, they treat the poor as 'Lords and Masters.' 11.1% responded neutrally. This respondents may not have access to direct service of the poor and may also be in the initial stages of formation.

From the responses, the majority agreed that they treat the poor as ‘Lords and Masters,’ following the teachings of St. Vincent De Paul and St. Louise De Marillac. To consider the poor as ‘Lords and Masters’ requires great faith; a faith life rooted in the incarnation that enables one to see Christ in the poor. When one sees Christ in the poor, one has the humility to learn from them.

**Learning from the Poor Gratitude and Trusting in God's Providence**



**Figure 7**

Figure 7 shows that 76.7% respondents strongly agreed and 23.3% agreed that they learn gratitude and trust in God’s providence from the poor. Apart from representing Christ for the Daughters of Charity, the poor are their ‘masters.’ They teach the sisters about a life of thankfulness and reliance upon God’s providence. When the sisters were asked to state what they learn from the poor, most of the respondents pointed out that they learn gratitude, trust in the providence of God, happiness with the little that they have. From the sisters, the poor can learn to grow and embrace healing from lives broken into pieces. The poor understand the acceptance of personal pain; this is the secret to happy and thankful hearts (O’Leary, 2015).

The respondents also stated that the poor are their masters who teach them humility and generosity. From the little they have, the poor share with others and even with the sisters too. There is another important point. The respondents stated that they learn patience from the poor,

hopeful waiting, and forbearance with challenges and crosses. The poor accept the will of God. In service to the poor, the sisters put into practice their Constitutions that says that they are open to receiving from the poor and must allow themselves to be evangelized by them (C. 24, b).

Few respondents pointed out that it does not mean that all poor people are good. There are also troublesome, deceitful and shrewd ones who affect the sisters' innocence and lead them to suspicion when approaching them for service. However, they said that even the poor, with such behaviours, teach them to be cautious and make discernment when identifying the poorest ones and all assist them according to their needs. Thus, in all their dealings, the poor are 'Masters and Lords' to the Daughters of Charity because they carry in themselves the face of Jesus Christ.

**Table 20: Using the Community Recreation Moments for a Joyful Community**

<b>Life and Service</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Missing	2	4.4%
Strongly agree	14	31.1%
Agree	26	57.8%
Neutral	2	4.4%
Disagree	1	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 20 indicates the responses of the sisters about using common recreation moments for a joyful community and service. 4.4% were missing. 31.1% strongly agreed and 57.8% agreed that they use their community moments effectively, and that helps them to serve the poor with joy. 4.4% of the respondents were neutral to the statement; these sisters might be among those who were recently admitted to the community; whereas 2.2% disagreed to the statement. Those who disagreed to the statement may be among those who never used effectively and joyfully

community moments of recreation because of some challenges of unity in their respective communities. This was clear in their responses about how they use common recreation moments.

Very few of the respondents said that because of their disunion in community, they do not use those wonderful moments of common recreation well. This implies that communities which have some challenges in union are not encouraged to stay together and enjoy those moments of recreation. This shows the fact that there is need to be in harmony and union with one another.

The sisters were asked to give their views about when and how they use moments of common recreation and the advantages of those community moments in relation to their community life and service to the poor. Most of them stated that because of their apostolates, the conducive time for common recreation are meals and the time after supper.

Similar to the results of table 20, the majority said that they do their best to use moments of common recreation well by their active and joyful participation. The sisters use various ways of entertaining one another. They role play, sharing funny stories, and sharing daily experiences, and recount the challenges of their work.

This active and joyful participation in common recreation seems to come from the sisters' understanding of the advantages of common recreation. In giving their views on the advantages of recreation in relation to their community life and service to the poor, the respondents pointed out that those moments of common life were also, moments of union, friendship, and mutual trust. True common life bridges gaps of misunderstanding among the sisters. Community life is impossible without forbearance and the letting go of past hurts. When the sisters' community let go of their annoyances, they could enjoy common recreation moments and gain happiness (O'Leary, 2015).

The respondents also indicated that common recreation creates moments where pardon and forgiveness may be given and received among the sisters. The sisters share their joys and sorrows as well as their successes and challenges in the service of the poor. They console one another and gain new insights from one another, which assist in the service of the poor as well. They relax their minds and bodies from the worries of their daily service. Common recreation reduces stress and helps the physical and psychological wellbeing of the sisters. Regarding common recreation, the sisters said that they are strengthened, refreshed, and renewed by such joyful moments. Upon receiving this gift of renewal, they go to the poor and witness to them the joy and solidarity, which they have enjoyed with one another.

The Company of the Daughters of Charity has been conscious of the necessity of moments of common recreation. Moments of relaxation are necessary in the life of the sister. The local community should structure regular moments of common life within an atmosphere of joy and simplicity to build and cultivate friendly relationships in community houses (S. 19). The former Father General, Maloney stressed the importance of relaxation and fun. He believes that humour fosters harmony and prevents community members from being overly serious about themselves. Just as it is important for the community to work together, so it is important for it to relax together and laugh from time to time. When the sisters enjoy each other's company, they are able to see a different side of one another's personality (Maloney, 1998).

Thus, common recreation moments plays an important role in the life of the Daughters of Charity. It helps them enjoy one another's company and strengthens personal bonds. In turn, they better witness to solidarity with the poor in joy and enthusiasm. Joyful community makes a life of service a life of joy.

## **4.5 Some Challenges of Community Living and Suggested Solutions to the Challenges of**

### **Union in Common Life**

The responses to the questions regarding the relationship between the community models and the witness to solidarity with the poor revealed that there are many challenges to living well a life in common. Widdicombe (2001) points out that following Christ creates many challenges. In community, members come from different families and perhaps different cultures; they can be both burden and blessing to one another. Sisters daily confront these challenges. The following subtopic presented the challenges that the sisters face in their respective communities. The work also presents possible solutions to these dilemmas which were proposed by the respondent sisters.

#### **4.5.1 Challenges of Union in Community Life**

The sisters were asked to relate their thoughts about the challenges of union that they face in their respective communities. Most revealing are their comments about how community life lived poorly can affect adversely their witness to solidarity with the poor. At the root of these challenges to unity in the common life stands the lack of a deep personal relationship with God as a source of unity. Challenges to community life include the failure in mutual love, inattentiveness, the failure in sincere dialogue, mistrust, the lack of care for one another, the lack of forbearance and impatience, pride, disrespect, negative attitudes, quarrelling, abusive words, prejudices, harsh judgement, misunderstandings, individualism, the disregard for community plans, disregard for the common good, the failure to keep the common rules, the lack of mutual acceptance, and the harbouring of grudges. All of these things would make life in the community and the witness to solidarity with the poor impossible.

In addressing the negative effects of individualism in common life, Pope Francis says, “The individualistic temptation grows and leads to partialities and divisions in community life (Francis,

2013, p.10). Prejudice, negative attitudes towards others and gossip destroy the unity of communities of consecrated people (Francis, 2013). St. Louise De Marillac says that when the sisters are together, normally one is in a hurry to discover the faults and moods of the other in order to relate what she knows about them (Sullivan, 1991). There are many challenges to unity and living together. These challenges must be addressed by the sisters and they suggested solutions to these challenges.

#### **4.5.2 Solutions to Challenges of Union in Community Life**

There were many suggestions regarding the causes and solutions to the challenges of common life. The sisters proposed a number of elements essential to unity in common life. Some stated that the main solution lies in a deep relationship with God cultivated through communal and personal prayer. The sisters must pray for one another as a family of God and meditate on the word of God. St. John Paul II discusses personal and communal prayer as the first source of all Christian spirituality (VC 94). The sisters also stated that regular and active participation in the Holy Sacraments especially the Holy Eucharist is critical for a healthy common life.

The Holy Eucharist is closely connected with the commitment to continual conversion. The Eucharist carries the necessary purification that brings the consecrated persons to full maturity (VC 95). Jesus says, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruits” (Jn. 15:5). To indicate the importance of spiritual life for consecrated people, St. John Paul II describes spiritual life as a source of apostolic fruitfulness; an attractive witness of life is a means of attracting vocations (VC 93).

Other sisters stressed the important of striving for mutual acceptance despite differences; these differences are a source of God’s gifts. They also said that the witness of love for the poor should start from their communities as they serve one another. Cultivating sincere love, trust,

appreciation, care and mutuality strengthens the bond among members in a community. Most important is attentive listening to one another. Each sister is the chosen spouse of Christ. For the respondents, life in community creates the grounds for better service of Christ in the poor.

Other respondents proposed using polite language with one another in conversation. They believe that sisters should cultivate a spirit of mortification and dialogue for the sake of the common good. Helpful is letting go of negative thoughts and feelings directed against one another: this should be replaced by self-control, self-knowledge and self-formation. In her writings, St. Louise De Marillac pointed out that the members' curiosity must be restrained (Sullivan, 199). In the struggle of building a spiritual family, Pope Francis (2015) urges us to avoid harmful elements, which hurt unity in communities. We should avoid criticism, gossip, envy, jealousy and hostility. These should have no place in communities.

Respondents also suggested that there is a need for sincere dialogue, discussion and the sharing ideas. Dialogue is especially necessary about matters pertaining to the challenges of union. Members must cultivate a spirit of gratitude for who they are and what they have giving priority to community matters. They should cultivate a spirit of humility, simplicity, and charity as the main virtues of the Company and strive to live according to the rules and Constitutions of the Company. Fidelity to the way of life of the Daughters of Charity naturally fosters union among its members and assures better service of the poor.

In the introduction to the Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity, the Superior General, Fr. Robert Maloney and Sr. Evelyn Frank, the Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity state that the Constitutions are meant to free the sisters to love. They create a sacred dwelling place for them that enables them to walk with Jesus as servants of the poor. It helps the sisters give themselves to the poor with a love that is concrete, practical and effective (Constitutions, 2004).

So, the Daughters of Charity must observe seriously their rules as a means of cultivating virtues. The Constitutions describe the necessary virtues and practices that enable them to be true witnesses to solidarity with the poor.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the data and interpreted and discussed the findings collected from the field. It also provided background information about the respondents. The respondents' answers were analysed in relation to literature proper to the field and the objectives of the study. The researcher divided the themes of discussion into sub-topics. The analysis indicates that the Trinitarian model of Community life, the First Christians' Model of Community Life and the Community Life Model of the Daughters of Charity are all correlated to the witness to solidarity with the poor – the core mission of the Daughters of Charity. This chapter also presented the suggestions of the respondents.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a summary of the conclusions drawn from the finding based on the three objectives of the study. It also provides recommendations related to the community life of the Daughters of Charity in the Eritrean Province and those in other Provinces. Finally, the chapter makes suggestions for further study.

#### **5.2 Summary of the Study**

The research sought to examine the relationship between models of the community life for the Daughters of Charity and the witness to solidarity with the poor. Furthermore, it sought to examine the challenges to community life propose solutions for the Eritrean Province based on three research questions. The investigation was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between the Trinitarian Community Life Model and the witness to solidarity with the poor?
2. What is the relationship between the First Christians' Community Life Model and the witness to solidarity with the poor?
3. What is the relationship between the community life of the Daughters of Charity and the witness to the love of God through loving the poor?

The study was based on the Community Cohesion Approach which provided the theoretical framework. The Community Cohesion concept was established in 2001 in England at the time of the rioting by immigrants in Great Britain. Considerable research have been done with the application of the Community Cohesion Approach in the different provinces of England. According to the Borough Council (2010), the approach creates a strong sense of belonging and a

defined, united community by the acknowledging diversity and focusing on common points of interest, which unite community member. It is a model that builds trust among individuals within their communities. It also enhances a sense of mutual respect among peoples of differing backgrounds by highlighting similar opportunities and goals between ethnic groups.

The mission that unites members of the Daughters of Charity is that of service to others a service that witnesses the love of God to the world especially the poor. This approach attempts to overcome inequalities by encouraging interactions that builds constructive relationships among those of differing social backgrounds. The approach focuses upon common values rather than differences. Prejudice, the use of stereotypes, and gossip among the members must be substituted for respect and mutual trust. This will enable them to put into practice the goal of witness to solidarity with the poor by which members consecrate themselves to God. This approach is appropriate and useful for the investigation.

The investigation was carried out among the Daughters of Charity in the Province of Eritrea. The study used mixed method research paradigm. The sample included 45 Sisters representing all levels of membership with varying experiences of community life. The researcher found out that there was a gap between the community life of the Daughters of Charity and the witness to solidarity with the poor. This occurred for a variety of reasons. This study attempted to identify the challenges to common life, which affect the witness to solidarity. This study also investigated solutions that might enable members to overcome the challenges and fill the gap that prevents community life from supporting the witness to solidarity with the poor. The study was conducted based on three research questions and the following results have come out of it.

The first research question sought to find out the sisters' views about the relationship between the Trinitarian model of community life and the witness to solidarity with the poor. In

response to the study questions, the sisters pointed out that the Trinitarian Community Life Model and the witness to solidarity with the poor must have a strong relationship. They said that they are called and assembled by God in the name of the Holy Trinity for the better service of the poor. They also strive to live in unity by accepting their differences as God given riches despite human weakness.

The study also discussed the unity that the sisters experienced whose source was deep prayer, mutual love, care, forbearance, respect, appreciation, and sacrifice for the common good. Marks such as these are signs of God's presence and enable the sisters to witness to solidarity with the poor. Annual consecration to God through vows was also considered an important means by which the sisters imitate the Holy Trinity. The Trinity is a source of God's grace in the witness to solidarity with the poor.

The second research question sought to investigate the relationship between the First Christians' Community Life Model and the witness to solidarity with the poor. Respondents said that the community life of the Daughters of Charity was modelled after the community life of the first Christians. The witness to solidarity with the poor has its foundations here.

The respondents also said that by their lives of prayer, the sisters imitate the life of the early church. The sisters live together because of a special call of God. They meditate on the word of God together, they share everything they have in common, and share their goods with the needy. They gain strength by partaking daily in the Eucharist (Cf. Acts. 2:43-47). In this way the sisters witness to solidarity with the poor through the visible marks of the spiritual life. While discussing these points, the sisters stressed that it was their love for one another which made them witnesses to God's love. Jesus said to his disciples that others would know His disciples through their love for one another. The view of the respondents about community life suggests that they live in

imitation of the early church, which creates an effective witness to solidarity that extends to the poor.

The third research question investigated the relationship between the model of the community life of the Daughters of Charity and the witness to solidarity with the poor. This group of questions sought to investigate this idea. The findings reveal that the majority of the respondents believe that common life supports the better service of the poor when sisters live common life in view of their mission. Common life supports the desire to serve Christ in the poor. Their lives revolve around the witness to solidarity with the poor. Good servants of the poor need to demonstrate love for the members within their communities first. Because of their specific mission of serving Christ in the poor, the virtues of simplicity, humility and charity in imitation of Christ must be lived first in their communities and then shared with the poor.

The respondents stated that the values which enable them to live common life well are as follows: a deep relationship with God, mutual forgiveness, openness to sincere dialogue, loving one another sincerely, and seeing in one another the face of Christ. The experience of love and respect in community can be shared with those whom they serve. This implies that there is a correlation between the Community Life Model of the Daughters of Charity and the witness to solidarity with the poor.

On the basis of the research questions, exploration was conducted about the challenges of community life, which negatively affect the witness to solidarity. Some respondents said that they faced challenges of unity in their respective communities. These challenges prevent them from witnessing to solidarity with the poor. Some of the challenges to community named by the sisters included a shallow spiritual life, the lack of mutual love, inattentiveness less than sincere dialogue,

mistrust, carelessness, disrespect, pride, prejudices and the lack of observance of the community plan, the lack of mutual acceptance, and the holding on to grudges.

Respondents also suggested some solutions for the challenges of union in the community life of the sisters. The majority of the respondents cultivated a deep prayer life. They participated actively in the Holy Sacraments especially the Holy Eucharist. They strived to accept others despite differences and sought to see gifts in others as riches from God. They actively cultivate sincere love, trust, appreciation, care and trust, attentive listening, and focus on mutual forgiveness. Among the members, there is politeness in conversations. The sisters cultivate a spirit of mortification and seek the common good. They let go of negative thoughts directed against one another and cultivate self-awareness and self-formation. They live lives of gratitude and strive to live the virtues of humility, charity and simplicity. When they cultivate the stated values and virtues, their lives become true witnesses to solidarity with the poor.

The study used the Statistical Package Software for Social Sciences (SPSS) to process the quantitative data collected. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize the data and presented in tables, charts and graphs. The qualitative data were analyzed in a descriptive form and presented in charts, figures and tables.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The findings of the study have shown that there is a strong correlation between the models of community life in the Daughters of Charity and the witness to solidarity with the poor in the Province of Eritrea. The Daughters of Charity are called and assembled by God in the name of the Holy Trinity for the service of Christ in the poor. This, of course, implies a witness to solidarity with the poor. The respondents report that they make every effort to witness to the charism. The

more the sisters live in harmony and joy with one another, the better the poor are served. When they fail to live common life in love, they also fail to witness to solidarity with the poor.

The results of the questionnaires and the interview guide suggest that the Daughters of Charity live common life well following the three models of community life: the community life of the Holy Trinity, the model of the community life of the first Christians, and the model of the community life of the Daughters of Charity. These three models enable them to witness to solidarity with the poor.

The findings also revealed that some respondents were unhappy with life in community in the face of certain challenges to unity, which serve as obstacles to the witness to solidarity with the poor. This cannot coincide with the call of the Daughters of Charity who live in community as in view of their mission to the poor. This witness to service of the poor is also a witness to solidarity. The challenges of unity in the communities of the Daughters of Charity should be addressed. This study was an attempt to address the issues and seek the best solutions to the named problems.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

The Daughters of Charity in the Eritrean Province should treasure the common life and to overcome the challenges. Respondents suggested basic solutions for improving community life for the better service of the poor. The most important suggestions were the following: cultivating a deep relationship with God, striving for mutual acceptance, appreciating differences, giving priority to the common good, fostering sincere dialogue, cultivating a spirit of gratitude, and practicing virtues of humility, charity and simplicity. Self-examination is necessary to gauge whether one lives a healthy and balanced life. One must also examine personal relationship with the other sisters, and devote time and energy to one's relationship to God. Weaknesses must be addressed and community members should maintain the values of community life as enshrined in

the Constitutions in order to witness fully to the love of God, the love of neighbour, and the love of the poor.

Finally, there is hope that this research will contribute to the awareness of the importance of the three models of community life for the Daughters of Charity in Eritrea. Sisters may wish to examine their individual and common lives in order to recommit themselves to the values of the community life models and render quality service to the poor. This will witness to the love of God to all whom they serve. In this way, the models of community life will serve as tools of reveal and witness to solidarity with the poor whom the Daughters of Charity consider their ‘Lords and Masters.’

### **5.5 Areas for Further Research**

This study investigated various models of community life as tools for the witness to solidarity with the poor in the Eritrean Province of the Daughters of Charity. The same investigation may also be carried out in other provinces and regions of the Daughters of Charity. Further research may be carried out on each model of community life in relation to the witness to solidarity with the poor as follows:

1. Trinitarian model of Community life as a tool for the witness to solidarity with the poor.
2. The First Christians’ Model of Community Life as a tool for the witness to solidarity with the poor
3. The Model of the Community Life for the Daughters of Charity as a tool for the witness to solidarity
4. The challenges of community life that prevent the witness to the love of God and others.

There are also multiple areas of community life that may be the object of investigation.

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## APPENDIX I

An Authorization paper for and **the**

**APPENDIX II**

**Questionnaires for the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul in Eritrean Province**

Tangaza College Catholic University of Eastern Africa

Institute of Spirituality and Religious Formation

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Tel. 0732938369

**Title of the Study:** Community Life Models as Tools for Witnessing to Solidarity with the Poor

**Dear respondent,**

This study is aimed at investigating if the Community life models influence the witness to solidarity among the poor in Eritrean Province of the Daughters of Charity. This is in partial fulfilment for the requirements for a Masters’ Degree in Spirituality and Religious Formation. I kindly request you to fill this questionnaire. It is purely for academic use. Your answers will be treated with confidentiality. Please tick your answer and discuss when needed.

**Section 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents**

Community life experiences /Vocation \_\_\_\_ years.

**Section 2: The Attitude of Sisters about the Relationship between Trinitarian Community**

**Model and Witnessing to Solidarity with the Poor by Means of Their Common life**

**Tick to: strongly-agree (1), Agree (2), neutral (3), disagree (4), or strongly-disagree (5)**

1. In my local community I experience mutual love and care in imitation of the Holy Trinity.

1 ( )      2 ( )      3 ( )      4 ( )      5 ( )

2. In my local community I appreciate our differences and I accept each sister as a gift from God.

1 ( )      2 ( )      3 ( )      4 ( )      5 ( )

3. My annual consecration to God through vows is freeing my heart to serve the poor with joy and undivided heart.

1 ( )      2 ( )      3 ( )      4 ( )      5 ( )

4. In our local community we witness to solidarity with through care, love and great concern for one another and the poor as God's chosen ones.

1 ( )      2 ( )      3 ( )      4 ( )      5 ( )

5. In my local community I overcome out differences of behaviours in patience, faith and charity for a better service of the poor.

1 ( )      2 ( )      3 ( )      4 ( )      5 ( )

6. The poor evangelize and challenge my life of faith, love and hope.

1 ( )      2 ( )      3 ( )      4 ( )      5 ( )

### **Section 3: Opinions of the respondents about the Relationship between the First Christian Community Life Model and Witnessing to Solidarity with the Poor in the Life of the Sisters**

**Tick to: strongly-agree (1), Agree (2), neutral (3), disagree (4), or strongly-disagree (5)**

1. Each member in my community nurtures personal and communal prayer life prayer life.

1 ( )      2 ( )      3 ( )      4 ( )      5 ( )

2. I participate in Holy Eucharist with faith watchfulness.

1 ( )      2 ( )      3 ( )      4 ( )      5 ( )

3. In my community each sister shares what she has and what she is generously in imitation of the First Christians' community life.

1 ( )      2 ( )      3 ( )      4 ( )      5 ( )

4. I am a witness to the love of God through my sincere participation in common life.

1 ( )      2 ( )      3 ( )      4 ( )      5 ( )

5. Through meditation of God's word I am living the life of Christ.

1 ( )      2 ( )      3 ( )      4 ( )      5 ( )

### **Section 4: Opinion of the Respondents on the Relationship between Community Life Model of the Daughters of Charity and Witnessing To Solidarity with the Poor**

1. I imitate Christ the simple, humble and charitable in my daily life and service of the poor.

1 ( )      2 ( )      3 ( )      4 ( )      5 ( )

2. Because of our mutual love in community, we serve the poor with compassion, humility and simplicity.

1 ( )      2 ( )      3 ( )      4 ( )      5 ( )

3. I am happy for being a member of this local community.

1 ( )      2 ( )      3 ( )      4 ( )      5 ( )

4. In my community I am eager to forgive and to ask forgiveness.

1( )      2( )      3( )      4( )      5( )

5. Beyond material needs, the poor expect from us love, tenderness and hope.

1( )      2( )      3( )      4( )      5( )

6. Through faith, I see Christ in the face of my sisters.

1( )      2( )      3( )      4( )      5( )

7. As our founders stress on, I treat the poor as my 'Lords and Masters.'

1( )      2( )      3( )      4( )      5( )

8. I learn gratitude and trusting in God's providence from the poor.

1( )      2( )      3( )      4( )      5( )

9. I use the communal time of recreation efficiently.

1( )      2( )      3( )      4( )      5( )

## APPENDIX III

### Questionnaires for Group Focused Daughters of Charity in Eritrean Province

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Tel: 0732938369.

**Title of the Study:** Community Life Models as Tools for Witnessing to Solidarity with the Poor

**Dear respondent,**

This study is aimed at investigating if the Community life models influence the witness to solidarity among the poor in Eritrean Province of the Daughters of Charity. This is in partial fulfilment for the requirements for a Masters' Degree in Spirituality and Religious Formation. I kindly request you to fill this questionnaire. It is purely for academic use. Your answers will be treated with confidentiality. Please discuss your attitudes briefly.

#### **Section 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents**

Community life experiences /Vocation \_\_\_\_ years.

#### **Section 2: Attitudes of Sisters on the Relationship between Community life Models and Witnessing to Solidarity with the Poor**

1. What is your opinion on community life affecting your witness to solidarity with the poor negatively?

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2. What are the signs of the presence of the Holy Trinity in your local community?

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3. How do the values of mutual trust, appreciation, care, acceptance and respect in your local community assist in the witness to the love of God with the poor?

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4. How do you use your moments of relaxation in your local community and what is its advantage?

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**Section 3: Attitudes of Sisters on Challenges of Community life and suggestions for the Challenges in relation to service of the poor**

1. What are the challenges of common life in your local community that affect your services?

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2. What are the possible solutions to the challenges of unity in community life?

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3. Other suggestions

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**Section 4: Attitudes of Sisters on Their Witnessing to solidarity with those who are poor**

1. What do you learn from the poor whom you serve in your specific duty?

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2. How do your spirit of simplicity, charity and humility assist you to be a true servant of the poor?

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3. How do you listen to and serve the poor?

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