

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

SR. DORCAS SIMIYU, SMC

DISCIPLESHIP

**A FIVE- DAY RETREAT TO THE NOVICES OF THE MISSIONAY SISTERS
OF THE CATECHISM**

Moderator

Mrs. Phyllis Muraya

A long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Diploma in
Spirituality and Religious Formation

NAIROBI 2004

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has never been submitted to any college or university for academic credit. Any information from other sources has been duly acknowledged.

Signature:.....*Simiyu*.....

Name: Sr. Dorcas Simiyu, SMC

Date: *10th December 2004*.....

This thesis has been submitted with my approval as the supervisor.

Signature:.....*Muraya*.....

Name: Mrs. Phyllis Muraya

Date: *10th December 2004*

EPIGRAPH

“.....He called them and immediately they left their boat
And their father and followed Him (Mt 4: 18-- 22)”

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Matthias Simiyu, my mother, Catherine Naliaka, to my Superiors and to all the Missionary Sisters of the Catechism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I thank God for His constant love to me and for all that I received, and those good things that I continue to receive from Him.

Thanks to my Congregation at large and specifically to our region and in a special way to my community, which supported me in my struggles to accomplish my studies in Tangaza.

I also express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Mrs. Phyllis Muraya, whose great dedication and untiring scholarly guidance have helped me to bring this work to completion. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to all those in Tangaza College who assisted me during my studies: the Director of the Institute of Spirituality and Religious Formation, Sr. Loretta Brennan, the lecturers, the staff members, students and workers. I thank all my friends who have been giving me moral and spiritual support, especially my community members of the S.M.C.

I sincerely appreciate the valuable services rendered to me by the libraries in Tangaza College, Catechism community and those who helped with their personal books. I thank all those who helped me in correcting the thesis, especially Br. John Carrigg.

I conclude by thanking all those whose names appear above and many others whose names are in my heart. I owe you all a great deal of appreciation may God's blessings be upon you all always!

The Missionary Sisters of The Catechism

The Missionary Sisters of the Catechism is an active international congregation following the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Their motto “Hail, True Body, born of the Virgin Mary” energizes and give the Missionaries enthusiasm for becoming holy and for working in union with Mary, for the benefit of souls and for the glory of Jesus. To realize this in their lives the sisters take refuge in God, to speak and judge as Christians, by listening to God and resting in Him through retreats of different lengths depending on the stages of formation.

The professed sisters have nine day retreats yearly and monthly recollections; novices retreats of at least five days while the postulants and aspirants have monthly recollections.

This five-day retreat for the novices is based mainly on the Scripture to help them deepen their relationship with Christ so that they may become more intimate with Him.

INTRODUCTION

Who is a disciple? In the Christian tradition, a disciple is one who answers the call to follow Christ as a baptized person. Who is a disciple? He or she is a person who accepts the teachings of Christ, his values and direction in life and also accepts and lives his commands in all situations. So as we accept Christ as our model of life and do what he commands us to do, we become his disciples. The call to religious life is a deep manifestation of discipleship. This call is both a mystery and a grace. The principal motive behind God's choice of a particular individual is his special love for the person. It is for this reason that the retreat conferences I am planning for a five-day retreat will consist of different aspects that will enable the novices to enter more deeply into their call as disciples of Christ and help them to become more intimate with him as religious women.

For the five days the themes will focus on discipleship as follows:

- 1st day The call and response to Christ's voice
- 2nd day The call to religious life
- 3rd day Staying with and learning from Jesus
- 4th day Mary as our model of discipleship
- 5th day Being sent to mission by Christ himself

In every conference there will be some personal reflection, my personal meditation; a social application that will enable us focus on our own life in relation with others; and a pastoral application which implies that after sharing the word of God among ourselves

in community we must feel the desire to share it with the people who are entrusted to us. There will be posters illustrating the different themes of each day.

I. Plan

The participants in this retreat are young women, aged between 21 - 26 years who have decided to follow Christ in my congregation and are in the stage of novitiate. This is a stage of intensive personal prayer and meditation in order to discern one's call in life and for one to grow more intimately in the love of Christ.

II. Reasons for Choosing the Episode on the Calling of Disciples by Jesus

Looking back at the time of my formation reminds me of one lady who had joined with me as an aspirant. This girl for sure did not know what brought her to the convent, though she was fully involved in many activities that we were carrying out in the community. She constantly followed a certain sister who had been her friend before she joined the convent. She only knew how to be with friends but not with herself and Christ who is the center of the life of Christians. Eventually, she ended up miserably because she lost direction in life. It is for that reason that I chose this episode of the call of the first disciples, to help the novices to understand their call better. Did they come to follow their friends or Christ? Do they know the one who is the source of their life as Christians? Through the conferences, I hope to help them to a better understanding of who a disciple of Christ is, what is expected of a disciple and how to live with him and learn from him alone in the way of life they have chosen to live.

III. The Venue

The retreat will take place in our formation house here in Nairobi. We will use one room for our daily conference that will be free by the time we will start our retreat. The sitting will be in a semicircle facing one another meaning so that as we talk about discipleship we will be seeing a chosen disciple of Christ in front of us and on the sides.

IV. Materials

In the middle we will have a small table covered with a white table cloth. There will be an African Bible in the middle of the table, on the right side there will be a vase of flowers and on the left there will be a burning candle that will signify Christ himself being present among us as our light during the conferences. I will invite all the novices to feel at peace with Jesus who is calling each one of them by name.

V. Structure of the Conferences

- a) Opening prayer
- b) Reading
- c) Personal reflection
- d) Social Application
- e) Pastoral Application
- f) Conclusion

g) Reflection

h) Other scripture passages for reading and reflection

VI. The Evening Before the Start of the Retreat

Mathew in his writing is showing us an example of how we should respond to the voice of God when we are invited. We can see this from the episode on how prompt the apostles were. They never thought to pick the tunics apart from what they had, they never bothered about their father whom they left mending their nets. We are not told whether their father grumbled at Jesus for taking his sons away. We can realize that the father was a true follower of Christ spiritually. He knew, I suppose, where they were going and so he did nothing but just looked at them: the episode is really beautiful and I feel that it will help us to mirror our own call when it started to be manifested in our life up to date.

I will tell them my own story on how I grew up longing to follow Christ as a Christian and as a future religious woman. After my story I will invite them to reflect on their own history as Christians. I am hoping that over their history they will come to discover where they have come from and where they are going. They will discover on whom they depend. In listening to the scriptures on discipleship they will come to have a sense of belonging to Christ and learn from him according to his will. They will come to understand why they are separated from their family where they could also follow Christ, but in a different way.

VII. The Setting

Matt 4:18—22

On this fine day, Jesus goes and disappears in a deserted place although the people are looking for him as usual. After getting him, they want him to stay with them but he feels the need to reach another group that was at the sea shore. Usually at the sea shore there are many people who go for fishing and, I suppose, by the time Jesus was walking at that hour, many people were there. But look, Jesus overlooks all others and goes straight to the four whom he calls. These are the only privileged people to whom Jesus talked. He had taught the crowd but none of the disciples came from it.

We can see that Christ talks to many but only a few are chosen to become intimate followers. He knows the hearts of the people who are likely to respond without hesitating. As Francis Moloney puts it, “the response of Simon, Andrew, James and John is immediate. There is not a word uttered by them. They simply leave and follow.....”¹ Their response is both physical and spiritual.

¹ FRANCIS J MOLONEY, *Disciples and Prophets*, p136

FIRST DAY

1.0 Theme: The Call and response to Christ

1.1 Prayer: We thank you Lord for having brought us to this day the first day of our retreat. We pray Lord that you may send us your Holy Spirit to enable us find you in us. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever, AMEN.

1.2 Reading: 1Kg 19: 19—21 –Call of Elisha²

1.3 Personal Reflection

In the reading we hear Elisha being anointed by Elijah. Anointing somebody is a sign of setting that person apart for some special purpose. He or she is a person who can be relied on, one who can protect the people and is respected in the society. So Elisha is being anointed in that capacity to succeed Elijah who would go to heaven on a chariot. The response of Elisha is very human. He wants to go back to his people and bid them goodbye before he follows Elijah. He wants to make sure that he has seen his family for the last moment before leaving it for his new mission. In this episode I can see what discipleship is all about. It is neither easy nor a joking issue. In the same way, it is very hard for me to respond to God's call in the way he wants me to. I have many excuses that I can make in order to avoid the responsibility of the divine call. As a Christian this is a reality that I need to focus on. Being a disciple is the essence of Christianity and it involves a privileged opportunity to learn from Christ what he wants from me. As a

² See picture Appedix 2

disciple I am a learner, not better than any other person in the world. I am just ordinary but a little difference begins to appear as I respond positively, making me a sharer in the life of Christ as happened with Elisha who shared in the discipleship of Elijah. He did what Elijah told him as his disciple. Now I ask myself these questions: as a Christian: how do I respond to the call of Christ? Is there anything that hinders me from following Him with my whole heart? Elisha made sure that he cooked the oxen before following Elijah. To me, this means that he wanted to eliminate what might cause him to worry as he followed Elijah. I have to be detached from the things that might distract me in answering this call of Christ genuinely. Such distractions include possessions in the form of material wealth, work, friends and so forth. Indeed anything that may prevent me from following Christ with my whole heart is a distraction and I need to get rid of it.

1.4 Social Application

I want to share with you a real story that happened to a certain novice, one who was very much like you. Before I tell the story, I want us to remember that being friends with one another is not bad but let friendship not cover our eyes and make us forget that the One who called us is the One we love most. It is easy to say that we love our friends in whom we should see Jesus. I think that is wonderful, but in which sense do we love our neighbors?

There was a certain novice who, from the beginning of her religious life, loved one of the sisters in the community dearly. She would stay with her and make sure that

she had done everything to make this sister happy. She allowed herself to be used by her. It came to a point where this sister was to be transferred to another house of mission. The novice could not bear the situation without this sister. The point is that she was not able to see her fellow novices as her friends and that is why she felt lonely and out of place. After some time she decided to leave religious life. In other words she possessed the sister and so her love for Christ came second. We need to ask ourselves how we relate with our friends in the community. Do we love Christ in our fellow novices? Where do you place your stand in responding to the call of Christ? Is it on the One who has called us or on another person? We also need to remember that as a missionary congregation we have members from different continents as well as different cultures. But since we believe that it is Christ who calls us together, we strive to live together despite some major differences that might discourage us from living harmoniously. We believe that he wants us to be close to him by living together in sisterly love, but always focusing on him.

Sometimes we are disciples of our friends not only in good actions but also in bad ones. For example when we find a friend who likes to go against the community schedule we are likely to copy her example and soon find ourselves doing the same. Or when one of the novices speaks against the formator we may be influenced to do the same thus becoming disciples of our friends.

1.5 Pastoral Application

We are all called to Christianity through baptism but sometimes we fail to respond to the call whole heartedly. In my village there lived an old man who was a Christian by name. One Saturday as youths we planned to visit the sick those not practising the faith in the sub parish. This old man was neither sick nor bed ridden. We went to his house and talked to him about the meaning of the call to Christianity. When we challenged him about his practice of the faith, he answered that he was a Christian in his heart. We suggested to him that what is in his heart can be seen on the outside also so that it can be manifested to others and through his example others might be drawn to Christ. He did not reject our ideas and after some time he started going to church every Sunday.

I relate this incident to help us focus on our Christian life that others may see us and learn from us. We have many baptized people who may not be living according to the promises they made. Very many people are called to Christianity but practising is a problem to them. We are, therefore, called to extend help to them on how they may respond to their call to Christianity so that they may come to understand who they are and what they are supposed to do as Christians. Our response to Christ is personal but its practice has a public implication.

1.6 Conclusion

Let us try to look back at the story of how we received our call personally and individually. Let us reflect on how we are responding to it with all the difficulties we

are encountering as followers of Christ today. When we look back, we realize that everybody was called from a different place and at a different time. Some were called from the farm like Elisha, others from the mountain, others from other different situations in which God found them. Some of these experiences are encouraging and others discouraging, but if we look at every one of them they somewhat contribute to our growth. I now suggest that you look again at the questions I have raised and using the reflection texts, spend some time in personal prayer.

1.7 Suggested Reflection Texts

Gen 12: 1 - 9 The Call of Abram

Sam 3: 1 -18 Call of Samuel

Mk 2: 13 -15 The Call of Levi

Lk 9: 62 The difficulties for the followers of Christ

Lk 18: 18- 29 The Rich Man and the Kingdom

Mt. 4: 19 “come after me”

SECOND DAY

2.0 Theme: The Call to Religious Life³

2.1 Prayer: Lord we thank you for this new day. We want to commend it into your care as we start our second day of prayer and meditation. Fill us with your love and hope, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

2.2 Reading : Mk 2: 13—15 – The Calling of Levi

2.3 Personal Reflection

In the scripture passage of today, we see Jesus calling more disciples. He meets another man called Levi, a tax collector at the customs house. Levi was considered a public sinner and his call clearly demonstrates how Jesus came to restore spiritual health and dignity of those who had lost them. Out of his generosity of heart and great love for Christ Levi did not hesitate to follow Jesus (Mk 2: 14). He was not even concerned about the money he had collected so as to handover it to his successor. He simply rose up and followed Christ.

This incident challenges me on how I find Christ in my daily life, because this call to religious life is continuous throughout life. It leads me to the question - how much do I entrust my spiritual and material needs to God's care? Levi was not concerned about the money he left in the custom's office, giving me the impression that he entrusted every thing to Christ's care. What faith he had in Christ Jesus!

When I was preparing to join this life, I was worried about how many skirts, blouses and so forth, I was supposed to have. First, I had to run up and down to find people of

³ See Picture Appendix 3

good will to help me to buy my personal necessities. But Levi teaches me that no earthly wealth can ever determine my discipleship. What I should know is that my call to religious life is Christ's own initiative and he will take care for me. All I need to do is to be ready to say yes to his call all the time.

2.4 Social Application

Sometimes we have things that are really dear to us and which we find difficult to share or give out. In a word we are attached to these things. There was a certain sister who was attached to a certain statue of our lady and a shiny black rosary. These two items were very dear to her. If one of us in the community asked for a rosary or a statue she would never give out these particular ones. She would rather buy other rosaries to give to us but not the particular black one in her room. These items were very attractive but she would not allow anybody to as much as touch them.

The response of Levi teaches us the sense of true detachment but many of us, like my sister, do not take it seriously. As it happened with Levi, a sense of detachment is the beginning of discipleship. If Levi had not become detached from that honorable post, he would not have become a disciple of Christ. As I said yesterday, being a Christian is the first sign of becoming a disciple of Jesus, but as religious, we have received a second calling to which we desire to respond fully. Let us reflect and see what holds us back from answering Christ's call wholeheartedly. It might not necessarily be material things but our attitudes too could become blocks. It may be pride, which is one of the things that are precious to us human beings. When we are

proud we neither listen to nor understand what is said to us and so this hinders us in understanding the will of God in our life.

So we are called to renounce anything that might hinder us from doing God's will. We are also told in the Bible that if it is the eye that hinders us from following Christ faithfully, it is better to remove it and if it is the leg chop it off so that we may be free in answering Christ's call of Mt 18:8-9. Let us detach ourselves from whatever detracts us in our discipleship.

2.5 Pastoral Application

When Jesus called his disciples "they at once left their nets and followed Him." Mt 4:20 they never said anything like taking their nets to the house before following him. They never thought of saying "Bye" to their loved ones and more so they did not regret abandoning their business of fishing. With complete serenity they followed Christ the way they were. They left their past life and went with Christ to begin a new way of life. We can see that their life was dynamic both physically and spiritually. They changed their place of domicile and I suppose they also changed their way of life whereby they were able to live the life of prayer that made them happy and contented with the life they had chosen. Nobody went back but all lived with him up to the end.

Some lay people do not understand our life as a gift from God. They take us as pretenders and failures in the society and so we seek refuge in religious houses to shelter ourselves from the challenges of the world. One day in a certain parish, one of the Christians approached me with the following question: "How do you manage to stay

joyfully in this life of yours? I always see you looking contented and happy, what do you receive from this life? But to my surprise I never see you with personal things that you own like cars, houses and so on. What makes you contented in this life?" I answered him in a simple way that it is the Christ who called me to this life who makes me a happy person because he is the fullness of my life. From this episode we can see that our life remains a mystery to many in the world today. They perceive this way of life to be useless and outdated. They do not know that even their life is full of happiness like ours if they can remember their call to discipleship by Christ. We should insist on this point of call to discipleship in their way of life so that they may come to knowledge that even for them, Christ is their fullness. In that way they may realize where our joy comes from as well as where theirs can come from.

By the way we embrace our vocation, let us help our people to understand that it is not in possessions that we are happy, but Christ is our happiness. Through the example of our life as true disciples of Christ they will understand themselves better as disciples of Christ also.

2.6 Conclusion

The disciples of Jesus were from different families but all the same they lived together as one community. The call of Jesus was so strong that they left their loved ones and followed Christ. This was a radical detachment that the disciples made in their lives and they were able to join a new family of God to be with Jesus who was the center of their lives as they lived as brothers, bonded together by his call. So we are

called to be witnesses to the world that it is possible to live together as sisters even if there are no blood kinship ties. This will be a great challenge as well as a witness in our today's world of hatred and war.

2.7 Reflection

Today let us meditate on our call to discipleship and the necessary detachment in this way of life we have chosen to live.

2.8 Sources of Reflection

Judges 6: 11 – 24 –God calls Gideon

Exodus 3:1 –6 –God calls and sends Moses

Jer 1: 1– 19 –the call of Jeremiah

Mk 1:16– 20 – Jesus calls four fishermen

Lk 9:57– 62 –the would be followers of Jesus

Acts 2:37--41 –the Pentecost day

THIRD DAY

3.0 Theme: Staying with and Learning from Jesus⁴

3.1 Prayer: Lord God, we want to thank you for the gift of our vocation and as we start this new day, we want to ask you for the grace to know and love you in our life. As we stay with and learn from you, may we be able to move closer to you. This we ask through Christ our Lord, AMEN.

3.2 Reading: Mt 9: 9—13 – The Call of Matthew

3.3 Personal Reflection

Looking at the theme of today, a question arises in my mind. How did they stay with a stranger whom they had just met at the shore of the lake and surprisingly, followed Him at once? Obviously there was something in Jesus that attracted them to Him. From this episode, I support Viviano who says that “the immediate obedience to the call is psychologically implausible.”⁵ For sure, that is so, otherwise how could it happen that when one is called by a stranger he or she follows that person without asking any question of where they would be going?

This passage reminds me of how I accepted Christ and followed Him in this missionary congregation. The call of Jesus is so strong and compelling that it made me forget what I had been doing before and followed Him even without thinking of my family members whom I am so dear to. What a strong trust the disciples had in Christ that even if they followed Him without any preparation they were sure all would be

⁴ See Picture Appendix 4

⁵ BENEDICT T. VIVANO, *In the NJBC*, P649

well! My own response has remained a mystery to me because this place is very far from my home but it only took me a half a day to get here. I can only say that this is the work of God that initially attracted and continues to attract me to follow Him in this vocation.

The love of God is so great that it surpasses all creation, thus every species obeys His command. This applies not only to human beings but to animals and plants as well. For example, early in the morning at six o'clock, the donkey acknowledges the greatness of God by confirming that it is alive with "Hihi Hoho, Hihi..." When I look at the plants they all grow facing the direction of the sun. The sun itself rises from the east never has it risen from the west. That is why I say that the call of Christ to follow and live with Him, like the response of creation, remains a mystery in my life. It always amazes me how great the love of God is for us his creatures. It is immeasurable and that is why as soon as the disciples heard his voice, they followed and went to stay with Him. The same thing applies to me.

3.4 Social Application

The invitation or the call demands then and now radical and prompt obedience from those called (Mt 8: 21 - 22). It requires an entire change of one's life direction and attitudes towards life. It is a decisive action which changes one's life completely. Wojciech Kowalski tells us that, "the four first disciples immediately dropped their fish nets, gave up their family ties and became his followers. They came after Him

renouncing their homes and their livelihood.”⁶ He took the initiative to call and gather them into a close relationship with himself, and we can see that his call is free from any human influence. It is a fact that the twelve disciples of Jesus were all different from one another. This diverse community was not that easy to handle but Jesus knew how to initiate the process of moulding them into a unified community. At times this diversity in the group tended to pull them in different directions, for example, when they started arguing among themselves as to who was the greatest. “Jesus knew that each person had an original way of thinking. Human originality stems from the uniqueness of each disciple. That is the way Jesus invited his disciples to express their original way of looking at the same reality.”⁷ But Jesus kept trying to orient them towards one goal, following his example of unity with the Father.

Now let us look at ourselves: like the disciples, we are very different individuals. Yes, we are different from each other, some of us are teachers from different parts of our continent, some are nurses, others catechists and so forth. We are all different from one another in our personalities, our attitudes, our backgrounds. We can see that we are not very different from the community of Jesus.

Such differences struck me strongly during my formation years as they caused our life to become like a drama. Our duties were being changed by our mistress each week. From this experience we could see how different we were in performing the different duties like arranging the house and washing of utensils. Some people liked plants and flowers in the house but others did not. So you could see how different the

⁶ WOJCIECH KOWALSKI, *The Call to Discipleship*, pp120-132

⁷ RICHARD LONGERNECKERED, *Pattern of Discipleship in the New Testament*, p18

house looked every week, depending on who was taking care of it. In one week, for example, the house would be full of flowers and plants. But the following week, it would be empty of all the plants and flowers. From this we can appreciate that even if we are following the same Christ we have different personalities.

Let us take one another as a gift from God that has been called to stay and learn from Christ in her own way and given to every one of us. The disciples had to learn the same lesson from Christ who taught them to love one another in their own way in truth and sincerity. The same principle applies to us who are called by Christ to follow Him by loving our fellow sisters even in their differences. Let us imitate the example that Christ left us.

3.5 Pastoral Reflection

When we look at our world today, very few of us human beings consider another person as the image of God. There are many tribal clashes. A good example is that of Molo during the year 1992 where some people were killed, hundreds displaced and many others suffered both physical and psychological trauma. It was a terrible situation because the sense of Christian love did not prevail. Those involved failed to see in their brothers and sisters the image of God who called them to be his sons and daughters and to live together in harmony. Although the perpetrators were all Christians, they lacked love for their fellow human beings.

Now for ourselves, how do we reflect Christ in this society? We who are able to see the importance of love for our fellow human beings, how can we be a sign of

contradiction to the world? After learning from the example of the community of Jesus, what are we doing to challenge the situation of tribalism in the country? We have to be fully convinced that our life testimony is the only medicine to this phenomenon. The disciples did not concentrate on who came from the same place with another but their struggle was to learn from what Christ taught and what they needed to do to give a hand to His mission. Their interest was to imitate the great Teacher in all that he did. We too need to learn from Jesus so that our lives may witness the fact that the values He stood for can be lived in the modern world. Those outside should be able to see from us that all human beings are our brothers and sisters even if they are not of our ethnic group. From our example, we hope that they may come to see the need of looking at the world with different eyes. Let our love for one another, our unity and oneness, be the signs that we are Christ's followers.

3.6 Conclusion

The issue of discrimination in any religious community or society is a killing agent for discipleship. Seeing the example of the community of Jesus, let us try to live as sisters in our own communities and that will reflect the image of Christ's command of loving one another so as to be one with Him.

3.7 Reflection

Today we will reflect on the issue of sisterly love with the intention of following Christ who is the source of our discipleship. We ask for the grace of perseverance in our love of God and neighbor.

3.8 Reflection texts

Gen 19: 1 -29- To reject others is to reject life

Hosea 1: 2- -8- A despised love

Exodus 34: 1 - 9 The new tablets of the Law

Col 4: 1 - 5- conduct towards outsiders

1Thes 4: 9- - 12- Holiness in the will of God

1Peter 3: 8 - 12- Fraternal love in the Christian community

Cor 13: 1 - 13- Hymn to love the supreme gift of the spirit

Mt 8: 18 - 21 - "follow me and let the dead burry their dead"

FOURTH DAY

4.0 Theme: Mary as the Model of Discipleship

4.1 Prayer: Lord we thank you for the gift of your mother in our life. We would like to invoke her presence and help in our life as we start this new day of our retreat. May she guide us and protect us all through. This we pray and ask through Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN.

4.2 Reading: Lk 1: 26—45 –The Annunciation⁸

4.3 Personal Reflection

Reflecting on the above scripture passage, I see how attentive and courageous Mary was, so that she managed to communicate with God through the Angel Gabriel. She made sure that the message was clear by asking questions without sparing the Angel. She accepted the message at long last by saying, “ Let your will be done” Lk 1:38. Even after the Angel had left her she was troubled but she knew what would happen to her was through God’s will.

She gathered her things and went to help her cousin, Elizabeth, who was six months pregnant. Lending a hand to her cousin shows how charitable Mary was and how tranquil she was during that time. Hers was only to ponder on what she had received from God and what she had yet to receive in her life.

God dialogues respectfully with a young woman in the sense that He does not impose his will on her and never does He to me. God invites me to answer what he asks of me.

⁸ See Picture Appendix 5

Dialogue with Him in my vocation is an ongoing process. Generous collaboration in God's plan is very important: I should desire to do a little more than what He expects of me.

The example of Mary of being generous, welcoming, charitable and humble to God's will challenges me very much (Lk 1: 39—40). Many times I really love to do my will more than what God asks of me. I find God's desire for me demanding and so I tend to do my own will. That is where I fail completely. I am called to ask myself how generous I am in answering the will of God in my life. Am I humble enough to accept his will? Am I welcoming to what God communicates to me? The example of Mary remains a challenge in my life.

4.4 Social Application

Doing the will of God is fulfilling what he has commanded us to do especially fulfilling the commandment of love of God and neighbor. Mary fulfilled his command by accepting his will. This is a great sign of the love Mary had for God and the one she carried in her womb, Jesus Christ. Since Mary is our model of discipleship, we need to imitate her example of how she welcomed the will of God. She did not grumble about it but was prudent enough to accept it whole heartedly. She did not say "no" or "wait;" all she did was to clarify the message by her prudent questions to the angel. As we try to learn from her example we are invited to examine our life, especially how we are responding to the command of Christ to love God and our neighbor above all else. Our love for Christ should be manifested in our actions (Lk 1: 39—45). Mary showed the

love she had for God by going to assist her cousin, Elizabeth, who was pregnant and old. How charitable she was! Mary is the first disciple of Christ and so we are challenged to learn from her as a mother and a teacher. If we follow Christ as his disciples, we are following or imitating Mary's ways. Pope John Paul II says "the special gifts which God had showered on Mary made her particularly suited to her task as mother and teacher.... Jesus could find her a model to follow and imitate and an example of perfect love for God and for his brothers and sisters."⁹

The pope says also in his Apostolic Exhortation (*vita consecrata*) "the blessed virgin teaches unconditional discipleship and diligent service."¹⁰ Let us ask ourselves, how many times have we loved our fellow sisters by giving a helping hand when the need arises or when we are requested by the mistress? Doing the will of God as we are directed makes a difference in the community in which we live. How many times have we accepted the assignment given with all our hearts without grumbling? But look, doing the will of God through your mistress's request makes a difference in the lives of others. The one helped will feel loved and supported in the community which leads to joy and peace in her heart. Let us imitate the example of Mary as the first disciple of Jesus, our teacher and our friend.

4.5 Pastoral Application

After having considered our model of discipleship, we should not stop there with ourselves but we need to share this discovery with the rest of humanity. People

⁹ JOHN PAUL II, *Theotokos*, p153

¹⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata*, p29

outside there call us “mama” not to undermine us but as a sign of respect for our state of life. They see something in us that reflects the image of “mama,” mother.

Many mothers these days are not fulfilling their responsibility of being loving and caring people in the society. They are the ones practicing abortion, beating and killing their children just because of petty issues. If mama Mary had done such a thing Jesus would not have lived. When we look at the time Jesus was twelve years old, he slipped off from their hands and remained in the temple with the elders (Lk 2: 41–52). His parents, Mary and Joseph, went to look for him all over, but they did not beat or kill him because of that. After finding him, Mary tried to deliver the message of how they had looked for him in vain for three days. We see Mary as a mother and a teacher to all the mothers in the world and to us too of being persons of love, care and concern (Jn 2: 1–12). Pope John Paul II says “from being her son’s ‘teacher,’ Mary thus became the humble disciple of the divine master to whom she had given birth.”¹¹ Humility and love are the only ways to discipleship. If we call ourselves Christians, we need to show this love and concern for one another. People will learn through our example that we are Christ’s disciples’ loving and caring attitude. We need to make them learn to do the same in their lives, a very important aspect of discipleship that will build a society of love and care. Once they understand how we live and love one another they will, hopefully practice the same in their lives. Let us make them know our model, mother and teacher of us all human kind.

¹¹ JOHN PAUL II, *A Catechesis on Mary, Mother of God*, p153

4.6 Conclusion

Being a disciple of Christ is none other than being a loving, concerned and generous person in responding to God's will. We are invited to imitate Mary's example of discipleship so that we may become true disciples of Christ. As our Constitutions say, "the missionaries as affectionate daughters and devoted disciples shall put themselves alongside Mary, mother of the Word: living with her and for her like the apostles in the upper room, hearing and keeping in their hearts her ineffable words."¹²

4.7 Reflection

Today, let us reflect on the example of our blessed virgin mother, the first disciple of Christ. Let us use the following questions as a help in our meditation today:

How do I respond to God's will?

Am I generous enough in doing his will?

Am I a loving and caring person to my sisters in the community as a disciple of Christ?

4.8 Reflection Texts

Lk 11: 28 The truly blessed

Lk 2: 41- 52 Jesus and his father

Jn 2: 1—12 -- Jesus changes water into wine

Jn 19: 25 27 Mary standing by the cross

¹² VINCENZO IDA', Manuscript pp177--178

FIFTH DAY

5.0 Theme: Being Sent for Mission

5.1 Prayer: Lord we ask you this morning to be with us as we listen to your ineffable words of blessings as you send us out for mission. Through Christ our Lord, AMEN.

5.2 Reading: Mt 10: 5—15 –The Commissioning of the Twelve¹³

5.3 Personal Reflection

In the reading today Jesus is sending the twelve out for mission. After their initial response to follow and stay with Jesus and having learnt what he wanted to teach them, they are considered ready for mission. They are going out to put into practice what they had learned from Jesus, though they are still fallible. They are going out to share what they received from the master and in the process, grow in their own faith. Karen A. Barta says that, “for it is precisely in sharing one’s faith by teaching and reaching out to others that one’s faith grows, develops and becomes more complete. Mission therefore is always an interchange, a mutuality that assumes an equality.”¹⁴ This statement reminds me of who I am now after my formation with all that I have acquired through it, and the fact that I need to share my whole self with those to whom I am sent. It reminds me that my growth in faith continues even as I seek to evangelize others.

The type of mission Jesus is describing is not an easy one because he knows what would happen to the disciples. He tells them that if there will be no welcome in a

¹³ See Picture Appendix 6

¹⁴ KAREN A. BARTA, *The Apostolic Mission*, p156

certain town or home they had to leave and shake the dust of that particular town or house. The people to whom Jesus was sending his disciples would not always welcome the message. This is exactly what I experience in my apostolate. I find it difficult sometimes to share my love with my sisters who do not appreciate it at all. It discourages me very much in that what we are called to do is not manifested in our Christian charity. But what Richard Longenecker says encourages me in one way or another. He says; “My discipleship should be a life of development in both one’s faith and one’s practice.”¹⁵ He reminds me that as a disciple I should not bother with those who do not welcome my love but continue practicing it, for a “mission is basically a change to be carried out, a job to be done, a service to be rendered.”¹⁶ So I have to do what I am commissioned to do but not worry too much about those who do not accept my message.

5.4 Social Application

Being Christians and chosen out of many we are disciples of Christ by virtue of baptism. We need one another and are called to be witnesses of Christ to one another. This is a wonderful call we have received. Looking at the theme of today, we are being sent every moment of our life to mission and for mission. This mission starts with ourselves before we think of other people in the world. We need to evangelize our fellow sisters in this community we are in before turning to other people. We are called to be generous and obedient to the call of Christ to be his witnesses. Dietrich

¹⁵ RICHARD LONGERNECKER, ed, *Pattern of Discipleship in the New Testament*, pp74–75

¹⁶ KAREN A. BARTA, *Apostolic Mission*, p155

Bonhoeffer says: "...there is no road to faith or discipleship, no other road -- only obedience to the call of Jesus."¹⁷ After staying with and learning from him we are called to obey to his will, which is love for our neighbor, and for one another. I think we have learned enough and what we did not understand we have asked for clarification and now we are ready for mission. As Matthew says, "for the disciples other than learning, they confronted what Jesus said or did which either did not please them or which they did not understand themselves" Mt 19:10, 13:10, 15:12. I also presume that what you have learned has taken root in you to help you to grow in faith and knowledge in guiding those who will be in need of your help. Hopefully we will not communicate our own selves but Christ's message to others.

When I was in class five, a teacher one day came in for a history lesson which was the last period before the lunch break. We were all tired but what could we do? We persevered in listening to him. At the end he asked us one question on what he had taught about the Kikuyu leadership system. He asked one of my classmates about what happened to the women who were oppressing the men. Just because this boy was very hungry, he found himself answering the teacher "yes ugali na sukuma." We all burst into laughter. This was a message that was not understood by the teacher. I feel that as human beings, we can also find ourselves communicating to our fellow sisters and to other people what we think, other than what we are taught by Christ. So we have to be careful in spreading the message of God not to put it as we like but the way Christ wants us to. More importantly, our mission must be a reflection of our living the gospel

¹⁷ DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, *The Call to Discipleship*, p61

values. As Michael Amaladoss says: “Mission is not the communication of creed but the sharing of our experience of God’s action in Jesus.”¹⁸

5.5 Pastoral Application

“Today the goal of mission is seen as the building of the kingdom on earth and of the Church as its symbol and servant.”¹⁹ From the Bible we are told that, “the harvest is rich and the labourers are few” Mt 9: 37–38. It is an invitation from Christ for us to offer ourselves for mission with all that he has taught and instructed us. He is calling us to partake in his ministry of spreading the Good News to his people. As we received his message without charge we are to share it out without charge. Even if in some places we experience humiliations and resistance we need to be firm and by his grace we will be able to deliver it convincingly.

There was one priest who went for a funeral service of one of the parishioners. He tried to give a sense of hope to the relatives by saying that the deceased was alive and so they did not need to worry about his death. The mother became mad about the expression because she could not grasp the message. The priest felt like taking off but he could not because he had to conduct the funeral service until the end. We can see how difficult spreading the Gospel message can be sometimes. We think that we are doing good but sometimes our message is misunderstood.

¹⁸ MICHAEL AMALADOSS, *Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Mission*, p226

¹⁹ *Ibd*

Longenecker encourages us that amidst all these challenges “discipleship is to be involved in prophetic proclamation that is focused on the work of Jesus.”²⁰ We need not be discouraged but to be “dependent on God and submissive to his will, hence the importance of prayer,”²¹ that those whom we instruct may welcome Christ himself. Also in this age of the H.I V/Aids pandemic, people are desperate in many ways and sometimes our message to them might not be relevant. But our discipleship must always recognize the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that he may speak to them through us so that they may benefit from what we tell them. We need to depend on Him to guide us in the best way to be available to those who need our love and compassion.

5.6 Conclusion

Being sent to and for mission means a lot. We can see that it needs courageous people like you, prayerful to overcome temptations, those who can endure humiliations and resistance from people. As disciples in mission we need to be friends of all, especially the marginalized, and ready to accept them as Christ did. He gave us an example by sitting at table with tax collectors, and prostitutes, touching lepers and other outcasts.

5.7 Reflection

After having listened to Christ all these days how ready am I to accept his will of carrying out his mission?

²⁰ *Ibd*

²¹ RICHARD LONGERNECKER, ed; *Pattern of Discipleship in the New Testament*, p18

Am I generous enough to share what he has offered me with my brothers and sisters?

Mt 28: 19--20

Am I ready to endure all that I will encounter in mission?

5.8 Suggested Texts for Reflection

Mt 10:16ff “I am sending you....”

Mk 6: 7—13 The Twelve as Poor Wanderers

Mk 16: 14 -18 The Eleven Are Sent to the World

Lk 9: 1—6 The Sending of the Twelve

Lk 10: 1-- 12 The Mission of the Seventy-two

ABBREVIATIONS

Cf.	Confer.
Col.	Colosians
Cons.	Constitutions
Cor.	Corinthians
Ed (s)	Editor(s)
I.S.R.F	Institute of Spirituality and Religious formation
Jer.	Jeremiah
Jn.	John
Kg	Kings
Lk.	Luke
Mt.	Matthew
Mk.	Mark
S.M.C	Suore Missionarie del Catechismo (Missionary Sisters of the Catechism)
St.	Saint

BIBLIOGRAPHY BOOKS

- BONHOEFFER D., *The Cost of Discipleship; The Call to Discipleship*, Macmillan Company, New York, 1963.
- LONGERNECKER N.R., (ed) *Pattern of Discipleship in the New Testament*, 1996.
- PAUL II., *A Catechesis on Mary, Mother of God; Theotokos*, St. Paul Publications, USA Boston, 2000.
-, *The Consecrated Life; Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, St. Paul Publications, Nairobi, 1996.
- MOLONEY J. F., *The Disciples and Prophets; A Biblical Model for the Religious life*, St. Paul Publications, Bandra Bombay, 1980.

JOURNALS

- AMALADOSS M., *Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Mission; The Japan Mission*, Vol., 55 Number 1,2,3,4., 2001
- BARTA A. K., *The Apostolic Mission; The Bible Today*, Vol., 33 Number 1,2,3,4,5,6., 1995.
- KOWALSKI W., *The Call to Discipleship; A Challenge to Personal Commitment*, AFER., Vol., 42 Number 3,4., 2000.

UNPUBLISHED BOOK

S.M.C., Constitution, Ariccia, Rome, 1992.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Student’s Declaration.....	i
Epigraph.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgement.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Plan.....	2
Reasons for Choosing the Episode.....	2
The Venue.....	3
Materials.....	3
Structure of the Conferences.....	3
The Evening Before the start of the Retreat.....	4
The Setting.....	4
FIRST DAY	
1.0 Theme: The Call and Response to Christ.....	6
1.1 Personal Reflection.....	6
1.2 Social Reflection.....	7
1.3 Pastoral Application.....	8
1.4 Conclusion.....	9
1.5 Suggested Reflection Texts.....	10
SECOND DAY	
2.0 Theme: The Call to Religious Life.....	11
2.1 Prayer.....	11
2.2 Reading: Mk 2: 13- 15-The Calling of Levi.....	11
2.3 Personal Reflection.....	11
2.4 Social Application.....	12
2.5 Pastoral Application.....	13
2.6 Conclusion.....	14
2.7 Reflection.....	15
2.8 Sources of Reflection.....	15
THIRD DAY	
3.0 Theme: Staying with and Learning from Jesus.....	16
3.1 Prayer.....	16
3.2 Reading: Mt.9: 9- 13-The Call of Matthew.....	16
3.3 Personal Reflection.....	16
3.4 Social Application.....	17
3.5 Pastoral Application.....	19
3.6 Conclusion.....	20
3.7 Reflection.....	20
3.8 ReflectionText.....	20

FOURTH DAY

4.0	Theme: Mary as the Model of Discipleship.....	22
4.1	Prayer.....	22
4.2	Reading: Lk 1: 26- 45-The Annunciation.....	22
4.3	Personal Reflection.....	22
4.4	Social Application.....	23
4.5	Pastoral Application.....	25
4.6	Conclusion.....	26
4.7	Reflection.....	26
4.8	Reflection Texts.....	26

FIFTH DAY

5.0	Theme: Being Sent for Mission.....	28
5.1	Prayer.....	28
5.2	Reading: Mt 10:5- 15-The Commissioning of the Twelve.....	28
5.3	Personal Reflection.....	28
5.4	Social Application.....	29
5.5	Pastoral Application.....	31
5.6	Conclusion.....	32
5.7	Reflection.....	32
5.8	Suggested Texts for Reflection.....	32
	Abbreviation.....	34
	Bibliography.....	34
	Table of Contents.....	35
	Appendix	

APPENDIX I

DAILY SCHEDULE FOR THE FIVE DAYS OF RETREAT

7:00	WAKING UP
7:30	COMMUNAL MORNING PRAYER
8:00	BREAKFAST
9:00	CONFERENCE
9:40	PERSONAL REFLECTION
1:00	LUNCH
2:00	SIESTA
3:00- 4:30	PERSONAL PRAYER
4:30- 5:30	FAITH SHARING
5:30—6:00	FREE TIME
6:00	MASS
7:00	DINNER
8:00- 8:30	SILENT COMMUNAL ADORATION

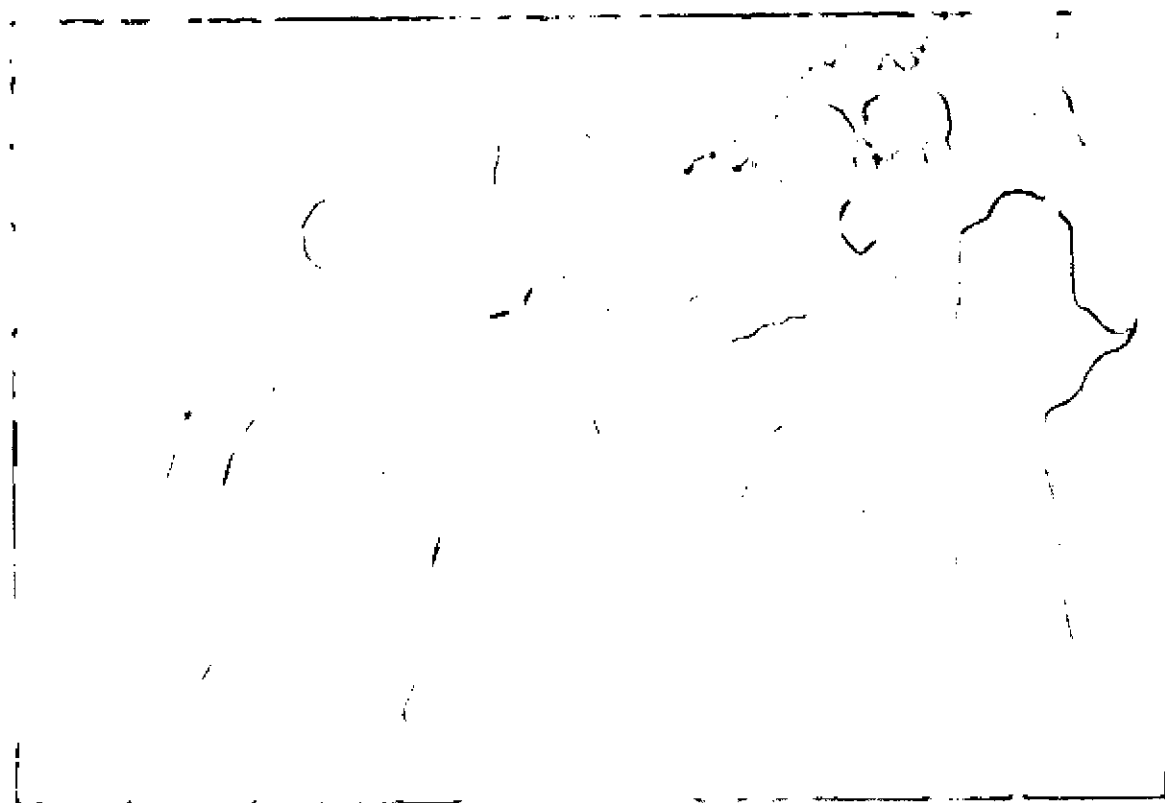
APPENDIX 2

THE CALL OF ELISHA



APPENDIX 3

THE CALL TO RELIGIOUS LIFE



APPENDIX 4

STAYING WITH AND LEARNING FROM CHRIST



APPENDIX 5

THE ANNUNCIATION



APPENDIX 6

BEING SENT FOR MISSION

