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**THE INFLUENCE OF FORMATORS AS ROLE MODELS IN RELIGIOUS
FORMATION ON FORMEES IN KENYA: A CASE OF OJOLA DEANERY,**

KISUMU ARCH-DIOCESE, KISUMU COUNTY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my entire family who first introduced me to the Catholic Faith. To mother Christina Okono, who passed on aged 84 on 6th June 2019 after a long illness. You were a great inspiration and support to me especially at the beginning of my journey into the religious life. I also dedicate this Long Essay to my brother Steve Okono who has been a source of strength since my coming to Nairobi to the completion of my studies. I acknowledge your immense support financially, materially and intellectually.

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Firstly, I would like to thank the Almighty God for having granted me good health and enabling me complete this Long Essay. I thank my Supervisor, Dr. Florence Githuthu, who has faithfully guided me through my research writing.

I extend a special word of gratitude to my community's founder Arch-Bishop Zacchaeus Okoth for having allowed me to study at Tangaza University College, for the material and spiritual support. To my friends Michael Opalo and Br Pollycarp Ongijo for having encouraged me, especially for having given me ideas on how to go about my work, I say, thank you.

STUDENT’S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this Long Essay is my original work, achieved through personal efforts of study, scientific research and critical reflection. It has never been submitted at any other College or University for academic credits. All sources cited have been accordingly acknowledged.

Signed:

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This Long Essay has been submitted to the Institute of Spirituality and Religious Formation under my approval as the University College Supervisor.

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Date.....

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Cor: Corinthians

2 Cor: 2nd Letter to Corinthians

BOLPH: Brothers of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

CCC: Catechism of the Catholic Church

CCL: Code of Canon Law

Gen: Genesis

Jn: John

Lk: Luke

Mk: Mark

Mt: Mathew

Phil: Philippians

Zec: Zechariah

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ is the model of all the religious involved in the task of formation. Founded on the spirituality of Jesus Christ and relying on the graces of God, the religious formators are involved in the nurture and growth of religious life ideals during the formation period. This study is aimed at bringing out the understanding of the ideal formator and the experience of formators in the formation process. It is hoped that the findings will help the formators and the religious fraternity in understanding the significant role performed by the persons put in charge of formation houses. The study focused on the relationships that exist between a formator and the formees and the challenges encountered in the process. It is an assessment and evaluation of factors that lead to a well-established formation team for effective placement of formees to realize the nurture of their talents for their wellbeing and the growth of Religious Institutes. It involved the two protagonists namely the formators and formees in religious institutes within Ojola Deanery of the Arch-Diocese of Kisumu.

Formators are key players in the formation process. As shepherds, they are vital in the identification and nurture of the religious ideals in the lives of those aspiring for Religious Life. They are important in the development of the formees as religious and besides their work in formation, their person is equally important. It was the intention of this study to find out how the person of the formator as the shepherd (cf. Mt 26:31, Zec 13:7) impacts the overall outlook and orientation of the formees. The study used the qualitative research method and also reviewed what other authors have documented concerning formators and the processes involved in the religious formation. It is divided into three chapters with a general introduction and conclusion and recommendations arising from the exercise.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

Formators are very essential in religious life since growth in vocation in the Religious Institutes is driven by their works of formation. The growth and progress to maturity and sanctity in the life of a religious require a suitable atmosphere in formation houses. The preparation and progress in religious consecration in the Church, therefore, require the input of both the formator and the formee. One of the tasks of formators is to give priority to the formees as individuals for them to feel free and open in sharing their deepest concerns. When formees get to feel their freedom in the formation house, they acquire a sense of openness and belonging to become part of the religious community. The basic way by which a formator imparts such guidance is directly determined by the formators' way of life in his exemplary living and through spiritual guidance. In this way, the formator shapes the norms of community living in two distinct ways, namely as a technical expert and also as a model in the community.

The formator as a technical expert implies his having insight that those under their care do not have. As a result, the word and act of the formator carry much weight. To achieve this, the formator must possess a clear grasp of his formation objectives in line with the values that shape religious life. These include the primacy of prayer life, the Charism of the community as well as the development of personal qualities such as servant leadership and good listening. On the other hand, as the model setting member of the community, a formator instills exemplary Christian

living through personal conduct.¹ The formator demonstrates this through being prayerful and as the unifier in the community as well as a servant leader to the formees. The formator may not necessarily be perfect, but, through model living, he offers overall direction on the expected behavior to the formees under his care.

The formator engages the formees actively by assigning them responsibilities for the wellbeing of the community. When delegated duties by the formator, formees feel empowered and in the process, the formators can evaluate them from an informed position based on personal observation and contact with them. The formator also schedules regular faith sharing sessions in the community through which the formees engage in mutual correction as they develop the much needed religious ideals in the community. The formees on their part are also made to realize that their quest to grow and live as religious does not solely come from them but God and through the formator. All these should be observed in the formation process to help the formator nurture and instill the spirit of religious life especially in the young men desiring to become religious in Ojola Deanery of the Arch-Diocese of Kisumu.

1.1 Purpose of the Research

This research investigated the role of the formator as models in nurturing formees in the religious institutes in Ojola Deanery in the Arch-Diocese of Kisumu. The study sought to establish how religious ethics, values, and conduct of formators contribute to the development of character and the overall wellbeing of the formees as religious. In so doing, the study aimed at expanding the knowledge base and awareness of the formators in the formation process so that they turn impact positively in the lives of the formees as future religious.

¹M. O'REILLY, *The Formation of a Religious in Africa Today ...* 47

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In preparing formees for religious life, formators are expected to comply with the rules of formation into religious life. They are expected to live exemplary lives that conform to the values and ideals of religious life. They are expected to be models to the formees under their care. Unfortunately, some formators fail to live up to this expectation. Others have an intrinsically formed negative attitude towards formation such as poor interest in prayer life. Their alack of cordial interpersonal relationship with formees and an ‘I don’t care attitude’ that demonstrates lack of concern in the wellbeing of formees directly impact on the lives of the formees. This results in immature religious. Therefore there is an academic need to address the apparent knowledge gap on how to deal with challenges experienced in the formation of formees in the religious institutes which necessitates formal research in this area.

1.3 Objectives of Study

The study set out to find the following:

- i. Impact of formators on formees in the formation process
- ii. Whether formees are influenced by the conduct of the formators
- iii. Values that inform the activities of formators in modelling formees into the religious life

1.4 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- i. What is the impact of the formators in the formation process?
- ii. What is the influence of the conduct of the formators on the formees?
- iii. What values inform the activities and way of life of the formators in the religious life?

1.5 Hypothesis of the Research

This study was established upon the hypothesis that formators have a big impact on the process of formation and that they influence the development of formees in religious life.

1.6 Justification of Study

Formators are supposed to be the main pillars in the making of a religious in the Church. They are tasked with being models for the formees in their journey into the religious life. They, in turn, shape the lives and ideals espoused by the formees as they mature into religious men and women in the Church. By evaluating the roles and impacts of the formators in the vocation discernment process, the study hoped to bring out the potential usefulness of the works of a formator in the life of a religious. They contribute to formation not only by instructing the formees on religious ideals and the spirituality of their founders but also by their way of life. In the process, formees experience a holistic awakening in their religious life's aspirations through their formation in the hands of formators, morally, spiritually, socially, intellectually and even physically. It is then that they develop as all round religious men and women, formed in the faith of the Church and the way of life of their respective religious institutes.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

The study was established upon the conceptual framework that the personal qualities of the formator and the expected religious ideals are integral in the formation process. The religious ideals and virtues constitute the independent variable while the personal qualities of the formator constitute the dependent variables. The formation processes require an enabling environment within the formation house and this constitutes the intervening variable.

The religious ideals and the personal character of the formator are interrelated and, together with conducive atmosphere within the formation house, the work of guiding the formees to becoming mature religious is enhanced and made real. The formator as the central pillar in the formation process offers exemplary spiritual and humane guidance so that the formees learn and become good religious from him. He stands out as the epitome of prayer, caring and supporting the formees in their development, educating and encouraging them in the process of their formation. In these the formees directly depend on him as their servant leader. On the other hand, the formees are expected to acquire and live the religious ideals that shape religious life. They are expected to be prayerful and self-disciplined; to be community-oriented and deeply rooted in the Charism of their founder. Formation becomes a process of development that transforms them into responsible religious and exemplary men of faith in the Church.

To achieve these, the formation house provides the necessary atmosphere to the formees for progress in the religious life. Supported by a praying community committed to faith sharing and mutual correction, the community setting should provide a peaceful and quiet atmosphere that is ideal for prayer and meditation. To develop their skills in management and sense of responsibility for individual and communal wellbeing, the formator also assigns roles to the formees as part of the formation process.

1.8 Scope and Delimitation

The study's target population consisted of the male religious formators, chaplains and the formees in the formation houses found within Ojola Deanery of the Arch-Diocese of Kisumu. There are several religious institutes, both for brothers and sisters with formation houses within the deanery where the preparation of formees for consecration into the religious life takes place. The formees in these houses are drawn from the parishes across the entire breadth of the western

region. Due to the nature of Study, this research hopes to narrow down its' scope to the experiences of the male religious formators, the chaplains and the formees by engaging respondents from houses of formation only. Including the female religious institutes would make the study too wide. Narrowing the study will help focus the study objectives so that the research can capitalize on the experiences of the male population. It is the hope of this study that the findings so achieved will be able to be escalated to reflect the experiences of other groups who may not have been included in the study. The study has also opted for conduct the research among these formation houses because they are located within the same area and often they engage in inter-community sharing programs that bring the formees together to share their experiences in the formation process.

1.9 Possible Difficulties and Remedies

The study sought to investigate the influence of formators in their responsibilities and life examples in the formation process. The study was realistic to the situation that while formators would be willing to share their experiences in the task of formation, this is one of the apostolates where the religious are ill-equipped and that many would rather be assigned as tutors in schools as opposed to nurturing formees.² Being a sensitive area, a lot of tact and rapport building was necessary. The researcher approached the study with an open mind and an attitude of willingness to learn. Again, we were aware that many formees would feel intimidated in sharing their experiences lest it impacts negatively in their formation. To overcome this, the study re-assured the formees that the information was intended for purposes of study only and that anonymity of the respondents will be upheld.

²E.P. LIPTAK, *The Religious Formator* ... 15.

10. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have established the overall background of the study. The main purpose of Study was to investigate the influential role of the formators in the formation process with a special focus on the lives of the formees. The study posited that the formators have a big impact on the development of the religious during their initial stages of formation. The study was guided by three variables namely the religious ideals and values, the personal qualities of the formator, and the environment within the formation houses.

CHAPTER TWO

FORMATION INTO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

2.1 Introduction

This Chapter focuses on the journey that the religious go through from the time they are still united with and socialized in their families to answer the call to the religious life. It intends to give the picture of the religious as persons who live their lives devotedly despite the struggles that encounter in the life they have chosen. The concept detail in this Chapter focuses on the life of an ideal formator and the realities that the formator goes through once he comes into contact with the recruited candidates based on the reviewed literature.

2.2 Growth in Community Life: African and Christian Foundations

The religious life embraces community life which can be viewed as an affirmation of community life in African societies.³ Religious life is a striving towards true community.⁴ The religious are men and women drawn from different cultures to living together in faith-inspired community and sharing among them the resources available in the community. A person brought up responsibly in the family will find no difficulty to live in a community of brothers. The family is the base of community life for the religious. It is from the family that social and religious values are passed from parents to children. Pope John Paul says that “the family has vital and organic links with society since it is its foundation and nourishes it continually through its role of service to life ... the first school of the social virtues that are animating principles of the existence and development of society itself”.⁵ A family will see the need of educating its members so that every

³V.C. Kiaziku, *Consecrated Life in Bantu Africa...* 167.

⁴F.B. CONNOLLY, *Religious Life: A Profile for the Future ...* 35.

⁵ John Paul II. *RedemptorisMissio ...*

member can fit into society. Social values are instilled in the children in various ways by being taught to distinguish right from wrong, what should be done and how it should be done, where to play and what time to be in the house after play. In the process, a 'mental' time table is drawn in the mind of the child containing all the essentials needed by the family. The parents also introduce the children to the church where they come into contact with the Church's teachings. At school, the child develops intellectually. With the goodwill from the parents, children grow holistically with knowledge on how to survive with others in society. When such a youth feels called to and joins the religious life, the person will have learned to cherish the diversities that come from other community members.

The ideal Christian community is found in the book of Acts. The communities in the apostolic age consisted of small groups of persons who come together regularly to foster personal, spiritual and apostolic growth in the faith. The believers were of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own; rather everything was held in common. They catered for the needy among them and under the guidance of the apostles, each received according to their need. The community ensured that no one suffered want because there was enough for everyone in the community (cf. Acts 4:32, 34-35). This translated to their joy of salvation in Christ Jesus. They were motivated by the fact that they were Christians and the sharing was for spiritual and communal gain. They were motivated by their spiritual concern that one should not suffer want when the other had something to share.

Saint Benedict, the founder of Benedictines, wrote the famous Rule of Saint Benedict which has the unifying spirit of the religious vocation rooted in the community life.⁶ For Benedict,

⁶ Cf. M. O'REILLY, *The Formation of a Religious in Africa Today ...* 4.

although it is important to have private prayer, it ordinarily should be brief; what is more fundamental is that a person possesses the spirit of prayer that comes from participation in the community's liturgy. He insists that communal gathering for prayers in the life chosen by religious should be primary. He also recognized that the brothers may have different apostolates which are demanding. When called to report on duty following an emergency, for example, such a brother can opt for personal prayer. This should however not be encouraged because it poses a threat to community living. Community prayers should not be seen as a routine but as the foundation for deeper communion with God. Participation in community prayer life is healthy and a reminder that religious are gathered together in the Lord's name (Mt 18:20). Living in a community is a call for the brothers to be subject to regular discipline.

Saint Benedict also emphasized the primacy of equality within the community. Besides demanding equality among the brethren in terms of their states in the Church or duties assigned to them, Benedict exhorted the brothers to respect each other regardless of age. "Let the younger brothers, then reverence their elders and the elders love the younger". In many religious life set-ups, we have members who are newly professed, those who have celebrated their silver jubilee, those who have celebrated golden jubilee and some in their diamond jubilee age bracket. This is an indication that the elderly/senior members of the community deserve respect and reverence as expected in any African society. The Rule stipulates that they too should love the young brothers who have a long way to go in the religious life's journey. The elderly have to hold young religious in love and guide them in the right direction.

2.3 Reality of the Candidates

In any given religious community, the population of young religious will arguably be the biggest. The situation of many youths entering religious life in Africa today is such that there is a

need for avocations apostolate so that candidates for formation possess the right motivation to the religious life.⁷ Candidates join the formation from different backgrounds and experiences that require proper discernment before being admitted into formation for religious life. In formation houses, therefore, it is generally advisable that we have a formation team. A formator should have another member in the formation community as an assistant. Those assigned to this role should be realistic to the fact that recruited candidates in many cases will expect to find holier persons in religious life. This will be demanding on their character as candidates get easily overwhelmed when they encounter an otherwise. In the formation house, they will learn to acquire a new character and scope in their Christian living as they grow in their vocation to the religious life.

Many African countries have been affected by ethnic-based politics. Ethnic affiliations and biases have become ingrained into African personalities so much that it has affected even the churches. It is a reality that even the recruited candidates will carry their ethnic affiliations into the formation houses. Formators are also not immune to these affiliations and must guard against viewing the candidates from ethnic lenses. Ethnicity is a critical area that initial formation must stem in the community. Tendencies to these will be evidenced in various ways. Based on the tribe, a formee may befriend another, get to know each other and identify with each other to the point of isolating themselves from the rest of the community. The candidates will gossip, criticize, and even spread rumours about their fellow brothers in the formation house. Given that language is an instrument for uniting the community members, such traits become a threat to the unifying spirit and the future of the community. Tribal alliances must be discouraged from the moment they are

⁷V.C. KIAZUKI, *Consecrated Life in Bantu Africa ...* 205.

noticed. In other instances, candidates will form friendships based on factors such as being accommodative, one who listens and does not challenge the other's ideas.

Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter on the Year of the Consecrated Life urges thus "I would ask you to think about my frequent comments about criticism, gossip, envy, jealousy as a way of acting which have no place in our houses".⁸ The Pope warns that friendships that do not help build the community are founded on these four vices and that anyone bearing these has no place in the houses of formation. Unlike in other communities, open resistance in formation houses tends to be minimal.⁹ In case of any form of resistance, it is advised that formators take time to find out the causes and address these at the earliest opportunity. They should seek to find out why the resistance. In case this resistance persists and there is a clear indication that the formees cannot cooperate and are unwilling to change, the best alternative will be to ask them to leave. Formation teams should not be afraid of losing a candidate. Such departures sometimes are healthy for those who stay behind. Metaphorically, a leaf that cannot withstand the dry spell will eventually fall off leaving room for the nourishment of other leaves.

It is difficult to form candidates who have two faces; venerate obedience and the face of real character. In the first instance, the external face shows a lot of obedience but with no character. This is influenced by the understanding that the formator holds the future of the formee as a religious. As a result, a formee whose only intention is to become a religious and knowing well that the formator has the power and influence towards his first profession, he may bend low to the point of offering blind obedience to whatever the formator seeks or orders. This is done with the sole aim of securing professing the vows as a religious. Such a candidate will need a lot of spiritual

⁸POPE FRANCIS, *Apostolic Letter of the Year of the Consecrated Life ...* No.

⁹A. O. OJORE, *Ministerial Formation in Africa Today ...* 74.

direction and instruction for self-evaluation. If unchecked, this face leads to the concept of ‘tunnel formation’ where the formee hides his true identity until he gets his perpetual vows to be free. Such a religious will not be the true reflection of Christ, the ultimate goal of formation.¹⁰ The second face presents real attitude, character, and behaviour emanating from deep within. This face will be evident in the way the formee responds in his inquiries. Such a formee will be an all-round character in the formation house and a model formee.

2.3.1 The Primacy of Prayer

As Christians, we are believers (also referred to as faithful) who have officially joined the Church through Baptism. We are called to remain practicing Christians who love to pray in the example of Christ. The Catechism of the Catholic Church presents us with Jesus at prayer before every decisive moment in His mission.¹¹ Jesus in prayer before the events of human salvation demonstrates the primacy of humility and trust in the loving will of the Father. When we pray, we invoke, adore, praise, thank, express sorrow and ask blessings from our Creator through Jesus Christ. Jesus took time to pray on different occasions and even taught the disciples how to pray, encouraging them that whatever they ask would be granted to them (Mt 6: 9-15) and promised them that whenever they gather in prayer in his name he will avail himself (Mt 18: 19-20). These passages teach us that prayer is fundamental to every Christian.

In the formation process, formators are at the core when it comes to matters of building the religious character of the formees. The formator can build the character of a praying community in the formees through following a stipulated prayer schedule. Journeying with formees in prayer requires sacrifice. The formator must lead by example while ensuring that all formees are in the

¹⁰E.P. LIPTAK, *The Religious Formator* ...49.

¹¹ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* ... 2600-2604

chapel at the times indicated in the prayer timetable. Formees should be prepared to embrace the word of God through meditation and to listening to their inner voice. God must have the first place in their minds, hearts and activities during the formative years.

To pray is to invite God into our presence. Prayer requires persistence without becoming weary. Jesus taught the need for persistence in prayer using the parable of the widow and the unjust judge (Mt 18: 1-8). Formees can also be taught to pray without ceasing. Apart from the community prayers including Lauds, Angelus and Vespers, the formee should be formed to know that they communicate with God in Holy Mass where they present their intentions. They should also be made conversant with the exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament as forms of spiritual growth. Above all, prayers should be characterized by faith and hope. Faith that has its basis on prayers should be accompanied by actions (James 2:14-26) and formees should be made to understand the essence of hard work in the community. When praying for abundance in the farm, for example, they should be able to link the prayer for abundance to watering the plants when the rains fail and make sure that weeds are removed from the farm. It is then that the plants to grow healthy and strong and yield in abundance.

A formator should not only pray because it is expected of him but also be exemplary for the formees. The moment the candidates see this, it will impact positively on their prayer life and they will, in turn, imitate the same. Ideally, candidates in the formation houses are in their crawling stage in their religious life and depend on the formator for spiritual, emotional, and psychological guidance. The formator is thus positioned because he is the first person in contact with the candidates.

A prayer is an act of raising our minds and hearts to God.¹² Prayers connect us with God and require us to be humble before God who exalts us. In humility, we shall not despise the young candidates or be consumed by pride. In the mind of the formees, the formator knows how to pray and they long to follow his example. Yet, the formator is subject to human imperfections may not always meet their expectations. In his humility, the formator should make the candidates aware constancy in prayer is a skill that can be acquired through daily practice. This can only be possible through humble admission that we do not know how to pray as we ought and are ready to freely receive the gift of prayer (Lk 11:1). During the formation period, the candidates should improve in their prayer life and know how to pray because they are exposed to prayers daily. One way by which the candidates can ask the Lord to teach them how to pray is by practicing to pray as individuals. In prayer we present our petitions to God, enter into a divine conversation with God, and spiritually progress in holiness. Formation must be interior with the essence of deepening the candidate's spiritual life.

2.3.2 Agents of Formation

Formation of candidates who have been admitted should not be restricted to the formators only. It should be a duty of all Christians. Arguably, formation begins at home with the parents or guardians and continues until death. Once one has dedicated himself to join the religious life, Jesus Christ becomes the first agent and prime mover of the vocation. Jesus told his disciples that they did not choose him but rather He is the one who chose and appointed them (Jn 15:16-17). The Pope as the successor of Saint Peter and the representative of Christ, in turn, is tasked with the ministry of 'confirming his brothers in the faith'.¹³ Therefore, every time the pope writes the

¹²*Catechism of the Catholic Church ...* No 2559

¹³C. MCGARRY, *The Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful ...* 56.

Apostolic Letters, he in effect contributes to the on-going Christian and religious formation. The pope's messages circulate worldwide and his teachings are used as sermons during Holy Mass. The local ordinaries and priests also have a responsibility towards the formation of the recruited candidates through proclaiming the word and the celebration of the Eucharist as well as pastoral care of the candidates.

When religious formators come into contact with the candidates in the formation houses, it is to provide spiritual and pedagogical formation. They have the opportunity to learn who the candidates are, what they are going through and how they can be nurtured to become true witnesses of Christ. Formators have to guide candidates by showing them the right path. In all their engagements, they seek to model the formees in the example and teachings of Jesus Christ. Contemporary formation houses need people who can learn, unlearn and relearn that which is acceptable to be productive in life. For those who cannot conform to being flexible and adapting to changes to bear fruits, the more they become stagnant the more their chances of continuing in the formation houses diminishes.

2.4 The Evangelical Counsels

The consecrated life through the profession of the evangelical counsels is a stable form of living by which the faithful choose to follow Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit. They are dedicated to God. These Christian faithful through vows and other sacred bonds according to the proper laws of the Institutes, profess the evangelical counsel of Chastity, Poverty, and Obedience.¹⁴ The religious profess the evangelical counsels that consecrate them to God by leaving the life of the world to live the life of Christ in the Church. Through the evangelical

¹⁴*Code of Canon Law ...* NO. 573

counsels, we dedicate ourselves to a life without marriage, communal ownership and to obey the voice of God in our superiors. The vows commit us to do a specific good for the sake of the kingdom of God. By taking the religious vows we are not only pronouncing a public and formal commitment to God but also dedicate our whole being to God. Therefore, evangelical counsels are the way of expressing our total consecration in pursuing Christian perfection.

2.4.1 Chastity

For the religious to be chaste, they must maintain being celibate all their life. Chastity is a freely chosen life of perfect continence for the sake of the kingdom of God through a solemn profession (Mt 19:10-12).¹⁵ The vow of chastity must include abstention from sexual activities and a fervent devotion to Christ Jesus who will guide us to the path of purity of mind and heart. Religious Brothers and formators are however encouraged to converse with women or join them in the service of the gospel during when their whole conduct should breathe truthfulness and reverence and be free from the desire to exploit or manipulate their feelings negatively in these interactions. Through the evangelical counsel of chastity, the religious strive to stay in cordial relationship with God and to increase their capacities to be true reflections of Christ.

In the pursuit of such perfect continence, the formators can engage the candidates in questions such as “How can a religious remain chaste all through his life”? Moreover, formators should engage the candidates in activities including manual work, and active sports and exercises that will keep the candidates busy. These will help them to avoid impure thoughts. The vow of chastity aims at making the religious learn to let go of the family back at home and the family they would have had had they made decided to marry.¹⁶ It aims at enabling them to begin embracing

¹⁵ Cf. *Perfectae Caritatis* No. 12.

¹⁶F.B. CONNOLLY, *Religious Life: A Profile for the Future ...* 20.

the larger family of the people of God in the example of Christ.¹⁷ The formator becomes the parent of a large family because every year he will receive new candidates. The formator must be open to embracing in love all the members of his community. Chastity frees the human heart so that it burns with love for God and the people.

2.4.2 Poverty

Kiaziku notes that the evangelical counsel of poverty is, perhaps, the most controversial and misunderstood for the African.¹⁸ It involves striving after the well-being of the community and Congregation to fulfill our mission in the world around us. A religious Brother should knowingly and willingly be prepared to help his fellow Brothers and others with all he has in the example of the poverty of Christ. The poverty of Christ had a salvific scope. Though rich, Christ became poor for us that by His poverty we might become rich. In his richness, he shared what he had generously from God. In the communities where religious live, they share daily the resources they have. They share the goodness and poverty of material goods, time, and each other's talents. When coming together as a community in formation, there is an experience of richness of the personal talents and candidates should not be proud of their talents, so much that they feel superior but instead they should use know that talents are God's gift to individuals in gratitude and for the greater glory of God's name.

The vow of poverty should be seen as an instrument to know, to love and to serve God. This vow has a communal aspect that requires religious to put everything in common to build up the community. Poverty does not mean living in misery. It is a call to sharing the possessions to accomplish their mission. Form the first day of formation, the candidates should be made aware

¹⁷V.C. KIAZIKU, *Consecrated Life in Bantu Africa...* 156.

¹⁸V.C. KIAZIKU, *Consecrated Life in Bantu Africa ...* 122.

of the need to practice the idea of spiritual poverty. The poverty of the spirit (Mt 5:3) is the door through which God's graces flow. Formators should teach the formees to venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary, who instead of being proud of heart when she was told by the Angel Gabriel that she would be the mother of God, remained humble (Lk 1:51-53). In this way, they learn to create a spirit of humility in the candidates.

2.4.3 Obedience

Obedience is a socio-cultural value that integrates respect and order in society through its leadership.¹⁹ The religious have a duty to obey their superiors in the spirit of love. The love of God will make a religious to open up his mind and heart so that he may seek not his own will but the will of God at all times (Jn 4:43). Obedience, therefore, is the religious virtue by which one learns to obey lawful superior for the love of God.²⁰ This love enkindles in us the right style in obeying. The superiors in their capacities have the invitation to assume the example of Jesus Christ during the washing of the disciple's feet when Jesus said: "Do you realise what I have done for you? You call me teacher and master and rightly so indeed I am. If I, therefore, master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow" (Jn 13: 12-17). This is a lesson for every religious and especially superiors. They should blend their authority with love.

In a formation house, the formator becomes the Superior because he is the one in charge of the candidates. Formators should guard against the feeling of superiority based on age and their position. Religious obedience is about 'seeing with discernment' and seeking the guidance of God whose wisdom and judgment far exceeds the human. The candidates are required in obedience to

¹⁹V.C. KIAZIKU, *Consecrated Life in Bantu Africa...* 157.

²⁰F.B. CONNOLLY, *Religious Life: A Profile for the Future ...* 70.

discern and seek God's guidance when they feel they are in a tragedy. Obedience becomes sacred when intertwined with faith in God and the love for God and neighbour.

2.5 The Call to Religious Life

Religious life is a call to consecrated life in union with Jesus Christ in the Church.²¹ The religious are men and women who make vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Religious life is distinguished from other forms of consecrated life by its liturgical character, public profession of the evangelical counsels, fraternal life led in common and witness given to the union of Christ in the Church.²² The evangelical counsels are based on the teachings and example of Christ the teacher and are divine gifts that the Church has received from the Lord and preserves always through his grace.²³ The consecrated life has a particular call to holiness by witnessing to fraternal life in the community. All who live the consecrated life are called to the spirit of communion and cooperation with the respective bishops, clergy, and the laity.

The religious are expected to minister to people as they are. Like Jesus, the religious are called to discern the needs of the people and to respond appropriately to them. This is the challenge they are called to bear. Like Jesus who when the community had run short of wine at Cana in Galilee helped the family during the wedding feast (Jn2:1-12), the religious should realize that they too can be approached by those who ran short of basic needs for their assistance. In their apostolate, the religious are called upon to reach out to members of the society who need their help and by doing so share in the continuity of the ministry that Jesus Christ established so that the love of Christ continues to be witnessed.

²¹M. ARINGO, *On-going Formation Process* ... 19.

²²*Catechism of the Catholic Church* ... No. 925

²³*Code of Canon Law* ... No. 575

Three fundamental values are inseparable from the religious call namely community living, service and prayers. In the community, members with different careers and responsibilities should have no priority over those without. Besides, there are particular religious Congregations and Orders that by the nature of their founding Charism tend to lay focus on one of these fundamental values over others. Mother Teresa Missionaries of Charity, for example, are associated more with service whereas the Little Brothers and of Sisters of Jesus are people of prayers in comparison to service. We, the Brothers of Our of Lady of Perpetual Help, BOLPH, have blended the three with emphasis on the need to come out and serve in the wider community hence the Charism-‘HELP’ included in the name of the congregation.²⁴ The vocations team should clearly express the Charism and help the youths to discern their call to religious life. When organizing a seminar for youths who wish to join the congregation, formators should be allowed to facilitate such seminars when they are available.

Formators, thanks to their experience and exposure with the young men in the formation houses and their training should ideally able to talk to youths in a youthful way while guiding them in a fatherly way and helping them to discern more their vocation before joining a religious congregation. Once they begin formation, the candidates should be made aware that they have begun a journey in which no one is perfect but which through constant instruction and correction, and by the grace of God, they will overcome the challenges in becoming a religious. They have to pray for strength and the spirit of endurance in the call they have decided to follow.

²⁴ Cf. Z. OKOTH, *Spiritual Way of the Brothers of Our Lady of Perpetual Help ...* No. 4.

2.5.1 Christian Vocation

Christian vocation, therefore, is a calling that one feels from within and that Jesus Christ enacts. It is a three-fold personal, group and apostolic experience that gives us the Christian identity and members of the Church.²⁵ Jesus in his ministry taught his disciples through parables concerning the Christian vocation and called on the apostles to follow him (Mk 1:17). When Jesus calls us, we are invited to respond by detaching ourselves from what we own and even what we were doing to follow him. The disciples abandoned their nets and followed him (Mk 1:18). Sometimes, we become attached to what we have and what we are doing which makes us feel sad thinking about letting go. The Christian calling comes out as a priority over whatever we may have for the kingdom of God. While it is logical to argue that for us to survive we must work hard, it is also logical that we should share our joys and struggles, our successes and failures with others. In our call to be Christians, Jesus teaches us the value of detachment for the sake of the kingdom of God.

Christ becomes our focal point. Christ calls everyone and each one will respond to the call differently. The family is core to the Christian vocation as the domestic church, the primary seminary and the basic community of formation. Christian couples are the witnesses of the faith which they pass to their children, the future religious. Parents have to educate their children to grow in the ways of the Lord. They achieve this by taking the children to the church for prayers and catechetical instructions and urge them to join the devotional groups in the Church like Pontifical Missionary Children. Through these subtle formative exercises, the children are

²⁵F.B. CONNOLLY, *Religious Life: A Profile of the Future ...* 7

introduced to the Christian teachings. It is from within the family as the basic Christian formation community that the religious are drawn for service in the Church.

2.5.2 Religious Life Experience

Religious life cannot be separated from the values of community life, service, and prayer. In religious life, these values are inseparable. This is demonstrated in the experiences of the first Christian communities who were united in prayers and service (Acts 2:1). In the Church, the ideas moulded by different religious community founders act as a source of guidance to the religious. In most cases, these have a lot of similarities, points of divergence being on the emphasis on a particular aspect to others. Today, community life should be based on mutual respect, understanding, and affection for one another. However, difficulties arise when brothers do not want to associate with one another. A religious can be a danger in the community when he spreads rumours in the community. Some brothers also witness wrongs within the community but they keep quiet until the problem affects the community. However, it is discrimination that is the greatest danger in community life because it brings division among brothers.²⁶ Whenever these vices are witnessed in the community then there is a need for on-going formation. This doesn't mean that other members are perfect for in a community we sometimes have members who will function well only when they are affirmed and told that they are doing a great job. Should that praise fail to be forthcoming then they quickly become disinterested. There are members of the community who will feel insecure with the brothers they are living with, not because the brother is bad but because of strictness in community living. We have religious who try to live the ideal religious life and who strive to show particular virtues where necessary. All these have to find

²⁶Z. OKOTH, *Spiritual Way of the Brothers of Our Lady of Perpetual Help (BOLPH)* ... No. 51.

communion and live the values of religious life to establish and bring out the Christian face of the community to humanity.

The religious vocation of brothers in Africa has to some extent developed an identity crisis. The vocation promotion process has continually failed to give the brothers the priority and identity they deserve in the Church.²⁷ Again, the clerical missionary institutes have no trouble recruiting young men who want to be missionary brothers unlike those in the lay state. In most parishes where brothers are seen for the first time, they are misconceived by lay Christians as seminarians. It is only when a brother congregation has stayed in a parish that the parishioners begin to understand them. Still, brother congregations with members who are clerics will attract more vocations. This is well explained in the story of locally founded brothers' congregation of Little Brothers of St Joseph that began in Senegal in the 1860s.²⁸ By 1960 when celebrating the centenary of their founding, they had just fourteen members. Christian families in parishes that have experienced the work of religious brothers in schools, hospitals, and other institutions have seen the need to allow their sons to join the religious brothers. The candidates must be well directed by their formators to distinguish the difference between a religious and a priest.

2.6 Conclusion

For anyone to become a religious within the Catholic Church, one must pass through the hands of a formator. The candidates might in the future become formators involved in nurturing yet another generation of candidates. In this way, the on-going cycle of formation into religious life perpetuates the religious institute's Charism and History with influences of personal attributes of the formator. The formator who participates in this on-going process is expected to be Christ-

²⁷M. OREILLY, *The Challenges of Being a Religious in Africa Today ...* 93.

²⁸M. OREILLY, *The Challenges of Being a Religious in Africa Today ...* 93.

like to the candidates who look up to him for exemplary religious and Christian living in their quest to become religious men and women. Whatever they say and do will be reflected in the kind of the lives of the candidates as religious men and women.

CHAPTER THREE

VALUES IN MODELLING FORMEES INTO RELIGIOUS LIFE

3.0 Introduction

Jesus Christ, the model of all formators was humble even to accepting death on a cross (cf. Phil 2: 6-11).²⁹ Was it for Jesus to be proud, would we have received salvation? Why such humility? In religious life, humility should take precedence in the example of Christ. Pride is the basis of incontinence in the world. It was human pride that led to the sin of disobedience in the Garden of Eden from the very beginning (Gen 3:6). Similarly, pride is attributed to the division of human unity and the destruction of the quest to build an earthly tower and the formation of different human languages (Gen 11:4). Saint Augustine argues that it was pride that changed angels into devils and by contrast, it is humility that makes men into angels. Alternatively, humility made the world receptive of salvation through Jesus Christ. Men and women in the Bible have been held in high esteem because of their humility. Humility is the foundation of religious life and formators have the vocation to advocate for the promotion of humility and other values in their duties.

3.1 Community Life

Community life is an important element of formation to religious life. Community life cuts across all forms of consecrated living in religious congregations. The religious communities found in Kisumu arch-diocese also share the general aspects of community life inherent in most traditional African communities. It is within the community setting that social values are passed on from the elderly to the younger members of the community. For this reason, there is a need to

²⁹M. O'REILLY, *The Formation of a Religious in Africa Today ...* 42.

incorporate elderly members in the formation houses to help encourage the formees and instil in them the awareness that growth in the religious life is an on-going process.³⁰ It will cultivate in the formees the virtue of humility to the will of God even as they journey through the formation.

The formation should promote the acculturation of African communal values so that the young religious view themselves in the context of “clan solidarity, which demands a spirit of hospitality, willingness to share what little there is and mutual help in case of need or distress”.³¹ The African concept of solidarity (we mentality) informed with cultural knowledge was the basis of social identity and belonging in the community. This, however, did not imply a loss of individual identity. In religious life, the candidates may have slightly different cultural orientations due to their different ethnic and family origins. In the context of these diversities, the formator is to the symbol of unity and should work towards harmony by encouraging the cultivation of religious ideals over the cultural identities. The formation processes, therefore, must take care of enculturation because it contributes a great deal to the proper integration of the young Africans into the apostolic nature of the religious life in the religious congregations.³²

3.2 Religious Personality Identity

Spiritual formation is the basic dimension in the nurture of the ideals of religious living. To be religious is first and foremost a call to a personal relationship and communion with God and with the community around us. It is this identity that gifts us with the particular religious spiritualities and so that we identify ourselves as members of specific religious communities. Formators are called upon to assist the candidates in moulding their personality in such a way that

³⁰E.P. LIPTAK, *The Religious Formator* ... 13.

³¹V.C. KIAZIKU, *Consecrated Life in Bantu Africa* ... 168.

³²V.C. KIAZIKU, *Consecrated Life in Bantu Africa* ... 88.

they become a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their encounter with Jesus Christ. To the candidate, they must guard against the pride of being a religious that might make them look down upon others who are not religious. This is the essence of spiritual formation and formators should avail themselves to accompany the young candidates in their prayers; during spiritual pilgrimages, and in every activity concerned with their spiritual development within the formation house. These should be well stipulated in the constitution of the congregation.

The formation program should be holistic and embrace the overall development of intellectual, psychological, moral, spiritual and sociological dimensions of the human person. According to Aringo, formation is the shaping of the character and ideas of an individual through the guidance of into the spirit, ethos, and history of the congregation.³³ The formation process should enable a formee to participate in the light of God's mind and to seek to acquire wisdom that opens the mind to God and directs the self towards knowing and adhering to the will of God.

3.3 Transmission of the Charism of the Congregation

Community Charism is the gift of the Holy Spirit transmitted through the founder of the congregation for our guidance in building the Kingdom of God here on earth.³⁴ It is in the formation that formees are introduced to the understanding of the Charism of their religious congregation as developed by the founder. The young religious are called upon to study it and to hold it as the cornerstone of community life. It is during this period when the formators take the responsibility to explain the Charism of the congregation and to expound on it. The candidates are called upon to view the Charism as the spiritual force propelling the congregation forward and without which the congregation is ideologically and practically barren.

³³M. ARINGO, ON-GOING FORMATION PROCESS ... 19.

³⁴M, O'REILLY, *The Formation of a Religious in Africa Today* ... 9.

The Charism of the congregation of the Brothers of Our Lady of Perpetual Help is derived from the scriptures. Upon the Annunciation, (Lk 1:26-38), Mary made haste to visit Elizabeth and stayed with her in her old age as a helper (cf. Lk 1:39-56). It is this act of kindness that inspired our founder to establish the congregation to inspire the brothers to emulate the example of Mary, Our Lady of Perpetual Help.³⁵ It is the responsibility of the formator to impart this Charism on the postulants so that they begin to identify with their vocation to become helpers in the vineyard of the Lord. It is the duty of the formator to explain the parameters of what is implied in the Charism and what is not and its practical applicability to the religious life. An example here will suffice: our Charism espouses visiting the sick and the less fortunate and sharing in their experiences as part of our apostolate, and on the other hand, taking responsibility for community resources and property for the common good and not for personal use. The evangelical counsels then become handy in the formation process as the candidates are made to acquire the ideal sense of being a religious.

Symbolically, the Charism of the congregation can be presented as a tree that bears fruits and has deep roots. The roots of the religious family are rediscovered in the spirit of the founder. The tree is the congregation and the fruits are the members of the religious community. They should be exemplary in living the ideals of the community. At the same time, it can be presented as the spiritual flame that has originated from the Holy Spirit, inflamed the heart of the founder (and companions) to come up with the Charism for the community. It is this flame that the formators transmit to the formees through their works of formation. To achieve this, the formator must be well informed and knowledgeable in the community Charism which he is also expected to live. He is to lay bare the history of the congregation and its development so that the young

³⁵Z. OKOTH, *Spiritual Way of Our Lady of Perpetual Help (BOLPH)* ... No. 4.

religious understand who they are as members of the particular religious community. Formation aims at equipping formees with the Charism of the community, how the founding Charism is transmitted and through which formees get transformed.

3.4 Impact of Formation Environment on Formees

A formation house is a special place for the development of the religious ideals desired of the formees hence the root word 'form'.³⁶ The location and infrastructure in the formation house should be such that the formators and the formees interact constantly. The formator has to ensure that before the candidates move to the net stage in the formation process, they shall have acquired the desired objectives of the particular stage. This is the essence of evaluation during formation. Formation is a journeying process and the formator is expected to possess a profound knowledge of each candidate based on their character, ability, attachments and conduct in various situations.

A good formation house should have a schedule of activities and the formees made aware of what is expected of them. The formation schedule and execution of activities should inculcate in the formees the spirit of integrity, honesty, transparency, and credibility by showing consistency in their decisions and behaviour in keeping with their inner beliefs, values, and convictions. A formation timetable, therefore, forms an essential part of the formation plan. It should be displayed in a conspicuous place. It is the responsibility of the formators to organize and plan for the day to day activities within the formation house. Activities for time allocation include the community and personal prayers, meals, recreation, classes, and games. All these activities serve an important purpose in the wellbeing of the candidates. It is during the classes when formators introduce the formees to the thematic areas such as the History of the congregation and the founding Charism.

³⁶E.P. LIPTAK, *The Religious Formator* ... 11.

Besides, the formator should assign responsibilities to formees as through these, they will be able to assess their capabilities. This will help foreshadow future apostolates. The formees should also be encouraged to embrace spiritual exercises such as praying the Rosary, Novena, and Recollections for their spiritual nourishment. At the same time, formators should further give the candidates assignments concerning the Church Saints to identify each candidate's proper Saint.

The participation of the formees in these activities will be a clear basis for evaluating them. They should attain the expected contents of formation within set timelines. The overall objective of the formation process is to make the candidate aware that the vocation to religious life is a call to witness fully to Christ wherever one is sent. It is this that necessitates proper formation on human, spiritual and intellectual aspects of life so that the young religious becomes suited for the apostolate in the Church. Through their contact and interactions in the formation house, it is expected that the formator will be well informed about the formees and be in a position to make a recommendation for them to progress into the next stages in the religious life or not. In case of failing to meet the expectations, formators are to strike a balance between the need for living up to expectations while being considerate for human weakness. The time that is set for the formation periods may, therefore, be increased or delayed including and not limited to the general conduct of the formee.

3.5 Influence of the Conduct of Formators on the Formees

In the formation process, formators are the primary educators and instructors in the formation houses. The direction and outcome of formation directly depend on their thought and act. Formators accompany formees by what they think, what say and how they say it. Formation is directly linked to the personality and maturity of the formator in religious life. The overall development of the formees is therefore dependent on their works in formation. They are the role

models for formees who look up to them for guidance in religious living. The personal example of the formator serves to instil lasting attitudes and witness to being a mature religious.

To grow into maturity and sanctity of life, formees require not only a suitable atmosphere in the formation house but also a determined attitude on the part of the formator. Through his interaction with the formees, the formator can create a serene environment where trust and openness prevails. This leads to a mutual understanding with the consequence of willingness to share their concerns with the formator. In the process, it also promotes the spirit of unity and a sense of belonging to the family of the religious leading to the expected development of the formees in their religious orientation and life. A virtuous formator who expresses his fear of God will, therefore, find it easy to question or correct the formees while modelling them to become mature religious. Quoting Pedro Arupe, the former General Superior of Society of Jesus, O' Brien counsels that the aim of formation is not to make prophets out of the formees but the candidates are neither taught to be prophets, saints nor angels, but they are taught the virtues and how to live acceptable religious life which should make them become saints.³⁷

Since formation has a direct impact on the future life of the community through the formees, the selection of the candidate for the position of a formator should be conducted with wisdom. If a religious is struggling with his prayer life, for example, and is appointed to be the head of the formation team, he might end up forming candidates who will equally struggle with their prayer life. Under such leadership, formees will not acquire the inner disposition to go for community prayers. This will reveal itself especially when their model is not around during prayer time. Consequently, they might be deficient in their commitment to the religious life. Therefore a

³⁷S. O'BRIAN, *Social Analysis and Justice* ... 50.

poorly formed formator begets poorly formed candidates who will develop into poorly formed religious with a poorly formed personality. Such a situation is not the desire for formation hence the need for wisdom in the selection of formators.

Good formation needs good formators and it is the task of the superior of the congregation to select and train formators whose mission should be well-formed and mature guardians to formees who will communicate and witness to the word of God both by word and example. It is important to note that nobody is born a formator and once chosen, there is a need for holistic preparation for effective delivery in the formation team. As a formator, one needs to cultivate a strong sense of personal prayer and deeper communion with the Saints and the Church. He should strive to cultivate a profound spiritual life, exemplary behaviour and willingness to recognise and correct oneself and others while taking into account fatigue and human limitations. This does not mean that the formator should live a perfect life; rather, they should aim at being exemplary by their conduct. They should strive to live in the example of Jesus Christ, the ideal formator

3.6 Conclusion

The incorporation of personal, cultural and religious ideals into the real-life situation in the formation process is necessary for the growth of vocation of the formees. Accustomed with Christ the ideal formator, the formator in his relationships with candidates acquire a loving attitude in taking care of the training of those entrusted into his care as they prepare to take their vows in the Catholic Church. It is of importance that religious institutes take due care as to who they endow with the responsibility of formation of candidates lest the religious institutes and the Church end up with poorly formed religious.

The religious formation process should help promote the human, spiritual, and intellectual formation so that when the candidates come out of the formation house, they shall have matured in the religious life. Only then shall the religious bear witness to the world as exemplary Christians who are well-formed and informed in their religious calling. The vocation of a formator is a call to bring up young religious men and women who possess human and religious virtues through their formation. The personal virtues of the formator play a big part in the formation process and it is important that they be persons mature in the religious life and who can lead the formees through exemplary servant leadership. A good formator will correct the formees with brotherly affection, remind them of the need to do well, and give warning and precaution from wrong-doing. Such a formator will effectively stand as a guide to the formees in their journey into religious life. Only then will they be able to inspire, motivate and persuade the younger brothers to be faithful to the founding Charism and the life they have chosen.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

As the religious, we are Christians spiritually striving to become better models in the faith. The religious are called to live in community life although born and nurtured in the family where we acquire our spiritual orientation and the call to become religious. The family is the basis of our initial formation of religious life. In the wider community, we learn to live with others in the human family, created in the image and likeness of God. We acquire lifelong virtues that shape our religious identity even as our vocation discernment becomes pronounced. Joining the religious congregation is the fundamental step we make to live the vocation to which God calls us of service in the Church. Under the guidance of a formator, our relationship with the divine is deepened and through a rigorous training and instruction process, we are prepared to become true witnesses of Christ the Ideal formator, in the communities in which we live and work. Our lives in the religious calling is a spiritual pilgrimage from the time we are born and until we are called back to be with the Lord.

For anyone to become a religious within the Catholic Church, one must have passed through the hands of the formator. The candidate might in the future become a formator and in turn, be involved in nurturing yet another set of candidates. It is in this way that the ongoing cycle of formation into religious life draws from both the religious institute's Charism as well as the personal contributions of the formator. The formator participates in this ongoing process following the candidates' admission into the religious institutes. The formator is expected to be Christ-like to the candidates who look up to him for exemplary religious and Christian living in their quest to become religious men and women. Whatever they say and do will be reflected in the kind of lives the candidates as religious men and women. The ultimate objective of formation is to give the

formees a vision of Christ that will overshadow the rest of their lives as servants in the Kingdom of God and the formator is the primary actor in this process. The incorporation of the understanding of Jesus Christ, the ideal formator in the formation process is therefore necessary for the growth of vocation. Accustomed with Christ the ideal formator, the formator in his/her relationships with candidates acquire a loving attitude in taking care of the training of those entrusted into his/her care as they are prepared to make their vows in the Catholic Church. It is of importance that religious institutes take due care as to who they endow with the responsibility of formation of candidates.

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