

TANGAZA COLLEGE

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**A Comparative Study of African Celibacy and Christian Celibacy with
Reference to the Karanga People of Zimbabwe**

BY

Bro. Tanasio Thomas Makamure O.F.M.

Moderator

Rev. Fr. Maurice Kigame Lugutu

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DECLARATION

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

Signed T. Makamure

Name of Student: Bro. Tanasio Makamure

Date 04/12/04

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

Signed Maurice Kigame Lugutu

Name of Moderator: Rev. Maurice Kigame Lugutu

Date 04/12/04

DEDICATION

I dedicate this long essay to the Makamure family and the Franciscan Friars family in Zimbabwe, who have tirelessly worked hard to instill the gift of celibacy in me by their good example.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am grateful to all brothers and sisters who contributed to the completion of this work. My special thanks go to Fr. Maurice Kigame Lugutu who accompanied me as my moderator. He was good, patient and a father to me. I thank my O.F.M. community for shaping me to become what I am today.

May the grace of our lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This paper is about a comparative study of African celibacy and Christian celibacy with reference to the Karanga people in Zimbabwe. The motivation for writing is to gather values from African and Christian celibacy that can help to stabilize the tarnished Christian celibacy with scandals. It seems as if traditional celibates were more responsible than some Christian celibates. So, there is a need to address the problem. The aim of the work is to show how the African traditional celibates lived and how the Christian celibates are living and struggling. I will then give my personal recommendation on how to improve our celibate life today in Zimbabwe.

The organization of the paper is in five chapters. The first chapter deals with the history of celibacy among the Karanga people. This chapter is basically based on interviews with people. The second chapter looks at celibacy in the scripture. Does the scripture support celibacy? The third chapter explains what the mother Church says about celibacy. In the fourth chapter, I am going to tackle some problems the Zimbabwean Church is facing. The last chapter points out similarities and differences between African celibacy and Christian celibacy. It is in this chapter that possible solutions are recommended on how to live a celibate life faithfully. This will be closed with a general conclusion.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0. HISTORY OF CELIBACY AMONG THE KARANGA PEOPLE

Introduction

The Karanga people in the Southern part of Zimbabwe had a belief that a person should be intact up to the time of marriage for them to enjoy sex. Intact in Karanga context means to be a virgin (having no knowledge of sexual intercourse). Sex for the Karanga people has been sacred and has to be done according to the norms of the tradition. The reason for having sex was for the transmission of life. The society had well organized groups of people who were responsible to train boys and girls to reach the time of marriage still being intact. So, the Karangas were basing their marriage on two things that is virginity and procreation.

The virginity of a woman and man was very important for marriage and the respect of the family. It was very clear for the Karanga people that sex was not for enjoyment only but was mainly for begetting children. That was the reason why sexual intercourse was held sacred. So, it was not strange and suspicious to have men and women who were not married for religious purposes.¹ Faithfulness, virginity and purity of a Karanga man and woman were so important that it was being taught from

¹ELIZABETH, MU VI-YE. Interviewed in Ruhode village, on the 12 June 2004. She is an elder and herbalist, she is aged 84 years.

childhood to the age of marriage. Purity has been understood in two ways that is intact or a religious meaning of holiness. It was at the age of marriage that few chosen ones were called to celibacy. Karanga people understood celibacy as a call to virginity for a religious purpose. The call to celibacy was from the world of the Ancestors. Women who were not married for religious purposes were called "Mbonga" in Shona.² The unmarried men had a general name called 'Svimborume' (celibates). The distinction was visible when analyzing what kind of celibate one was. It was either he was a religious celibate called a 'Nyusa' (rainmaker), religious and political celibate (Mhondoro), a man not married at all (a bachelor) or one whose husband died (Chirikadzi). On the other hand, there were some men and women who were not married because of physical, psychological and spiritual problems (being possessed by evil spirits). This group was never accepted in the Karanga society because it had no call to celibacy. Their state was being caused by nature and the world of the spirit. Therefore everything possible was done to make sure that the problems were overcome. There was another group of divorcees and those whose loved ones died. The good thing to do was to get another wife or husband rather than to remain single. The women who had reached menopause and whose husbands died were allowed to remain single and look after their children. So, to be a celibate without any valid reason was not accepted by the Karanga people.³

² Ibid.

³ Ibid

1.1. Celibates among the Karanga people

The Karanga people had a society that was structured in a way that could embrace everybody. Each person had a place and role to play according to their age and function in the society. Those who could not find a place were marginalized. To be a celibate without a function to play could also lead a person to be an outcast. They were rejected because they were taken as rebels and abnormal. The celibates who were accepted and respected were religious and political celibates (MaNyusa and Mhondoro). The religious celibates were called from a group of boys and girls of marriageable age. They were called after undergoing all rituals necessary for one to get a wife or husband. The call could be discovered by the delay to marry or the family medium could inform the family the fate of the man or woman chosen to a special call. So, the discernment of the call was being done by the elders and the Spirit mediums (Masvikiro).⁴ Most of the people called to celibacy were rainmakers (Manyusa). They had to prove their ability and authenticity by being able to call the rain to fall. One who could fail to make rain was a sign of not being called to celibacy. Their powers were vested in their relationship with the world of the Spirit. So, these celibates had to spare time to be on their own for contemplation. They were to visit a sacred shrine called 'Matonjeni' to listen to the voice of God who was speaking from a cave. This was a place where they could meet the national mediums. Nobody could go to Matonjeni if not a true traditional celibate and come back normal.⁵ It was another place that was authenticating one's call to traditional

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

celibacy. People who were called to celibacy were from simple families. The choice was from above. The most vital qualification for a celibate was virginity and purity. Any man and woman who could preside on a religious ceremony were expected to be pure regardless of whether he or she was married. So, for married people to preside over a sacrifice, one had to refrain from sex for some days. This is the reason why celibates were important among the Karanga people. An example of the importance of purity could be seen during the time of drought. The beer to appease the ancestors was being prepared by virgins and women who had passed menopause and who had stopped sexual intercourse with their husbands. According to the Karanga tradition, it was not allowed for a person who was still active in sex to do anything in the preparation for the beer. The fact is that virginity and purity was important in religious rituals. In places where celibates were, they could take over because it was for that purpose they were virgins and celibates.⁶

Traditional celibates were living a simple life. They were living as individuals but the community had a duty to look after them. They did not have a permanent place as they were wanderers. The community was giving them accommodation for the night and food for their survival. The male celibates could be accommodated in boy's huts and females with the girls. This was the time boys and girls were learning more about the culture and the time they also come in contact with these people. Celibates could mix and relate well with people of any age group.

⁶ EMILIO, ZIVANAI, U-KETERA. Interviewed in Harare Glen Norah Parish, on 05 June 2004. He is a civil servant and his date of birth is 01/01/51

In the traditional Karanga culture, celibacy and maturity went hand in hand. A celibate was expected to be a mature man or woman. Their maturity was being measured by the way they performed their work and how they conducted themselves before people. Their commitment, responsibility, honest, faithfulness, social standards, trustworthy, devotedness, obedience to traditional customs, and uprightness were signs of maturity and also a sign that one was called to the life of celibacy. They were happy and sociable people. In Karanga culture, a man or woman with responsibilities who was drinking too much was not considered a good person. A celibate was to be a person with dignity, a person of integrity who makes and keeps commitments to himself or herself and to others. The habits were to be congruent with values, words to be harmonious with deeds. A celibate who did not fall into these qualities was not accepted for public office like being a rainmaker or a political leader. Traditional celibates were not many but were of both sexes. In the area where I come from there were two celibates known as 'VaMukorivo' and 'VaKuzwa'. In Bikita district, there was a male celibate who was not taking beer at all. Celibates who could control themselves well could take beer without any problem.⁷

Celibates had groups. The group that was legal was the one I was describing above. This group was specifically for rain making. But outside the Karanga society, an old woman who refused to be named told me that there were celibates known by the whole country. Their names were "Chaminuka" and "Nehanda". These two can be read in Zimbabwean history. They were political celibates (Mhondoro) and were

⁷ Ibid

very powerful and influential in the country. It is believed that their spirits led the freedom fighters to fight and win the liberation war. These celibates were informers of the traditional chiefs of the political situation in the country. They could foretell what was going to happen in the future. What they predicted, they could prescribe means of protecting themselves. Nehanda foretold about the coming of the white people to Zimbabwe a long time before they arrived in the country. When the whites conquered the country, Nehanda led the nation to resist the occupation. The oppressors killed her. The other celibate Chaminuka predicted that his spirit was going to come back and fight the oppressors. This is what triggered the liberation war in Zimbabwe. These two political celibates had nothing to do with rainmaking but they could predict a drought or any disaster on the way (that is plagues, war, locusts etc). Their revelation was by dreams or possession. Their function was to admonish and advice people about the mistakes they make and how to amend them. They were the mouth piece of the Ancestors. They were the big political spirit mediums.⁸

The other group of celibates was a group of men and women who could not marry due to physical problems like impotence or psychological or being possessed by evil spirits. Some of these people had problems like poor erection of the penis, sterility, small virginal and fear of men or women. Homosexuality was not visible as it is today but it seems it was there because in Shona we have a name for it "Ngochani". It was not visible because the families would cover up by giving a wife who could be used by the young brother on behalf of the brother. So, people from outside could not

⁸ The person refused his identity to be known but she is a traditional healer. The woman is a well respected person in her area and she has a lot of knowledge concerning the Karanga celibates.

know that there is a problem of that nature with such a person. Others were mentally retarded and some had evil spirits haunting them. A woman who could not be married because of being haunted by evil spirits was believed to have what we call in Shona 'Chitsinha'. Their families had to find ways of exorcising them so that they could get married. It was not normal for a man or woman to be single. What it means is that if treatment had failed a woman or man was provided with a husband or wife to remove shame on the person and the family. On the side of men, the woman was being taken by the young brother to beget children for him. Women were just given to married men and take shelter there. The whole thing was to make sure that each and everybody had a wife and husband.

The group of widows, widowers and divorcees was another special group of people no longer married. The group had a special name to distinguish themselves from proper celibates. Women of this kind were called "Chirikadzi" (widows) but men use the same name with celibates (svimborume). Men and women of this group were allowed and encouraged to have another partner. So, this kind of celibacy was a transitory one for other people. Those who could not marry again because of reaching menopause or old age for men could remain in that state for life. Their work was to be like sages in their families and communities. They were not expected to live a scandalous life, prostituting. Their work was to be teachers of the tradition to the young.⁹

⁹ MAZVIPESA, MUTURU. Interviewed in Daitai village, on 12.06.04. She is a wife of the headman. Her age ranges from 80-90 years old

1.2. The function of celibates in the Karanga society

The work of the Traditional celibates was mainly religious. They were intermediaries between God and the people. The people went to them when the rains failed for consultation. Sometimes before the people could consult them (celibates) they could go to the chief or headman to warn him. So, the community had faith in them for these men and women had the ability to do the unexpected (bringing rain for them). They were being taken as specialists among others like the diviners and the traditional doctors. In their work, they could use objects to call the rain. Some were using knobkerries (sign of power and authority) to invoke the rain. On the other hand, rainmakers were very familiar with the weather patterns. These men and women were symbols of God among the people. They were the depositories of customs.

The rain makers were not regional: they could go far away from their own places to help other people. Celibates were a bridge in communities for they could bring people together for rituals. They were creating solidarity and communion among the people. The rituals conducted for rain were also places for education especially to the young people. The young could learn how to socialize as well as their spiritual side. Rainmaking was a communal rite, there was no individualism. The celibates were not just intermediaries but were shepherds and prophets of the people. So, they had an obligation to live a holy life so that others could learn from them. Most of them were good celibates who were renowned and respected. Their work gave them

powers in the society for the society was depending on them in time of happiness and crises. These celibates were the prophets of their time. Their prophetic way of life was seen by their faithfulness to their vocation. They were not involved in any dirty games like prostitution, corruption, stealing and killing. These were against their call and if one was suspected or caught, the punishment was severe. The society was very proud of them because of their commitment to their vocation. It was believed that they had a strong call from God which was sustaining them to live a holy life.¹⁰

The people of the community used to visit them to consult them on other things of life for there were men and women of wisdom. They were acting like elders of the villages. Due to their movements, they had a lot of experience with people of other places. So, these celibates were like transmitters of information and knowledge. They were also helping the people to keep the traditional customs. In today's language I can say that they were the salt of the society. Their way of life was very simple for they did not have a particular permanent place to stay. It was the duty of the society to support them with food, clothes and all necessary things for their survival.

1.3. Sanctions for breaking the vocation

In the Karanga society, people who could not abide to the traditional laws were punished severely. There was a culture that if one steals, his hands were cut off and adultery eyes were removed. This was the same with celibates who could break their

¹⁰ FRANCIS, SHUMBA. Interviewed in Masvingo town, on 07/08/04. The person is a pastor in the Old Apostle Church. He was born on 21 March 1922.

vows. So, because of severe punishment and excommunication from the society people were forced to keep their vocations. When I enquired about any case of misbehaving, I was told that it was very rare because of stiff punishment. Probably the fact that the punishment was heavy, celibates were afraid of the consequences, so they remained faithful to their vocation.¹¹

Conclusion

The Karanga people had few men and women who were celibates for sacred ministries. These men and women were living as individuals. Their vocation was from the world of the spirits and they could perform their duties without failing due to their union with the world of the Spirits, faithfulness, devotion and commitment. As men and women of good reputation, the traditional celibates were being treated with great honor and respect. Their prophetic way of life gave them power over the society. People could feel or experience their presence by the way they could work among them. According to the survey I did, these celibates were not corrupt, hypocrites but were men and women for the people. They were very close to the people they served. Their formation from childhood gave them a strong foundation for their ministry. These men and women were faithful, honest, hard working, trustworthy and holy.

¹¹ Ibid.

The traditional celibates because of the nature of their call and work were the depositories of knowledge and custodians of the traditional customs. They were the symbol of God among the people. Their way of life and function made the traditional rituals sacred and religious. The unfortunate part of the traditional celibates is that they disappeared by the coming of Christianity in Zimbabwe. Concrete reasons for their death are not known but it is believed that colonization and Christianity contributed to the death of celibacy among the Karanga people. The Karanga tradition and customs were being condemned as satanic by the early missionaries; so many people who wanted to be civilized abandoned their tradition. So the culture just died a natural death. Today the traditional celibates do not exist; they were substituted by the Roman Catholic Church celibates. Who are these celibates? The following chapter is going to examine celibates in the scripture and then in the Church.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0. CELIBACY IN THE SCRIPTURE

Introduction

Celibacy has been part of the Church for a long time. Its purpose has been to bring about God's kingdom in the midst of people. The texts of the Church that speak about celibacy and celibates used terms like "agnicia" (chastity) and "agnos" (chaste).¹² These terms refer to men and women who rejected sexual relationships as a sign of total surrender to Christ (virgins). "Celibacy is a witness to the faithfulness of God."¹³ It is an ascetical detachment for a person to totally devote to prayer and God. St Thomas Aquinas used these terms specifically referring to religious life. The Vatican II used the term "continentia perfecta" also to refer to the religious. The Vatican II has another word for chastity for the kingdom of heaven (castitas propter regnum caelorum). Chastity is a general term, "it is the virtue which regulates the sexual instinct, subordinating it to a life of faith and consequently excluding any sin."¹⁴ This kind of chastity is for both religious and married people. Vatican II is trying to differentiate religious/priestly celibacy from chastity which is embraced by both states of life (religious and marriage). Religious chastity is a state of life not a virtue and has to be seen by living a celibate life. It is a call to celibacy for the

¹² J. M. LOZANO *Discipleship. Towards an Understanding of Religious Life*, Claret Center for Resources in Spirituality, Chicago, 1980, 144.

¹³ D. O'MURCHU *Religious life. A Prophetic Vision*, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, 1991, 129

¹⁴ J. M. LOZANO, *Discipleship*, 145.

kingdom and the person has to renounce marriage. This call to celibacy entails commitment and living a life of total continence. What do scriptures have to say about celibacy in the Old Testament and the New Testament?

2.1. Celibacy in the Old Testament

The Old Testament shows clearly that celibacy was foreign to Israel. "Celibacy is alien to Israel's mentality and spirituality; it has, therefore no basis in the Old Testament where marriage is seen as a natural obligation marked by the command to increase and multiply"¹⁵ People who were childless were considered a misfortune and especially for a woman, it was a disgrace. Virginity for girls before marriage was encouraged and praised. In Deuteronomy 22:14-29, if a girl was married and found not to be a virgin was stoned to death. "If a man meets a young virgin who is not betrothed and seizes her, sleeps with her and is caught in the act...", the man was obliged to take her as his wife (Deuteronomy 22:28-29). The Old Testament was clear that marriage was an honored thing and a blessing from God. "Sons are a birth right from Yahweh; children are a reward from him" (Ps 127). The people who were faithful were going to see their children's children (Ps 128). What we have in the Hebrew Scriptures is that celibacy never existed in the world of the Israelites. The celibate we have in Jeremiah 16:1-4 was not an ideal but an answer to an invitation from God. It was a sign of the death of the present and his life anticipated the life to come, which is new life in the spirit. This can be interpreted as the end of the old covenant and the coming of the new. "I look, the days are coming, Yahweh declares,

¹⁵ D. O'MURCHU, *Religious Life*, 129.

when I shall make a new covenant with the house of Israel," (Jer 31:31-35). The celibacy of Jeremiah can be the foundation to talk about celibacy or its message to us today and in the Church.

The Israelite teachers were teaching that each and every person was obliged to marry. The reason is that God had commanded it to be that way. "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1: 28). So, any body that was going against this teaching was blamed. "He who does not contribute to propagation is like a man who sheds blood."¹⁶ The teachers of the law were expected to give a good example by not remaining celibate. But we have individuals who opted to separate with their wives to devote their lives to study the Torah. One of them was Shimon ben Ahaz. Others criticized his actions. It is said that Miriam and Aaron complained that Moses had stopped intercourse with his wife (Numbers 12:18). The reason being that Moses wanted to finish the mission he was given by God. So, what we have in the Old Testament are exceptions where individuals were given permission by God not to procreate for a higher value (intimacy with God) but the culture was not accepting it.

¹⁶ J. M. LOZANO. *Discipleship* 146

2.2. CELIBACY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

2.2.1. *Celibacy for the Kingdom of God*

The New Testament does not impose celibacy for priesthood neither for religious life, but it does propose it as a call or vocation for spiritual growth. Jesus Christ himself had no family. He devoted his life to the preaching of the kingdom of God (Mtt8:18-19). In Matthew 19:10-12, Jesus explicitly stated that there are some people who are made eunuchs for the kingdom of God. Jesus made it clear that it is only those who are able to live celibate life that can do it. "Let anyone accept this who can" (Mtt19:12). What Matthew was saying is that, celibate life is not for everybody but only for a few who are called by God for a special mission. "In its original context, therefore, this saying would be a reaffirmation of the legitimacy of the celibacy which Jesus had chosen for himself, and an explanation of its religious motive."¹⁷ People who are called to be celibates are given grace from God in order to live the life faithfully and productively.

In the letters of Paul, especially in 1 Corinthians⁷, there was a debate between celibacy and marriage. Paul had to intervene and explained the importance of the two states of life. It was not a doctrinal problem but a reality in Paul's community. There were some people in his community who were abstaining from physical sexual intercourse practicing continence because of God. Paul had to defend the goodness of marriage as well as celibacy. "To the unmarried and widows I say: it is good for them

¹⁷ J. M. LOZANO *Discipleship*, 152.

to stay as they are, like me” (1Cor7:8). But Paul was very aware of the dangers of celibacy. Instead of giving celibacy as a law to the people, he gave them an option. Those who are able can live like him but others have to get married. Here, we can deduce the delicacy of celibacy from Paul. It is not a life of everybody but it is a gift from God. So, according to Paul celibacy is a voluntary vocation, obedience to God and it is a call one has to respond to. Paul encouraged those opting for celibacy that they have to live celibate life faithfully and in love. The life is a life to holiness of body and spirit.

Conclusion

The Old Testament is not clear concerning celibacy; it clearly shows virginity as an important aspect in the preparation for marriage. There were few and special cases where God could call some individuals for celibate life but the society itself were not for it. Celibacy becomes clear in the New Testament where Jesus and Paul encouraged it. In the New Testament celibacy is encouraged but not imposed on a person. The one who opts for it has to do it freely. Celibacy in the New Testament is for the kingdom of God and it is a gift and grace given by God himself. A person gives himself totally to God. The vocation is a call to a prophetic life and the one called had to be faithful to the vocation. Celibacy is a call to holiness and service. What we have now is that celibacy can be traced in the scriptures especially in the New Testament. What is the stand and teaching of the Church concerning celibacy?

The following chapter is going to look at the law of celibacy, its Christological significance and celibacy and human value as taught by the Church.

CHAPTER THREE

30. THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

Introduction

The Catholic Church has protected and kept celibacy for centuries in order to promote the sanctity/purity in the ministry of priesthood and religious life. Celibacy as we have it today has a doctrinal, historical, sociological, psychological and pastoral perspective.¹⁸ In this paper I am going to deal with the pastoral perspective approach. The Catholic Church understands celibacy that it is "not" the nature of priesthood but it is a response to a call from God. It is "the embrace of a divinely-offered gift inviting one to freely choose a life-commitment of abstention from genital intimacy which expresses itself in an alternate intimacy with God and others. The celibate is a person who freely embraces the divine offer to refrain from genital intercourse, who finds offer to warm and intimate with others and who has a place in his or her heart only for God"¹⁹ So celibacy is a gift from God. The Church fathers upheld celibacy or virginity as a noble thing to do. "If anyone can live in chastity for the honor of the lord's flesh, let him do so without ever boasting."²⁰ This was said by St. Ignatius Martyr. Other Church fathers who supported virginity were Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Cyprian. Women who were virgins were given

¹⁸ Cf. PAUL, VI. Pope, "Sacerdotialis caelibatus" in *Vatican Council II - More Post Conciliar Documents*, St Paul Publications, Bombay, 1982, 286.

¹⁹ M. H. CROSBY, *Means of Control or Mandate of the Heart - Celibacy*, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, 1996, 141.

²⁰ J. M. LOZANO *Discipleship*, 158

positions in the early Church. Celibacy's motive is to direct a person towards God, to dedicate oneself to him and relate with him in a special way.

3.1. The law of celibacy in the Church

Celibacy developed slowly in the history of the Church. It started in the third to fourth century in Egypt by St Antony who attracted a large number of disciples in mortification, prayer and seclusion. Pachomius not happy with some aspect of the life, developed a communal life. This model was taken by John Cassian (360-475) to the West. When monasticism grew, one aspect of it was celibacy and it was regarded as superior to marriage. The multiplicity of monasteries brought some problems within the Church that led the Church to control them, thereby institutionalizing clerical celibacy in the Church.

According to the second Vatican II More Post Conciliar Documents paragraph 14, celibacy has to continue as it is an ecclesiastical ministry.²¹ "Christ, the permanent and always new origin of salvation, is the mystical fount from which is derived the mystery of the Church, his body and his bride called by his spouse to be a sign and instrument of redemption."²² A man and woman are called to celibacy in the Church as a sign of consecrating oneself to Christ. It is the highest form of love of Christ. It calls a person to witness the truth of God. The being of a celibate is to speak a message. He has to be a sign and reality of Christ. So, the Church has the right to test the suitability of a candidate to priesthood or to religious life. Proper and adequate formation has to be given to young

²¹ Cf. PAUL VI, Pope "Sacerdotalis Caelibatus", 28^o

²² THE CONGREGATION OF THE CLERGY, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi, 1997, 12.

men and women who want to embrace celibacy.²³ “This means that the student should be helped by a formation which is both positive and grounded in theology to face risks and overcome mistakes and ambiguities surrounding the final choice he will make...”²⁴

This vocation which is lived in the Church is a divine call to follow Christ more closely. “The response to this call is always a grace.”²⁵ The following of Christ is achieved through faith, hope and love. A celibate unites himself or herself with Christ, participate in the mysteries of Christ. A priest or religious leaves everything behind and walks in the footprints of Jesus Christ. Celibacy in the Church calls men and women to holiness, dedication, faithfulness, witness and sacrifice.

3.2. The Christological significance of celibacy

People who choose to be celibates for the sake of the kingdom of God model their lives on Christ. They imitate Christ that the love of Christ is transmitted to other people through them. A priest or religious becomes the mediator between people and Christ as Christ was the mediator between heaven and earth.²⁶ In the New Testament there is no evidence that Christ ever married. He remained single to dedicate his life to the father and to people. So, men and women who choose to be celibates do so for total dedication to God with one mind and heart focused on God. It is following Christ by participating in

²³ Cf. PAUL, VI. Pope, “Sacerdotalis Caelibatus”, 289

²⁴ THE SACRED CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *A Guide to Formation to Priestly Celibacy*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi, 2002, 88.

²⁵ SYNOD OF BISHOPS IX ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *The Consecrated Life and its Role in the Church and in the World*, Paulines Publications, Nairobi, 1994, 21.

²⁶ PAUL, VI. Pope *On Priestly Celibacy*, Saint Paul Editions, Kampala, 1967, 17

his life or living his life again by making him effectively known to other people. This is a special call to the service of neighbour. The call has to bear fruits of personal holiness and salvation of others. When celibates have these qualities, Christ will bless them. It is Christ himself who promised his brothers who leave everything for him abundance recompense.

What is at the core of celibacy is a unique relationship that exists between the person and God. Celibates stripe themselves of everything and devote their lives to Christ. They fight to please God throughout their life. In Christ they reach God, in Christ they serve the neighbour, in Christ they die to self in order to serve God and people effectively. What makes one a priest religious is his or her devotion and dedication to God the Trinity and mission. The person gives all the energy in the Church, grows in and for the devotion to Christ.²⁷ Celibacy has been described by the Magisterium "as a badge of charity, an encouragement to charity; it signifies a love without reservations, it stimulates to a charity which is open to all."²⁸ A celibate loves God and others with an undivided heart. A person lives a life of love and the love is experienced by other people. A celibate lives not for himself but for others.

Scripture says God is love (Jn4.8). A religious or priest who has love, has faith in Jesus Christ our channel of love of the father. This love is a gift from God. The love of God moves a celibate into prayer which is the back bone of life in God. Prayerful religious and priests "intensify love of God and neighbour, and inspire more intelligent and firm

²⁷ J. M. LOZANO *Discipleship*, 164.

²⁸ PAUL, VI Pope, "Sacerdotalis Caelibatus", 292.

celibate commitment."²⁹ The more a celibate prays, the more he unites himself with God and neighbour.

3.3. Celibacy and human values

In the Catholic Church we have men and women who choose celibacy because of love of Christ. They choose to live their whole life for Christ and service of the people of God. This entails renunciation of their cultural values like procreation and fecundity. The aim is to be Christ like. These celibates are called to safeguard the Christian values and Gospel life to invite Christians into the life of the Trinity. It is sad news that people are looking for models but unfortunately they come across celibates who claim to have the true values but not living them as expected. People lose confidence in them and can not see the value of celibacy in their communities. They resent to them because they do not see Christ in them.

A Christian value is visible only if a person dedicates himself to the God of Jesus Christ and become responsible for his choice. "Noting that celibacy offers value for individuals only when it is freely chosen and freely lived."³⁰ A celibate for the kingdom is controlled by the grace of God the creator and redeemer. He becomes the light and salt of the world. The celibate acts like a catalyst in the transformation of people. This entails that a celibate values his vocation by being responsible, faithful and upright in his morality. He

²⁹ C. KIESLING, *Celibacy, Prayer and Friendship. A Making-Sense-Out-Of-Life Approach*, St Pauls, Bombay, 1978, 159.

³⁰ M. H. CROSBY *Means of Control or Mandate of the Heart*, ??

is called to take the role of the Apostles by being faithful to Christ in order to bear good fruits.

Conclusion

Celibacy for the kingdom of God is geared towards purity, fidelity, total surrender, self-giving and strong intimacy with Jesus Christ. Celibacy is a means by which a priest/religious are freed from all worries and demands of a family so that their lives can be devoted to work and pray effectively. Celibacy has its source and strength from a God of love. It is a call to witness to the world by a high standard quality of love to self, others, creation and to God. So, celibates are chaste for the universal love (salvation of all). Their call is to serve the Church and the world as disciples and prophets. They exist in order to call all Christian to authenticity, faithfulness and intimacy with God the Trinity.

The Church checks for the suitability of the candidate for it is the one which is responsible for discernment. It wants the celibate to model his or her life on Christ and act as the mediator between God and people. Therefore celibates are the pillars of our Christian values. They are called to safeguard the Christian values and Gospel life. Celibates are the prophets of this age. The life is only possible with the grace of God. It is a service to the Church. "Celibacy accordingly is (or at least should be) a distinct form of ecclesial Christian service."³¹ So, this vocation is from God and is a gift. Today in Zimbabwe, celibacy is facing problems and challenges because of secularization. The

³¹ J. A. RYAN, "The Celibate Life" *Doctrine and Life*, (1975), Vol. 25, 472.

chapter to come is going to discuss the challenges the Church is facing in regard with living a celibate life.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0. CHALLENGES OF CELIBACY IN THE ZIMBABWEAN CHURCH TODAY:

Introduction

The present phenomena of sexual scandals, searching for pleasure and wealth and lack of zeal to pastoral work are contributing to the leaving of religious life and priesthood with young celibates. This is the biggest challenge the Church in Zimbabwe is facing and there is an agent need to find a good permanent solution to the problem. The solution will be for the protection of the good name of the Church and also to cultivate and cherish the Christian faith of our flock. The celibates have to learn and develop a good way of expressing their sexual desires. The exploitation (sexually) of young women and boys has increased. So, discipline on celibacy has to be enforced in order to safe guard the credibility of celibacy in the Church. This chapter is going to tackle the problems the Zimbabwean Church is facing at the present moment. The problems which are coming out are signs to the conflict between celibacy and religious/priestly life. So, the chapter would try to expose the cause of the problems then later (in the next chapter) solutions will be suggested.

4.1. The deterioration of commitment to religious vows and pastoral work

It is true that celibacy is difficult to live, but it does not mean that it is impossible to live. Celibate life needs men and women who can sacrifice life for God. The reality on the ground today says something else. The Church has many men and women who are celibate but some of them are not authentic celibates. They have a problem with their sexuality. I think that some celibates do not understand what sexuality is all about. They fail to understand that sexuality is a gift from God and religious/priests have to be proud of it. They are called to serve God and other people as sexed beings. But the problem today is that some celibates take sexuality as a human right, so they have to do it, regardless of their vows. The commitments celibates make are forgotten. F.B. Connolly said that, "to be committed...is to let God take us by the hand and lead us into life."³² Celibacy is neglected in practice by those who profess it.³³

In the diocese where I come from, some priests/religious leave celibate life after impregnating a woman, having a kid or kids in many different places, or having scandals with people of the same sex. Priests/religious of this nature, who fail to put Christ at the centre of their lives, cripple their service they are supposed to give to the people of God. This in turn, cripples their morality and spirituality. They become dry and drift along the system but not being themselves. Once celibates are far away from God, they fall and lose grip of their vocation. The African celibates have a

³² F. B. CONNOLLY, *Religious life: A Profile of the Future*, Montfort Missionaries, Balaka, 27.

³³ A. W. R. SIFF, *Celibacy: A way of loving, living and Serving*, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1996, 58.

cultural problem. A person is considered a man or woman only when one has children. This poor and wrong mentality has badly affected the African Church as some of the celibates are living a double life. They try to leave a child somewhere before they die.

“Celibacy is a call to the life of hope.”³⁴ Hope and holiness go hand in hand. The hope is towards the sinful world, which has to be redeemed and saved by love. Celibates have to restore this hope and joy. But this hope and joy is being destroyed by scandalous religious and priests. These sexual scandals caused by religious/priests are destroying and wounding the good reputation of the Church. They also affect the Christian faith of the Christians. It is not only the faithful who are scandalized, but even some good religious and priests are affected by these celibates who fail to live up to the standard. Another problem is of celibates who get gratification from masturbation and homosexuality. These weaknesses are a sign of immaturity and lack of commitment to religious life and priesthood. The unfaithfulness which is going on with vowed men and women is contributed by pornography on our televisions, media and internet. Pornography is entertaining and giving gratification to many celibates though it has some effects that can activate some celibates after watching to do sexual intercourse. They spent hours and hours watching pornographic films and it develops into an addiction to some. Time for prayers and working is hardly available. Once it becomes a habit, where will it lead a person to? A celibate can develop a strange behavior that is contrary to his or her vocation.

³⁴ F. NWAIGBO “Priestly Celibacy” *African Ecclesial Review*, (2003), Vol 45, 2, 117.

Frustrated celibates look for ways to please or to find happiness in their frustration. They end up abusing children using them as objects of genital pleasure. They forget that they are teachers of the society; they are the prophets of the time. What they preach is not what they do. They teach that sexual intercourse is for procreation and is unitive only in marriage and is a commitment for life but they are doing the opposite. They are false teachers and prophets in the society. "In addition to the trend towards sexual permissiveness in society today, however, the value of celibacy itself has come under direct attack."³⁵ The good job done by the faithful and committed celibates is no longer seen because of being overshadowed by few scandals happening in the Church.

Some celibates have a problem of loneliness due to the nature of their life style (living as individuals). The loneliness is accompanied by the absence of a community, spouse and children. "The great fear I hear from young people is that a committed celibate life would be a lonely life, while marriage is a life filled with intimacy."³⁶ One becomes frustrated, bored and find pastoral work a burden. Instead of getting much consolation from pastoral work, some engage themselves in strange behaviors like too much drinking, using drugs and prostituting. When a celibate gets into a bad habit, pastoral work suffers. The more one loses the zeal for pastoral work, the more one distances himself or herself from the people. Others develop a bad tendency of off loading their burden to others (Christians). They use them as servants or tools or even use them for their self satisfaction.

³⁵ THE IPERU FORMATION COMMUNITY, *Handbook on Formation*, Ambassador Publications, Ibadan, 1992,304.

³⁶ K. CLARK, "Celibate Chastity" *Review for Religious*, (2000), Vol.59.2, 135

Celibates who are dry spiritually and are getting tired with their vocations usually become unfaithful. Their unfaithfulness degrades the gift of celibacy and a celibate's responsibility. They put in danger their spirituality and God becomes someone very far away and difficult to reach. Their unfaithfulness may reveal the lack of community support. Some is poor training in sexuality and self control. Others unfaithfulness comes as a sign of immaturity and lack of zeal for one's commitment to God. Religious and priests who are not faithful have a problem of relating well with their brothers and sisters in their communities, therefore they seek comfort and consolation outside.

4.2. The seeking of pleasure and wealth

Globalization has affected every corner of the world including institutions that are to safe guard moral norms of the society. On one side, it brings good and on the other side bad things. The modern technologies are exposing people and celibates to advertisements and movies that put emphasis on sex. The art, music, dressing, magazines, dances and dramas shown on our televisions are basically pornographic. They show sexual acts in order to cause sexual excitement. Sex becomes a private means of procuring pleasure. The fantasies instilled in the minds of celibates and people weaken the ability to resist temptations against sexual intercourse. When this kind of staff is instilled in celibates who are staggering with their vocation, who are

frustrated and who are not happy with their call, they lose their direction.³⁷ Pleasure is sought in an unhealthy way. Some end up being addicted to smoking, auto-eroticism and too much watching television.³⁸

The economic situation in Zimbabwe has left thousands and thousands of people unemployed. Young men and women do not have any source of income, so the girls indulge themselves in activities that can give them money for food, clothing and some for their children. One easy way of getting money is prostitution. Celibates are not spared in these snares which are laid everywhere. Some men and women are involved in prostitution because of the death of their spouses. These men and women have money, transport and accommodation. The poor religious and priests who come from poor families are also trapped in this net. The widowers and widows are ready to provide the needs of these religious and priests in cash as long as they give them intimacy they need. "Money is the great idolatry of our age."³⁹ It is used for exploitation, power and control of our world. What I am saying is that, as our world is becoming a world of sex, some people including religious and priests are taking sex as a way of getting money or looking for extra cash. Sex has become part of recreation with some celibates. They are totally into sex consumerism, pleasure and their self control is weakened.

³⁷ P. COLLINS, "Crises Intervention in Community life", *Religious Life Review*, (2002), Vol. 41.217, 325.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 325.

³⁹ D. O'MURCHU, *Religious Life*, 186.

4.3. The leaving of religious life and priesthood soon after ordination

The fact that some religious and priests have lost their commitments, happiness, and are seeking pleasure and wealth for themselves; indicate the direction they are leading to. The most common indicator is the number of scandals celibates are involved in. There are very few of them who can come back to their senses and leave religious and priestly life peacefully, and with dignity. What surprises me is that many religious and priests leave soon after their final profession or ordination. One wonders what kind of commitment one is committing to God. It seems as if some celibates are not serious in committing themselves to God, they do not have proper discernment and no good accompaniment during their formation. What it means is that many young religious and priests' just drift along the system but without a total commitment to God and the Church. Their true colors come out after ordination and profession that they are not for a committed life but for a profession (job). Religious life and priesthood is a way of life not a profession.

The biggest problem rests in our communities. The communities are not places for affirmation and consolation, so some celibates lack self-esteem. They get good affirmation and consolation outside. The people accept them, give them support and love they lack in their communities. In such a situation, celibates become more comfortable outside than in their communities. The celibates become vulnerable to manipulation and abuses by people outside who have a hidden agenda. The

communities that fail to give moral, spiritual, physical and psychological support to their brothers and sisters create a vacuum of loneliness.

The problem of unemployment is also contributing to the decay of moral standards in religious and priestly life. The unemployed young men and women are forced by circumstances to join religious life and priesthood not because they are called but to find a place of comfort. So, it is likely that religious houses and seminaries are filled with people who are not at all called to religious and priestly life. If good formation is not going to change them, then we have problems of celibates who live a double life. There are also celibates who are pressurized by their families to be celibates without themselves choosing the life. They can endure for some time but later on they can show that it is not their life and they leave. So, good discernment is needed to get good quality of priests and religious. The Church's complacency is also a problem. It has to be very strict to celibates who are scandalous in order to protect the faithful ones and the good name of the Church. Its soft stand with scandalous celibates is leading to moral recklessness among the religious and priests.

Conclusion

It is true that the Zimbabwean Church is facing a big challenge with celibates who fail to live according to their commitments. Their weaknesses affect both the faithful and other committed celibates. The name of the Church and the credibility of celibacy are challenged. The reasons for the unfaithfulness of some celibates are not

obvious but it seems as if it is lack of commitment to the evangelical counsels, to God and lack of respect of oneself and other people. The zeal of service has died among the young priests and religious. Some are frustrated and feel lonely in their communities which are not places of love and support. Other celibates have opted for pleasure and wealth rather than giving themselves totally to Christ. The unemployment and economic hardships experienced in the country has resulted in an exodus of young men and women to religious and priestly life. The Church has to find new ways of dealing with this issue. The next chapter is going to compare the similarities and differences between African celibacy with Christian celibacy then give a personal reflection and some recommendations on how the Church in Zimbabwe can use the gift of celibacy effectively in our modern times.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0. A COMPARISON BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND CHRISTIAN CELIBACY AND PERSONAL RECOMMENDATION

Introduction

The Traditional and Christian celibates share many common elements but also differ in other aspects. In both groups, celibacy is a call from above to few individuals to be messengers of God. "Celibacy is the prophetic announcement of the kingdom, insofar as it expresses and embodies present grace."⁴⁰ This grace is given to them in order to live a holy life and carry God's message faithfully to the people. This is done by giving a good service to the people, Church and to God. They try to respond to the signs of the times. Celibates are prophets, custodians of African and Christian values, intermediaries, promoters of health relationships and community builders. The people of God have to experience God in their lives through the life style of celibates. They are called to be models of the society, so scandals have to be avoided in order to bring out their prophetic identity.

⁴⁰ J. M. LOZANO, *Discipleship*, 170.

5.1. The similarities and differences between traditional and Christian celibacy

Celibacy in both traditions (Christian and African), has a functional purpose in the society. The celibates are called by the Supreme Being (God for Christians and the Supreme Being for African tradition). They are called to serve the people with a single heart and mind. These celibates are not married so that they dedicate their service to God and the society. The dedication is in purity (heart and body). The celibates are called to be faithful, transparent, holy, sociable, prophets, teachers and trustworthy. Thorough discernment is done before one becomes or is admitted into celibate life. The celibate life is for both men and women. In both groups, continence is the norm for celibacy. It is for performing religious rituals (rituals need purity). These celibates are the intermediaries between God and people. Their work is to unite people with the other world, help them to be faithful to the tradition and to be holy. Celibates who fail to live according to their call are punished. Their celibate life is perpetual.

The African traditional celibates differ from Christian celibates in the sense of calling. The call comes from the Supreme Being through the world of the spirits and the discernment is done by the family and the spirit mediums. Physical virginity is perpetual. The celibates are very few but with a thorough training, correct and no deceit and shortcuts. The religious ceremonies are performed by both men and women. The celibates function as both religious and political intermediaries. They

were very faithful to their vocation (scandals were hardly heard of). The African celibates were regional ministers not for the whole world.

The Christian celibates receive their call from God and their service is for the regnocentric. Their way of life has an eschatological implication. Their discernment is done by the Church and formators. They take vows or promises as a sign of total dedication to God and to the Church. Their call is for the salvation of all. They live in communities or as individuals. The virtue of tolerance is strong among them. When one breaks the vows sanctions are given. The Christian celibates are very many and the world is their village. Their call is to religious life which is different from traditional celibates.

5.2. Celibacy is a prophetic way of life and relevant to the Karanga people of today

Celibacy is directed towards self emptying of a person for God and others. It is a call to love and to live a holy life. Celibates reflect Christ to other people; relate with them, direct them to reverence God. People have to see Christ and experience the love and care of God through them. They are the source of wisdom; people should have confidence and trust in them. Their way of life has to be upright, honest, hardworking and sociable. The people have to be attracted to them for advice, protection and for spiritual nourishment and healing. So, their vocation and prophetic way of life should be relevant to the needs of people. Prophetic life goes hand in hand with good example.

Prophetic life is cultivated by prayer. So, celibates need grace to forge with their vocation. "and this grace comes to us through prayer."⁴¹ A celibate who does not pray, the prophetic element dies and later one falls. So, commitment anchored on prayer life sustains a religious/priest to be a sound prophet. A celibate who is committed to his or her call, "challenges everyone to think again about what it means to be Christ's follower."⁴² Jesus said that, to see him was to see the Father. To see a celibate of today is to see Christ. Why? It is because "Jesus is the centre of the celibate's life."⁴³ The clinging of a celibate to Christ affects the roots of the persons' existence (including a person's sexuality). So, a celibate who is rooted in God can control his or her life and can be a good sign post to other people towards God. The model is Christ and Mary his mother. The people today are looking for good models, so celibates still have a lot of work to do and offer. Celibacy has never lost its flavor but we need strong men and women to witness to this life faithfully. "Without God, celibacy remains totally irrational."⁴⁴ The more a celibate relates with God, the more he or she gets in touch with people and love pastoral work. Prophets are always in touch with people, listen to them, love them and care for them. People are secure in their hands. They bring God to the people through their way of life.

⁴¹ F. B. CONNOLLY, *Religious life*, 27.

⁴² M. O'RILEY, *The Challenge of Being Religious*, 159.

⁴³ A. SHORTER, *Celibacy and African Culture*, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi, 44.

⁴⁴ R. FAIRCUP, *Religious life Review*, 336

5.3. The necessity of integrating African values with Christian values

Celibates have to incorporate African values that are good into their formation and life. The value of family is very important that celibates are called to relate and enjoy life in the family of God (the whole world). Traditionally, formation of young ones was being done by the whole community. Each elderly person was responsible for the moral behavior of children and teenagers. So, formation of the young was collaborative. This has to be taken into religious and priestly formation. The formators have to work hand in hand with the faithful in the formation of the future religious and priests.

There are many African values that can be used to improve our celibate life today. Virginity and continence can be considered, solidarity, sharing common property without hoarding, simplicity, tenderness towards the poor, fecundity, hospitality, obedience and availability and service. All these values do not contradict our Christian belief. They motivate a person to be fully human and adapt and respond to the signs of the times. If celibates embrace these values and live them, the unfaithfulness I have mentioned earlier on can be reduced. Among the Karanga people a person with these qualities is called “munhu” (a person). This is what we expect from our celibates today.

5.4. The creation of health communities

Celibacy can not be learnt within a short time, but it is a process that involves trial and error. Young religious and priests need time to get into it and live it well. They need models in their communities. So communities should be fountains of love, security and protection. In communities where there is lack of support, affirmation, love, the young priests and religious look for happiness outside. The lack of warmth in the community can lead celibates into unhealthy relationships and thereby endangering their vocation. So, religious and priests' houses should be health places to live. The young celibates have to be trained to be independent from the beginning of their formation. They need time to be own their own for personal reflection, evaluation and for their own growth. Too much policing can not help them in the future (but accompaniment should be done thoroughly). Create situations which are free, tolerant, open and loving.

The communities have a duty to take care of their celibates in terms of moral, physical and spiritual support. The material support is very essential for creating a health and happy community. To deprive them material things can lead celibates to acquire them in an unhealthy manner. The people outside are ready to help them but with strings attached (I give you what you want and you satisfy me sexually). The fact is that some celibates come from poor families and they do not earn a salary but they feel obliged to help their family members. Double life can be lived when one is trying to get money for his or her family. This is a big problem and difficult to solve.

What I am saying is that there is a need for the availability of basic human needs for our priests and religious. The communities have to be places where God is experienced and brothers and sisters live as children of God. Communities should give their members love and brotherly affection. This love changes the face of a religious or priest. They love their vocation and live it to the full.

5.5. The promotion of health relationships between males and females and different ways of avoiding scandals

“Is there any danger in celibate men and women getting so close that they fall in love?”⁴⁵ Yes there is danger, so breaks and boundaries are needed for protecting one’s vocation. But there is no reason why a celibate can not relate with a friend of the opposite sex. What is needed and expected is a healthy relationship. Celibates have to be mature enough to get into a relationship without violating their chastity. Celibates who are mature physically, in thinking and spiritually make relationships that are expected. They respect themselves and the other person. There is no manipulation of one another. The problem that some celibates have today is that the relationship can be very superficial, it is for genital satisfaction. The relationship lacks the understanding of intimacy as a vowed person and no respect of human dignity. Celibates are teachers, prophets and models of the people in society. Their friendship is a way of witnessing faithfulness, trust, love, intimacy and honest. Their failure to live according to the Gospel has an impact on the faithful and the Church.

⁴⁵ M. ORELLY, *The Challenges of Being a Religious*, 161

The celibates have to be aware that their relationship with people is not giving a wrong message to the public. The relationships should have limits. Boundaries preserve the independence of each person in a relationship. It is good to know the time when a celibate is good to be alone with a friend. They have to learn how to avoid affections that can lead to their arousal. There are few things to take into consideration with relationships: touching, kissing and dressing. These are the snares that can loosen a celibate's ability to resist temptations. Many have fallen because of risking. It is better to protect our vocations by having boundaries. There is no relationship that can last if one is making demands that are contrary to one's vocation. Choose a friend after a thorough reflection.

What can celibates do to have a health relationship? The first thing I recommend is the awareness of oneself. A celibate should know himself or herself well. He has to be aware of his body that is what it needs, how it responds to certain situations and what causes it to respond. Try to understand the other person. Celibates have to be conscious of the time they spend with a friend. Things do not just happen; some places put two people into temptations. What time of the day is it? What are you doing, talking and what kind of play is going on and how long has it gone? "Every person knows, by experience, that chastity requires reflecting certain thoughts, words and sinful actions."⁴⁶

⁴⁶ PONTIFIC COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 14.

Conclusion

Both types of celibates are called to minister the people of God faithfully and holy. Their life should be deeply rooted in God so that they become true prophets and shepherds. They are there to instill trust, confidence, commitment and sense of prayer in people. Their life style should reflect love, trustfulness, transparency and hope. They are called to defend the weak. Celibates are the models of the people. The celibates have to bring in the African values into their life to enhance their Christian way of life. If these values are embraced, celibates can become relevant to the signs of the times. The religious and priests convents have to be healthy environments for the growth of their vocation. The lack of support in communities can lead to a crisis, thereby causing scandals. A celibate who causes scandals is hurting the body of Christ, the Church, violating other people's dignity and betraying the trust of the Church. The few scandals that are happening are destroying the work and mission to the Church. The solution is to accept the call as a gift and use it productively and faithfully. Holiness is the core part of celibate life.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The call to celibacy for the African and Christian celibates demands faithfulness, purity and commitment. The life calls for responsibility and accountability. The celibates have to be deeply rooted in God that what they have is what they give to others. They are the prophets, teachers and models of the people. Celibates are the depository of knowledge and custodians of the African and Christian customs. It means that they are to live an exemplary life that inspires people to come closer to God and neighbor. Celibates are there to serve the society. Their work is to bring the kingdom of God among the people. Celibacy is not easy to live; it needs perseverance, endurance and sacrifice. Today, some celibates are living as if they are not vowed men and women. The crisis is a reflection of a conflict between celibacy and religious or priestly life. Although the situation does not look bright due to scandals, celibacy still reminds people that it is important and necessary for challenging the sinful world. The authentic living of celibacy by some (priests and religious) gives hope and encouragement to the survival of the mission of the Church. As the Church is experiencing problems with some celibates, faithful celibates have a duty to make the life relevant to the people and the Church. Celibates are the pillars of the Church: they exist for the people and the Church. Their work is to instill love, faith and hope in the people. They cooperate with God in his saving act by their prophetic way of life. Where sin is, grace increases. Their way of life should be a challenge to the society and the Church. Faithful celibates are

models to be imitated and a challenge to a society that exalts pleasure, wealth and power. Holiness is the core part of their call and life.

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SELECTED ORAL INTERVIEWS

MUYEYE ELIZABETH, Interviewed in Ruhode village, on the 12 June 2004. She is an elder and herbalist, aged 84 years.

JEKETERA EMILIO ZIVANAI, Interviewed in Harare Glen Norah Parish, on 05 June 2004. He is a civil servant and his date of birth is 01/01/51.

SHUMBA FRANCIS, Interviewed in Masvingo town, on 07/08/04. The person is a pastor in the Apostle Church. He was born on 21 March 1922.

MUJURU MAZVIPESA, Interviewed in Daitai village, on 12/06/04. She is a wife of the headman. Her age ranges from 80-90 years old.

The person refused his identity to be known but she is a traditional healer. The woman is well respected person in her area and she has a lot of knowledge concerning the Karanga celibates.