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**DEVELOPMENT OF VALUE SYSTEMS AMONG
CHRISTIAN TEENAGERS**

Case Study:

St Mary Secondary School, Thigio and Thigio Boys' School

Supervisor

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A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated

To

All families who sincerely bring up their young ones in a sound value system; my family, friends and my beloved Vincentian Community.

EPIGRAPH

“Man [*sic*] is lost and is wandering in a jungle where real values have no meaning. Real values can have meaning to man only when he steps on to the spiritual path, a path where negative emotions have no use.”

- Sai Baba

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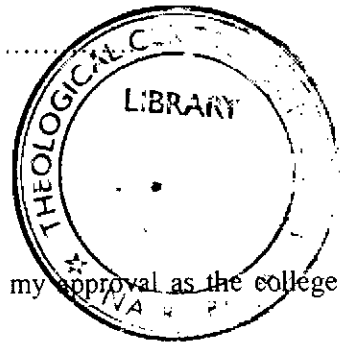
DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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

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Date: 27.11.2007

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AB	African Bible
<i>al.</i>	<i>alii</i> – other persons
<i>cf.</i>	<i>confer</i> ; compare
C.R.E.	Christian Religious Education
C.M.A.	Catholic Men Association
C.U.	Christian Union
C.W.A.	Catholic Women Association
<i>DA</i>	<i>Dilecti Amici (Dear Friends)</i>
ed.	edited by
etc.	<i>et cetera</i> – and so on
<i>FC</i>	<i>Familiaris Consortio (On the Family Unit)</i>
FI-FM	Family and I – Focused For Meaning
FRP	Food Relief Program
<i>GS</i>	<i>Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)</i>
Ksh	Kenya Shilling
<i>SRS</i>	<i>Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (on Social Concern)</i>
P.C.E.A	Presbyterian Church of Eastern Africa
TIM	Transforming Inductive Method
VDA	Value Development Activities
Y.C.S.	Young Christian Students

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

A past experience in Nigeria, where the researcher was involved in assisting the Y.C.S. students in High school, in education to Christian values and attitudes, was the first reason that motivated the choice of a high school for this research.

Being in Kenya, the researcher thought it wise to work with high school students basically for their openness and willingness to learn and live a quality life. The researcher chooses two high schools -- St Mary Girls' High School and Thigio Boys' High School, which are under the jurisdiction of one of our Vincentians parishes, Holy Cross parish, situated at Limuru. A good combination of the two schools for young men and women will definitely help the researcher to come up with a more holistic view on how the young people understand and live out their values in our present day society.

Statement of the problem

Many young people seem to reject most traditional values and question dogmatic beliefs held sacred for centuries. This might not be bad in itself because knowledge is dynamic, not static. But the problem lies in the fact that they do not seem to have found replacements for the traditional values, therefore a kind of vacuum is created in their lives. This is a critical and dangerous situation because, in the absence of values, they have no criteria on the basis of which they can face life situations, make choices and decisions. This research work will analyze and evaluate what Christian values are for the young Christian students of Thigio High School. How do they view the traditional Christian values? It shall also try to discover the

challenges and difficulties facing young people along the Christian life journey, how to accompany them to appropriate those values which they desire for themselves.

Objectives of the research

- To find out the challenges faced by the Y.C.S. high schools teenagers in appropriating attitudes and values for life.
- To empower the young people to stand for themselves with enduring values.
- To determine the helpfulness of the Preventive System of the Salesian family.
- To accompany the young people to discover the joy of being themselves, to love and live life as a whole, and live it qualitatively.
- To eventually find a more effective approach and methods in offering an adequate programme of attitude and value system formation for the young, according to the needs discovered through findings.

Research hypotheses

Cultivation of Christian attitude/value system helps the young people to live optimistically despite the apparent challenges in their lives. The attitude of having faith in the young people, as appropriated by the educators, can be of tangible importance in developing them integrally. The Preventive System is an integral plan of education that aims at forming not just good Young Christian people but honest citizens as well.

Research method and procedure

Participant observation: the researcher will participate in the activities of the Young Christian Students in the schools. There will be inter-personal encounters and direct interviews with the students, teachers, collaborators and other responsible figures in the schools.

Justification and significance of research study

Education, to be worthy of its name, must encompass not only information, concepts and facts, but also attitudes and values. This is all the more true today in view of the widespread confusion and questioning of the traditional Christian values in our society. Corruption, bribery, oppression of the poor and the less fortunate and manipulation seem to be the order of the day. There is terrorism, murder, looting, rape and heavy disregard for basic human rights. People in positions of power and influence seem to bear counter-witness to positive and desirable values by their lives and example. Even the so called educators tend to complicate this issue by giving conflicting signals leaving the young students in a serious state of confusion. This is the awful side of reality faced by young people today.

On the other side, there are many signs of hope. There is new awareness of human dignity and rights, greater concern for the poor, the oppressed, the sick and the old. There are individuals and groups involved in the struggle for justice and eradication of social evils. Many young people seem to generously embrace the call to serve the poor, the vulnerable and the needy.

Scope and Limitation of the Research

The research will focus on the change of attitude and education of the young Christian students between 13 and 18 years of age within the two high schools. The research is aimed at finding out the reasons why today's teenagers have difficulties in living concretely their values and therefore hindering them from becoming mature and committed adult citizens. The research will also use the preventive method of education, as proposed by the Salesian Family, to journey with these young students to help them incarnate these values.

CHAPTER ONE

Situational Analysis of the Town, Thigio

INTRODUCTION

It is said that a person is the product of his or her environment. The “environment” goes beyond the physical surroundings. It involves the culture, the way of life, the people with their affections and attitudes as well as other psychological aspects of the reality experienced by the person during the growing stages of life. To educate the young people effectively, it is worthwhile to analyze the situation in which they grew because this usually has a long lasting effect on them. It impacts on their way of thinking, feeling, behaving and viewing reality in general. Considering education to values as a journey, this chapter aims at analyzing the cultural, social, educational, economic, and health situation in Thigio. Emphasis will be put on human and faith formation and the kind of activities carried out to help the young to be value-oriented people with particular reference to the Young Christian Students (YCS). The physical set up of the place and the facilities used will be considered as tools in order to help understand the young people of Thigio. The research will have the duration of six weeks.

The study focuses on the Holy Cross Parish in Thigio. It analyzes the situation of the indigenous young people within the parish, as well as those of the two high schools under the care of the parish — St Mary’s Secondary School and

Thigio Boys' High School. The possible theory resulting from the interaction of these different young people would be viewed as an organic whole.

1. Brief Background and Nature of Thigio

In the endeavour to understand Thigio town, the researcher made some inquiries about the origins of Thigio. D.M. (June 24, 2007) said, "Thigio is a town originally occupied by the Maasai, but that was later taken over by immigrants. Many people who settled here were not originally from the place. For instance, I come originally from Kiambu, but now this is my only home and no one can drive me away."

This seems to describe the reason why there are some people who own huge portions of land while many others have little or none. Still in a verbal interview on the same issue with one of the dwellers, M. C. (June 25, 2007) said, "This is why we do not have close relationship with one another here, we care less about one another. The rich are already rich; the poor have nothing, not even land. Many of us here pay rent because we live on another man's purchased property." By now many of the dwellers were born in Thigio and they have become natives there hoping to die and be buried there. One of the natives, whose children are grownups, I. H. (22 June, 2007) said, "I was born here and I also wish to die and be buried here."

1.1 Situation Analysis of Thigio Sub- location

According to the Assistant Chief of Thigio, I.B. (June 24, 2007), "this is a small rural town, a sub location of Ndeiya, which is located in Limuru Division, Kiambu District, in the Central Province. It has a population of about 15,000 people,

68% being youth aged between ten and thirty-five years. The population is mainly of the Kikuyu tribe". While asked about the means of living among the people, he said, "The people of Thigio depend mostly on crop farming, small-scale animal rearing (dairy) and a few small entrepreneurial activities such as butchery, barber shops, Saloons, etc." According to I. R. (June 17, 2007), "We do not have much land, and even the little we have is not that productive. However, we try to make do with what we have. We grow subsistence crops, mainly maize, potatoes, beans and pumpkins." This seems true since Thigio was among the beneficiaries of the FRP during the period of drought in 2005. Thigio is a small village on the hill. The weather is terribly cold, especially in the months of June and July when the researcher was carrying out this work. Thigio is roughly 30 km away from Nairobi city and the transportation cost for the settlers to and from Nairobi is Kshs 250.

1.1.1 Roads and Transportation

The road network to and within Thigio was in a deplorable condition at the time the research was being carried out. This makes transportation very difficult, especially during the rainy season. Apart from being bumpy, any time it rains heavily the roads become so slippery that the *matatus* (i.e. public transport vehicles) can not move on them. The resulting effect is that people wishing to go to the city would have to walk for a long distance (taking about 2 hours) to get to Limuru Highway. At other times, when the rains are lighter, the "Matatu" drivers may inflate the cost of their service due to the poor conditions of the road. J.N. (16 June, 2007) says, "The cost of transportation levied on these poor traders determines how much they sell their hardware goods". The normal fare from Thigio to the Limuru

Highway is Kshs 40, but it increases when there is a heavy downpour of rain. Goods like clothes, shoes, books, are quite expensive, while farm products are rather cheap and affordable. The researcher saw that these roads, though not so good, have however favoured the running of small businesses, such as fast food hotels, saloons, butcheries, bars, video shows, hardware shops, mini-mechanic shops, second hand wears and a few brand new wears. The major means of transportation within Thigio itself are beasts of burden. The most common beasts of burden used are donkeys. According to T.R., “About 80% of the families in Thigio have at least one donkey and a matured donkey costs between Kshs 6,000 and 7,000. Children, as early as at eight years of age, begin to use them for carrying water, farm produce and the like. We are delighted to use these animals as a means of transportation.” (June 20, 2007)

1.1.2 Power and Electricity

Thigio as a village is not well provided with electricity. Only few houses benefit of the power services. The market centre and few nearby homesteads have electricity. The power supply is also unstable, especially during the rainy season. This tends to stifle any opportunity for small investment to thrive in the area. With this kind of situation, there seems little or no room for job opportunities in Thigio through small enterprises. However, there is the presence of some businesses, like a welding place for the mechanics and a *posho* mill. These businesses are always at a standstill whenever there is a power failure. However, in most homesteads, people use liquid batteries and solar power to run their TV sets and radios, and this serves them well.

1.1.3 Social Life: Culture, Housing and Feeding

The kind of housing and food in Thigio was also a sort of window for the researcher through which he could look into the welfare and the economic situation of the people. The houses are mainly made of mud, while only a few of them are made of cement blocks. In the culture of the people, there seems to be a good element of aesthetics especially seen in the manner in which they use flowers to beautify their compounds, even those of the seemingly poorest family. This was a quite fascinating and interesting discovery for the researcher. For I.R. (June 20, 2007), “there is a great gap between the rich and the poor in this place of ours, but what can we do, though, we do well to beautify our compounds with flowers no matter how poor we may be.” According to a young adult, E.N. (June 21, 2007), who was interviewed, “only about 10% of the natives are well off”. As the research was carried out, there was glaring evidence to this fact in the quality of the houses observed. Some people live in permanent stone houses, others in aluminium sheet (i.e. *mabati*) houses, or in mud and grass houses which are the majority. The researcher observed that the natives like to grow their own food, since it is more expensive to buy foodstuffs. Most of the staple food consists in maize and beans cooked together (locally known as *githeri* — when they are cooked together — or *mukimo* — when they are mashed together).

M.M. (June 26, 2007) said, “There is much individualism in this place as the rich seem to be less caring about the poor families of their own clan”. When asked the reason for the wide discrepancy between the *haves* and the *have-nots*, M.M. continued, “some people were given many hectares of land after Independence, and

they bequeathed these properties to their children, while children from other families have none, not even sufficient land for cultivation. About 30% of the natives have little or nothing and usually depend entirely on charity". This kind of situation makes life very difficult for the young people of these families. Because of much stress they tend to yield to alcoholism at the village centre, or to chewing "miraa" and using other stronger drugs. These factors contribute also to the high rate of insecurity and of poverty in the area.

The young men of Thigio are usually circumcised from the age of thirteen, after which they build their own hut/house and begin to live as young adults. This is usually done in December. One would expect that some traditional values are being imparted as the circumcision takes place, but unfortunately it seems that this practice has been corrupted. M.M., a young man (June 24, 2007), said, "The older young men who had been initiated seem to distort the values and wrongly advise these initiates to 'be men' by sleeping with a woman". One of the teachers, G.I., (June 26, 2007) when interviewed said, "The newly circumcised tend to see themselves as hot cakes now, they go about looking for sex partners and even older ladies want to have them too". This misconduct seems to have adversely led to the spread of HIV/AIDS amongst young people in Thigio.

1.1.4 Health Situation in Thigio

Within Ndeiya Location, there are four dispensaries, two health centres and three clinics, most of which are Government-sponsored. Unfortunately, B.C. (June 28, 2007) said, "the government clinic needs more facilities". There is also a P.C.E.A. dispensary and an Orthodox dispensary. They administer medicine to the

people and assist pregnant women. The Holy Cross Dispensary, situated within the parish, has been of great assistance to the natives of Thigio, because of the availability of some laboratory equipment and physiotherapy. According to the matron of the Holy Cross Dispensary, L.G. (June 26, 2007), “the cost of medical treatment is quite affordable for most drug supplies are free from Kenya Government and we have good facilities here.”

Investigating more on the health situation in Thigio, L.G. (June 25, 2007) said, “The most common illnesses here are malaria, chest infections, skin diseases, diarrhoea, worm infestations, pneumonia and mental illnesses. It is deplorable.” Asking her about the response of the patients to instructions regarding their health, she said, “Sometimes the instructions are not followed, with the clients giving all sorts of reasons”. She added, “The high level of poverty has also played its part in making the health situation hazardous.”

As the Author inquired about some of the challenges to good health, she listed the following, “lack of resources to meet the expectations of the community, illiteracy, poor road network which leads to delay in seeking medical help, therefore sometimes ending in death or disability, irresponsible behaviour.” Concerning values as spice for good health, she remarked (June 25, 2007), “We try to teach them the values of self-respect and of respect for one another, faithfulness, responsibility and openness.”

About the young people and their health situation, I.R., a young woman, (June 20, 2007) said, “It is quite unfortunate that many of the HIV/AIDS patients are young people. They do not even wish to attend HIV/AIDS seminars any longer. I think youth here are giving up very fast.”

1.1.5 Educational and other institutes of Empowerment

There are six public and a private primary schools, four public and a private high schools situated in Thigio. There is a vocational institution like the tailoring schools through which some poor young people try to better their lot. The researcher discovered that there were growing interests among the young people to gain education. In the course of the study the researcher noticed that most families are keen in sending their kids to schools. There is also a free nursery school which is being run by the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent De Paul, especially for the poor families.

It is interesting to note that, despite the fact that Thigio is an interior place, people are quite learned. Interviewing M. M. (June 26, 2007), he maintained that some young adults have only a primary education while a few have secondary and tertiary education and there are many dropouts. When asked about the self-help or empowerment group, he said, "We do have small groups of youth who contribute a certain amount monthly which is given to a person for the purpose of starting up a business. Most of the times, these young men use the fund for animal rearing, especially poultry, though in most cases this is not sufficient". He also said, "The youth are really waiting for the Government to distribute the money allocated for youth empowerment. As a result, more youth groups are being formed for the sake of the government fund, which will only be given to well known youth groups."

Interviewing one of the young people concerning the influence of education, G.M. (June 29, 2007) said, "I think education has helped the young girls like me to respect their own selves. Those girls who are not well educated are the ones who

mostly fall victims to exploitation and sexual abuse. From observation, many families have their children drop out from school after their primary education due to lack of funds to support them.”

1.2 Youth Situation in Thigio

Interacting with some young people in Thigio, the researcher was able to go into their world. About 65% of the population in Thigio is made up of young people between the ages of 7 and 32. Interviewing a young man, M.M. (June 28, 2007), on the means of livelihood of the young people, he said, “Most of the young people here are casual labourers. They work for peoples in farms and building sites because there is lack of employment.” He added, “Some have even completed their college studies but they have decided to settle here because they are jobless. Some of them try to forget their worries and give themselves to alcohol and substance abuse.” When asked the reason for resorting to alcohol, G.I. (June 26, 2007) said, “ Peer pressure is one of the major factors that push most young people here to use the little money they get for alcohol”.

However, M.M. (June 28, 2007) maintains, “Most of us young people here are persevering; we do not want to steal. We are waiting for the day when God will bless us. Some of us do cattle rearing and poultry though we need to do more”. He went on to say, “Some of the young are already orphans at an early age, fending for themselves and their siblings.” It is a big challenge for these young people. G.I. (June 26, 2007) added, “Laziness is also a poisonous substance which keeps some of our youth very idle throughout the day. As a result, they indulge themselves in bad activities”.

Inquiring more about values and the value system among them, G.I. (June 27, 2007) said, “I think that we have a low regard for the value system. There is no one to guide us, no role model and as a result we see living a qualitative life as impracticable”. The researcher also discovered that there were few young people in the church on Sundays. Inquiring on this, M.M. (June 28, 2007) said, “We are neglected even by the church so what shall we do? We seem to be treated with disdain and this has created a suspicious relationship between the parish council and us. We are still working on how to improve this relationship”. When asked about how games have helped in value development, he said, “there were some young people who engaged themselves in sports, like football and volleyball, and they seem to be of more responsible behaviour”. G.I. (June 26, 2007) affirms this view saying, “These young people who engage themselves in sports groups are really better behaved than the ones who do not”. Asking them about the nature of some games facilities, T.A. (June 27, 2007) said, “It is quite dissatisfying; we have only four football fields and a couple of volleyball pitches and they are not well-maintained. I think this has also contributed in making my fellow youth lose interest in games.”

1.2.1 The Holy Cross Parish, Thigio

The Holy Cross Catholic Parish, Thigio, is situated at the centre of the village; it is surrounded by a few educative institutions, a shopping centre, the market and other small entrepreneurial shops like *kinyozi* (barber) and beauty saloons, a mechanic workshop and a butchery.

The Holy Cross Catholic Parish has a long history. As stated in the archives of the Parish, it dates back to the 1940s-50s and early 60s when it was still a mission under Ngarariga Parish, run by the Spiritans. While under Ngarariga, many priests, including Fr John Njenga, now a retired Archbishop served it. Through God's grace, it underwent some progressive metamorphoses which led to its being made a parish in 1968. The new Parish was officially opened by His Eminence Michael Cardinal Otunga, assisted by Rev. Msg. John Njenga, on the 16th of December, 1968.

The parish, through the instrumentality of Fr Dunne CSSP, acquired plots for building schools like St Mary's High School between 1970 and 1972. In 1976, the Comboni Sisters started a dispensary in the Parish which was officially opened in 1978. Providentially, in 2002, the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent De Paul came and took over the running of the dispensary. Since then, besides running the dispensary, the Daughters of Charity have helped put up a school (*Kisima*) for the mentally and physically challenged children from the locality, a Nursery, a Tailoring School for the young women and a feeding programme for the elderly, among other apostolic activities.¹

1.2.2 Nature of Holy Cross Parish, Thigio

The Holy Cross Parish, Thigio, seems to have taken up different missions and visions, due to the activities of missionaries from different orders who have worked there.

Interviewing the parish priest on the mission and vision of the parish, he said (28 June, 2007), "Our mission is to bring the good news to the poorest of the poor in

¹This information is extracted from the "Welcome Address" read to the invitees on the day of "Harambee" (unity launching) for the purchase of a vehicle for the mission in Nov. 2005.

the Holy Cross parish, and our vision is to create a community where all member of the church care for one another especially for the needy.”

1.2.3 Some Works and Activities that Take Place at Holy Cross Parish, Thigio

There are many works going on in the parish centre. There is a free Nursery school for the education of children from poor families. This enables them to get basic education before entering primary school. One of the teachers, G.T. (June 28, 2007), when asked whether the children are being taught values at this stage, said, “Yes, this is basically what we are doing, though we also teach them some academic disciplines.”

Within the parish premises, there is also a beautiful centre for young people, at present between the ages of eight and twenty-four, with mental and hearing disabilities. When the researcher inquired about their progress, Sr I.R. (June 29, 2007) said, “ The progress so far is very good as these young people are learning how to care for themselves in areas of cookery, sewing, reading, basic Mathematics”.

The researcher also observed that there was a tailoring and dressmaking centre for girls. As the researcher inquired more about it, Sr. I.R. said, “We train them to be independent and be able to earn a living. They could not make it to school like other girls due to poverty.”

The parish centre also provides sessions for the elderly that are attended twice a week. They are taught how to take good care of themselves with some basic health instructions. This includes the act of preparing clean water for drinking, keeping the surroundings clean, etc. There were twenty-six of them at the time the

research took place. These elderly people are also visited in their homes and food is provided for them.

There is also a programme for young mothers to train them in dressmaking, embroidery, health education and cookery. Due to the situation of Thigio, there are some families without land so the Daughters of Charity bought a large piece of land and provided houses for over 20 families. Cows were also given to these poor families as well as instruction on how to use them to help them become independent.

In addition to these, there is also a library which is still under construction. According to Sr. C.M. (21 June 2007), "the library is for everyone, especially the young people, to assist them to appreciate educational values. We ought to finish it by December". As interviews were carried out among the nurses working at the Holy Cross dispensary, Sr. C.M. explained, "out of the nine dispensaries in Thigio and its immediate environs, only Holy Cross dispensary has more available facilities which are offered to the natives at an affordable cost. They also have a good laboratory and some equipment for physiotherapy." "We try to educate people on the values of neatness of environment and respect for life among many others, and on how they help prevent illnesses," said Sr. DC, one of the nurses at the parish dispensary, "The members of staff at the dispensary go on a home-to-home visitation to the elderly at least twice a week."

Interviewing the matron of the dispensary, Sr. I.R., on whether they do educate their patients on values, she stated, "We do teach our staff and clients the need to have a value system in their lives. We just had a seminar about values on March 8, 2007." Looking at the content of the seminar, the researcher observed that they had some values which they regarded as essential and concentrated on how they

could live them out. They include: Service, Respect, Justice, Excellence, Obedience, Honesty, Commitment and Perseverance.

The Holy Cross Parish has also some schools under its jurisdiction. The researcher interacted more with the young people of St Mary Girls' Secondary School and Thigio Boys' High School, with the view of knowing how the schools have helped in inculcating values into their students and how much these students do appreciate these values.

1.2.4 Grassroots Evangelization

The parish has a number of ways for evangelization. The parish priest, Fr I.M. (27 June 2007), said, "We are engaged in simple evangelization. This is the grass-root level, whereby we visit the parishioners from one home to the other".

The researcher observed that there seems to be an organized programme of faith formation in the parish. Apart from the home-to-home visitation, which the priest does with the seminarians, there are other groups such as the Small Christian Communities which are 37 in number.

"The Catholic Women's Association and the Catholic Men's Association are very active in the parish," said Fr I.M., the parish priest (June 27, 2007). M.C., one of the seminarians working in the parish said (June 26, 2007), "The choir is semi-active. The members were mainly elderly people, though about 10 young people have also joined. The Senior Youth group is inactive due a squabble with the Parish priest, while the Middle Youth and Junior Youth Groups are quite okay. Inquiring more about the strain relationship between the Parish priest and the Senior Youth Group, M.M. said (29 June 2007) said, "We were wrongly accused of some theft in

the Church and we demanded for an apology which they never considered so we pulled out.” The Parish priest, I.M., (June 29, 2007) said, “I love our youths so much, but sometimes they feel like doing things their own way which is unacceptable. However, we are working towards mending fences and a few of the senior youth are responding positively. We shall get there.”

1.2.5 Spiritual and Moral Formation

Since there are different groups and structures within the parish, there are different modalities in the formation to faith and morals among the faithful.

a) Catechism

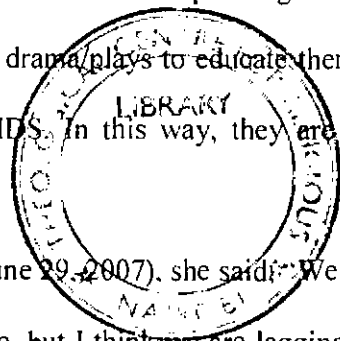
Carrying out the research, J.N. (June 24, 2007), one of the postulants of the Sisters working directly with the catechumens explained, “Since most people are in different learning institutions, Catechism formation is given on Saturdays for the catechumens. We also have moments of sharing the Word of God and prayers.” The Catechism classes begin at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 11:00 a.m. There are about 45 young people attending between the ages of 8 and 15. One of the Catechumens, D.N. (June 31, 2007) said, “Brother, we like the way Sister teaches about God and the Sacraments.” There were only two Sisters teaching them but one at a time. The researcher, however, observed that the number of Catechumens was too big for a well-integrated understanding to take place. The Sister explained to the researcher that they did not have rooms for the candidates other than the small hall that the researcher found them in.

b) Youth Ministry

The researcher discovered that it was mainly the Junior Youth and the Senior Youth groups who were active in the parish centre at the time the research took place. The researcher discovered that there was a misunderstanding between the Senior Youth and the parish council. This made the Senior Youth to withdraw from the youth activities of the parish such as liturgical dance, drama, sports, etc. However, they are working on solving the misunderstanding.

Inquiring whether the young people are represented in the leadership of the parish, the parish priest, Fr I.M. (July 5, 2007), said, "Yes, youth are represented by a matron and patron in the parish council." Asking one of the senior youth, M.M. (June 29, 2007), about the same issue, he said, "I think the Parish has even neglected us, regarding us as nothing. We want to represent ourselves." T.M. (June 30, 2007) said, "We, the Middle Youth, have activities such as football, volleyball, music concerts, drama, choral verses, traditional dances, etc." The Middle Youth were made up of students between the ages of 20 and 27. The Parish Priest (June 28, 2007) also said, "The young people are also involved in the planting of trees in the out-stations, selling bulletins and performing drama/plays to educate themselves on responsible living and avoidance of HIV/AIDS. In this way, they are formed to mature in faith and morals."

Inquiring from a young adult, H.A. (June 29, 2007), she said, "We are indeed active in some activities like drama and dance, but I think we are lagging behind in prayers." Asking the Parish Priest about the seeming lack of seriousness in prayers (June 30, 2007), he said, "this is a big challenge for us: the young people here do not seem to respond to prayer sessions. They only seem to be attracted to the church



when there are activities like games, drama and the like.” The researcher became more interested in the reasons for this lack of interest in prayers. Interviewing a youth about it, he said, “Most times, our prayers here seem boring and they are full of distractions. Some of the clergy who staffed the parish in the past seemed not be worthy to lead us in prayer sessions, because they scandalized us a lot. For instance, some were competing with us for girlfriends. It is really degrading and we do not like it.”

c) Masses in the Schools

The students in the care of the parish are not left out in faith formation. They are also educated to mature into adult Christians. The parish priest visits the schools and celebrates the Eucharist with them once every month. Being there during one of the Masses, the researcher realized the resounding joy the whole school had as they celebrated Holy Mass: it was indeed amazing. The Mass is usually held in the evening at 4:30 p.m. after classes. One would expect the students to be tired after a long day, but the reverse seems to be the case.

There are a total of 21 students whom are taught Catechism. The Music classes are also held every Saturday at 4:00 p.m. One of the students, A.G. (June 29, 2007) testified, “All this has helped me in deepening the awareness of God in my life.” The parish also reaches out to them through the Y.C.S. (Young Christian Students) Movement and brings the different schools together once in a while to help them network and support one another as they grow in faith. In an interview with one of the Y.C.S. members, M.U. (June 30, 2007) said, “Y.C.S. members meet on Tuesdays from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. The turn out is usually impressive. We read the

Bible, after which we preach sometimes, sing and then pray together. We also carry out some out some duties in the school like washing the toilets, tidying up the compound and encouraging some poor students in our midst.” The Y.C.S. group has an attendance of about 200 students during their weekly meetings. When asked about their challenges, M.U. (June 24, 2007) said, “Some of the students are not so committed and we need speakers from outside to encourage us.”

d) Small Christian Communities

The Small Christian Communities are very crucial in the life of Thigio parish. The parish priest began the grass roots evangelization starting from the Small Christian Communities. He visits them, going from one homestead to the other. While interviewing him about the Small Christian Communities, (July 6, 2007) he said, “Many of them said that it had been a long time since they were visited by a priest. They seem to be so happy with this form of evangelization. It is really tasking but very rewarding.”

The researcher who witnessed one of the visitations discovered that it was something very enriching for maturing in faith.

e) Organizations

There are also some Organizations and Societies in the parish through which faith is being nurtured. They include the Liturgical Dance Group, the Catholic Women Association (CWA) and Catholic Men Association (CMA), the Single Mothers Association and the Sacred Heart League. The Liturgical Dance Group, for instance, has 35 young people between the ages of 13 and 23. These groups meet at

different times to deepen their faith. The parish priest, Fr I.M. (28 June, 2007), said, “We educate them in faith through Catechesis and Church seminars.”

1.2.6 Networking with Other Parishes

In the interview with the Pastor on the interaction of the parish with other parishes, Fr I.M. (June 30, 2007) said, “There is much interaction on the level of faith between this parish and others in the deanery.” The CWA and CMA of the parish are so effective in networking with other parishes that they were appointed into positions of leadership in the deanery. There are also games like football and volleyball that are played in competition with other parishes.

As the researcher inquired about the challenges, Fr I.M. (June 30, 2007) said, “We don’t have a big compound to accommodate many people; we do not have a good field as playground and there is no means of transportation to convey the Christians to other parishes.”

1.3 The Nature of Thigio Boys’ High School

Thigio Boys’ High School is a triple-streamed district boys’ school with both day students and boarders. The school was started in 1969 by the Catholic Church to cater for 80 students. It was formally opened on 30th November 1969. It was started as a mixed school and so it continued until 1979, when the girls were phased out to form a separate school, today known as St Mary’s Secondary School. This separation was a necessity due to the increasing school population. At the moment,

there are 430 students, with 21 teachers and the natives of Thigio form about 90% of the school population.²

The mission and vision of the school are boldly written on the wall of the administrative block of the school. The text reads:

Mission: To provide quality and affordable education that enables full development of an individual who can cope with changes in modern society by rendering services to improve the welfare of the general citizenry.

Vision: To be a high-achieving school providing better citizens of the future who will be intrinsically motivated, self-reliant and goal-oriented graduates.

1.3.1 Academic Performance

In an oral interview with the deputy principal of Thigio Boys' High School, Mr P.M. (June 29, 2007), he said, "The school has slightly improved academically. Its average grade went up from 4.8 to 5.1. We hope to have a better result this year". When asked about the teachers, he said, "We have highly dedicated teachers who are committed to their duties, though at the moment there is a slight shortage of teachers but, by and large, all are quite cooperative and I am happy with them."

The researcher, going round the whole school, discovered that they have a good laboratory. As the researcher inquired from one of the students, S.U. (June 28, 2007), he said, "I am happy to be a student of this school; our teachers are committed to assisting us understand what we need to know."

As the researcher investigated into the challenges, one of the students, A.N. (July 28, 2007), said, "We have a very cold weather here and it makes studying a bit difficult. There is also the problem of distractions from our families, especially among those from broken homes. Some of us are also lazy."

² An extract from the school Documentation Archive. January 2007.

1.3.2 Discipline in the School

While interacting with the boys, the researcher found out that the boys seemed balanced. While he was interviewing D.N. (June 28, 2007), she said, “Last year, the discipline in the school was not encouraging, but this year I think the boys have really improved greatly”. The deputy principal, P.M. (June 29, 2007) said, “I think the level of discipline in the school is fairly average.” Exploring more about what has led to the improvement in the level of discipline and in the appreciation of values, the deputy principal added, “We have some movements like Y.C.S., C.U. and the Scout Group which have helped to instil discipline in the school. We also have clubs like *AIDS Awareness Club*, *True Love Waits Club* and *Science Club* which have contributed to the growth of discipline in the school”. The researcher discovered that, every Wednesday from 4:15 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., the school sets aside time for the meeting of all these clubs. The clubs have been beneficial especially in helping to inculcate values in the young like creativity, commitment, dedication to duty, and orderliness.

The researcher worked hand in hand with the prefects and came to realize that they are helpful agents in promoting discipline. While the researcher was inquiring on how they were elected, one of the teachers told him (June 29, 2007), “they are usually elected by their fellow students.” This is interesting because it gives the young people the freedom to choose the ones who would lead them.

There is also a division of the students into families of 40 with a teacher acting as a parent to help them and give them clear guidance. J.M., one of the teachers, said (June 29, 2007), “This method of guidance has really helped the

students to feel so much at home in the school. They are behaving better: there are fewer cases of indiscipline. However, much more needs to be done.”

During the interview, one the students, E.K., a peer counsellor, on the challenges of appropriating values among the students, said (June 20, 2007),

One of the challenges I have realized among my fellow students and even in myself is lack of self-empowerment that would enable us to be committed to some of the values we were given at our homes. The peer pressure in the school is often so strong that we give up on some of our values. Another thing is we are often troubled and distracted in the mind; some of us are often distracted about family issues, relationships with the opposite sex and some programs we watch in the school TV. We want to dress like the gangsters we see on the TV screen. All these pose a lot of challenges to our value system.

1.3.3 Disciplinary Measures: Peer Counselling and Inculcation of Values

Probing into the nature through which breach of discipline is controlled and values inculcated, the deputy principal said,

Since the abolishment of canes, we give them manual work, cleaning of rooms, counselling and suspension or even expulsion depending on the magnitude of the offence. I must admit that counselling has helped us greatly to attain some discipline in the school. Most of the offenders are from broken homes and so lack basic values, but through counselling we have helped many of them.

Being a Catholic-sponsored school, the students are also given the opportunity to be educated to values together with other students from different schools. One of the students, J.N. (June 25, 2007) said, “We usually attend the World Catholic Education Day in which we are informed on how to live responsibly. All these measures have helped to improve the quality of discipline in my school.”

Another factor that has helped in the promotion of discipline in the school is peer counselling. Each class selects whom they have confidence and trust in to be their representative in counselling training. The school has about thirty-five students who are trained as peer counsellors. They listen and help their fellow students to cope with issues that affect them. The deputy principal, P.M. (28 June, 2007), exalted them saying, "The counselling department is a great contribution to us in regard to handling cases of indiscipline and helping the students to appropriate values that would help them in their lives as adults". The Head of the Counselling Department, J.M., while being interviewed, said, "Peer counselling has helped a lot in instilling discipline in the school. The boys really appreciate it". This reaffirms the researcher's hypothesis that the best way to help youth is to help them educate themselves "by themselves". It works at Thigio Boys! The boys are freer to meet among themselves than in encounters with the teacher-counsellors.

When the researcher investigated more on the challenges their department encounters as they go about their duty, J.M. (28 June, 2007) said,

One of the major challenges we have is that there is no set budget for counselling. Sometimes we invite professional personnel to help us educate our peer counsellors and facilitate seminars, but it is indeed expensive. We do experience at times lack of commitment on the part of the student peer counsellors and isolation from the rest of the students which is suffered by the student peer counsellors. However, the school administration has been very supportive to us knowing the impact we have made in the lives of the students.

1.3.4 External and Internal Network

Exploring the network structure within and without the school, J.M. (June 25, 2007) reported, “We have a good network structure in the school internally and externally. We try to organize some seminars, games, club interactions within the school and also go beyond the school to network with students of other high schools”. They do have competitions in drama, football, volleyball and debates and even in courses like Mathematics. Through this networking, the students enrich themselves with some values like self-respect, knowledge, hard work and responsibility.

Probing into the difficulties that might militate against proper networking, one of the students, B.I. (June 26, 2007), said, “We do not network well enough with students of other schools due to inadequate means of transportation. We even have to use our money to fuel the school bus, if we must go out. Unfortunately, the bus can carry only a few of us.”

1.4 St Mary Girls’ Secondary School, Thigio

St Mary’s is a two-streamed district girls’ boarding school. It is sponsored by the Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Nairobi. It is located in Thigio sub-location, Ndeiya location, Limuru division in Kiambu district. Currently the school has 346 students, 19 teachers and 21 non-teaching staff. It is situated on a 10-acre piece of land.

The school was founded in 1976 when the girls from Thigio Secondary school (Now Thigio Boys School) were transferred to start off St Mary’s Girls. The

school started as a single-streamed day secondary school run by the Comboni Sisters.

The school became a boarding school in 1985, with the help of the retired President – His Excellency Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi --- for the construction of the Nyayo dormitory and the school kitchen. He also helped in setting up the current office block and four classrooms. This is when the second stream of the school began. Along with this came the construction of the three staff houses. The school was officially opened by President Daniel Arap Moi in 1986.

In 1989 the parents constructed Bishop Njenga dormitory. The school hall was built in 1984. The school today has one science laboratory and seven teachers' houses. It has also one vehicle which was purchased in 1999. To counteract the consequences of power blackouts, a generator was bought in the year 2001. In the effort to keep in touch with changing education trends, computer studies were introduced in 2003, courtesy of Computers for Schools, Kenya. The ongoing project for the year 2007 is the construction of the library. The school is in partnership with the Limuru Constituency Development Committee in the construction. They project that the facility will be ready for use early in 2008, God willing.³

1.4.1 Nature of St Mary's Girls' High School

Unlike the Thigio Boys' High School, St Mary's Girl's has no laid down mission and vision of the school. However, on an oral interview with the deputy principal, Ms T. W. (July 2, 2007), she said, "Our mission is to deliver our students

³ An extract of the brief history of St Mary's Secondary School as presented by the Principal on the Speech and Prize-giving Day, July 16, 2007.

with effective teaching and hard work while our vision is to produce an all round student.”

1.4.2 Academic Performance

The academic performance of the students has not improved significantly from 2003 to date according to the report on the prize-giving day. As the researcher was present during the prize-giving day of the school, it was a good time to realize the academic potentiality of the students. On an interview with the matron of the college, Ms. M.W. (28 June, 2007), she said, “Though the students have tried to improve academically, more still needs to be done. I shall rate the students 50% in academic performance.”

Interacting with the students, the researcher inquired from them about the challenges they encounter in their academic life. One of them, M.G. (July 1, 2007), said, “I think we are so noisy during our night study time that we do not concentrate. Another factor is that we often do not have sufficient power supply for study. The worst amongst it is that some of us are lazy academically.” Another student, B.M. (July 1, 2007), said, “I always feel distracted when I want to study because of the crisis in my family. It is not easy for me, Brother.” One of the last year students of the Girl’s school also said, “We are also distracted by the TV movies we watch every Saturday and Sunday after Mass. We do not study most weekends and the weekdays are indeed busy, so that we have little time for ourselves.”

The matron of the school, when interviewed, went on to say, “I think the students spend most of their time in the class with their teachers, so that they became

teacher-centred. They hardly make good use of their free time. Efforts to make them stop noise making have not yielded much fruit. We continue trying our best.”

The researcher also noticed that some students are often sent home due to lack of school fees and this could affect their performance hugely. Asking the principal, Ms E.M. (29 June, 2007), about this situation, she said, “Most of the times it is difficult for me to send them back home but I cannot help it because it is what ought to be done to run the school efficiently.”

1.4.3 Discipline in the School

In an interview with the principal of the school, Ms E.M. (28 June, 2007), on the level of discipline in the school, she said, “We have minimal cases of indiscipline.” According to one of the teachers, Ms B.T. (June 30, 2007), “Peer counselling has been of great help to us with regard to development of values. This has led to a higher degree of discipline in the school. I can rate the school as 65% disciplined.”

While the researcher interviewed the Principal of St Mary’s Secondary School (June 29, 2007) on how well the students appreciate the values of discipline in the school, she said, “I think our students have improved a bit; there seems to be a strong desire in them to be responsible. The reports on misconduct seem minimal now.” When asked about what structures they had put in place to facilitate this improvement, she said,

We have trained counsellors who talk to the students on the need to behave responsibly. I also think it is because most of our students are not from well-off families. They have known that life is not easy for their parents and so they tend to behave themselves. Besides we do have disciplinary measures

put in place. We also give incentives to the students who are observed as being well behaved, and also to the most disciplined class. This seems to have contributed to a general good behaviour among the students.

As the researcher inquired from one of the student peer counsellors in St Mary's Girls' Secondary School, A.N. (July 28, 2007), she said, "The peer counselling group of the school has helped in some way: take for instance, there used to be some traces of lesbianism in the school, but the Form One students who are usually the victims confided in us and we attacked it with the help of the authorities. There seem to be no such cases any longer."

In a terrific interview with the young students on the challenges they face in living out their value system, one of them, E.N. (June 29, 2007), said, "Some of my school mates who are very poor tend to steal some little items like blouses, sanitary materials from other fellow students. Most times it is not their wish to do so." Another student in Form Two, T. N. (June 30, 2007) said:

There is also a fad among some students, whose parents give them little or no pocket money due to poverty, so they decide to cheat their parents with lies like saying there are club dues and so on, just to support themselves in the school. We learnt this from the older students. I think the problem is that we do not have any role model, so to speak, among our senior students; therefore we end up following their example.

1.4.4 External and Internal Network

The school also interacts with other schools in various ways. They have a formidable Y.C.S. group which networks with other students from different schools. They also have Girls' guilds and clubs like: Science Club, Mathematics Club and

Wildlife Club which provide them the opportunity to interact with other students even in competitions. Involvement in sports and games also has facilitated some networking among the students.

Exploring more on networking, the researcher interviewed one of the students, A.N. (27 June, 2007), who said, “We are always delighted to be with other students: we socialize and integrate with one another. In the process, we learn from one another. I do enjoy this kind of socialization”. There seem to be values such as freedom and friendship which the students enjoy during these encounters. D.N., a new student of Thigio Boys’, said during an interview (June 29, 2007), “I like it so much when the school invites people to talk to us or when we go out to meet other students. It has helped me to build a good habit of studying from those students since I love to learn.”

1.5 Reflections on Holy Cross Parish, St Mary’s Secondary School and Thigio Boys’ High School

Because of the availability of many young people who are willing to learn and share their experiences, the researcher felt that the teenagers of Holy Cross Parish, St Mary’s High School and Thigio Boys’ High School offered the best setting to carry out his research on value education. The complexity of such group facilitated the research and also opened wider horizons to the researcher, giving new insights on how to journey with the young in a challenging society.

Being a human institution, there are challenges that are experienced mostly by the young in the development of their values. Such challenges are: poverty, lack of clear guidance, misunderstanding, emotional disturbances, insecurity, lack of role

models, religious scandals, insufficient emphasis on education for life and dysfunctional families.

As the research was carried out in the locality and in the two schools, it was discovered that all the above factors lead to frustrations and misconduct among the young. Thus the young develop deviant behaviours that make it difficult to keep discipline in the school.

As a result of participative group activities, the researcher noticed that these challenging situations help some young people to appreciate the little offered to them. They contributed a lot and were very honest about how they live their value system. This served as an inspiration to the researcher. Many of the young were really eager to have an enduring value system that would help improve their dignity and self-worth.

Through the interviews with the educators from the locality and the two learning institutions, the researcher discovered the difficulties they had faced in trying to educate and instil values and discipline without corporal punishment, as it is encouraged by the Preventive System. There were counter-reactions like riots and threats to burn down the school premises by the students. Now, they are using the counselling method which seems to have proved more effective. They try to understand the teenagers' background with love and appreciation. As Scott Peck, a renowned psychiatrist, puts it, "[...] self discipline develops from the foundation of love. It is further suggested that the absence of love is the major cause of mental illness and that the presence of love is consequently the essential healing element in psychotherapy."⁴

⁴ M. SCOTT PECK, *The Road Less Travelled*, 180.

In the course of the research, it was discovered that some students seem to have difficulty with the value of honesty, though it is the most admired value amongst them as shown on the graph in the next chapter. What could be the best way to help these teenagers make the value of honesty their own? Among the educators who were interviewed, the deputy principal of Thigio Boys' High School (July 4, 2007) said, "Many of the young students here seem to cover themselves up in crimes; they do not want to be seen as sell outs. I think there is a culture of lies in the environment where our young people grew up."

In the participative group activities, the researcher realized how the young students seemed to enjoy the values lived by Jesus Christ. They were eager to live their values till death. Christian education to building a value system through loving kindness has a positive impact on the whole society, especially on the young. In the case of Thigio, of St Mary's Secondary School and Thigio Boys' High School, the young people need love, understanding and an educative presence. Many of them complained of lack of role models to look up to. However, they seem very willing to be responsible and to become value-oriented. "To be responsible implies, first of all, to be able to identify what God is calling us to do. Each of us is unique in the sight of God and as such, each has received a particular task to fulfil."⁵ Likewise, the young Christian students need accompaniment to grow in their value system.

Christ did not impose anything on the two disciples on their way to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24: 13-35), but journeyed with them till they discovered for themselves the joy of their lives. Through the interviews, group work and active interaction with the young people, the researcher experienced the cry of the young in their struggle to

⁵ A. BIKIN, *No Fear of Christ Young People*, 35.

“grow” in Gospel values. John Paul II, in addressing the young, says, “Youth, then, is ‘growth’”. For him, “Youth should be a process of ‘growth’ bringing with it the gradual accumulation of all that is true, good and beautiful, even when this growth is linked ‘from outside’ to suffering, the loss of loved ones, and the whole experience of evil that constantly makes itself felt in the world in which we live.” (DA, 14) It is a call for the Church to assume the attitudes of Jesus to accompany the young with love and understanding to grow even when they fall short in following its teachings on morals. Development of values is a gradual process which requires patience and perseverance.

Almost all the groups look up to their parents for appropriation of values. The Church must reach out to the young through their parents, recalling to them the need to be exemplary to their children, especially at the initial stage. Good family values would be of huge assistance to the young. This is, therefore, a wake-up call for the Vincentians at Holy Cross Parish, Thigio, to strengthen their conviction of the importance of educating the senior youth to embrace commitment to marriage as a way to assist their children to grow in the values that would shape their lives for the good of the church and the community.

CHAPTER TWO

The Challenges of Value Appropriation among the YCS Members of St Mary's Secondary School and Thigio Boys' High School

INTRODUCTION

Education to values among the teenagers is of paramount importance. The challenge is how to accompany them to become mature, responsible Christian adults. This chapter aims at finding the reasons why some young people find it difficult to appropriate Christian attitudes and values for life. It will glance closely into the challenges faced by young students; whether the young people believe in themselves and how this influences their value system. It shall also analyze the reasons the young people proffer with regard to living a quality life and if there are any values the young students find most challenging. It shall equally view the helpfulness of the Preventive System of the Salesian family and how effective the educative presence is among young students.

The methods used for the completion of the first part of this research were insertion-active participation, participative and descriptive observation, focus groups, class sharing, interviews -- both formal and informal -- and questionnaires. Using the active participatory method, the researcher felt really enriched by the

genuine desire and determination of the young students of Thigio to live a qualitative human life like Jesus, and thus be better citizens. This axiom is confirmed by Spradley, when he says, "Active participants seek to do what other people are doing, not merely to gain acceptance, but to learn more fully the cultural rules for behaviour."⁶ This process also involves descriptive analysis whereby the researcher not only observed, but also critically examined, the reasons why some students possess certain traits without trying to be judgmental over them.

2. The Beauty of Education to Values among the Young Christian Students of Thigio.

To help the teenagers to experience and enjoy the goodness of the values as passed on to them by their parents, the Church and the society, the researcher used the afore-mentioned methods for a unique purpose through a variety of ways. Group discussions were used to draw out information from the teenagers. General questions were discussed regarding their value systems and the help they received from their parents, teachers, pastors and role models.

Class presentations and talks were also helpful and effective, after a short introduction on the topic of education to values, which aided the young students to understand the context. There were some basic questions on how they formed their value system and how academic education can help one to form an enduring value system. This was aimed at by seeing education as integrated in life and not separated from it. The purpose was also to assist the young students to look at education not just from the perspective of passing exams, but as a tool to live a quality life of values. The researcher also tried to help the students to realize the need to appropriate values especially in Africa where we have many "educated illiterates",

⁶ J.P. SPRADLEY, *Participant Observation*, 84-85.

who studied abroad only to come back to infest our society with the contagious disease of corruption.

Knowing that these teenagers are the future leaders of the Church, the researcher conducted direct and indirect interviews with them, with the aim to see how the students themselves appreciate the values, how they came to make them their own and the possible challenges they might face in trying to live them. The researcher also wanted to determine the effectiveness of the Salesian method of education which he applied to the education to values among the young students in Thigio.

2.1 Research Design

As mentioned earlier, the research design chosen was participant observation and interviews. In participant observation, the researcher was able to be one with the target group. He related to them with respect and mutuality, which created an atmosphere of trust and collaboration. The researcher was available to the students as an educator, animator and counsellor.

Notwithstanding the tight academic schedule in the schools, the researcher was given some class periods to interact and share with the students of the two High Schools. The researcher also participated fully in the activities of the students, both in the schools and in the parish. With the collaboration of the students, he revived the Students' Readers Association which seemed to be disorganized when he began the research. This availed the students the opportunity to improve on their spoken English.

The researcher appreciated the activities of the students within the school. By participating with interest in some activities, he was able to experience the real life situation of the students. He also attended some of the major functions that took place in one of the schools, like "Speech and Prize-giving day", and offered his own contribution by empowering the students through education to be people of quality-life, of values and of character. In view of that, he pledged some prizes for students who would be the best in C.R.E. in the next academic year, as a way of motivating them in their academic pursuit. The pledge was redeemed in the course of the research. The researcher also had sessions with the Form Four students who, at that time, were due for their mock exams; he encouraged them to be confident in themselves and they deeply appreciated his interest. The researcher was able to be present at the various Mass services in the schools and admired the way the students were joyful in celebrating their lives in Jesus.

He also visited the choir groups in the schools and the reading groups, helping them discover the beauty of a well prepared liturgy through the singing of the psalms. The students were so glad to be part of a lively communal worship where God is celebrated in an African way. This experience helped the researcher to see how deeply the teenagers seem to appreciate worship, as opposed to some views affirming that they prefer disco parties to church services. One of the students, A.N. (June 24, 2007), said, "I like listening to disco music, but I would prefer to attend a Gospel band music concert because it makes me feel good."

Class presentations, discussions and talks were quite helpful. The students were asked questions which seemed to have been answered by them sincerely and openly. The questions reinforced their participation and willingness to be part of the

discussion and talks. Some questions asked by the researcher received immediate and spontaneous answers. In some classes, students were asked to take some time to reflect more deeply before sharing their answers with others.

Indirect interviews were mainly used by the researcher during recreation times. This helped to establish a solid relationship between the students and the researcher and also to foster trust. The researcher also chatted with the teachers, priests, students and other relevant figures in the schools. This informal sort of interview helped to establish relationships with the teenagers, educators and the collaborators thus facilitating and enriching the research. Questions were not structured or systematized for this kind of interview. They were meant to capture the real feelings of the students about their daily lives, with special regard to their value system. They indeed achieved their aim as they helped the researcher to understand more about what lies deeply within the target group.

The schools provided a set time for the researcher to participate fully in the education of the students. This was the most effective time the researcher used in conducting his formal interviews. Most questions were general and descriptive, rather than closed-ended. There were also some provoking and challenging questions which demanded honesty and sincerity. The researcher also visited the Matrons of the students at their homes to hear what their views were about the students with regard to their value system.

2.2 Data Collection

Data was collected from different groups of people found at Holy Cross Parish, Thigio and environs. This included the educators and nurses from the dispensary. The main target groups were the teenagers in the parish, but mostly the students from the two schools. Other categories of people who touch the lives of the young people were contacted for information, such as the teachers, priests, catechists and the community at large.

The Daughters of Charity were interviewed to find out in what ways and through what apostolic activities they offer their contribution to the parish, and if they share the parish vision towards fulfilling its mission, goals and objectives.

Interviews were carried out among the students in the two schools with the aim of finding out how they appreciate the values stressed in these institutions and the reasons for choosing those values. Particular importance was given to how the teenagers appreciate and to their will to adhere to the values of honesty and solidarity with the poor.

Interviews carried out among the teachers, matrons and principals in the schools aimed at assessing how many teenagers have improved in the area of discipline and appropriation of values within the school.

There were some motivational talks given to the students by the researcher. The aim was to encourage and enable the teenagers to stand up to what they call their personal values. One of the talks was entitled "Believe in yourself", while the other was on "Determination in Appropriating Values". The outcome of the talks among the young people was impressive. They helped the teenagers to be more

vocal in expressing their personal values, how they appropriated them and how they would hold firm to them till death! It was so thrilling and interesting to discover the openness among these young people and how much they are eager to be better human beings.

2.2.1 Data Collection within the Schools

In the Thigio Boys' High School, the students and the educators were interviewed formally and informally. Ten hours of class-time were offered during which shared discussions were carried out with the students of Form Two, Three and Four. Ideas were freely shared and this exchange made the class very lively and interesting.

In the St Mary's Secondary School, the researcher was privileged to meet all the students in their own classrooms. There was a total of twelve intensive and interesting hours of class-time in which the students shared openly from their hearts. The way of interaction and sharing with one another provoked spontaneity and reflections on the journey of value acquisition through the family in their homes, at school, in Church and in society. There were interviews — both formal and informal — among the students and their teachers on the subject.

The table below shows the methods used in data collection, the categories of people interviewed and the total population involved in the research.

Figure 2.1

Research Methods	Number of Young People(Students)	Number of Adults	Total Population
Formal interview	128	15	148
Informal interviews	95	9	104
Focus groups	95		85
Discussion groups	125		125
Talk discussion	94	20	104

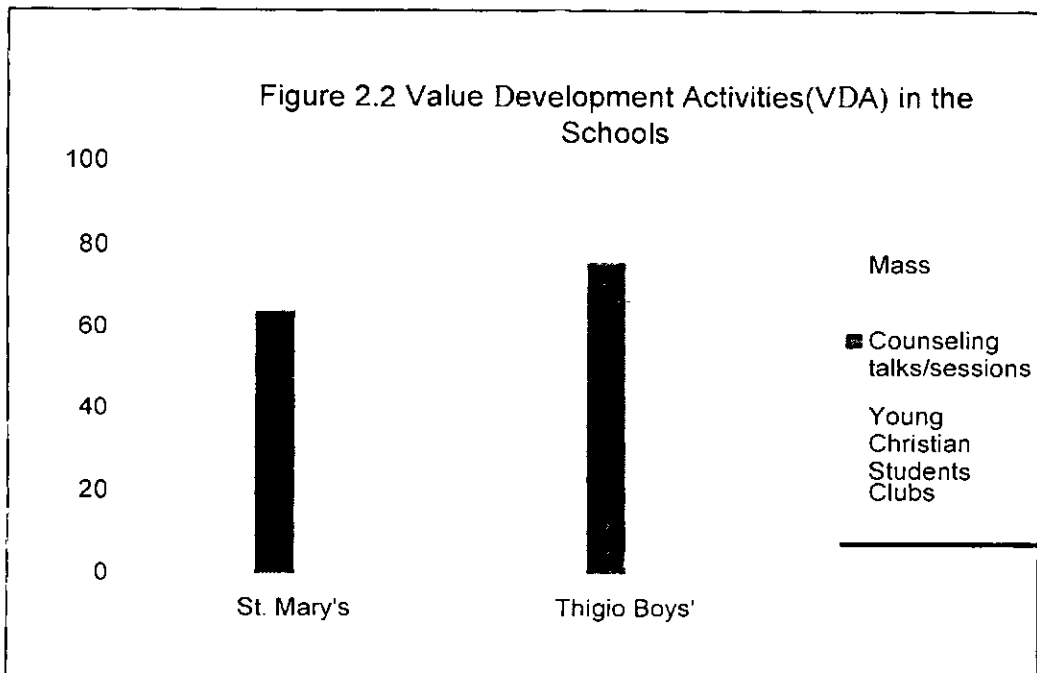
The above table is a graph of the participants in the course of the data collection.

There were some difficulties encountered by the researcher during the process of the fieldwork experience. The major challenge was a lack of sufficient time. Due to the tight schedule of the school programme, the researcher had little opportunity to organize drama-skits that could help the students understand the importance of some values in their lives. The researcher, however, tried to manage in an appropriate manner by using the little class-time given him.

2.3 Data Analysis and Description of Findings

During the research it was discovered that the students in both learning institutions are happy to have the Holy Cross Parish close to them, educating them to values and to the faith. A. G., the head student, during the interview (June 29, 2007) said, "I am so happy that the parish is close to us. We have the privilege of having many seminarians talk to us on how to live an honourable life. The Holy Mass we have in the school expresses some kind of delight that fills their hearts as we celebrate it." The presence of the seminarians seems to create an environment of oneness, as all the students would like to be a part of this joyful spiritual experience.

The level of solidarity among the students, irrespective of their religious denominations, was observed when they share these moments together at Holy Mass by the researcher. In the schools, there is also Value Development Activities (VDA)



which helps the students to deepen their human and Christian values. The graph below shows the level of appreciation by the young students for each Value Development Activity.

The most favourable activity for the development of values for the majority of the students in both schools is the Holy Mass. Through research and active participation, it was observed that Masses are usually well prepared. The students have Mass once a month in their respective schools and every Sunday at the Parish Centre. They practice ahead of time the various readings, the psalm which is usually sung, and the liturgical dance. They dress in dazzling neat uniforms and are filled with enthusiasm and joy. T.N. (June 25, 2007) said: "I always feel good when the priest preaches and makes us enjoy his sense of humour. We always look forward to seeing him come around for Mass". The choir is so good especially at Sunday celebrations. The young people also present special numbers like drama, Gospel songs, etc., after the Post-Communion prayer of the Mass. One of the major things that could have contributed to making the Mass enjoyed with such appreciation amongst the students is that it is compulsory for all students, since both schools are Catholic-sponsored institutions. The researcher gathered that the students found it difficult at first to welcome this kind of imposition, but as time went on, the Mass became the most celebrated activity because of the joy that accompanies it. One of the students (July 5, 2007) told the researcher, "It brings us together and gives us a sense of unity".

The two learning institutions also have counselling opportunities. There are some motivational talks which most of the students are always delighted to listen to. The researcher was present at one of such talks and discovered how keen the young

students were in listening to the presenter. The researcher also offered some motivational talks to them and they always seemed to be enriched and to profit by each of the sessions. Some of the talks, like “Believing in Yourself” and “Determination as a Key to Success”, were highly appreciated by many students. F.K., a Form Four student, said (June 16, 2007), “I am so appreciative of the talk you gave us. Most of my fears are gone. I am confident that I will do better in this mock exam.” External professionals are often called to talk to the youngsters on human development principles. The Thigio School boys appreciate counselling sessions more than the girls. This is due to the school’s giant stride made in the area of discipline after the riot and the attempt on the part of the boys to burn down the school. The counsellors’ co-coordinator, Ms J.M. (June 22, 2007), said:

The students went violent on account of the indiscriminate use of suspension and expulsion, so much so that they threatened to burn down the school. This made the school authority to take up the challenge by using an alternative method so as to help the boys be more aware of themselves through counselling talks and sessions. I think there has been great improvement.

At the moment, there are Peer Counselling Groups in both schools; these are better structured in the Thigio Boys High School than in St Mary’s Girls Secondary School, because of the above mentioned episode that took place in the Boys’ school.

From the research it was discovered that the YCS enjoyed the least appreciation by the students in both schools. T.O., one of the YCS students, told the researcher (June 25, 2007): “I feel so tired sometimes after the long classes to attend the prayer meetings, but I usually manage to go despite all odds. At the end of the day, I do enjoy it so much”. Some of the students share similar opinions and this indicates that the lack of appreciation for the YCS is due to the time scheduled for

the meetings. In fact, they usually meet at 4:30 p.m. after long hours of classes. Also, they often lack external speakers coming to encourage them in their prayer meetings and other activities. They seemed to really appreciate the songs the researcher taught them in the course of the findings. Be it as it may, it is a vibrant association that has helped shape the mind of many students to appreciate very important values in life.

Regarding the clubs in the schools, the researcher discovered that some students enjoy and tend to appreciate them because of their secular nature. H.D., a member of the Drama Club, said in the course of the interview (June 24, 2007): "I like the way my club brings in things that are not sacred. Sometimes, I am bored with many of these holy things". There are Drama Clubs, Music Clubs, Girls' Guides, Boys' Scouts, etc., and these clubs avail the students the opportunity to be free and sing some songs which they may not want to sing in any religious gathering. However, the teachers in charge of these clubs try to educate them on including some very important values in their acting or singing, values that can improve the quality of life of these students. They, in fact, presented a drama which underlined the need to be faithful to God's commandments and to one's partner in marriage. Mr. B. E. (June 21, 2007), a member of staff in charge of one of the clubs, said: "We try to instil discipline in all the members of the club. There is a fine penalty for disciplinary breaches. This has encouraged the members to be the best of their selves."

The researcher focused mainly on value-formation for the students. He tried to begin from where the young people are, what their personal values are and the means through which they came to know and acquire these values. The researcher

interviewed the students after a brief talk, to understand what their values looked like. To facilitate the session, the students were provided with a list of a variety of values and were asked to make a choice of the most important value which they are living out at the present time and the one they are aspiring to appropriate in the future.

Some values were mentioned by the students while others were taken from the book "Live Your Values".⁷ The list includes:

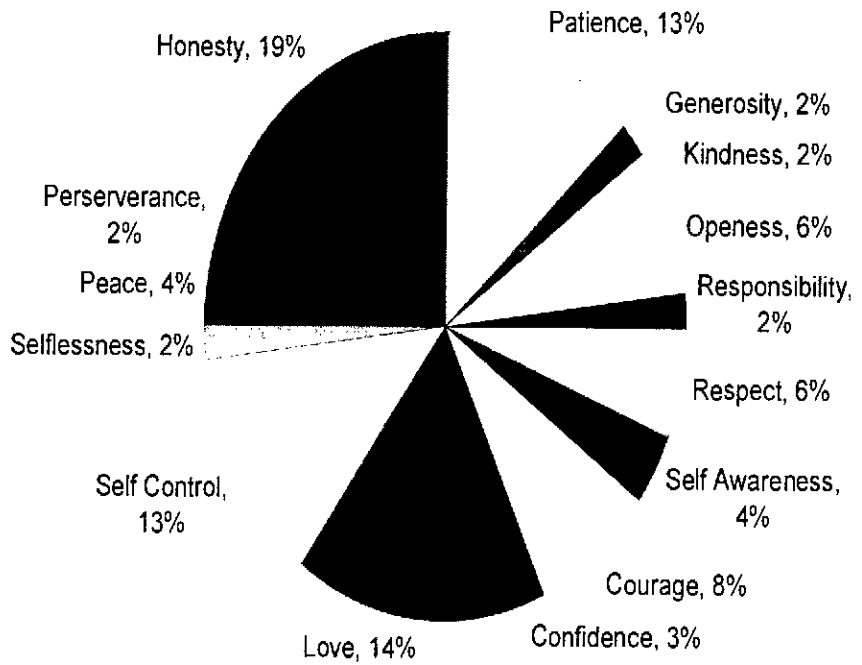
Kindness	Power	Patience	Peace
Hopefulness	Punctuality	Achievement	Freedom
Courage	Money	Pleasure	Respect
Creativity	Love	Hard work	Service
Perseverance	Knowledge	Purity	Openness
Responsibility	Self-awareness	Self-control	Beauty
Honesty	Self-confidence	Obedience	Forgiveness
Happiness	Success	Orderliness	Trustfulness

The students were interviewed and asked which values are the ones they practice most here and now. At first, it was difficult for many of them to discern which value ranks first in their lives because, in their actions, they seem to discover so many of the listed values in themselves.

The following pie chart is a representation of the preferred values among the teenage students.

⁷ F. KOIKARA, *Live Your Values*, 12

Values most appreciated by the students



The majority of the students appreciated mostly the value of honesty.

Many say that they are inclined to honesty because it is the best policy which makes them be their true selves. Some also say that they have discovered that a pretentious life is not worth living. It is interesting to see how these young students prefer an honest sinner than a pretentious holy person. One of them, G.M. (June 28, 2007), said, "Brother, I like taking alcohol and hanging out at night sometimes. I do not want to cheat you. Honesty makes me free." Some students equally owned up to the fact that they are not honest. The reasons they gave for being dishonest are fear of punishments, peer pressure, greed and covering up for one another. The most

fascinating part of the interview was when one of the students declared that she would not want to be honest at all times in her life because it usually gets her into trouble. It causes problems especially with others. This enlightened the researcher to know how deeply honest the young people can be when given a free environment of understanding. The researcher felt so challenged by the courage of the teenager who was so honest to say that she does not want to tell the truth at all times. The researcher, however, used the person of Jesus and his words as a paradigm to instruct the teenagers on the reality that "THE TRUTH SETS US FREE" (cf. John 8: 32).

The second most appreciated value is love. B.U. (June 23, 2007) said, "I appreciate love as a value because I believe that true love is the essence of life". Another said to me, "Life is not how much you possess, but how much you love". Most of those who appreciated this value say that they learnt the value of love from their parents. This also shows how important parents are in the transmission of values to their children. Some of them also cited the Scriptures stating that "love is the greatest commandment."

Some of the students also showed their admiration for patience and self-control. This value was more pronounced among the girls than the boys. Some girls, like F.A. (June 24, 2007), said, "I like to respect myself so I try to always hold my emotions with patience especially in tempting situations". It is so significant to discover that the majority of the students, referring to this value, admitted that they acquired it by themselves. A few mentioned their parents or role models as those from whom they learnt this value.

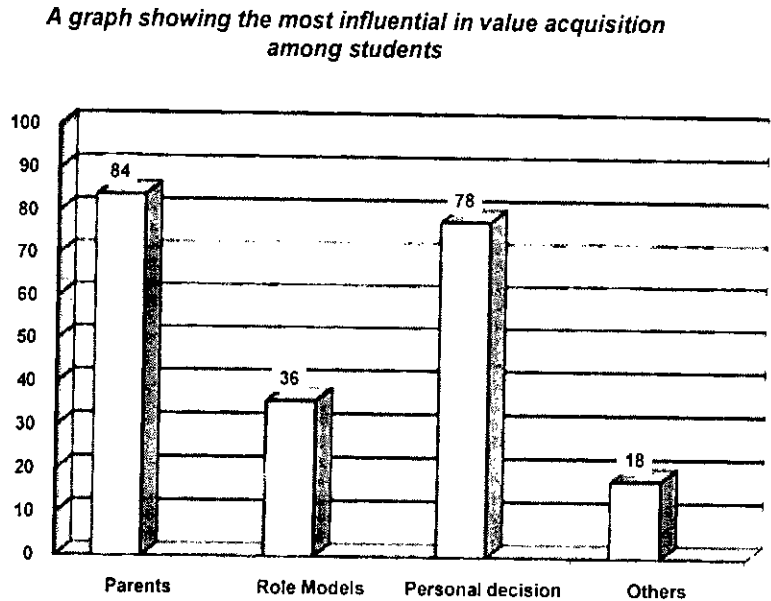
Openness, courage and respect enjoyed some percentage of preference by the young students out of the whole list of values offered them during the course of the interview. According to the findings, the boys seem to appreciate these values more than the girls. C.Y. (June 28, 2007) said, "I like to be full of courage as a man. Openness and courage help me to face bad situations". K.V. (June 24, 2007) said, "I am not courageous enough, but I am sure that I would acquire more of these values of openness, courage and respect as I grow a bit older in age, especially when I will be able to earn my livelihood."

Kindness, generosity and selflessness enjoyed the least appreciation according to the chart. Investigating on the reasons. the researcher discovered interesting points. G. T. (June 22, 2007) said, "I love kindness and generosity, but in the school I do not have much to give, so I try to manage the little I have, and so do my fellow students, I suppose". Asking them more on what they could give, F. N. (June 22, 2007) said, "Sometimes I give money, biscuits, *mandazi* (locally made buns)." This seems to prove that many of them are not fully aware of what they could give. They tend to limit it to material things alone. On this, the researcher tried to educate them on how to be generous with one's time, intelligence and talents.

There are some values that the students rarely mentioned as the priority in their lives. These include knowledge, purity, pleasure, money, popularity, etc. A.N. (June 24, 2007) said, "I do possess such values, but they are not the most prominent in my life". This seems to suggest that most teenagers would not really value popularity or riches as they would value honesty.

In the course of the interviews and findings, the researcher also carried out an investigation on the means through which the students came to appropriate these values. The following graph illustrates the response by the students.

Figure 2.4



The graph above indicates that the majority of the students said they learnt their most important personal values from their parents. This proves again that parents are a very vital influence in the development of values of their children. This, of course, must be followed by the young people's personal decision to live a value out of personal convictions. For instance, in the course of the interview, P.S. (June 28, 2007) said, "I discovered that my parents are often wrangling among themselves. This kept me worried. But now I have made up my mind to be a peaceful child of God". This example and many others can explain how many young

people would like to make a decision to live up to some personal values even when their parents or role models fall below their expectation.

There is a drastic fall in the number of students who say that they received their most important values from role models. As the researcher investigated into this situation, D. G. (June 28, 2007) said, "One of the major problems we have is not that we do not know the responsible things to do, but that the responsible actions seem to make us look awkward in society". The students seem to say that practically no one is responsible in the society today. Since we have a few or no role models to emulate, we tend to do what we feel is good for us. This is the truth of the matter. H.O. (June 24, 2005) said, "I am content with the very few role models who are there to show us the way, but we still need more people of integrity to lead us".

2.4 Some Challenges in the Development of Personal Values among Teenagers

Through the research it was discovered that, while many young people would like to live a qualitative life, there are some environmental, social and economic situations that hinder their journey to a real life of values. No doubt, many of them already have their personal values, which they seem to believe in, even when there was no role model or parent to imitate. However, the above mentioned situations seem to hinder them from living out these values to their level best. They wish to improve on what they already have. One of them, S.V. (June 25, 2007), said:

I think that one of the major threats against my value system is the confusion in our society about what it means to be good. Take, for instance, the fact that one is considered to be "imprudent" when he is just being honest. The idea of commitment is a thing of the past; sex is the in-thing for many of us. Sometimes we are taught to think of ourselves first before others. Other times we are told to be our brothers' keepers. Sometimes we are told to

abstain from sex; at other times we are encouraged to use condoms. I think this is my major problem and I have not really seen any model that is showing me a good example to follow.

This tends to show that the environment and the social structure in which the young people find themselves today militate against their personal value systems. The majority of the teenagers in the schools also expressed other reasons why many of them seem confused and lost on the way, while they wish to live their values to the full. Some of the reasons mentioned include: lack of proper parental care and love, lack of role models, peer pressure, improper education, and fashion waves, lack of self-esteem, laziness, and inability to strike a balance, secularism, identity crisis, religious scandals, poverty and unjust social structures.

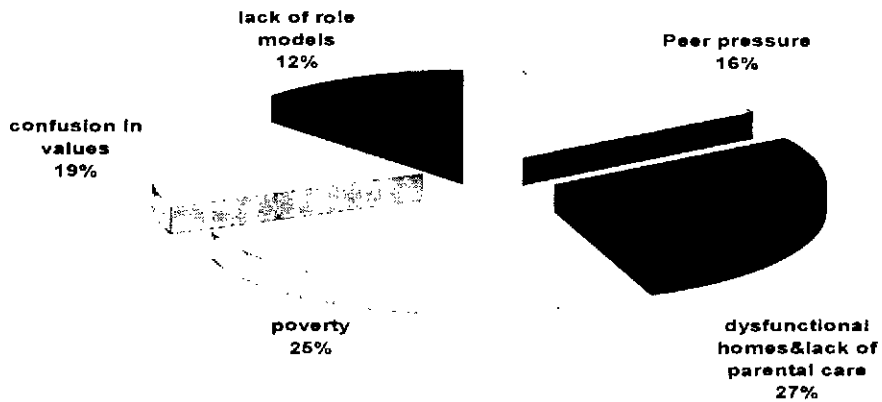
Another challenge that the young students shared in a class discussion is the media. Many of them honestly admitted that they enjoy watching musicals, soap operas and movies. When asked why, the majority of them said (June 27, 2007) that it is just for the fun of it, especially when they have nothing to do. Some said that it is what is usually presented to them, so they have no other option than to watch that. When the researcher investigated whether they have received some values from the media, some said (June 27, 2007) that they have come to admire good values worthy of emulation in movie actors, while others said they are left thinking about sex and violence whenever they watch certain provocative programmes. This shows that the media have a very powerful influence on the consciousness of most young people. Some of the teenagers expressed their confusion by the conflicting signals of attitudes and values presented daily by the media. There is serious need to help the young people to be aware of the pros and cons of the media, so as to be able to make

an informed decision to restrain oneself from some “deadly poison” shown through the media. The media must not present hooliganism, illicit sex and consumerist attitudes to rob the young minds of their innocence. Many times, the inordinate secular activities presented by the media tend to drown many teenagers. Who shall rescue them from this?

In one of the class discussions on the value of honesty, which seemed to be a thing of the past among some of the young people, it was highlighted that lack of honesty in public offices has resulted to corruption and other related vices in most countries of Africa and around the world. Examining the young students on how they view honesty, the researcher discovered that they have a high regard for this value, though not without some challenges. Bringing down the discussion to their situation in school, the researcher tried to inquire how much they practiced honesty in the school. Many of them said (June 25, 2007) that it was very challenging for them to practice it, because they would be looked upon as betrayers and many would distance themselves from them. So they tend to cover up one another when one violates the school rules and regulations, even though it is not really their sincere wish to be dishonest. From the pie chart (Figure 2.3), we discover that only 19% of all the students do appreciate honesty as a paramount value. Only about 2% say that they do not want to be that honest because it puts them into trouble with others. They, however, confessed that they sincerely appreciate honest people and would not like to befriend anyone who is dishonest. The bottom-line at the end of the discussion is that many of these teenagers seem not to be fully self-empowered, through systematic education, to stand by their values and principles of life. They seem to be carried away by what people would say, if they practiced some values.

The following chart shows some of the situations that prevent teenagers from living out their personal values to the full.

Table 2.5 Some major situations that militate against development of values



As the teenagers reported that they “caught” most of their values from their parents, so did many of them view dysfunctional homes and lack of parental love and care as a major block to the development of their personal values. They highlighted that if their parents did not accept them in love, they would go outside to do anything they wanted so as to gain acceptance. By this, many of them acknowledge that they tend to be at the mercy of whoever would show them any slightest attention and care. In the process, their value systems tend to be at risk. Many of them want their parents to live up to their responsibilities in the family (cf. T.K. June 25, 2007).

Almost in the same vein, many of them reported that they seem to lack self-esteem, which they really need in order to stand firm on their personal values. Some of them said (June 28, 2007) that, when their parents show insufficient love and care to them, they are inclined to feel inferior, which deeply eats up their self-esteem. As a result, they feel so weak in trying to grow and develop in their value system.

Though the two schools are in the rural area, the young students are caught up with the modern world of mass media. They watch many movies (especially soap operas, movies produced in Nigeria, and other TV programmes) in the school (on weekends only) and get so confused about the values to live out. For instance, many tend to see the value of purity as an impossible task in their world. They tend to be confused about values. They also acknowledge that it is not only the media; sometimes their parents, teachers and friends tend to influence them with some “counter-values” which seem to contradict the truly human and Christian values. Most of the times, they tend to yield easily to these counter-values such as excessive ambition, dishonesty, corruption, laziness, and smoking because they seem pleasurable, even though it is not really their wish to do so.

Unfortunately, quite a number of young students come from very poor backgrounds. Most of them are usually sent home after the mid-term break if they did not pay their school fees. According to Ms E.U. (June 29, 2007), “It is always a hard decision for me to send them home. But I have to do so to run the school, though it affects the students in a number of ways, especially in their academic results”. One of the matrons (June 23, 2007), in an interview, also highlighted the poor situation of some of the students which forces them to steal other students’ clothes, mostly because their parents cannot afford to sew new ones for them, when

they outgrow their wears. In that manner, they end up compromising their value systems and feel dissatisfied with themselves. During one of the group sessions, some students said (June 25, 2007) that they could do some sorts of immoral things just to make some money, so that they could go back to school. They admitted that it is not their wish to do such things, but many times they are left with little or no other options. The young students also decry that they lack good role models to help them know that a quality life of values is indeed possible. They also reported that, sometimes, the pressure from peers and friends is too strong for them to resist.

2.5 The Preventive System of Education among Young Students

In the course of the study, the researcher used the Preventive System of the Salesian Family. The Preventive System is a pedagogical method characterized by a desire to be with the young sharing their life, looking sympathetically at their world, attentive to their real experience and values. It believes in the strength of the good already present in every youngster, even the neediest, and seeks to develop this through positive good experiences. It is a wonderful method which brings into perspective the centrality of *reason*, *religion* and *loving kindness*. The Salesian Family proposes to the young people the centrality of reason, which becomes reasonableness of requests and rules, flexibility and persuasiveness in proposal; of religion, understood as developing the sense of God present in every person; and of loving-kindness, expressed as an educative love that enables growth and brings about a meeting of minds and hearts.⁸ It is favourable to creating positive interpersonal relationships, attitudes of openness, a spirit of mutual trust that creates a

⁸ Cf. Salesians of Don Bosco, "Preventive System", 8/19/2007.

serene and harmonious environment between the pupils and their educators. It was highly appreciated.

The researcher realized that the Preventive System already exists in a minimal scale in the schools. The counselling team of the schools tries to create an environment of educative rapport among the students. He also observed that a few teachers do take their students out for a light game in a very cordial and lovely manner. In the interviews conducted, the students expressed their enthusiasm for how much they enjoy subjects with such teachers and also remarked how well they perform in such subjects. This proves that an environment of educative and loving presence by the teacher can help students do better in their subjects.

The researcher associated himself with the students, giving them some room to open themselves up. They were so free with him, that they wanted this method to enter in a more profound way their academic set-up. Out of 537 young students interviewed, 532 said that it was a wonderful method of teaching, while the remaining five expressed the fear that giving them that sort of freedom could lead to its abuse. One of them, A.N. (3 July, 2007), said, "We have never been given such freedom and confidence to speak out those truths that lie deep within our hearts".

Out of the 44 adults interviewed, only 29 of them saw the beauty of the Preventive System of Education in helping the young people grow into becoming their real selves. The rest said that it could only be valuable if you are a youth like the researcher, not for adults like them. They said the young students might begin to disrespect and see them (adults) as their equals. They maintained that there are certain values you have to force into these students, because if you give them a

chance, they would argue about them till they are trivialized. One of the teachers, J.N. (28 June, 2007), said:

I think it is a wonderful method, but it seems to be difficult for us teachers to use it to educate the students to values. This is because they tend to “fear” us because we are also disciplinarians and this could be an obstacle to their being open with us. I think that for this method to yield its desired goal, we need its users to be free from all classroom business so as to enable young students to be free enough to approach us. I love it.

The criticism that the Preventive System stifles intellectual development seems to be baseless, because the research proves that the young students were more creative, inventive and poised to venture into any scope of study with enthusiasm as they felt so much appreciated.

The researcher highly recommends a more comprehensive way of incorporating this pedagogy in fields of academic learning. It may fit into pastoral ministry with young people, but seems difficult to fit some academic courses like Physics or Chemistry. However, an environment of mutual trust and understanding could create a better comprehension by the students, as compared to a rigid and exaggeratedly serious one, as observed in the course of the interviews

2.6 Conclusion

As stated earlier, the research aimed at examining how the young people appreciate values; who taught them their most important values and whether they caught these values by themselves at some point in their growth process. The researcher understood that many students, who felt that their parents failed in

teaching them some life values, showed a considerable degree of propensity to appropriate some principles and values of life by themselves. This indicates how much the students desire to live by a value system and how best could they be helped to do so.

The researcher also tried to investigate into the most appreciated values among the students of Thigio. In the process, he discovered the challenges the young people encounter in the development of values and value systems. These include dysfunctional homes and inadequate parental love, peer pressure, poverty, confusion in values, lack of role models, religious scandals and unjust social structures among others.

The research also aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the Preventive System fostered by the Salesian Family. He realized that the majority of the students appreciated the Preventive System for it gave them a sense of belonging and created a spirit of loving kindness. They also liked the interaction and openness that existed between them and the researcher.

Following the outcome of the findings, the researcher wishes to offer a proposal for a way forward. Through the research, it was discovered that lack of parental love affects the young people most negatively with regard to the development of values among them. More education on parental love needs to be fostered by the Church and the community. In addition, many parents seem to be ignorant of the Preventive approach, especially the meaning of its three elements — reason, religion and loving-kindness. There should be workshops and education sessions to enlighten the parents on how to journey with their children in this method.

The researcher also discovered that there seems to be greater appreciation of values among teenagers who have a strong attachment to God rather than among those who seem to be indifferent to things pertaining to God. There is a serious need to help educate the young on values from a tender age, a task to be continued through an ongoing formation even when they become adults. There is also a need for the introduction of “education to values” at all levels of learning. This would go a long way to assist young people become more firm in the conviction and the living of personal values. The researcher also observed how deeply the young people seem to love the values as lived in Jesus. Through songs, drama and skits the young people are helped to grow gradually towards living authentic Christian values. Honesty is one of the most appreciated values among the young people (see Figure 2.3). It really shows that, if given a good educating environment, young people could live out this value to the full. Therefore, they would be able to combat the most dangerous “beast” — corruption — which has sunk its claws in the continent of Africa.

CHAPTER THREE

Development of a Value System among Christian African Teenagers

INTRODUCTION

Having analyzed the situation of the young Christian students of Thigio, the researcher came to discover that these young people already have some values which they believe in. They only needed a boost, a sort of development that would enable them to organize them into a system. At this point, I would like to highlight what I mean by values and value system for the sake of clarity. "A value is an enduring preference for a mode of conduct (e.g. honesty) or a state of existence (e.g. inner peace).⁹ A value system is formed when there is an organization of values in terms of their relative importance. One's value system is ultimately influenced by one's over-all frame of reference, world view, the assumptions that one makes about the world, about oneself and others — in other words by "my state of consciousness."¹⁰ Values are indeed acquired. We all begin assimilating the values of our culture with our mother's milk. Anthropologists tell us that by the age of two, a child is a complete creature of the culture. *Culture*, in this context, includes all the circles in which the individual finds himself or herself — nation, city or village,

⁹ M. ROKEACH, "The Nature of Human Values", 224.

¹⁰ Cf. B. HALL, *Development of Consciousness*, 51.

social class, ethnic group, church, family.¹¹ It is the accumulated experience of a people that is handed on from one generation to the other. Consequently, children come into the world with many things already decided for them by the surrounding culture which affects virtually everything about them including their value systems. In a big sense, culture is a great key to understanding and developing value systems among young people. A sound knowledge of this would certainly help alleviate the impending *tsunami* which is threatening both the church of Africa and the society at large.

This is why the researcher would like to delve into the challenges discovered in the course of the research and see how they might have been caused by some cultural situations in which the teenagers found themselves. There would be an exposition of the traditional, modern, post-modern and youth Culture and the manner these shape the young people's attitudes and behaviours. It shall also offer a key to understanding the development of their value system and how to accompany them attain its optimal point. The chapter shall also propose some models of how the contemporary African teenagers could be helped to develop their personal value systems for their good, that of the Church and of the wider society.

3 Development of Value System among Contemporary Christian African Teenagers: Major Challenges

In the course of the research, the researcher discovered that there are some challenges which face the young Christian students, as they try to live out their value systems. The major challenges highlighted by the teenagers would be dealt with

¹¹ Cf. B. HALL – *al.*, *Readings in Value Development*, 7.

separately and individually. They include confusion of values, dysfunctional homes, secularism and lack of role models.

3.1.1 Confusion about Values

We live in a confusing world. At every turn we are forced to make choices about how we live our lives, which ideally prove our value system, but we are not clear about our own values.¹² “All of us, young or old, often become confused about our values. But for young people especially, the values conflicts are more acute. This is true in modern African society. The children and youth of today are confronted by many more choices than in previous generations.”¹³ There are many ideologies in the new culture. “People have access to an extraordinary variety of ideas and opinions through books, cinema, TV, newspapers...”¹⁴ Some of the students said that they are being thrown into confusion about sexuality. During the interview, one of them said (June 24, 2007), “Sometimes we are encouraged to abstain from sex by the teachers and priests, other times we are told to use condoms by some other instructors.” S.B. Simon and his co-authors say, “So often, what goes on in the classroom is irrelevant and remote from the real things that are going on in students’ lives — their daily encounters with friends, strangers, with peers, with authority figures; [...]”¹⁵ In this kind of situation, the teenagers often get themselves entangled in a tight corner, because of the difficulty of choosing from the multiplicity of ideas. The question is: how, then, does a young person learn how to direct his life through a world full of confused values and conflicting ideas?

¹² Cf. S. B. SIMON – L. W. HOWE – H. KIRSCHENBAUM, *Values Clarification*, 14.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁴ G. BORAN, *The Pastoral Challenge*, 34.

¹⁵ S. B. SIMON – L. W. HOWE – H. KIRSCHENBAUM, *Values Clarification*, 13.

In the traditional African culture and society, there were no technological advancements as we do have them today. Values were basically transmitted through the parents and family members to their children. Since they were not exposed to many ideologies through mass media, magazines, internet and other media of value transmission, it was easier for the young people of the time to go on with whatever they learnt from their parents and society with little or no confusion. There was some kind of imposition of values upon the teenagers in the past. This is because the parents believed that the child was given the societal desirable values for its good. Through the rites of passage, the child was taught to believe and live out its societal norms and values. S/he was taught how to behave, the values and norms of the community, the expectations and responsibilities of life in the community.¹⁶

Traditionally, adults motivated by a sincere desire to have the younger generation lead happy and productive lives, tended to guide them, to moralise them. "Moralising is the direct, although subtle, inculcation of the adults' values upon the young."¹⁷ This traditional approach of direct inculcation seems to be becoming increasingly less effective in the contemporary African culture. This does not imply that the traditional values such as honesty, integrity, commitment, perseverance, respect for nature, etc. are irrelevant today. It is absolutely not the case. It only calls for a change or updating of the approach. Direct inculcation, however, works when there is complete consistency about what constitutes 'desirable' values.¹⁸ But consider the African youth of today. The parents offer certain sets of conduct. The Church often encourages another. The peer group offers a third view of values. The media and popular magazines give a fourth. The teacher a fifth, while a role model

¹⁶ Cf. M. C. KIRWEN, ed., *African Cultural Knowledge*, 102.

¹⁷ S. B. SIMON - L. W. HOWE - H. KIRSCHENBAUM, *Value Clarification*, 16.

¹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*

offers a sixth view and so on. Bombarded with all these influences, the young person is finally left to make his/her choices about whose values to follow. How would the young person swim across these confusion and conflicts of values? Unfortunately, the traditional approach of direct inculcation of values would certainly not be effective, due to various alternatives offered to the young person of today. Which way would be recommended for today's African youth to help him/her clarify and develop a convincing and beneficial value system?

3.1.2 Dysfunctional Families and Inadequate Love and Care

The families from which young people grew up, consciously or unconsciously, affect them in a significant degree. Unfortunately, there seem to be many breakdowns of family structures in the contemporary African society. The African child of today is mostly faced with some ugly situations like separation, divorce, lack of adequate care, wars, poverty and so on, right from the time of birth. These tend to influence his or her development of values. As Kitembo and others put it, "There is no doubt that the influence of the family on the children, let alone the wider family community and the clan, is not as strong as it used to be in the past."¹⁹ In the traditional Africa, development of values for a child was not only the responsibility of its parents, but the collective responsibility of the whole community. In this way, there were lesser responsibilities on the shoulders of the parents or guardians.²⁰ In those days, the child was well cared for, with love and great affection by everyone. This is indeed the most important stage of life as

¹⁹ B. KISEMBO L. MAGESA A. SHORTER, *African Christian Marriage*, 143.

²⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 145.

pointed out by Pope Benedict XVI.²¹ The interviews revealed that most of the students who claimed they possess low self-esteem (value) of themselves were from dysfunctional families or that they were not given sufficient attention in their homes.

In modern Africa, the rate at which divorces in families are growing is quite alarming. Reports show that more than 25% of households in Kenya are made of single-parents.²² The brutal truth is that divorce is so common today in Africa especially in its big cities. The current industrialization and urbanization of Africa, without prejudice to its advantages, means establishing “new homes away from home” mostly by young men, women and fathers of families due to the quest for making a “decent living”. This tends to lead to a gradual but inevitable break-up of families. Researchers also report that societal demands for geographical mobility, increased education and the increasing independence of women have led to a breakdown of the traditional family structures.²³ Researchers claim that this revolution in family behaviour is taking place particularly in organized capitalistic societies.²⁴ Who are the most vulnerable victims of broken and dysfunctional homes? Are they not the growing children? In Africa, today, there are many families torn apart by the ravages of wars, HIV/AIDS, infidelity, poverty and these affect the value system of the teenager. What could be the value system of a teenager who was born at the time of war and has never got any notion of peace and love? What would probably be the value system of a teenager who is always forced to see the fight and quarrels between one’s parents? From the interviews, the researcher came

²¹ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, “Reflection on St John Chrysostom’s Emphasis on Formation”, 19/10/2007.

²² Cf. “Single-parent Families”, 12/10/2007.

²³ Cf. W. MCCREADY, “Family and Socialisation”, 26-34.

²⁴ Cf. W. GOODE, “World Revolution and Family Patterns”, 158-169.

to the realization that the *storms* in family life can lead the teenagers to suffer from emotional disorders.

In other situations where the parents are still living together, the struggle to survive economically seems to have taken the place of the much needed love and care which ought to be given to the child. Material possessions and fleeting connections must not take priority over value education, which is the natural right of every child. Most fairly stable families often suffer greatly from failure to recognize a higher meaning and purpose of life.²⁵ This failure seems to make them go after wealth and economic status, so that they have little or no time for the children. The increasing rate of poverty on the continent of Africa could also contribute to the scramble for economic stability by most parents. With some sense of guilt, they tend to buy material gifts for the child in compensation for the love they should have given. This, most writers term as spoiling the child instead of loving the child. Wilson puts it succinctly, "The child's need is for love, not things."²⁶ Julius Ndirangu, a youth educator, makes mention of a teenager, aged 14, who rarely laughs with other students, has low self-worth and performs poorly in school. After careful interview, it was found out that his father is a very harsh man. Whenever he drinks, he threatens him and condemns him as a good-for-nothing. He is sometimes beaten and this makes the young man feel like running away from home forever. So often filled with worries, he rarely concentrates in the class and therefore he performs so poorly.²⁷ How can a teenager like this acquire any values system from such a circumstance? This is one of the many instances faced by many teenagers in modern Africa. Poverty, unemployment, irresponsible behaviours have all led to the

²⁵ Cf. M. A. WILSON, *Love & Family*, 41.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 78.

²⁷ J. NDIRANGU, *Youth in Danger*. 30.

breakdown of many homes. This breakdown of families has taken unprecedented tolls on the teenagers born from such homes.

3.1.3 Lack of Role Models

In modern African society, there seem to be increasing instances of violence, permissiveness and lack of discipline. Statistics show that vandalism, violent crime, drug taking, deception, irresponsibility and the so-called “free love” have risen especially among teenagers.²⁸ Young people like to be challenged by those who live out their value systems in concrete life situations. Young people have heroes and heroines whom they almost “worship” and imitate, but unfortunately those presented to them tend to possess the afore-mentioned “destructive” values. From the interviews, it was clear that quite a few teenagers got their value system from role models (see figure 2.3). They seem to lack real heroes and heroines that would help them cope with the challenges of the modern African society. All moralities are not the same and neither are all value systems: there are beneficial ones and harmful ones, life-giving ones and death-dealing ones, mature and immature ones. It is up to the contemporary teenagers to be critical of the moralities we find in our pluralistic African society, in which values and principles often seem to be dished out as options, like a cafeteria-style lunch.²⁹

In the traditional African society, there were some family members and age group members who lived exemplary lives and the teenagers at the time were so keen to imitate them. Indeed the whole village tended to serve as a model to the child. Bad role models were despised by the entire community. There is an African

²⁸ Cf. R. STRAUGHAN, *Can We Teach Children to Be Good?*, 1-2.

²⁹ Cf. J. AGLERS · B. ALLAIRE · C. KOCH, *Growing in Christian Morality*, 16.

proverb which illustrates this fact very well, "It takes a village to raise a child."³⁰ Today, the situation is different. Most teenagers acknowledge that they learn quickly by imitation. They learn from pop stars, actors and sportsmen on how to "succeed" in life, but sooner or later feel that they are lacking "something" that touches the core of their being. These may not be the best role models to help them develop their values. They seem to need better ones. A role model who has a formidable value system seems most attractive to the young people themselves. They like and adore honest, courageous and compassionate young adults, but they seem to find it difficult to come across these people. What shall they do? What has become of the youth ministers?

3.1.4 Secularism

One can easily characterize the struggle of the African, since independence, as a total commitment to urbanization and modernity. Consequently, on gaining independence, his/her overriding task appears to be nation-building and a serious effort to raise his/her standard of living.³¹ This phenomenon has also led to secularization in Africa which is not bad in itself. "Africans are notoriously religious."³² In the African traditional conception, there is a deep sense of the sacred. Traditional Africans regard the entire cosmos, when viewed in its totality (visible and invisible), as sacred. Sometimes, secular and sacred are erroneously seen as opposed to each other: this is not true. They are simply ways of seeing and experiencing the same reality - either from the human point of view or from the

³⁰ Cf. E. M. FASHBAUGH, *Creating an Authentic Youth Ministry*. 34.

³¹ Cf. C. B. OKOLO, "Urbanisation and African Traditional Values". 9/17/2007.

³² J. MBEMBE, *African Religions and Philosophy*. 1.

divine. It is like a balance of faith and reason in the search of reality. They both stand for order and coherence.³³

Unfortunately, secularisation possesses a momentum of its own and develops into *secularism*, a situation in which the secular is observed to dominate or even replace the sacred. Secularism, therefore, refers to a situation in which religious faith, for one reason or the other, is felt as superfluous. It is a state in which religion loses its hold both at the level of social institutions and at the level of human consciousness. It denies the immanence of God and adorns itself with materialism and consumerism.³⁴ This is practically the situation in which most African countries find themselves, especially in big cities since the past twenty years. As a result, secularism has also taken its toll on the religious consciousness in modern African society. Religious institutions have played a great role in value formation in Africa, both in traditional and pre-modern times. Unfortunately, this consciousness is being eroded by secularism in modern African culture. It has equally contributed to decline in morality and value development. Not even religious figures are left out in this *tsunami* of secularism. It seems to have made the religious values lose their meaning and purpose. Many religious tend to complain of the “rigour” in religious life. Religious scandals seem to be escalating in the tide of secularism. Most teenagers tend to lose interest in religious values and systems, due to the scandals of the so-called religious leaders and figures thus contributing to what an author terms as “vocation crisis” among young people. This seems to confirm the story of a preacher who requested anonymity but boasts about the kind of double standard life he was living. He said, “I have slept with about 20 women in my [*sic*] church, and each

³³ Cf. A. SHORTER · E. ONYANCHA, *Secularism in Africa*. 13.

³⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 14.

thinks she is the first and the last.”³⁵ The awful thing about it is that he justifies himself that he was not supposed to be a superman. How would this sort of preacher assist the youth in his care grow into matured Christian adults with endearing value system?

Secularism has also found its way into modern African teenagers through many ways, especially through the mass media. They have got a lot of impact on the teenagers of today. They have brought a lot of good to youth through educative programmes, but also caused great harm to them by projecting attitudes of materialism, consumerism, violence, sexual disorientation and immorality to the teenagers. The mass media often times are so pre-occupied with economic gains and commercial satisfaction that they tend to undermine their objective role towards all, especially the teenagers. Since young people love media entertainment, much of the entertainment put out by television and magazines is aimed at young adults. Love, sex, romance are the favourite topics of such entertainment. Casual sex is often depicted as acceptable and often without risks or adverse consequences. The great harm this does to the teenager and his or her maturity is not mentioned. A recent advertisement on a Kenyan television showed a mother telling her daughter to take some condoms with her as she departed for a date with her boyfriend.³⁶ What kind of values and value system would this mother impart on the daughter? The African teenager has an enormous task to cope with the big challenges of secularism.

³⁵ N. ASEGO — M. MOSOTA, “Seeking the Forbidden Kingdom”, 8-9

³⁶ A. SHORTER — E. ONYANCHA, *Secularism in Africa*, 79.

3.2 Youth Culture: a Key to Understanding today's Teenagers and Their Values

Anthropologists maintain that we are all products of our individual cultures. There seem to be many nuances of the word *culture*. When some people hear of the word *culture*, they think of learning. A *cultured* person is one who has studied. However, to clear some doubts, it would be beneficial to define what I mean by *culture*. *Culture* refers to the social organization of any social group. It influences and conditions a vision of the world, social organization, political powers, sexuality, family, religion, ways of relating to others and community values.³⁷ Culture offers answers to the needs of human beings in their search for identity, meaning, security, happiness and roots. It is not invented by the child; it shapes the life of the child and the family in which the child is born. The process by which the child assimilates the culture surrounding him or her is called socialization.³⁸

Culture is transmitted from one generation to another through symbols, myths and rituals. Symbols transmit meaning through imagination and emotions. Symbols are more powerful than words: for instance, think of a boy giving a flower to his girlfriend as a symbol of his feelings for her. For most people, myths are fairy tales told around a campfire for entertainment. The scientific meaning of myth is however different. Myths are symbolic stories that are part of human and political reality. They are clues to the meaning of the universe and because they are symbolic narrations, they might not follow a logical process of reasoning. The third element in culture is ritual which is an important and basic action of all human beings. Ritual is the repetition of movements and gestures to express and reinforce the values in

³⁷ Cf. G. BORAN, *The Pastoral Challenges*. 21.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 20.

which we believe. It is part of everyday living.³⁹ For instance, in most African cultures, the initiation rite is a gesture which implies one's movement into adulthood and, in Western culture, shaking hands after a quarrel is a sign of peace-making. It should also be noted that culture is not static but dynamic. We have moved from traditional culture to a modern culture in Africa, due to the introduction of technology and human autonomy. This, indeed, has influenced magnificently the value system of the teenagers today. It is not the fault of the teenager to find him/herself in this modern world, therefore it will be more relevant to help him/her grow in a quality value system, even in a modern youth culture.

An understanding of the youth culture reveals the concrete situation of the teenagers and is essential to help the teenager develop his or her value system. Youth culture is not another culture different from modern and post-modern cultures. It is rather a subculture within these wider cultures. In some aspects youth have a different culture from adult culture — they wear different kinds of dresses, have their own slang, relish loud music, they are fond of parties and so on.

As I proceed in the work, I shall be using *teenager* and *youth* interchangeably, because a teenager is also a youth.

3.2.1 Origin of Youth Culture

³⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 22-28.

Youth was distinguished as a separate phase in life towards the end of the eighteenth century. Studies on youth and culture began with the publication of a book by Stanley Hall in 1904.⁴⁰

Youth as a cultural group is not a natural condition, but something that emerged historically. As a world phenomenon, it developed only in the 1950s. In the traditional societies, there were rites of passage to help young people move into adulthood. Due to urbanization, such passage no longer holds for one reason or the other. In the modern culture, young people work, spend their money and buy whatever they need. Industrialization and speed of technology has also removed the responsibility of education from the parents. As technology advanced in the industrial society, the demand for qualified workers also grew. It therefore became pertinent to prolong the time of study. In so doing, the young people now spend more time together in school and so postpone their passage into adulthood. For the first time in history, there were such large amalgamations of young people in the same place which, to a certain extent, made youth isolated from the rest of society, taking on the characteristics of a society apart.⁴¹

3.2.2 The Teenager, Youth Culture and Value System

Youth is a phase in human life in which many important decisions are taken, decisions that can shape future happiness and self-fulfilment: decisions to be committed to a value system or not. What it means to be young is also shaped by culture. The teenager cannot escape the youth culture of our modern age. S/he is

⁴⁰ G. BORAN, *The Pastoral Challenges*, 107

⁴¹ G. BORAN, *The Pastoral Challenges*, 107

bombarded with the good, the bad and the ugly of the culture. No culture is bad and no culture is perfect, but an understanding of youth culture — the continent of youth — would enable ministers, parents and society to assist young people to draw out the optimal value from it. Due to globalization, this youth culture tends to cut across every teenager in the world.

One must understand the mentality of the young people so as to get the best from them. This mentality is greatly shaped by youth culture, which invariably affects the value system of the teenager. The development of values among today's teenagers tends to take longer than in the past. A number of factors have contributed to this, especially the pluralistic nature of the modern world, globalization, attitudes of immediate gratification and confusion of values by the media, lack of proper guidance by the parents due to emphasis on economic security. There seems to be a spiritual crisis in the modern world. All this affects youth and shape their lives and value systems. Industrialization seems to have given the situation a worse outlook, because new things come into existence every day and the young people seem to take it that there are no basic permanent values, thus the slogan "anything can go". Reports say that there are over a million out-of-wedlock teenage pregnancies each year in the United States. Violent crimes by youth are on the increase and educational standards have dropped alarmingly.⁴²

Furthermore, the young people tend to enjoy their fashion and music. They do not seem to be in favour of classical music, but of the *loud* one. Youth music offers young people immediate satisfaction, in contrast with the sacrifices and restrictions required by the adult world. This is true of most young people all over

⁴² Cf. G. BORAN, *Youth Ministry that Works*, 84.

the world. More important than words and melodies, are the gestures, the way of dressing, slang and hair-style, etc. Youth culture often seems to be counter-productive, as it questions the values of the dominant culture. Singers use symbols tied to romanticism, sex, materialism and violence to attract youth. Adult values are often rejected. The stark fact is that the youth culture has come to stay. Being resentful about this youth culture can never help the situation but an effort to understand it is required. Michael Paul Gallagher proposes three schools of Christian response to culture: tense hostility; innocent acceptance; discernment and creation of culture.⁴³ A youth culture has to be discerned and proposed, one that hinges on a deeper spirituality.

Youth music can be a powerful tool for evangelizing young people, if youth leaders know how to use it. Some apostolic movements, such as *Charismatic Renewal*, invest heavily in attractive melodies and bands with sophisticated musical instruments. For instance, thousands of young Kenyans were attracted by an American gospel rap musician, Kirk Franklin, in October when this work was being written, and he encouraged them, through his musical performance, to live out their gospel values. Young people can help us understand that they are not negative people. The practical question is, "How can we work pastorally with the young people and develop a quality value system within a modern cultural setting?"⁴⁴ But it is not enough to understand the young people by studying their surrounding culture. How do we interact with all that? How do you move from understanding the youth culture to the praxis of value development? How do we involve the young

⁴³ Cf. M. GALLAGHER, *Clashing Symbols*, 135.

⁴⁴ Cf. G. BORAN, *The Pastoral Challenges*, 119.

people and those concerned about them in the process? The results will depend on our approach, methodology and goals. This is the subject of the next heading.

3.3 Some Educative and Pastoral Proposals for the Development of Quality Value Systems among Christian African Teenagers

Having discussed some major challenges the Christian teenagers undergo in the development of their personal value systems, it was pertinent to understand the value system of youth vis-à-vis the modern culture. This led to what George Boran calls “youth culture” which is seen as a key to understanding today’s African teenager. Having understood the culture of youth, we shall propose an approach, a methodology to help the teenager recapture the basic values, even within the youth culture, thus building up a quality value system.

3.3.1 Promotion of African Family Values and Enhancement of Family Loving Care through the Preventive System

In the context of the African teen, it would be great to have recourse to the family in Africa. Among many Africans, it is a well-known fact that a person is known foremost as being related to others; young people are always referred to as the son or daughter of so-and-so.⁴⁵ This emphasizes how important family life is in Africa. I do not want to romanticize African family values as if they were perfect. Traditional African ways of discipline, like flogging and beating, must be done away with, because they have a terribly negative effect on the child. However, there is urgent need to promote values such as the sense of the sacred, hard work, consistency in marriage, responsibility, delayed gratification, the sense of solidarity and community in today’s culture.

⁴⁵ B. WA LELE. *Family Spirituality in Africa*, 30.

One of God's most creative concepts was that of family, and this was part of his plan for the human race from the very beginning.⁴⁶ It must be noted that family is not the brainchild of a sociologist from a past generation, but was in God's mind long before it became a reality. Parents must be aware of the dangers of separation, divorce, incessant quarrels and how all this affects the psyche of their children. Parents should be aware of the challenges in marital life and develop a certain discipline basically for their own good, that of the child and indeed of the whole society. Families tend to break down due to some modern "values", like the so called free love, conflicting value systems, quest for conscienceless pleasure, immediate gratification, inordinate quest for economic security, individualism and so on. The Church and other societal institutions must give adequate training and education to the young, right from childhood, on how to make a good family where peace and love prevail. It was also God's plan that parents would pass on their faith and values to their children.⁴⁷ M. Scott Peck puts it in a subtle manner. He says, "If a child sees his parents, day in and day out behaving with self-discipline, restraint, dignity and a capacity to order their own lives, then the child will come to feel in the deepest fibres of his being that this is the way to live."⁴⁸ This deep sense of responsibility is quite instrumental to acquisition of a quality value system among teenagers for their integral growth. For him, over and above such self-discipline, there must be love. He maintains that even chaotic and disorganized families could have self-disciplined children and teens if they showed them genuine love, whereas those families who might be highly ordered and organized but never showed true

⁴⁶ M. FANSTONE, *Unbelieving Children*, 32.

⁴⁷ M. FANSTONE, *Unbelieving Children*, 32.

⁴⁸ M. SCOTT PECK, *The Road Less Travelled*, 21.

love to their children could have children who grow with a disorganized and destructive value system.⁴⁹

Having a low self-esteem has been attributed to inadequate parental love and care. Some teens have been left with unconstructive value systems due to some ill-treatment by their own parents. Here, I propose to parents Don Bosco's Preventive System. It is an educative and pastoral system which finds its source in the love of God who cares for all his creatures. The Preventive System offers the centrality of *reason* — rules and requests must be reasonable; the centrality of *religion* — cultivating that sense of God found in every person and the effort at Christian evangelization; the centrality of a *loving kindness* — expressed in an educative love that allows one to grow and creates reciprocity.⁵⁰ Through this method, the parent creates a positive environment filled with personal relationships; enlivened by a genuine presence to encourage the young to become protagonists in their own education. With this, the child may grow up with a true sense of self-esteem which will help him/her live a concrete life of values.

The Church acknowledges that the family serves the life and mission of the Church by becoming an evangelizing and catechizing community (cf. *FC* 51-54). The Church should therefore intensify its family value-formation programmes among its members. The 1994 African Synod "encourages the development of an African ecclesiology based on Church-as-Family."⁵¹ The Church must be a "Family of families" and equip parents with an integral formation on how to nurture their children right from the age of reason. M. De Vries maintains that the family is the first priority in helping the teens grows in faith and values. He says, "When

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁰ A. DOMENECH — *al.*, *A Manual for Salesian Youth Ministry*, 28-29.

⁵¹ A. E. OROBATO, *The Church as Family*, 137.

teenagers become adults, they will ordinarily return to the core values of their parents."⁵² There is need for the African churches to empower the parents for any sustainable youth ministry and quality value system development.

3.3.2 Self-empowerment: an Antidote against Emotional Disorders

There are many teenagers who tend to suffer from some emotional disorders which inhibit the development of their value system. Emotion, like physical and intellectual skills, has its roots in childhood.⁵³ This implies that poor upbringing can affect the psychological processes of the child, which would adversely affect his/her total maturity. These emotional disorders can be in form of fear, guilt, anxiety induced by parents, teachers or guardians in the course of one's childhood. Emotionality may linger and become more intense during adolescence. Disturbing thoughts, stress in the environment may become so intense that the teenager may entertain the idea of escaping to drugs, committing suicide or withdrawing into loneliness. These emotional disorders may lead to confusion and disillusionment and therefore the teenager might not be able to make the choice of a quality value system. Emotional manifestations include:

- a) **Fear:** In childhood, fear comes from events within the environment that overpower the child, creating insecurity. In adolescence, fear primarily involves the uncertainties of being an adolescent (teenager). Since the experiences of adolescents are often diversified, they sometimes find themselves without the necessary skills to cope with new experiences. Unless they are empowered and decisively self-confident, adolescents may

⁵² M. DE VRIES, *Family-based Youth Ministry*, 104.

⁵³ H. D. THORNBERG, *Development in Adolescence*, 53.

demonstrate uncertainty. Through empowerment, adolescents may bridge the discrepancy between real and imaginary states which helps to reduce fear. Worry comes primarily from imaginary situations. Although it may contain some real fear, these are usually exaggerated. Discussing openly both fears and worries could also minimize their intensity.

- b) **Anxiety:** Research has shown that attempts to cover up self-perceived weaknesses or dissatisfactions cause anxiety, because of fear that others may find out the truth. Irritability, uneasiness, depression, unhappiness, and sudden shifts in mood are symptomatic of underlying anxiety states. Prolonged educational or occupational pursuits, as well as excessive preoccupations with personal success or failure, sanity or sex perpetuate anxiety even to the point of emotional or mental disorder.⁵⁴ Since anxiety is more deeply ingrained in the personality than fear, it is not so easily reduced or alleviated. It may be helpful to teenagers suffering from anxiety to move towards self-empowerment. They do not really need anyone to be a role model for them.
- c) **Guilt** is an internal conflict which exists between values that an individual holds and the behaviour that he or she expresses. Teens are more prone to guilt, due to value-behaviour inconsistency. Research has shown that early parental, social and religious teachings are sources of adolescent guilt.⁵⁵ All these bother the teen and cause a whole lot of emotional disorder, which militates against a quality value system.

⁵⁴ H. D. THORNBURG, *Development in Adolescence*. 56.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

The young people can be empowered to empower themselves. They can as well be the change they wish to see in the world, as Gandhi puts it. Some empowering skills can be developed through the following:

- (i) Increasing instances of behavioural situations that result in positive feelings;
- (ii) Accumulating intellectual information that can help change perceptions;
- (iii) Expressing feelings without guilt or shame;
- (iv) Believing in oneself;
- (v) Faith in God. George Shinn says that faith tells us that we must have a purpose in life, that life can be meaningful and that all our efforts need not to be in vain.⁵⁶ With faith in God, the Christian teenager can live out his/her value system to its maximum.

Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter to youth, said, “Each individual must build this structure ‘from within’, build it with effort, perseverance and patience (which are not always easy for young people).” (*DI* 13). Without this empowerment from within, there would not be any sustainable personality that would combat emotional disorders and be a foundation for a quality value system.

3.3.3 More Holistic Formation: the Church, Youth Ministry and the Young People

In the past, a traditional deductive model of church ministry gave priority to teaching doctrine as the principal method of spiritual formation. A central concern was the teaching of the correct doctrine in order to combat heresy. Today the

⁵⁶ G. SHINN, *The Miracle of Motivation*, 206.

challenge is different. For instance, many contemporary young people are not so concerned about religious instructions and certain sacraments, like the sacrament of Reconciliation. This is not to say that they are less concerned about spiritual life, but that the models for the transmission of these gospel and human values are obsolete. Priority should be given to situations that help young people to feel they are welcomed and accepted for what [*sic*] they are.⁵⁷ There should be a method, that George Boran calls the “Transforming Inductive Model”, which gives primacy to experience. It begins with reality, with life situations, with the concrete involvement of Christians, and only then brings in theory, principles, abstract ideas, doctrine and the Word of God.⁵⁸ The opposite which is the traditional deductive model tends to lead one to ignore real facts or try to force reality to adapt to the theory.

Nevertheless, the inductive method does not exclude the use of deductive reasoning. There should be an integration of the two elements. Theory is also important. A solid intellectual formation is essential. The most appropriate approach seems to be that of giving a privileged position to experience (inductive method), without making it an absolute requirement always to start with experience. The Church has the task of using a model to promote a more integral and holistic formation, as Pope John Paul II puts it, since genuine development must be integral (cf. *SRS* 22). The youth ministry proposed by the Church must equip the young people with a holistic formation which will enable them to develop in the totality of bodily and spiritual existence. The value system of the young people can never be developed if these components are not considered. In so doing, the young person is converted from a situation of “received faith” to one of “owned

⁵⁷ G. BORAN, *The Pastoral Challenges*, 154.

⁵⁸ G. BORAN, *The Pastoral Challenges*, 156.

faith". By "received faith", Boran means a faith that the teenager gets from parents and the environment. It is the foundational faith which is in itself good and beneficial.⁵⁹ Of course, this kind of faith suffers so much today because of the disintegration of families. Many families seem not to be practicing Christians and this affects the life of the young person. It becomes negative when the young person "gets stuck" there. The Church must offer a youth ministry that stresses "owned faith", which makes young persons, take on responsibility for their own beliefs, actions and lifestyle. A more personal faith arises from questioning the "received faith". This development can help the young person to use his/her "owned faith" to harness his/her personal value system.

The Church must also present a youth ministry which is more diversified. A valid theology of youth ministry must proceed with constant input from the behavioural sciences as well as from biblical scholarship.⁶⁰ This means that the Church should constantly be behind the rapidly changing youth culture, humbly learn from it and return to the Word of God and the *Magisterium* so that her ministry may be as relevant as possible. This would give the young person a more lasting and holistic formation.⁶¹

Post-modern culture and probably youth culture emphasise the need to go beyond a purely rational approach to pastoral work with young people and "tune in" also to other dimensions of their personalities. Today, over-reliance on the rational approach does not have as strong an appeal as before. The young people need experiences that involve sentiments, creativity, and imagination.⁶² On one

⁵⁹ G. BORAN, *Youth Ministry that Works*. 21.

⁶⁰ Cf. D. BORGMAN, *When 'Kumbaya' Is not Enough*. 16.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶² Cf. G. BORAN, *The Pastoral Challenges*. 160.

hand, the Church must be anthropologically aware of the role of symbols, myths and rituals in the human search for meaning and use them to create a more holistic formation for youth. On the other hand, there should not be a swing to the other extreme, so the Church needs to find a synthesis that integrates the rational with other dimensions of the youngster's personality.

The youth ministry proposed by the Church should be reaching out. It must find its way in the schools, in the playgrounds, in the families, in order to evangelise youth who are *unchurched*. The Church needs committed youth ministers to go on one-on-one visitations and invite the teens in the families to a life of fellowship with other young people.

3.3.4 Jesus, the Ultimate Yearning for Teenagers: a Return to Meaning

It is a fact that many young people today seek a new quality life. The anti-religious attitudes of the 1960s and 1970s have given place to a new religious awakening. Today, a post-modern culture highlights the importance of the sacred and the spiritual.⁶³ Many teenagers like to acquire a lot of material goods, such as cell phones, Walkmans, MP Players, iPods and so on, but sooner or later they discover that all this stuff does not fulfil their interior lives. There is a need to go deeper. It was in this regard that the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council said, "Our era needs such wisdom more than bygone ages if the discoveries made by man are to be further humanized. For the future of the world stands in peril unless wiser people are forthcoming" (*GS* 15). It is therefore a necessity, on the part of all, to "recapture the meaning of life and fundamental values" (*FC* 8.3). The group most

⁶³ Cf. G. BORAN, *The Pastoral Challenges*, 161.

targeted by what Pope John Paul II calls “new humanism” (*FC* 8.1) is youth, especially teenagers. Seemingly devastated, the young people are deeply in search of a religious experience which gives meaning to life and brings back the joy of living.

A quality value system must be hinged on the message of God’s kingdom revealed in Jesus Christ. The principal goal of youth ministry is to evangelize young people, i.e. to put them in contact with the person and message of Jesus Christ. The tension is that some young people sometimes tend to consider the demand of following Christ as a loss rather than a gain, but Pope Benedict XVI — in his installation homily — said emphatically, “My dear young people have no fear of Christ! He takes nothing, and gives everything. Who gives himself to Him, receives a hundredfold. Yes, open, open up wide the doors to Christ, and you will find true life.”⁶⁴ True life here is fully in consonance with a qualitative value system.

Jesus is the model for any authentic value system. For this to be actualized, the youth ministers must help the young people to have a personal encounter with the person and message of Jesus. This must also take into account the psychology and the culture of the youngsters. In this, the young people would see the consonance between the life of Jesus and a value system of truth, joy, freedom, patience, honesty, compassion, justice, commitment, solidarity, prayerfulness, etc. These are the values of the Kingdom preached by Jesus. Theologians believe that Jesus came to restore us to our full humanity. He came to teach us how to be human, thus the Scriptures say, “I have come so that they might have life, and have it more abundantly.” (*AB* John 10: 10). A quality value system for Christian youth must be

⁶⁴ BENEDICT XVI, “Homily for the Inauguration of the Pontificate”.

compatible with reason, the Scriptures and the *Magisterium*. It involves a gradual process from what is known by youth to what is unknown.

To facilitate the focus on the centrality of Jesus in this present age by the young people, Fr Paulino Mondo proposes a *deeper evangelization* targeting youth, which aims at the personal conversion of individuals, manifested not just emotionally nor in devotional habits alone, but in deeper convictions leading to attitudes that govern the integral person, body, mind and soul in all circumstances of one's family background, age, life and work.⁶⁵

Teenagers are indeed yearning for a concrete spirituality, the type that helps them to discover God in the core of their beings. This is why many of the new Religious Movements are on the rise among many youth. There is a tendency to over-emphasize the psychological, recreational or social dimension of the faith, but today young people seem to need Jesus to fill their emptiness. There should be an urgent cry to return to the sacred. African teenagers may more likely return to the divine because of the natural deep sense of the sacred which is a value inherent in the culture. A deeper evangelisation among youth would make this proposal realizable and thus shoot forth the beginning of a quality value system. The young people are thus saying, as St. Peter did, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (AB John 6: 68). A genuine encounter with the person and message of Jesus would guarantee the teenager a balanced life with an impressive value system.

⁶⁵ Cf. P. T. MONDO, "Youth in the Heart of the Church", 17-28.

3.4 Reflection

We have seen the challenges African teenagers do face in the development of their value systems. These challenges have been shown to come from the confusions of values in the modern society, among youth themselves (pressure groups), in their families, at school, in the lack of role models, in secularism and in religious scandals within the Church. The teenager of today is left to choose from all these seemingly appealing values, which sometimes put him/her in greater danger and make his/her value system crumble. Is there any hope for the teenager? Can he/she live out his/her value system amidst all odds? Who are there to help the young people actualize their dreams of living meaningful and fulfilling lives?

All hope is not lost. An understanding of the youth culture is important in assisting the young people live out their value system. It is not the fault of the young people to be born in an age where materialism is taken to be the in-thing. Unlike in the past, secularism and relativism have made it very difficult for the teenagers of today to mature in time. Everything seems transient. This seems to be because they have to go through a lot of experimentations before they come to settle with a particular value system. It is the noble task of the family, the Church and youth ministers to help youth actualise their dream of a quality life. The traditional deductive method does not seem to work in the present age, so a new methodology is needed to help the young people attain their maximum potentials.

The Church and the youth ministers must use an appropriate method like the *Transforming Inductive Method* to begin right from the experience of the young people. Quality democratic values, such as honesty, freedom, integrity, are not in dissonance with the gospel values. This, therefore, means that a quality value system

is epitomized in the gospel. For any authentic value system among the young people, educative and theological approaches are needed to help the young who are in dire need of the spiritual. Sr. Elena Rastello succinctly reaffirms that “Jesus Christ is the one we proclaim as Church and the one to whom the Church wants to lead all young people in answer to their often repeated cry: ‘Give us Jesus!’.”⁶⁶ Jesus is the true educator and the ultimate value for youth. Jesus is also the one who accompanies the young people in their life journey (cf. Luke 24: 13-35). He is the only one who can give the young people a sustaining and qualitative value system.

3.5 General Conclusion

It was an interesting experience to work with the young students of Thigio. Since Thigio is in a rural area, one might expect to see some kind of rural influence on the teenagers. This was not the case. The teenagers are also being influenced by the prevalent youth culture of our time. Thigio is a poor small town with a population of about 15,000 people, of whom 60% is made up of youth between the ages of thirteen and thirty-five. They lack social amenities like roads, steady electricity and constant water supply. Due to these factors, there are less employment opportunities for the locals. As a result, only very few of the indigenous girls could afford to go to St Mary Secondary School, while their counterparts are privileged to be in Thigio Boys, because it is a cheaper institution in comparison with St Mary Secondary School. The latter is made up mainly of city girls whose parents seem not to want them to be adversely influenced by city life. The fact is that they brought the city youth culture into this rural school. This was evident in their style of dance, comportment and music. Be it as it may, the boys seem to be

⁶⁶ E. RASTELLO, “Presentation”, 5.

better academically, due to their level of discipline. From the interviews conducted and participatory observation, it seemed that the boys were more disciplined than the girls. Therefore, it seems that some poor boys from the humble rural area of Thigio are more conscientious in living out their value systems than the girls at St Mary's. This is evident also in the number of indigenous priests who were born and bred at Thigio and who studied in Thigio Boys' High School.

The Holy Cross Parish has also contributed in assisting the young students to develop their value systems. Most of the students interviewed testified to that. However, the researcher still noticed some unfounded biased comments levelled against the students by some pastors of the Church. The pastors should be more open to the needs of the teenager students, with a heart full of loving kindness. The parish must beef up its strategies in dealing with the young people, both within the parish and in the schools under its jurisdiction. More pastoral attention is indeed required.

The schools, with the aid of peer counselling activities, have attained some level of discipline and of inculcation of value systems. The case of an attempt to burn down the school building in Thigio Boys shows that instilling discipline without love can be more devastating than anything else. The boys tried to burn down the school, because the then Principal was too harsh on them. Now the students seem to be more listened to, more attended to with love and understanding and I believe they are in full gear to actualising their goals. From the data collected, it was discovered that most of the students (see Figure 2.4) got their fundamental values from their parents. As M. Wilson says, " Throughout history and in cultures around the world, the ideas, attitudes and values of the family shape each child and

help determine his development into a happy, responsible and productive adult.’⁶⁷ There is a serious need to emphasise family values. The Church and the State must protect the family for it is the natural and fundamental unit of society. In today’s world, we are losing family values due to the culture of immediate gratification, consumerism and secularism and the so-called *free love*, in which commitment and permanence are relegated to the background. This indeed is affecting the teenagers of the contemporary world.

The pluralistic nature of the world today and the secularism that abounds everywhere has thrown the teenagers into a state of big confusion. There are conflicting signals here and there and this has led to a longer period needed to achieve maturity among young people. In the past, maturity was attained at an earlier age than today. This is basically due to the lack of permanence in the modern era. In the past, there were no media as we have today. Through the media, the young person is constantly faced with many values, some of which contradict the ones taught at home or in the school or by the church. Where shall the young go?

At any rate, all hope is not lost for the young people. The researcher discovered that an understanding of the “youth culture” can go a great deal to help them develop a quality value system. We are all products of our environment. It is not the fault of youth to be born in such a rapidly changing world, where societal values seem to be neglected and individualism and relativism are the order of the day.

In Africa today there can not be any tangible social and economic progress without young men and women who live by quality value systems illumined by truth

⁶⁷ M.A. WILSON, *Love and Family*, 29.

and sincerity. The only way the cankerworm of corruption could be eradicated in the continent is through clarification and development of values.

As a remedy, the researcher proposes an educative and pastoral approach. He advocates return to the roots: the African family values are essential to eliminate the *bastardisation* of families which affects many teenagers adversely. It was also discovered that some teenagers wish to have quality values, even if their parents are not living up to their expectations. In that case, there is a need to empower them to believe more in themselves, rather than looking for role models whom they could really imitate. They can be the role models or ideal parents they wish to see. Gandhi says, "Be the change you want to see in the world." The young must be empowered to take up the task of discovering who they are and to believe in their potentialities to create a better world.

In our world today, where everything seems meaningless, the young people are searching for a meaningful life — a life that offers hope, joy and tranquillity. This does not imply the denial of difficulties in life, but proposing an acceptance that will help one to freely cope with such difficulties through the discipline of a good value system. Jesus is the ultimate value that is meaningful to the young. Jesus says, "I have come that they might have life, life to the full" (John 10: 10). The Church and the society have the duty to use a relevant methodology (like T.I.M.) to mediate Jesus for the young people. The quality value system lived by Jesus offers the young people of today hope, freedom, perseverance in suffering and joy amidst all odds.

In the light of the findings among the young students of Thigio, the researcher proposes a way forward for the schools. This project would be done in the schools, though informally, using the Preventive System centred on reason, religion

and loving kindness. I propose a project based on the acronym *FI-FM* (i.e. *Family and I Focused for Meaning*). This may be most suitable because it brings out the youth culture and its idea music. Most young people like FM radio stations, because of hip-hop music that entertains them. In this proposal, I shall journey with the students on true family values, especially in Africa, which must focus on the meaning of life; on the “I” (i.e. themselves) who would be empowered to focus on the real meaning of life. They are to understand that we are not on earth by mere chance. Therefore, there must be a purpose for our existence. The meaning of our lives must be aimed at through the educative and theological approach, starting from the practical life experiences of the young people. Jesus, who is the fullness of meaning for every teenage Christian, will be hopefully discovered by the teenagers. This will be a gradual process which — the researcher is optimistic — will yield a great fruit.

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APPENDIX 2

GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWS

WITH THE PASTOR

What could be the percentage of the youth in the parish?
 How many outstations does the parish have?
 How often do youth participate in the Church's spiritual activities?
 Are youth given some leadership position in the Parish Council? If not, why?
 What are some programmes, facilities, etc. put up by the parish which have impacted on the lives of the locals significantly?

WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Under which Province is Thigio?
 Under which District is Thigio?
 Are there other towns in the District? Name them if there are.
 What could be an estimate of the population in Thigio?
 What could be the youth population?
 How is the land and how are job opportunities like?
 What are the major ways by which people earn their living here?
 Is it an enterprising town? How? What are the most feasible means of survival?
 How agricultural is this place?
 Do they have professionals, like plumbers, architects, and mechanics?
 What is the most common means of transport?
 How accessible is the village to the city?
 Are goods sold here more expensive because of the transport system?
 How does electric power facilitate development and business in the area?
 How is the relationship between the rich and the poor?
 What is the most common food in the area?
 How do families relate amongst themselves?
 What are most basic beliefs among the people?
 What are some of the cultural festivals in the town and how do the young people participate in them?

WITH NURSES AND SISTERS

How is the availability of health centres in the area?
 What is the average number of the health centres?
 What influence have they made on the locals, especially during this time of HIV/AIDS?

Do people tend to welcome new medical researches in terms of treatment?

WITH INDIGENOUS TEACHERS

How many high schools and primary schools do we have in Thigio?

Is there any vocational institution in the place? How does it impact on the young people?

How do the locals (esp. the young people of Thigio) benefit directly from these institutions?

WITH STUDENTS

What do you know about values?

Which is your most important value?

Why did you choose it?

How did you acquire that value?

How has the school helped you in developing this value?

How would like to live out this value more concretely?

WITH TEACHERS IN THE SCHOOL

How has the school helped the students to develop in values?

How is the level of discipline in the school?

How can you balance education for academic excellence with education for life?
(Value development)

How often do you advise parents to help the students develop sound value systems?

APPENDIX 3

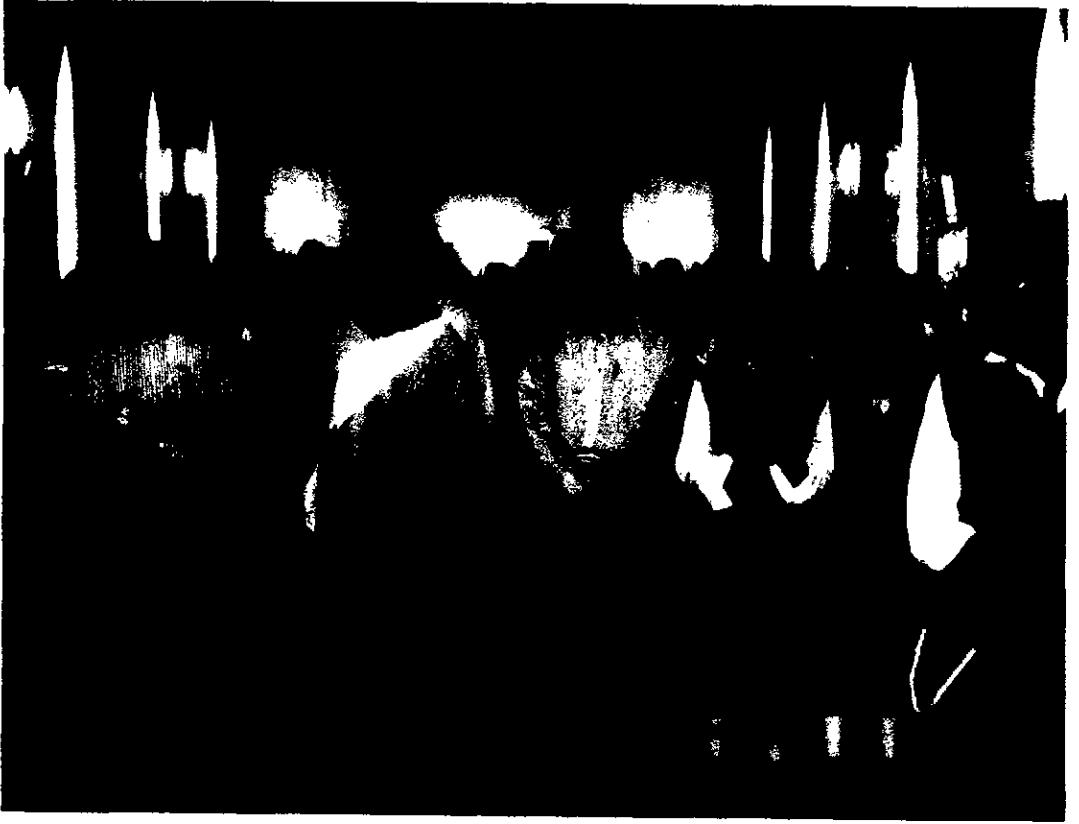
PICTURES



St Mary's Students during a class discussion on value systems



Group discussions on value systems among the students as they listen attentively to each other



Thigio Boys celebrating Jesus, during a Sunday Eucharistic Mass. Sundays are joyful days for the young students.