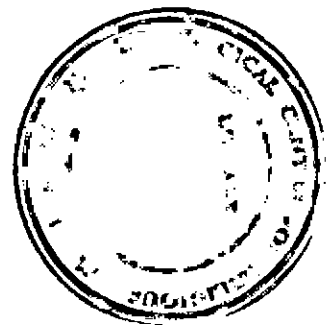


**INSTITUTE OF SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOUS FORMATION**

**TANGAZA COLLEGE**

**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

**INCULTURATION - INCARNATION:  
THE CHALLENGE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE  
IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM**



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**19 MARCH 2001**

**SOLEMNITY OF ST. JOSEPH**

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*This long essay submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a diploma in  
Religious Formation.*

**19 MARCH 2001**

**SOLEMNITY OF ST. JOSEPH**

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## Student Declaration

I hereby declare that the material used here in has not been submitted for academic credit to any other institution. All sources have been cited in full.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paula" with a flourish underneath. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

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**Paula Angelica Aguilar Ochoa C.V.J.**

Dedication

*To the Incarnate Mercy*

*and in Him*

*to all those "that had come into being through Him*

*and... did accept Him"*

*(cf. John 1:10a, 12a)*

Acknowledgement.

*I would like to express my gratitude towards all those who collaborated, in one way or another, in the elaboration of this paper. I am shure that this long essay is the fruit of our life in communion. You will remain always as a "dangerous memory" of prophetic love in my being.*

*May God bless you!!!*

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## INTRODUCTION

Today, in our changing world, we Religious are experiencing a period of crisis and of witnessing. We are living in a time of rapid change where globalisation is taking place. Our world has been defined as a "Global village" where cultural change is greatly impacting the local culture.<sup>1</sup>

Understanding culture as our way of being human in the world, as our identity, we can see the influence of a global cosmopolitan society coming to tell us how to live, to feel, to act and react... This global culture is passing through our hearts and minds and it is reflected in our behaviours. For example: we can see here in Kenya Christian youth knowing "something" about the cultural heritage of the clan/tribe they belong to, but rarely this knowledge has been integrated, reflected upon and challenged so as to have a clear stand in their behaviours and options as members of the society. Few people have been able to discern which are the cultural values<sup>2</sup> the person has received, which are the ones that this global culture is presenting and which are the Gospel values one uses to make a choice in his/her way of living. As daughters and sons of their times they are experiencing a dualistic life standard that weakens their self-identity, sense of belonging and the all-embracing African worldview of the human person.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Culture is a system of meanings that are expressed in the way people live. Thus culture is a process by which people shape their lives, helping them to know how to feel, think and behave. Most cultures consist of many sub-cultures, all of which are in rapid transition. There are traditional and modern technological subcultures, urban versus rural mind-sets, youth values and the values of the older generation," see Philip Gibbs, SVD, "Missionaries and Culture." In: *VERBUM SVD*, Fasciculus 1, Vol. 41, 2000. It is a gift of the Spirit, hence is always dynamic and in constant transformation (metanoia), see Arij Roest Crolius, S.J and T. Nkeramihigo, SJ, "What is so new about Inculturation?" In: *Inculturation working papers on living faith and cultures V* (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1991), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Values: "those worthy things that are essential to proper human living, e.g., the capacity for love. Moral values include such virtues as honesty, justice, chastity, fortitude, and temperance. In Catholic ethics, value translates the Latin *bonum*, 'good', and therefore has objective reality. Values are either properly moral, related directly to the morality of the person or, more commonly, morally relevant effects of human action. Properly moral values are absolute and inviolable because to act against them involves violation of one's own or another's conscience. In the second sense, values are identical with premoral goods, e.g., knowledge, health, friendship, beauty," see Richard P. McBrien, *general editor, Encyclopaedia of Catholicism*. (Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), p. 1295.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Aloys Otieno Ojore, *Problems of the youth in Africa*. (Nairobi: The seed studio, 2000)

Consequently, we can say that we are experiencing a state of total confusion in a society of frustration and addiction. Although in a false way, addictions supply what the real cultural values formerly provided in terms of self-identity.

These changes that we are facing are taking place so fast that awareness of them seldom has room in our daily lives. They leave no space to reflect, integrate and make choices about questions like: Who am I? Who am I called to be? To whom do I belong? How to deal with so many different issues: anger, stress, 'freedom', war, hatred, the mass media, consumerism, new forms of Gnosticism, etc. This is happening not only in Africa but in other continents as well.

This general situation, of course, also affects the life of the Church. The Church as a body is composed of different members who belong to different social, economic and cultural backgrounds. As in the society, we are experiencing a period of transition.

Concretely in the African Church we are passing from the stage of being dependent on missionaries from other lands to becoming truly God's People with our own agents of evangelisation. This means that the churches in Africa are called to be truly African as well as Universal. As a consequence, the Church in each country must reflect the characteristic cultures of its peoples. Although faith is not a culture, it can only find expression and live within cultures. Christianity exists when people believe. Christianity becomes deeply rooted when it touches people and their lives where and as they are.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore we can say that this time of chaos<sup>5</sup> is a time of inculturation, a time for incarnation (Chapter 1). It is time to open ourselves once again to the great experience of the love of God so as to become an extension of it. We are referring to an experience of KENOSIS, of

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<sup>4</sup> J.M. Waliggo et al., Inculturation: its meaning and urgency ( Africa: St. Paul Publications, 1986) , p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Biblical chaos is not something negative. It is frequently described in a variety of fear-evoking terms, such as fierce storms, exile, desert, wilderness, grave illness, death, confusion, darkness, emptiness, void, yet at the same time with connotations of immense creative potential. Chaos provides space for God's creative power to enter into our lives; with our co-operation, dramatically near and vigorous life beyond our wildest dreams will emerge. For the Israelite and the Christian, to undergo this process is to enter a faith journey of owning up in the midst of chaos to our utter powerlessness without God in our lives; from this comes the energy to use the experience of chaos constructively for the building of the faith community. E.g. Jesus in Gethsemane (Luke 22:44, John 18:4-5), see Gerald Arbuckle, From Chaos to Mission: Refounding Religious Formation. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1996) , p. 92.

self-awareness and self-emptying, such as the one of the Father who, moved by perfect love that is God's essence, was revealed in the Son, the Word. Thus, God humbled himself, taking the form of a humankind who collaborated and participated in freedom in the salvation of humankind (cf. Phil 2:6-8). It is through Mary who in total availability to God was overshadowed by the Spirit, that the Word, the Son of God, became one of us in response to the Father's love.

The Incarnation, something no human being could ever have imagined, constitutes a dangerous memory<sup>6</sup> for us, prompting us to be what we are called to be (Chapter 2). That is to know ourselves as well as the Gospel<sup>7</sup> and the charism<sup>8</sup> of our institutes, in such a way that Christ may be born once again in each one of us, in our communities and consequently in the Church and the society (Chapter 3). We are called to the integrity of a prophetic love that has as its core the Kingdom of God. As expressed in the Beatitudes which embody a spirituality of conflict so necessary and urgent in the current times (Chapter 4).

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<sup>6</sup> Dangerous memories are those "in which earlier experiences break through to the center point of our lives and reveal new and dangerous insights [which make demands on us] for the present." As a result remembering disrupts the tyranny of the present status quo, summons up a future worth struggling for and sets our feet on the path of their unfinished business. see Claudette de la Verdiere in: *Ecce Ancilla Domini: The Annunciation to Mary as a paradigm for the Consecrated Life*. (Unpublished thesis for the Weston Jesuit School of Theology, 19 May 2000), p. 7. And cf. J. B. Metz, "Faith in the Memory of Suffering." In *Faith and the Future*, 7. Introduction by Francis Schussler Fiorenza. Concilium Series. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> **Gospel:** "This English word, 'god-spell', good tidings, translates the Gk *euangelion*. A gospel is a work that collects Jesus' words and stories about Jesus arising from a living church tradition and arranges them in a more or less closed biographical narrative of his acts, told in the light of his final days, and having as ultimate and decisive purpose to draw attention to what God himself has told us through Jesus and about Jesus," see the Glossary/Thematic Index of The African Bible (Africa: Paulines Publications, 1999), p. 2149.

<sup>8</sup> **Charism:** "divine spiritual gift to individuals or groups for the good of the community. Paul introduced the word with this meaning. 'To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good...All these (gifts) are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses' (1 Cor 12:7,11). Most are powers for the ordered growth of the Christian community. Having received charisms from the Holy Spirit, each Christian has the power and the responsibility to exercise some office or render some service in the Church. Charism originates with the Spirit working directly in the baptized, so they can challenge the institutional Church and call it to renewal. Charisms given to one person can become embodied in a large group, such as a religious institute. The unique gift of the founder or foundress is given to every member from one generation to the next. Through these unmerited gifts, the Spirit continues to call the Church to dynamic growth and to renewed fidelity to Christ," see Richard P. McBrien *op.cit.*, p. 300.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1. Inculturation-Incarnation**

In this chapter I will talk about the urgency of inculturation in religious life. Thus, to understand inculturation as a process that promotes self-awareness, dialogue and understanding among members of a multicultural community, either in initial formation or in apostolic life.

I will develop the challenge of inculturation-incarnation for religious life entering into the third millennium by means of reflecting upon the experience of culture shock. For this purpose I did a Field Research in June-July 2000,<sup>9</sup> mainly in the Langata area of Nairobi. I interviewed fourteen people that have experienced cross-cultural encounters in religious life. The informants were formators, superiors, religious in temporary vows, religious in a concrete missionary experience, as well as some who eventually withdrew from religious life.

Each interview consisted of three hours of personal dialogue and sharing about cultural values and the experience of culture shock from three sets of experiences: upon entry into religious life, in the process of initial formation, and in apostolic ministry. For the sake of the informants I decided to keep names confidential. We will make reference to information provided by using File Research (F.R.) as our reference to the file research summary sheet found in Appendix 1.

I am aware that what I present in the case studies is obviously just a part of the whole reality. However, even though it is limited, it can shed a light on the following question: Is it possible that inculturation can take place in a context of globalisation and rapid change such as what we are living in?

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<sup>9</sup> This field Research work was part of the MIASMU (MaryKnoll Institute of African Studies of Saint Mary's Un. Mn.) programm at Tangaza College on the summer of the year 2000.

## 1.1 Understanding Incarnation-Inculturation (Terminology)

Before entering into the main part of this chapter, I consider of great importance to share with the reader the meaning of some of the terms and historical events that will help us in the understanding and purpose of this paper. These themes are: Incarnation and Inculturation.

**1.1.1 Incarnation:** [In Christianity] It refers to the Paschal Event (life, death and resurrection) of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word: "And the word was made flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14).

**1.1.2 Inculturation:** It is a process of encounter, discovery and re-creation between a given culture and the Gospel. This process involves the interaction between the nationals' culture and the foreigners' culture (learner of the unknown culture) who brings with him/her the Gospel. Both cultures, the one of the national as well as the one of the foreigner, through the Gospel are called to enter into a process of death and new life (Paschal Mystery of Christ). This process implies that cultural elements are viewed and discerned in the light of the Gospel values as Marcello Azevedo and Arbuckle state:

Inculturation is the dynamic relation between the Christian message and culture or cultures. It involves the insertion of Christian life into a culture, in an ongoing process of reciprocal and critical interaction and assimilation between them.<sup>10</sup>

It is a movement of conversion at the invitation of God. Evangelisers, with Christ, struggle to call people and cultures to this radical turning to God. Michael Amaladoss notes that three mysteries of our faith are especially involved in the process: the re-living of the incarnation, the dying of cultures to what is not of God, the elevation through union with Christ in his paschal mystery, of attitudes, values and customs that are in conformity with Christ's message, and the creative, Pentecostal energising of people and cultures to share their love of Jesus with others. The process of Inculturation therefore involves liberation, a freeing of a people and cultures from all forms of domination or injustice. But the unmasking of cultural domination, for example prejudices and discrimination, is an extremely difficult process. People on their own, even the most oppressed, are often unable to identify the

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<sup>10</sup> Marcello de C. Azevedo, S.J. The Consecrated Life (Crossroads and Directions) (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), p. 37. For further information cf. Arij Roest Crollius, SJ, *op.cit.*, p. 3

insidious nature of domination in their lives, assuming it is something natural and that nothing can be done about it.<sup>11</sup>

The realisation of the cultural values enlightened and enriched with the ones of the Gospel will bring about a new space, a new community, where these values can be embodied and expressed in a creative and unique way in a concrete socio-cultural set up.

It is in this process that the Christian life and message become incarnated within a particular culture, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about a "new creation."<sup>12</sup>

This new community will be called to a dynamic and continuous process of inculturation so to grow into maturity in Christ. I consider it important at this point to see how inculturation has develop in both the Bible and in Theology, as well as in Church history and finally its relation with Religious life.

A) Inculturation in the Bible and in Theology: The human being by reflecting on the historical events has realised the constant manifestation of God's love as a continuous process of inculturation. This process, where the love of God touches and transforms the reality of the human being has reached the apex in the Incarnation. The Incarnation that is the revelation of the Word of God the Father, through his Son made man is the best model for inculturation as Marcello Azevedo expresses:

The unfolding of salvation history is a process of Inculturation. God's saving project is open to all humanity in every time and place. We cannot exclude any culture from its potential to become the bearer of revelation. In fact, God loves the whole of humanity and has left in every culture and in every time signs and vestiges of the divine action in and through them. The Word who is God, without setting aside divinity, became fully human in Jesus Christ (John 1:1-14; Phil 2:5-8). Through the Incarnation, God has been inculturated in an original and most radical form in a specific cultural space and

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<sup>11</sup> Gerald Arbuckle, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>12</sup> Arij Crollius, SJ, and T. Nkeramihigo, SJ, *op.cit.*, p. 1.

time. In that process we have become heirs of the theological heritage of Israel and been given insight into the prototypical example of the entire Inculturation process. Founded as it is theologically and christologically upon the mystery of the Incarnation, Inculturation is the unique expression of mission and evangelisation.<sup>13</sup>

B) Inculturation in Church history: The experience of the Paschal event brought forth for the first community of believers the challenge of inculturation. Inculturation was experienced as a constant process of reflection and discernment upon the reality and context of the community in relationship with Jesus Christ. Where by the members of this community were called to live and announce (witness) the good news of the Kingdom as revealed in Jesus Christ, in their daily living. This same experience will be the challenge for all the Christians through all the ages as the following paragraph expresses:

The history of the Church shows us that Inculturation has been operative since the beginning. The time of the Jewish- Diaspora experience, is perhaps the greatest and most complete process of Christian Inculturation of the Gospel. Christian faith was assimilated and rephrased on the basis of the elements and genius of an evangelised Greco-Roman culture so that it was no longer an expression of faith in Semitic-Jewish cultural patterns. Throughout the fundamental faithfulness to the core of the Gospel was maintained. History continued but not with the same pattern. During the first centuries of the Christian era the church moved from a theological-christological model, from a more biblical Inculturation, to a more Christological-ecclesiological model. During the closing years of the first millennium and the major portion of the second millennium the historical-political model –that of a quasi normative European-Christian cultural superiority– held sway in the West and was extended to other regions in the world. Reaction to this hegemonic model is vital if one is to understand contemporary efforts to inculturate the gospel.<sup>14</sup>

Let us now see which is the call for Religious as members of the same body, the Church, in relation with inculturation.

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<sup>13</sup> Marcello de C. Azevedo, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

C) Religious Life and Inculturation: Religious, as members of the society and of the Church are called to live in community without leaving their socio-cultural heritage behind. Hence, the above mentioned encounter between culture, life and faith is experienced among the members of the community. For this reason:

The primary life objective of religious is to live out the implications of the gospel radically in both the church and the world. This compels us to understand the message of Jesus Christ, which by implication becomes the message of religious. The international character of many religious communities, which are by definition multicultural in character, raises the issue of the relationship of faith, life and culture. For members of such congregations, this kind of interaction is part and parcel of their daily being and doing, and of their apostolic praxis in evangelising mission. Inculturation, then, must be a central topic, not only in ecclesial praxis and theological and missiological reflection, but also in the consecrated life. This is particularly the case today. Until quite recently religious institutes have been characterised by a monocultural uniformity despite their internationality. Indeed, communities have been mostly ruled according to the cultural assumptions and practices of the cultural area of the world in which they were founded. There has been relatively little space given to constructive reflection on their actual multicultural experience. Similarly scant attention has been paid to the different cultures where these communities have lived, worked and been planted around the world.<sup>15</sup>

Consequently each religious is called to enter into the process of Inculturation in his/her own community so that in the light of the Gospel the identity of the religious institutes may be fostered and authentically expressed in the uniqueness of each individual and their cultures. Hopefully, through this process of inculturation the members of the community will become more aware that:

All the religious institutes of the church have their own distinctive ways of examining and reading the Word and of living the gospel. These traditions are a key to understand their respective contributions to apostolic action as they further the mission of Jesus Christ. Religious institutes and orders generally trace their origins to a founder. The Spirit is viewed within the institute as having helped the founders –men or women- to discern, at the appointed time, a specific ecclesial need. The unique intuition and divine dynamism of founders is commonly called a founding charism. Founders responded positively to divine challenges and dedicated their lives to specific goals. Each order as a consequence has its own emphasis and particular accents through which men and women understand reality

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42-43.

and listen to the Word of God. For this reason there is a specific connection between founding charism, the historical moments and sociocultural context in which they originally appeared.<sup>16</sup>

Because of above mentioned multicultural reality of congregations there is an increasing awareness on the part of religious in today's world Church to be engaged in the process of Inculturation. Hence, religious are called to discern the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel and the charism of their institutes in the concrete situation they are living in so to be faithful to the Gospel, to the foundress/founder and to the people. For this reason religious orders feel a sense of urgency about Inculturation.<sup>17</sup>

## **1.2 Culture-shock and the urgency of Inculturation-Incarnation.**

This urgency of inculturation was confirmed by the field research work that we previously mention in the introduction to this chapter. I will share some of the common factors in the experience of culture encounter and its implications for religious life. Hence, I will focus on the experience of culture shock in three sets of experiences: upon entering into religious life, in the process of initial formation and in apostolic ministry.

### **1.2.1 A life experience: Culture shock.**

The term "culture shock" refers to how people react when introduced to a new culture for any length of time. It is also described as "the inability of an individual in a given physical, social, ideational environment to adjust comfortably and more or less spontaneously to another environment. It is as well the result of excessive strain -often unconscious- or physical exertion. The most difficult adjustments are generally not physical but social and psychological... not so much a question of the forms of the cultural pattern as

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43-45.

<sup>17</sup> Gerald Arbuckle, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

the class of meanings that the forms express."<sup>18</sup> "One of the most important dimensions of foreign experience will be how well one meets and copes with this syndrome."<sup>19</sup> It is good to bear in mind when reading this that not everyone is affected in the same way, and if they are, the extent to which they are affected varies considerably.

Margaret Aringo states that "Culture shock is an inevitable reality as one enters an international community."<sup>20</sup> It is a life experience met in any encounter with others' behaviour, values, attitudes, and way of acting and reacting. "When persons are unaware of what is happening, the experience can create some anxiety, frustration and pain."<sup>21</sup> If it is handled properly however, it will broaden the individuals understanding of her/himself and others. Culture shock that is well negotiated can open the doors to a personal and communitarian process of maturity and unity. This experience can help people to become more incarnated,<sup>22</sup> more human (Cf. Phil 2 and John 17).

### **1.2.2 Common factors in culture shock.**

A) Cultural background: When our informants were invited to share about their cultural background and some of the specific aspects that they can identify as essential in their birth cultures, all of them could name concrete aspects of their own culture, family, tribe...which were in fact an integral part of their own identity. Examples include the following:

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<sup>18</sup> Louis Luzbetak, *"The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology."* In: American Society of Missiology Series, No. 12. (New York: Orbis Books, 1991)

<sup>19</sup> An article from U.S. Training Guide on "*Culture shock*". Homestay/USA, World Learning.

<sup>20</sup> Margaret Aringo, "On-going Formation Process: An Enculturation of Young Religious Women in a multi-cultural Community." Tangaza Occasional Papers No.6 , 1998. p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. U.S. Training Guide on "Culture shock" . *op.cit.*

<sup>22</sup> To become more Incarnated: express the wholistic approach to human growth into maturity in Christ. To become more incarnated is understood here as a way of being "fully human and fully alive", in a constant process of transformation (metanoia) into the image and likeness of God through the Incarnate Word, in the Spirit to the Glory of the Father.

"One of our Luo values is to be good to strangers. It implies and shows the simplicity, warmth, good neighbourliness through sharing and helping to others" (F. R. #1).

"Solidarity and communion (clan), strong communitarian sense as pastoralist" (F.R. #2).

"In Copper-belt, Zambia. There is no tribalism. We have the sense of one family, of belonging. Freedom among ourselves is very strong" (F. R. #3).

"The Nso are a hard working people in different fields. The community work is coordinated by the chief. Sharing is a very strong value" (F. R. #5).

"Value of common work and responsibility. Ownership" (F. R. #4).

"A great respect for the person. Responsibility, sobriety, solidarity-sacrifice" (F.R. #6).

"Hospitality, respect of elders" (F. R. #8).

"Hospitality, unity, honesty"(F. R. #7).

"Hospitality, solidarity"(F. R. #9).

"Strong sense of belonging, hospitality, solidarity, harmony"(F. R. #10).

"Ngoni people: we always feel one, even when we are far"(F. R. #11).

"I consider that to be Mexican is to be 'Guadalupano'"(F.R.#12).

The above responses show the fact that if we take time to reflect and share with each other, we will be more able to recognise that each human being carries with her/his-self values and cultural traditions that are specific of his/her birth culture.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, an identification of certain cultural values will lead us to recognise as well common values that keep us united. This awareness can be fostered when international or multi-cultural community membership can help us to identify ourselves as unique while at the same time similar.

We can call the above mentioned common values domains or patterns. In this case we can identify the domains of hospitality, sense of belonging and solidarity. The question therefore is: are not these evangelical values also? Are they not also at the core of our religious life? Yes, they are. A further step might be: How can a person deal with the different ways of living these values, and how they can be articulated in the light of the

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Arij Crollius, SJ, *op.cit.*, p. 1.

Gospel? This process of awareness and integration will imply a process of transformation. Expressing these values in a concrete and personal way will enrich the community in its common path of following Christ. Consequently the person will be able to identify the non-values of her/his own culture and allow them be challenged and transformed by the Gospel through the communitarian and apostolic experience.

All of this naturally presents challenges to the system of formation that we have and the formation of formators as well. The challenge will be to provide the formation needed to develop the ability and capacity to foster self-awareness and self-identity as important sources of new life and hope in religious life. The challenge includes helping those in formation to become more aware of their cultural background, as well as psychological and sociological beliefs. By being aware of one's personal vision,<sup>24</sup> an individual may be freer to relate, understand and accept her/himself and others in a healthier way, becoming more aware of the roots of her/his own actions and reactions, feelings and emotions and how to deal with them. Something fundamental for initial formation is to foster the authentic integration of cultural values and gospel values expressed in the concrete way of living of the institute (Charism).

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<sup>24</sup> Personal vision is the way in which each individual perceives life, others, one-self, the creation and God. This vision is therefore unique, incomplete, distorted and influenced by the personal background. It comprehends the genetic heritage of the families in which we grew up. It is given (we do not choose it) and it is part of us. Remembering that by family we understand not only the nuclear family but also the extended one. It is in this family that we also learn behaviour and emotional responses. In a way this will be the vision that shapes our lives. The good news is that what we have learned, we can unlearn. This means that we have in ourselves the capacity and potentiality to grow and to change. We all need a vision because of the restless insistence of the mind to find answers to life's questions and organise reality into understandable patterns. Vision gives direction for behaviour, gives life predictability, serves as a frame of reference and serves as a source of adjustment to reality. It is the basis of emotional patterns that define us as happy, sad, angry, courageous, afraid... (Notes from a workshop on self-awareness by Joe Mahee, Marist Brother).

B) Cultural shock in initial formation: In most of the interviews for this research a common experience of culture shock was initially described as misunderstanding, due to lack of knowledge of the person, of the culture and of communication<sup>25</sup> e.g.: "Some of my cultural values, such as showing respect by not looking at the eyes of an 'elder', were in a certain moment misunderstood"(F. R. #8). Related to this can be perhaps unintentional imposition

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<sup>25</sup> Communication: From this small word depend the success or failure of human relationships. It is important for us to reflect on how we communicate with others. The aim of communication is to foster and promote relationship and communion. There are some elements or components that can help us to understand how we communicate with others:

I. Content and feeling

II. Blocks

- Images/ expectations
- Anxieties
- Defence mechanism
- Language

These elements can be expressed through verbal and non-verbal communication. For non-verbal communication we understand our body language (postures, gestures, silence, position, tone of our voice, facial expression, eye contact... and so on). By becoming aware of our body language we are able to distinguish in which level of integration, harmony and coherence we are with our selves and with others. The state in which we are most probably will surface in our verbal communication. It is here where our words and our body come together, at this point it will be good for us to reflect where we are in all this. If most of the time there is no coherence between our verbal and non-verbal communication there is something that we are not dealing with in a healthy way hence, we are in need of help. Mostly our emotions are an automatic response to circumstances and people. Most of this is influenced by our culture, education and spirituality. It is good to reflect on how well we express our emotions. With which emotions are we most comfortable? Which emotion I am least comfortable? Which do I feel more difficult/hard to handle? Most probably we will find ourselves among two tendencies:

1. Suppressing: pushing down our emotions in such a way that they remain inside
2. Repressing: pushing them away, sending them to our unconscious.

This happens because most of the time we tend to put on our emotions a moral connotation before accepting that emotions are neither good nor bad. We have the right to experience all kinds of feelings. The important aspect is to own them, to respond and deal with the situation. This implies some responsibility. To understand responsibility we must make the difference between being responsible "for" and being responsible "towards" others and my self. When we use "for" it is because we feel over responsible for other people. This is an unhealthy form of responsibility where we take over the rights and independence of the people, creating dependent people. On the other hand to be responsible "towards" means to own our responsibility and to respect others' rights and independence. To reach this level in communication it is helpful to practice "unconditional love" (positive regard). By unconditional love we understand love that puts no condition. Consequently we need to acknowledge that we are on a journey. The first step is to accept oneself in honesty and humility (truth). This implies a constant effort to be who we are and not to keep on blaming others, the past or determined circumstances, remaining in a distorted vision. It will imply that we accept that feelings (anger, depression, and fear...) and conflict are part of life. The important point is how to deal with them in a healthier way. We also need to try to love as freely as possible and to build up a healthier vision that may help us to have a different perception of the things and aspects of life we have to deal with. This consequently will change our way of responding in an emotional and behavioural level. By trying to get to the root of unhealthy behaviours, we will be more able to discover the real self within us. It is in this same way that the energy flowing from our emotions such as anger, can be channelled and used in a constructive way. This is essential for community living and for formation (Notes from a workshop on self-awareness by Joe MaKee, Marist Brother).

of both cultural values or religious life traditions or ideologies as "Gospel values" e.g. "For me a shock was the way persons were welcomed and the way we shared with them"(F. R. #9). "The purely western and individualistic way of receiving visitors shocked me. At home you don't isolate. A person belongs to the community; you do not exclude because it contradicts solidarity. The visitor is the centre of interest. If there is no food, the people at home can abstain themselves from eating to share it with the visitor."(F.R. #10). Another informant shared his experience of feeling that belonging to that particular community meant adopting the culture and traditions of the majority in the community (F.R.#12). He observed different postures members adopted:

1. To become one of them: "to fit" (Acculturation).<sup>26</sup>
  2. To adapt oneself to the other culture for survival, even though there was an inner rejection towards everything belonging to the dominant group, (Adaptation).<sup>27</sup>
  3. To seek for a sound personal identity that can free a person from the above attitudes so one can both retain one's own culture (Enculturation)<sup>28</sup> and assimilate the Charism.
- Necessary for a fruitful encounter, our informant said, will be openness to the cultures, persons and languages of others. This will foster growth in one's proper identity supported

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<sup>26</sup> Acculturation: refers to a person of one culture acquiring the cultural qualities of another society. "Through contact between persons and groups in an another culture one experiences a transformation. Examples would be learning a language, local customs and adopting different ways of eating and dressing. When different cultural groups meet, acculturation may entail asymmetrical relations between dominant and dependent cultures. The risk in evangelisation is when one culture, in which the gospel is already present, acts upon a receptor culture and tries to evangelise it by imposing on it the cultural traits of the evangeliser," cf. Gerald Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel* (New York: Orbis, 1991), chapter 2; Marcello de C. Azevedo, *op.cit.*, p. 36. and Arij Crollius *op.cit.*, p. 4 and 8.

<sup>27</sup> Adaptation: The ancient proverb: When in Rome do as the Romans do, describes adaptation. "It is not a question of making profound changes but of relative, tactical adjustments. Adaptation can be permanent or temporary. It refers to the phenomenon of assuming another dominant culture" An example would be as evangelisers adjusting to the culture receiving the gospel -internally or externally- in manners of acting and being and in translating and expressing the message, see Gerald Arbuckle, *op.cit.*, p. 41 and cf. Arij Crollius *op.cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Enculturation: "is the process of learning from childhood that which enables the individual to become an integrated part of his/her culture" see Gerald Arbuckle, *op.cit.*, p. 41 and cf. Arij Crollius *op.cit.*, pp. 5-7.

by a sincere accompaniment. In this posture one would be open and able to integrate and harmonise new experiences in concrete situations (See Inculturation above).

Some other similar experiences can enlighten our sharing:

"What helped me most is to become more aware of my family values. Therefore, religious life is only a process of deepening what is already there" (F. R. #14).

An african sister who did her studies in Europe said: "It is not difficult, it is the way one lives it. We need to treat each other as individuals, being able to understand the other, being patient, and acknowledging our differences and gifts" (F. R. #13).

"I can relate with everybody. The value of being a human being and a creature of God shows me the way to know that there is something that we share in common" (F.R.#11).

"In the beginning I didn't find any value. 'High tables, different food, and so on'. Now I have a family sense" (F. R. #5).

"I experience we are in a transitional stage. There is also a 'generation shock'" (F.R #6).

Community life gives us the opportunity to come into ongoing contact with other people from different nationalities, languages and traditions. This experience can help us to discover ourselves more deeply, even though it involves the experience of culture-shock. This in itself will awaken in us a greater awareness of who we are, what makes us different from so and so and what we have in common. The process of getting to know each other and our experiences of misunderstanding can either lead to a strengthening of the bonds of unity in diversity or can be a source of loathsome and divisive behaviour such as: jealousy, anger and resentment; a fact that needs urgently to be addressed in some of our communities. This experience will serve as the basis and challenge for our community life and the urgency of dialogue and understanding as we go into it more deeply. One needs to ask the question in community living: Does religious life allow the individual to be authentic? If so, what are the challenges and consequences of inculturation-incarnation in an international community? What can we do? "For effective Inculturation people in formation

need to develop the skills of cultural discernment in order to perceive objectively the ways in which people, including themselves, are oppressed by cultural influences or contribute to the cultural oppression of others. As it is very difficult if not impossible, to do this discernment alone, religious must become aware of the need for community reflection and its appropriate skills."<sup>29</sup>

Hence, it is important to note that a majority of the persons who were able to articulate the experience of culture-shock were the ones who also had somebody close to them in the initial stages of formation that was open enough to guide, confront, listen to, be with, and journey with them in this moment of crisis and growth.

I have realised that it is through dialogue that we come to understand ourselves more deeply and at the same time others can understand us better. It is also the entrance for further discovery in deeper and essential aspects such as the understanding of the vows and the wholistic approach needed for a healthy integration of the person in formation. Consequently, because of the need and urgency of handling dialogue with depth, openness, respect and joy, the person will be able to open areas that apparently are considered taboos. The personal choice and determination to disclose and discover the beauty and challenge of this culture shock experience was also significant:

“First was an experience of confrontation, and then developed as openness to other persons, cultures and expressions which fostered growth in self-identity. All of it in a process of accompaniment where we were invited to develop a universal ideology, to share, to integrate and harmonise” (F.R.#14).

“We need to develop an Evangelical approach towards other human beings. Listening is an important part of this. It implies sitting back and understanding, to be patient, not rushing or looking beyond what the lips say” (F.R.#1).

“I needed to learn to love them, to live with them, to learn their language and to understand their difficulties. Until it started to be part of me, creating deeper bonds according to the circumstances, with patience and learning from

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<sup>29</sup> Gerald Arbuckle, *op.cit.*, From Chaos to Mission p. 37.

mistakes. To enter another world and to transform the one of efficiency, timetable and so on” (F.R. #2).

“Was a shocking experience that of being different from other people: another kind of food, house and sickness, it implied for me to accept that I have different needs and limitations because of the way I was brought up. Among other things when I saw a different reality, I felt the need to go deeper and rediscover what was poverty for me” (F.R.#4).

“The encounter with other people helped me to be more warm and expressive. Some of these experiences were hard, but they were the preparation for the one I am living now” (F.R. #7).

“Community life in Africa needs to be focused on the person” (F.R. #10).

“We need love, affection, and concern. This is essential for a life of celibacy. Therefore to feel at home is necessary in community. We are called to love. This implies openness and discernment of motivations” (F.R. #5).

As we can see, the person has the possibility of broadening her/his way of perceiving reality, and therefore, being enriched through the acceptance of the customs of other members of the community and reflecting another way of living and another way of being human. Community life can become the soil for the Gospel to touch members and their cultures, not only in the external aspects but, even at the deepest levels of their being. Cultures thus will bloom with new life, colour and fragrance, and the Charism of the different institutes will have new forms of expression.

C) Cross-cultural encounter in apostolic life: Part of the Apostolic/Missionary experience of Inculturation in Religious life is that the same experience we undergo in our initial formation can be found again in the encounter with other peoples, cultures or countries in our life of ministry. With this, the challenge of Inculturation of Christianity becomes stronger. Coming to know and understand another culture in community life can become the source and foundation of Inculturation in Apostolic Ministry. Let us be aware of the great importance of the way we handled the past experience of cross-cultural encounter. If we were not aware of its implications at that time, we may repeat the same patterns of behaviour in the different places that we are called to be, to live and to serve (especially in formation). The history of

our countries of origin, of the Church and of religious life demonstrates this well in the form of racism, imposition, domination, and violation of human rights, infantilism and so on.

The data from field research work suggests helpful ways to cope with culture shock in our apostolic life experience as individuals, as communities and as brothers and sisters called to spread the good news in togetherness. I quote the following examples from the field research:

"To live with them, learn the language, understand the difficulties, moving around. To love them, to let them become part of me, my family" (F. R. #2).

"The person is most important. We need to approach others with a listening disposition. Patience" (F. R. #1).

"The reality of the people shocked me and made me reflect on the sense and witness of my consecrated life. It was an experience of being different from the people and to accept that I had different needs and limits" (F. R. #4).

"To have had the experience of an encounter with my culture and another culture helped me a lot to develop some things I needed to work on" (F. R. #7).

These suggestions on how to cope with culture-shock was clearly demonstrated in the following two case studies one from the Rwandese society at large and the second one from a mission located in Southern Sudan within the area of the Nuer people.

#### The Rwandese community:

"In the traditional Rwandese society discipline is a great value. Therefore religious life is considered good for upbringing, helps human beings to discipline oneself. Chances are to be a good person. People are happy when their children join the convent. Religious life in Rwanda is high class oriented. (Smart, shining...) Obedience is not too difficult. Children are expected to respect parents and can be corrected by any adult. There is unquestioned obedience, self-sacrifice and tolerance. Christianity introduced dialogue to us. Virginity before marriage was understood as a great value. Chastity in religious life is a real witness because many ask is it possible? Peace and harmony are of great importance in the family context. Fidelity and loyalty are strong values in the community, therefore in religious life and in marriage. Hard work and sharing are universal values for Africans, the more I have, the more I need to share. Poverty is seen as lack of blessing. You cannot praise it. Generosity and charity are also strong values but not for strangers and enemies. This is an enrichment coming from Christianity" (F.R. 12).

The Rwandese society fits perfectly into the schemes of religious life. But my question is: Is it just enough to fit into the values of certain cultures and structures? Which elements of the process of inculturation-incarnation can we notice are already present in this community? Which are missing? Personally, I perceive that the guideline for a further study in the area of pastoral/apostolic Ministry in this society can be based on the fact that the Rwandese community considers that enemies and strangers need to be treated as they treat them. On the other hand, in the area of religious life it will be interesting to reflect about the influence of the cultural understanding of obedience<sup>30</sup> and the vow of obedience in community life. As well as about fidelity and loyalty, generosity and charity in relation with the vow of Poverty and Chastity, among others. For example if I would like to explore on a deeper level the above aspects I can start by questioning: Are these values or non-values in this culture? What are the implications of this 'value'? Is it a gospel value? Are religious people witnesses of hospitality and forgiveness in the community? How is conflict solving with strangers, enemies and authority figures? And so forth.

Therefore, I think that it is crucial not only for the Rwandese but for all of us christians, specifically religious, to assess if we are just fitting into determined structures within the culture or institutes; or if we really are able to accept the challenge of entering in a 'life experience' of discovering both values and non-values in our cultures and religious communities fostering and challenging them with those of the Gospel. What should our attitude be? Is it easy? Which is the cornerstone here? What do we need to address, and how? Is the Mystery of the Incarnation of any help in these circumstances?

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Arij Crollius *op.cit.*, p. 11.

## The Nuer community (Southern Sudan):

“The Nuer community is for me always a surprise, with them I have become more aware that the person is not a book. Therefore an encounter is needed to know the culture and the person. The Nuer community is very open to Christianity. The attraction is Jesus and not the Catholic Church as such... We pray also with Protestants. Christianity is taken also as personal security –the risk here is that it may be considered in a magical sense-...Community life is basic for them and for us; it is a way of evangelisation through witness...Prayer is a value and it is a daily experience...The Nuer expresses the community life by sharing and through solidarity, especially with the orphans and widows...The way of making decisions is through the counsel of elders and in the community through dialogue. To be consecrated to Jesus is understandable for the Christians but not for all the members. The challenge here is the witness of life. The persons name us with names that they will never use for NGO members...Then what do we mean for them?

Abuna=Father-Priest

Baba= Abba

Gat Kuoth=Son of God

Yiee Kuoth=Spirit of God.

Yieen Kuoth=Shepherd of God

Jääk Kuoth=Apostle or messenger of God.

Gat Luak Kuoth= Son of the Church.

There are other names that imply authority, but I have clarified to them that any name that is related with a certain level of authority is not for me.”

“The challenge that we face is that universal values need to be promoted and local values integrated. It is a double process of the one that is arriving with a personal identity (culture), Charism, and Gospel. There is the risk of presenting the culture of the missionary as ‘the Gospel’. And the other part needs to be helped to find its own values...not to teach them. We can do the great mistake of teaching values or cultural aspects instead of giving the proper space to the persons to discover their own cultural values”(F.R.#14).

The example of the Nuer community is also a challenge. Some of the aspects that can be for further investigation in this community are, how to deal with issues of Christianity taken as a security, as well as the influence of the "magic" cultural understanding in relation to the sacramental life. What challenges does it present to the pastoral work of the Church today and to the need and urgency of inculturation? What does the way of living of this religious community say to the actual situation of religious life and to that particular village?

Maybe the above mentioned need of dialogue, understanding and simplicity of life by being one among the people (cf. John 1:14) is lived and experienced already in some places and communities. The question is: How do we perceive this is happening in our own communities? In our contemporary society does our way of living mean something to people? My point is that what we have been reflecting on shows us that the experience of Inculturation-Incarnation is possible if we are open to it and embrace it! This experience of course is a process that will never finish. It is always new. There is no one formula for it. It is only through reflection and articulation of our experiences that knowledge, attitudes and behaviours can be integrated, challenged and confirmed. It is an open horizon to enjoy the rising of the sun with new splendour if we are docile to the Spirit and are able to live it fully.

It is essential in this dynamic process that the person of Jesus be at the core, the very heart of the culture, not destroying but incarnating and recreating it. There is the need for a personal conversion, a personal choice. The cultural values exist because we exist as a people, as a tribe. Therefore the mutual enrichment of culture and the Gospel is also a gift of the Holy Spirit that needs a lived response.

### **1.2.3 Can a painful personal experience be the foundation of an unifying experience?**

#### **(Towards integration)**

I started this chapter by questioning if inculturation has room in a context of globalisation and rapid change as the one we are living in. Through our sharing I came to realise that it is possible. Aware that it is a process that takes time I am able to conclude that the experience of culture-shock, as well as any other shocking experience or crisis, even though painful, can lead religious people to become more conscious of the great challenge and need for Enculturation-Incarnation in community life. To help the person to articulate

and explore the experience of culture-shock in a deeper and practical way some resources for personal and group reflection can be found in Appendix 2 and something about General Barriers to Inculturation and Personal Competencies in Appendix 3.

At the same time the field work experience led me to reflect on the way we live, express and witness our discipleship, our Christian life. This revealed to me the importance of Religious Life facing the need and urgency of going back to the sources. One needs to reclaim her/his roots as an individual, as a member of a certain group or culture, as a member of a Congregation and as a member of the universal Church and the world.

In all this, one sees how each person is impregnated with a concrete historical background (tradition, wisdom, and mistakes, etc.) which play a role in the actual situation. Their converging makes for the basis of our community life. Consequently it is only in being Christ-centred that we will be more able to love, accept, understand and help each other as one body built up on the foundation of the apostles and the founders of our institutes.

If Inculturation-Incarnation eventually begins to take root, the experience will be the source of a new springtime not only for the individual but also for the Church and the society. It will be the source of life and the stem of unity among human beings. Inculturation-Incarnation is urgent in the present moment not only for the African Continent, but also for the Universal Church. Hence, it requires a personal choice in response to a personal call.

It is for this reason that in the next chapter, I will talk about the ability to dialogue and listen to the WORD in order to respond to this personal call in total availability to the Holy Spirit. I will do so by means of reflecting upon the experience of Mary in the Incarnation and Jesus in his daily life experience.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2. The Corner Stone: The mystery of the Incarnation

In this chapter I intend to do three reflections. The first will be on the experience of culture shock in relation with the Mystery of the Incarnation. The purpose of this reflection is to center ourselves on the core of this long essay: Discipleship and formation viewed in the light of the Incarnation as a challenge for religious entering into the third millennium.

It is for this reason that I choosed Luke 1:35a-38b as the starting point for our second reflection. Through this text one can grasp the essential attitudes for discipleship that implies a personal call as well as a personal choice in response to this call.. To achieve this I will fix my attention in the figure of Mary as a Jewish village woman of faith. Presenting Mary as a village woman with a concrete socio-cultural heritage as each one of us. As a woman of faith who listened to the Word of God and availed herself to be an instrument of God's loving revelation: the Incarnation. Being at the same time formee and formator, overshadowed and accompanied by the Spirit in her daily living.

Lastly, this led me to focus in the same Word of the Father as the formator par excellence, alpha and omega of Mary's discipleship, model and challenge for the unfinished formation journey of formees and formators, both as well followers of Christ.

#### 2.1 A personal call, a personal choice, an universal witness.

By reflecting on the Mystery of the Incarnation a person begins to see the experience of culture shock with the eyes of faith.

Only in this way the Church as one family will be able to exchange all the riches of the nations which were given to Christ as an inheritance (cf. Ps 2:8). From the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and sciences, these Churches borrow and develop all those things which can contribute to the glory of the Creator, the revelation of the Saviour's grace, or the proper ordering of Christian life.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. J.M. Waliggo, *op. cit.*, pg. 23.

The mystery of the Incarnation can lead us to understand that the chaos of a painful situation is a solid foundation and beginning of new life. The experience of death leads us to new life. Such was the experience of the first Christian communities. This implies a personal response, a choice to let die what can be an obstacle to wholistic growth and understanding of oneself and others, community life and 'Family unity' not only as Church, but also as brothers and sisters created in the image and likeness of God. This will open the door to a process of self-awareness and accompaniment as necessary elements in this journey.

The Mystery of the Incarnation can lead the person into freedom through self-awareness. This can only be done under the impulse of the Spirit who constantly prompts us to a mature discernment. I am aware that for many people the process of incarnation-inculturation of religious life is quite challenging. But let us be aware that it is the corner stone for the so-called re-foundation<sup>32</sup> of the Church and of religious life. At the present moment all seems to indicate that religious life has lost the essence of its being. I have a sense that we religious are in a passive state. We have watered down religious life and we are quite comfortable just 'living'. Counting too much on great and spectacular institutions (physically and mentally) does not seem to fit with evangelical simplicity. It seems to me that sooner or later, the Spirit, as a hurricane, will remove all what is not firmly grounded on "the

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<sup>32</sup> "Re-founding is a journey in faith with Jesus Christ to bring his message of salvation to the very roots of contemporary pastoral problems. As a process of change it drew on the insights of management studies, and social anthropology, but above all on Sacred Scriptures. By re-founding we mean the collaborative process of referring to the original founding experience of the group, in order to identify and re-own its primary purpose/vision, and to be energised by it and create radically new responses directed towards the causes of contemporary problems. Re-founding is a risk-filled journey of faith and hope whereby we enter into the heart of the paschal mystery itself to unite ourselves with Christ and his mission, thus being energised to be ongoingly creative in bringing the kingdom message to the world of our times. As it is a journey demanding personal and group conversion, it is a slow and hesitant process, the outcome of which is ultimately in the hand of God. Since the process of re-founding involves a break with past securities and a journey into the unknown there is bound to be resistance, sometimes of considerable, even paralysing power. For the sake of the mission this resistance needs to be surpassed so that it does not de-energize people from the task- filled journey of faith and hope," see Gerald Arbuckle, *op.cit.*, From Chaos to Mission, p. 8.

corner stone" Jesus, the Incarnate Word (cf. Matt 7:27-28) poor, humble, servant of all (cf. Matt 12:18; 20:26). His first concern was for the men and women who were the excluded, marginalised and poor. Should this not also be the first concern of all of us today?

To answer this question we need to reclaim the roots that give meaning and unity to all. We need to return to the sources, to rediscover for ourselves the origin of our call and charisms. To ask ourselves honestly: What initially was the foundational experience? How can it be expressed and incarnated in our actual situation? It is only when we go deep that we reach the source of life: the Gospel, which is like a transparent running river. Drinking from its waters, we can let ourselves be inundated and refreshed by the Spirit. Inculturation-incarnation requires a death to bring us to new life. This does not mean that we must forget the past. It means rather to recognise it, to do all what is possible to heal the wounds caused by specific circumstances as well as to be grateful for the richness that we have received from it while moving ahead. This is the hope of all who have a deep desire for something more, something radical and that is nothing less than what we are called to be (our identity, our being, our joy...).

For this reason we need to experience God once again; this is the essence of our 'being' religious. The authentic religious people of today are the ones striving to live the life of the Spirit and open themselves to the initiative of the Spirit in total availability, trust and freedom that they might be moulded and remoulded.

It means that it is a time of grace, a time for a new encounter, and a time to listen once again to the original call to a new 'Kenosis' (Phil 2) which is a call to maturity. Along this process of growing into maturity there necessarily is a period of painful gestation awaiting the new life. (John 2:1-11; Matt 16:4; Mark 8:11-13; Luke 11:16-19). This moment

of "gestation" is a period of darkness where we will be prepared by a patient searching full of hope and docility to our foundress/founder. Drawn by the initiative of the Spirit, this experience will lead us to rediscover the new forms capable of incarnating and fostering the mystery of Jesus Christ in an enlightened way. This process will involve the challenge of a search for greater fidelity and courage in creating as well as openness to the new as we participate in the paschal Mystery of Christ. There will be the risk of the discernment and fraternity in the Spirit.<sup>33</sup> This will demand that we put ourselves in the path of constant 'metanoia' i.e. transformation of mentality and behaviour.

Consequently this process of incarnation-inculturation must be a hand in hand action emerging from the "bottom-up" so as to create anew a community life rich in personal relationship, friendship, hospitality, mutual acceptance, and respect for the freedom of each one. The total realisation of the Gospel will unfold in fraternal dialogue and discernment and will be expressed in gratitude and feasting. The prophetic witness of a dialoguing presence,<sup>34</sup> more than impressive structures, will in itself challenge the culture of the "global village" with its exaggerated individualism and competitive drive. Being called by Jesus Christ to live in fraternity, not just together: Can there be a more revealing witness than the one of unity in Love?<sup>35</sup>

As daughters and sons of God and members of the Church we will announce justice, freedom and hope. Out of love we will constructively criticise and denounce. For this to take place, states Gerald Arbuckle, we need creative or dissenting<sup>36</sup> people. These are people

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<sup>33</sup> Taken from Jose Maria Guerrero, "*Para Vino Nuevo, Odres Nuevos*" Folletos con El. 2000 and cf. Oliver Ellis, "Metanoia and Community" *The Way*. p. 292.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Arij Crollius, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> Arbuckle uses the term to dissent to express this need of first Refounding the church by means of proposing

called to give birth to that which has never been in existence before. This will be a threat for those taking comfort in the predictable and safe ways of traditions, for the well-ordered structures of an organisation's process, states Arbuckle.

But these dissenters need to propose and pursue their options for action with respect, patience and tolerance rooted in the attitude of Jesus Christ. T.S. Eliot refers to them as "another voice" that means the carriers of the Gospel vision through radically new language and action, in response to ever changing apostolic needs. As carriers of another voice and alive with the power of Christ, they yearn to draw others to him in believing, worshipping and social justice-oriented community through which the Gospel is lived and presented in ways relevant to the ever changing needs of our times.<sup>37</sup>

At this point Arbuckle invites us to recall that historically, religious congregations evolved as dissent movements to challenge the society and the Church to measure up to Gospel values. In fact, he states, the most dramatic growth point for religious life have been those stages when society and Church were particularly corrupt. Religious are desperately needed as prophetic witnesses or dissenters for the sake of Gospel values.

By their lifestyles and their bold apostolic initiatives they will dissent from the culture of restoration<sup>38</sup> developing within the Church. Inevitably this will lead to tensions with the hierarchical structures within the Church. The fear of suffering must not dissuade them from their primary task of being "MARTYRS OF PROPHECY" within the Society and the Church.<sup>39</sup>

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alternatives, new ideas and ways of doing things that may guarantee that life and vitality continue because "a system that is not continuously examining alternatives is not likely to evolve creatively," see Gerald Arbuckle Refounding the Church (Dissent for leadership) (New York, USA: Orbis Books, 1993) p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>38</sup> Arbuckle identifies a very strong reaction to chaos that current theology defines as Restorationism. This Restorationism is characterised by efforts to take the Church back to pre-Vatican II; with high degrees of intolerance to any form of opposition where dialogue is rarely possible either with individuals or institutions adhering to its beliefs. Aware of such a situation Arbuckle present chaos as a catalyst for an immense surge of faith inspired by evangelization. This can force us to look for radically new ways to preach the Good News. (Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 3-4.)

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

For this reason we need people who love their own institutes and are creatively docile to their founders. Required are humble people who are able to feel and recognise their fragility and at the same time the strength of the Spirit. Religious must be able to find joy in radically renouncing power and ownership. In all this, they will witness fraternity, simplicity, solidarity, and love without barriers, detachment, justice and reconciliation.<sup>40</sup> It is here where the refoundation of religious life will take place. Religious life will be barefooted, and impregnated of modesty that will accompany without protagonism the people of God in their exodus towards the Promised Land.<sup>41</sup> Therefore we are called to refound religious life.

As we mentioned before for the refoundation of religious life it is needed responsible dissenting religious and their communities to be able to live in a constant tension so to keep the balance between the mystical and political aspects of discipleship - I mean between prayer and prophetic witness. - This will imply that these creative people may enter into Christ Paschal mystery experiencing in themselves the painful period of gestation (of chaos and crisis) in both personal and communitarian level, for mission.<sup>42</sup> It also demands discerning what God wants and doing it, not merely what the congregation or individuals desire. In their discernment:

1. They acknowledge the chaos within themselves personally and within contemporary religious life.
2. Only by accepting the inner brokenness, poverty and powerlessness to begin to discover the mystery of God's all powerful love and compassion.

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Jose Maria Guerrero, *op.cit.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Gerald Arbuckle, *op.cit.*, Refounding the Church, p. 8.

3. To realise as never before that any constructive movement out of the present malaise is impossible without the CALL AND POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.<sup>43</sup>

Consequently, Mary's question, "How can this be?"(Luke 1:34) resounds through the centuries and finds a good place in our times. The answer is being given to us, just as it was given to Mary in the solitude and quietness of our listening heart:

**"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:35a-38b).**

Who better than Mary to accompany us in our journey towards a deeper encounter with "The Word"? Let us journey with Mary in time and history so as to understand her as a Jewish village woman of Faith and rediscover the way to answer to this personal call with a personal choice.

## **2.2 The Incarnation and discipleship.**

For us to rediscover the essence of discipleship in the company of Mary, it is needed that we may become aware of the way we relate with her and her impact in our lives. For this purpose we will focus on Mary as a Jewish village woman of Faith. The concreteness of her life, overshadowed by the Spirit, will lead us to rediscover the beauty of discipleship in the New Testament based on the Companionship Model.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* and cf. Johannes B. Metz, Followers of Christ, (USA: Burns and Oates/Paulist Press, 1978), p. 47.

### 2.2.1 The Companionship Model:

#### **Miriam of Nazareth, a Jewish village woman of faith<sup>44</sup>.**

Through the years, a way of relating with Mary that has dominated the tradition is the one of the patronage model whereby "we little people need more important people to plead our cause [before God] and obtain spiritual and material blessings."<sup>45</sup> But the early Christians did not have this kind of relationship with God nor with Mary. For them the dead were companions in the "one spirit-filled community"<sup>46</sup> i.e., the communion of Saints. The companionship model, therefore, is another way of relating with Mary. It is best expressed in the theology of Vatican II where the saint in heaven are not between God and those on earth but alongside their brothers and sisters in Christ. This occurs in a context of mutual sharing in the project of the reign of God<sup>47</sup>(Cf. Heb 12:1). In the African society this can be easily understood and enriched with the concept and the experience of the 'living dead', i.e. our ancestors that are close to us. This happens when particular persons emerge who live out their call (vocation) in constant self-awareness, listening and discernment. They make the will of God the centre and core of their actions and decisions bringing forth life in the Spirit that energises individual and communitarian hope. It is therefore when these persons are recognised by the spiritual intuition of the community as a whole, that they become publicly significant for the life of others.

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<sup>44</sup>Elizabeth A. Johnson. *"Mary of Nazareth: Friend of God and Prophet."* America, 182 (21), 2000, p. 8.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>46</sup>A grand company of "friends of God and prophets" (Wis 7:27). A community of holy people endeavouring to live their lives praising God, loving each other and struggling for justice and peace. It also includes those who have died and now live in the embrace of God, see *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, (21 November, 1964) No. 51.

Such a person is Miriam of Nazareth, a Jewish village woman of faith. As Jewish she belonged to the people of Israel. The Israelites believed in a God who hears the cries of the poor and frees the enslaved into covenanted relationship, faith stemming from Abraham and Sarah onward. Hence it is reasonable to assume that Mary, with her husband Joseph, practised this Jewish religion in their home and it is easy to confirm given Jesus' clear knowledge and practice of it.<sup>48</sup>

Mary's village consisted of farmers and craftsmen serving their basic needs with the sweat of their brow. As a Jewish woman married to Joseph the carpenter, Mary used to feed, clothe and nurture her household. Due to the cultural and religious set up of this village, we can be almost sure that most of the women in this context were unlettered. Violence and poverty prevailed as a consequence of the villagers' revolutionary resistance to be a "colony," to say so, under the heel of imperial Rome.

Mary's life and the life of so many poor women today have a lot of similarities, even to giving birth in a homeless situation or fleeing as a refugee with her baby to a strange land to escape being killed by military action, and so on.<sup>49</sup>

This concrededness of her life in a Mediterranean Jewish peasant society leads us to discover this Jewish village woman as Miriam of Nazareth, a woman of faith.

As depicted in Scripture, she walked by faith, not by sight, asking questions, pondering things in her heart and plunging into the dark night of faith when grief stabbed her to the heart.<sup>50</sup>

For example, the Annunciation scene is nothing less than a prophetic vocation story. Mary, after questioning, gives her free assent, launching her life on an adventure whose

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<sup>48</sup> Cf Elizabeth Johnson, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

outcome is unknown. Her very pregnancy takes place through the overshadowing of the Spirit (Ruah),<sup>51</sup> the creative Spirit of God. Supported and inspired by the Spirit, she receives a personal call and at the same time she makes a personal choice by consenting to become the Mother of the Word. Her response of faith with all her human and feminine I, included both perfect co-operation with the grace of God that precedes and assists, and perfect openness to the action of the Holy Spirit, who constantly "brings faith to completion by his gifts."<sup>52</sup>

The relationship between Mary and the Spirit is a helping relationship where Mary overshadowed by the Spirit is helped to believe that the Child of hers was the fulfilment of the promises of God (Luke 1:35). It is also a model of an accompanying relationship where the Spirit journeys with Mary as Jesus grows up. The Spirit abides with her during the most difficult and mysterious moments of her life and the life of Jesus "such as the crucible of the darkness of sorrows, weakness, adversities, calumnies, interior sterility and desolation"<sup>53</sup> i.e. in her pregnancy, in the encounter of Mary with Simeon and Anna and at the cross, etc.

For me the most challenging aspect of Mary's response of faith is that, accompanied by the Spirit, her 'fiat' was and continues to be a model of free collaboration with God's grace. Mary constantly meditates and interiorizes the daily events of Jesus life and her own

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<sup>51</sup> "In the Old Testament (Gn 1:2; Dt 32:11), the Spirit is not only eager to protect God's chosen children by His overarching, loving protection, but can be seen as a force that stirs life to greater life as the eagle and the eaglet. The eagle image for the Israelites of the desert was very rich with meaning. Often they had seen the mother eagle take the individual eaglet on its strong pinions and fly up into the sky. At a given moment, the mother eagle would dip from under the eaglet, leaving the little eagle alone in mid-air to fly upward or to plummet downward. The eagle would quickly fly under the falling eaglet to catch it again, to bear it up on its pinions only to repeat the process until the eaglet let go of fear and soared up into the heavens -an eagle at last! The Holy Spirit is the Ruah, the wind and the breath - source of our living being- that blow over the universe creating a loving relationship between God and man. (Gn. 2:7), see George A. Maloney, SJ, Mary: The Womb of God (Denville, New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1976), p. 72.

<sup>52</sup> Official Catechetical Text in preparation for the Holy Year 2000 Your Spirit Lord Fills the Earth p. 66.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. George Maloney, *op.cit.*, p. 80.

life, searching always with great trust and simplicity the will of God. Becoming in this way more aware of the importance and meaning of these happenings "receiving a more complete understanding of her role in the history of salvation."<sup>54</sup>

In a word, Mary's relationship to the Holy Spirit is one of ever-increasing docility and surrender to the deifying power of the Spirit. The work of the Spirit in Mary leads her continually to ever-new levels of awareness of her oneness in the Trinity with the whole created world outside herself. As she co-operates with the Spirit, she receives a greater and greater infusion of faith, hope and love to experience God as Abba. She 'sees' the indescribable tenderness of the Father that makes her, through His Spirit of love, His daughter. She 'hears' the enchantments of the Word proceeding from the Father and claiming her as mother and spouse. She 'tastes' the sweetness of the Spirit's love from the Father and the Son, vivifying her and exalting her as blessed. Still she grows daily in this transforming union with God as One and as Three. The greatest joy that the Spirit infuses into Mary is to allow her to be purified of her nothingness and filled with joyful humility by entering into the Paschal mystery of God's own son, her son. She thus experiences the oneness of God's essence as Love within her and at the same time the inexpressible mystery of the unique relationships of Father to Son in the Spirit, reproduced in the depths of her being. It is always the Spirit, that puts her in communion with the whole Trinitarian life. What the Spirit revealed to her as an inner experience of the Holy Trinity living and loving within her, she also experienced as the same Holy Trinity living and loving in God's untreated energies within each creature. Mary's life on earth, continued in her heavenly state, was one of humble service as a purified channel of God's love toward all creatures.<sup>55</sup>

Mary, a loving companion in our journey, is able to turn back such a generous donation to the Father through Jesus Christ, in the Spirit in a complete self-emptying and life-giving donation. This is a dangerous memory for all of us Christians as we journey together along the path of faith in companionship. This is the path of the Spirit, the path of wholeness and holiness, the path of the Incarnation, the source and foundation of our Christian and religious life.

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<sup>54</sup> cf. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 91-93.

Mary stands forth in the memory of the community for the way in which she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God, she heard the Word of God and acted upon it and because charity and a spirit of service were the driving force of her actions.<sup>56</sup>

In this way Mary as a Jewish village woman of faith, overshadowed by the Spirit, is the companion of the ones following Christ by recalling with them "the dangerous memory of the Incarnation," a true path for discipleship.

With Mary, the dangerous memory of the Incarnation shakes our status quo as religious and calls us to live a life in the Spirit, a life of true companionship and discipleship. Mary, as "anawim" and first disciple, was constantly learning with Jesus and from Jesus how to live a life in the Spirit, letting the will of God be done according to His Word, letting God be God and growing constantly in an ever-expanding consciousness. We have been called to follow Christ based on the paschal event in a constant life giving. This total donation to the Father and to our brothers and sisters in union with Christ leads us to reveal God's love the way Mary did, in the midst of the individual and social contradictions of our life. It must be a love without limits, one that infiltrates every social level and reaches everyone without exclusion. We need to make ourselves vulnerable for the sake of the Kingdom, that is, capable of being wounded, hurt, disappointed, ridiculed, abandoned, subject to misunderstanding, rejection and even death. Our lives must witness that it is possible to overcome our tendency to possess (with all its fruits such as selfishness, pride, injustice, oppression, racism, division, envy and so on) through the Power of the Spirit, ours must be the decisive choice to be in solidarity with the least fortunate, holding nothing back.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Bertrand Buby, SM, Mary the Faithful Disciple. (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press. 1985), p. 80.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Claudette LaVerdiere, *Class notes for 7 September on 'Poverty of Spirit'* Tangaza Collage. Nairobi, 2000. p. 3.

We must be one among them as Jesus was, praying, laughing, crying and struggling with them. If this is the source of our life of prayer, we will be led to a deeper experience of the love of God, mirroring the Trinitarian experience as revealed in the Incarnation. As Mary is our true companion, all of us Christians, and specifically formators in religious life, are also called to be true companions to those in formation. Thus, both the formee and the formator simultaneously may grow in the image and likeness of God as faithful disciples of the Word in the company of Mary.

It is for this reason that I would like to take this opportunity to look at the implications of discipleship in the New Testament in the company of Mary, 'the disciple and formator,' so that we may be enlightened as followers of Christ, called to accompany others in the same path of faith.

#### A) Mary in the Pauline writings (Discipleship in Paul)

Through the Pauline literature we are invited to be Christ-centered as Mary was emptying ourselves to be filled with the Word of God and in this way to have new life through faith, in the power of the Spirit. Being born to a new life, the life of true freedom, as Children of God, united in one body that is Christ, the Incarnate Word, source and beginning of the life in the Spirit.

In Paul's spirituality we do not find the word disciple but we find that the criterion for holiness, namely, to be centred in Christ and his mysteries through faith. Mary, as a Jewish woman of faith, meets Paul's criterion to be totally immersed "in Christ" her Son and her Lord. The emptying out of Jesus (Kenosis) in Philippians 2:6-9 is complemented by the humility, openness and poverty of Mary who totally emptied herself out to God filled with his Word. Hence, the humanness of Jesus which springs from Mary, his Mother, and the graced nature of Christ who belongs to God, is found in Romans 1:3-4 and Gal 4:4-5. In the allegory of Gal 4:28-30, Isaac and Jesus are the "sons of the one born free" (Gal 4:30). Isaac is the child "born according to the Spirit" (Gal 4:29) because of the faith of Abraham and Jesus too, is the child born according to the Spirit because of Mary's faith."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, Bertrand Buby, SM, *op.cit.*, p. 36 and c.f. Raymond E. Brown et.al. "Mary in the New Testament" (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1978), pp. 34,41 and 45.

## B) Mary in Mark's Gospel (Discipleship in Mark)

Mary's patient waiting and inquiry represents our own struggles in following Jesus. Just as she struggled to understand, we struggle with our doubts to come to a deeper faith and stronger commitment to Jesus. "Mark is where we see our raw potential as believers. The challenge is to continue to learn, pray and persevere in simplicity, clear-sightedness, and detachment from our securities and culture."<sup>59</sup> We must put ourselves along the unfinished path of searching for the will of God in every circumstance of our lives and doing it. We learn how to surrender our will to the will of the Father in union with Christ moved by their love (Spirit) in the company of Mary who also had to learn step by step what it meant to be a disciple. It is only in this way that we can understand that:

Mark's Gospel focuses discipleship on Jesus himself. Jesus completes his mission on earth with the high note of surrendering his will to the Father.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, Mark develops the theme of discipleship while calling the believing Christian community to overcome any of its selfish attachments so that the believers may become followers of Christ despite the overwhelming oppression from those who hate the Christian community. In Mark all of Jesus' disciples fall short of their discipleship. However, even though they misunderstand, fail and obstruct such a call, they are important witnesses for Mark's community.<sup>61</sup>

Perhaps the way in which the disciples are described in Mark's gospel is with the intention to foster confidence in the followers of Christ that the call and mission of the community is "to remain faithful despite opposition, persecution, and separation from the

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<sup>59</sup> Bertrand Buby, *op.cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>60</sup> Fr. Peter Leo Fernando SVD, "*Discipleship in the Gospel of Matthew in confrontation with S.V.D. Formation in Langata*" (Unpublished Long Essay for the Institute of Spirituality and Religious Formation, April 2000), pp. 10-11.

<sup>61</sup> Bertrand Buby, S.M., *op.cit.*, p. 38.

homeland and the physical presence of Jesus."<sup>62</sup> Bringing them to be focused on the fulfilment of the will of the Father as the core of discipleship as expressed in Mark 3:33-35

"Behold my mother and my brothers!

Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother"

### C) Mary in Matthew's Gospel

In Matthew's Gospel Mary, the faithful disciple, does the will of the Father just as Jesus and Joseph do the will of the Father. The family of Mary and Joseph are, in a sense, the first blurry model of both community life and family life.

Faith as willing trust in the fatherly kindness of God who cares for his people is essential as the one of Mary. Jesus' family is the foundation for the true Israel which he has formed of all believers through their call to discipleship. Matthew's discipleship uses the pattern command and execution of command to stress that a true disciple obeys immediately and perfectly.<sup>63</sup>

Consequently discipleship in Matthew is a call to be shared with others in the Christian community.<sup>64</sup> This is one of the greatest challenges that we are facing now days because we experience our call as an individual one that implies a personal response with a determined determination to do the will of the Father. But this personal response must find expression in the Christian community that, like Matthew's community, recognises the need to review and reinterpret constantly old traditions so as to look at Christ and his Church with new eyes. Because we, as Matthew's community are in a period of transition and new encounter, that means a time for inculturation, a time for incarnation.

Matthew's gospel setting is a community which easily could be divided against itself. This community, deeply embedded in Jewish origins, had traumatically experienced itself being separated from the synagogue as it experienced a great influx of Gentiles.

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41 and cf Raymond E. Brown *op.cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, Bertrand Buby, SM, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

This shift in its Christian existence demanded a new interpretation of old traditions, a new way of looking at Christ and his Church, at the Old Testament and Salvation history, at discipleship and morality.<sup>65</sup>

According to the experience of this community Matthew realised that it was essential for the welfare of the community to demonstrate that Jesus is the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies (See Isa 7:14 in reference to Matt 1:22-23; Mic 5:1 and 2 Sam 5:3 with Matt 2:5-6; Hos 11:1 with Matt 2:15b; Jer 31:15 with Matt 2:17-18; Isa 4:3 and Judg 16:17 with Matt 2:23b) so to help the community to grow in stability and strength. In faith, hope and love.

Matthew uses the Old Testament to show how in Jesus' life God is carefully ordering history towards the fulfilment of his prophetic WORD. Mary's miraculous conception is an eschatological event. It shows us Mary's place in God's plan. Mary is among the 'just' persons, like Joseph who express a life of wholeness dedicated to God. She carries in her person 'Emmanuel' (Mt. 1:18) the Messiah, who brings salvation to all people by being closely attached to her Son (the Son of Man and the Son of God) opening one's heart to what God is speaking now and listening to his revelation.<sup>66</sup>

On the other hand in Matthew we find Jesus teaching his disciples through parables and there is a great amount of freedom given to his disciples to clear their doubts by asking questions (17:10; 18:1.21). Hence this freedom demands conversion (Matt 5:48) that is a metanoia, a change of heart, in which we turn away from all our self-protective values. In Matthew disciples are to be among the little ones (Matt 18:3-4), as in the first four beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-6) which are Mary's Magnificat in action. Through the beatitudes, she has the Gospel within her, enabling her to live out the Good news perfectly. Hers is the full response of a woman who has been surprised by the joy of God's love<sup>67</sup>. Suffering becomes

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51 and c.f. Raymond E. Brown *op.cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>66</sup> Fr. Leo Fernando, SVD, *op.cit.*, pp. 14-15 and c.f. Raymond E. Brown, *op.cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Bertrand Buby, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

intrinsic to the quest for discipleship (Mt. 10:24-25)<sup>68</sup> If religious strive to adopt the spirit of the beatitudes, that is the attitude of Mary and of Jesus throughout their lives, they will be

a kind of shock therapy instituted by the Holy Spirit for the Church as whole. Against the dangerous accommodations and questionable compromises to which the Church as a large-scale institution is inclined, religious are called to press for the uncompromising nature of the Gospel and of the imitation of Christ. In this sense they are the institutionalised form of a dangerous memory within the Church<sup>69</sup> and the Society.

#### D) Mary in Luke's Gospel (Discipleship in Luke)

Mary is presented in Luke 2:19 as a woman of prayer, pondering the significance of the irruption of God in her life. This experience cannot be fully comprehended at once hence, she keeps on reflecting and searching the will of God in her daily experiences, i.e.

In Luke the Annunciation can be seen as the calling of Mary to discipleship. Mary's response to Gabriel shows the spontaneous reaction of a woman totally dependant on God 'I am the Lord's handmaid, let it be with me as you say' (Luke 1:38). Mary has been recognised as a woman of faith and as a disciple who is obedient to God's word, that is, to the actual salvific events accomplished by God among his people (Deut 28:1-4). In Acts 1:14 we see that Mary is as a believing disciple, the only bridge from the birth of Christ to the birth of the Church. In Luke also, she is the bridge for the hidden years of Jesus to his active ministry.<sup>70</sup>

Mary, as a Jewish woman, sings in the manner of her people praising God for his mercy and love toward her and for his strong fidelity to the covenants made with her ancestors (Luke 1:46-55). Mary is self-confident and free because she centres her sight and trust on the power and presence of God in her own soul and in the memory of her people Israel.

Mary's attitude of humility, acceptance and obedience to the Word of God is seen in 1:38-45 and her inner reflection in 2:19,51. Consequently, as a prayerful person "she will be

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. Fr. Leo Fernando, SVD, *op.cit.*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>69</sup> Johannes B. Metz Followers of Christ (USA: Burns and Oates/Paulist Press, 1978) p. 12.

<sup>70</sup> Bertrand Buby, SM, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

present among the disciples (Acts 1:14), not only as an image of the Church but also as a member of the Church. It is in this way that Mary experiences the call of discipleship in every stage of her Son's life and even in the life of his Church."<sup>71</sup>

Hence, Luke is the evangelist who emphasises that prayer is at the heart of discipleship. Mary is a perfect disciple who "continues to hear God's Word and always accomplishes it (Cf. Luke 8:15; Luke 11:27-28) precisely because she prays."<sup>72</sup>

She is a witness to prayer within the Gospel just as Jesus himself is, articulating the promises of God to his people through profound reflection on the events in which she is involved in the mystery of Salvation History praying within and for the community. Mary is a model for our faith, for she is the most experienced of disciples, knowing him from the crib to the cross and again when the fullness of Jesus Spirit comes at Pentecost, she is present as a disciple among other disciples.<sup>73</sup>

It is for this reason that prayer and presence will be the source and foundation for the disciple's apostolic work and for us followers of Christ.

Luke's texts on discipleship emphasise the need for wholesome response to the call of Jesus. The radical nature of discipleship is brought out together with the need for daily response through prayer and continuous perseverance. Attention rests on the disciples' relationship to Jesus and his mission. Luke has written to persuade the disciples of Jesus to labor perseveringly in the apostolate of bringing the good news to all peoples.<sup>74</sup>

Consequently, as is true of the other evangelists who shared the experience of the community following Christ, Luke also presents for us the challenge of reviewing our understanding of prayer. I think that the problem in our contemporary society arises when

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>72</sup> The prayer of Mary is a prayer of biblical reflection. She is pondering over the concrete signs of the Spirit in her life and the life of her people Israel. The word used for pondering over or treasuring means "retention", "the keeping of something in mind". She doesn't solve the mystery, she ponders, attempts to understand, she "re-members" the events and she remains calm and joyful, see Bertrand Buby, *op.cit.*, p. 91. and cf. Raymond E. Brown *op.cit.*, p. 174.

<sup>73</sup> Bertrand Buby, *op.cit.*, p. 88. and cf. Brown *op.cit.*, p. 176.

<sup>74</sup> Bertrand Buby, *op.cit.*, pp. 91-92.

we compartmentalise our daily living. Lacking a wholistic approach, we do not integrate each happening of our life with the paschal mystery of Christ, the Incarnate Word through prayer. I would like to emphasise the importance and the need to set apart specific quality moments of time and space for an intimate encounter with Christ in prayer. These moments will be the source and sustenance of our discipleship expressed in a personal, communitarian and apostolic life. We cannot do the will of God if we do not search for it, and prepare ourselves to listen to it. We cannot share what we do not have. It is only through prayer that our communitarian and apostolic life can be a prophetic witness of the love of God.

#### E) Mary in John's Gospel (Discipleship in John)

What else can we say? Our journey with Mary through the New Testament has led us from the moment of receiving a personal call to the climax of our discipleship: friendship and intimacy.

In John, Mary sets the criterion of discipleship: belief in Jesus and the following of Jesus even to his death on the cross.<sup>75</sup> becoming intimate friend of Jesus begotten by God. (Cf. John 1:12-13). "Even though John uses the technique of misunderstanding where Jesus speaks on one level but the listener hears on another level."<sup>76</sup> John deals with the intimate relationship of Jesus with his own (John 13:1) in terms of friendship (John 15:14-15). "The conditions for such friendship and discipleship are living out the words and love-commands of Jesus (John 13:34-35; 13:15,17) in humble service. This is clearly expressed in the drama of the passion and death of Jesus where Mary appears and is considered a disciple of Jesus. She receives the love of Jesus and listens to his final words of revelation. She is present, standing with the disciple whom Jesus loved; they are entrusted to one another, the community of the beloved disciple is born and the mother of Jesus -the woman of faith- is present."<sup>77</sup>

At the foot of the cross we are invited once again to give our life to Christ and with Christ, becoming one body through the power of the Spirit.

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

By receiving Mary, the beloved disciple receives the community. It is at the foot of the cross that Jesus breathes his Spirit upon the two: Judaism and Christianity, which, makes up the new community, the Church, the new chosen people, messianic family united in the same faith under the care and protection of the same mother. This new community receives the blessings promised to Israel and will be witness of the revelation of the glory of Jesus and the love of God for the world.<sup>78</sup> It is at this point that Jesus realises his journey to the Father has been completed after entrusting Mary to the beloved disciple (John 19:28; 30). These two disciples are symbols of the call to perfect discipleship, which reaches its highest demands in the context of community and the care and concern we have for one another. Intimacy, love, community and mutual sharing are presented at the foot of the cross. The members of the new community are now, through their intimate relationship with Jesus, brothers and sisters in him. [Let us become aware that we are that new community!] The beloved disciple represents us as living out the fullness of our Christian life with wholesomeness.<sup>79</sup>

Christ has set us free. Therefore, there is no difference between an African, European or American... In receiving the love of Christ we receive the new light, the new life (cf. John 1), the new creation, the new community, the new family of God, where love is the cornerstone. This is the new creation which began at Cana through the sign of water made into wine, while at Calvary becomes event in the commitment of love given by the Spirit of Jesus to his mother and the beloved disciple. The foundation of the first Christian community, our inheritance, a treasure that we carry in earthen vessels. If we really want to be what we are called to be this treasure must be cultivated and fostered in our contemporary realities because:

Community is the process of becoming united through the common experience of a core vision. Community is not about feeling. It exists only to the degree that people are prepared to allow Christ himself to be the 'corner-stone'(Eph 2:20) with the asceticism and openness to others that this implies. Hence, a community is only a community when the majority of the members make the transition from 'the community for myself to 'myself for the community.'<sup>80</sup> " This is a movement from egoism to love, from death to resurrection... It means wanting others to fulfil

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.106 and cf. Raymond E. Brown, *op.cit.*, pp. 214-215.

<sup>79</sup> Bertrand Buby, *op.cit.*, p. 109. and cf. Raymond E. Brown, *op.cit.*, pp. 288-289.

<sup>80</sup> Gerald Arbuckle, *op. cit.*, From Chaos to Mission p. 150.

themselves, according to God's plan...Consequently, experts in communion, religious are, therefore, called to be an ecclesial community in the Church and in the world, witness and architects of the plan for unity.<sup>81</sup>

#### F) Revelation and Mary

Mary, in an accommodated sense, is like the woman who represents a sign of hope and victory for the Church and the world. She has the courage to believe and to persevere in following her Son Jesus despite inward struggles and outward opposition to him. She now is experiencing the fullness of life. This encourages us to see ourselves as part of the people cared for by God even as we experience opposition and hostility. We are not alone in our discipleship to Jesus on either the human or the divine/heavenly dimension.

In Revelation the disciples are "All who obey God's commandments and bear witness for Jesus." Mary, as disciple, expresses in her spiritual journey the best of Israel, the people of God and a community of faith awaiting the coming of the Messiah. Also, she is the first among believers in the new community of Christ who is blessed among the believers because of her faith and her obedience to the Word of God become flesh. As disciple, she also witnesses to the mystery of suffering because of her testimony to Jesus.<sup>82</sup>

Taking Mary as the woman that is the archetype of the Church and the full flowering of the Old Israel, she is a sign that the Church is surrounded by God's power and protection (clothed with the sun) and is in continuity with the past people of God yet suggestive of the new people, both of them led into the desert where God nourished her and bore her up on eagle's wings (Dt. 32:10-11).<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, Religious and human promotion 1978 (Sydney: St. Paul Publications, 1981), p. 11.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>83</sup> Bertrand Buby, *op.cit.*, p. 113.

Therefore, if at this point of our journey we ask ourselves who a Disciple is, we can answer that it is those Jesus wanted to be with him. They are those who knew him and experienced the dynamism of being in personal contact with him, conscious of his presence in their lives through an intimate relationship. Those who became disciples were the ones who shared freely what they freely had received (the good news), and consequently, those who opposed any kind of evil (personal, social, economic...) despite the consequences.

Now that we have an overview of discipleship in the New Testament, accompanied by Mary, we can highlight some important aspects for formation based on the experience of discipleship fixing our sight, as Mary did, on the Word made flesh, " the one who is the way, the truth and the life."

### **2.3 Formation in the Gospels**

I think that the Gospels in themselves portray the best program of formation (discipleship) even though in them we would never find a solution as such for our formation difficulties and challenges. We will get the answer by reading, reflecting, praying and acting according to them. That is how we will find the source (principles and methods) of formation.

The key to formation in the gospels is the reflection upon the personal and communitarian experience of Jesus Christ. Therefore, if we would like to explore the elements of Religious Formation in the Gospels we cannot do better than to fix our gaze on Jesus as formator, and see the disciples as the formees.

Jesus Christ is the model for both, the formee and the formator. By looking at the attitudes of Jesus towards his disciples as well as his way of relating with others, we are able to grasp some aspects that will enrich and challenge our understanding of formation.

Jesus initiated the formation of the apostles by calling them to conversion and faith in the good news. They accepted their call by giving up all things and following Jesus (Luke 5:11).<sup>84</sup> We now understand the process of "giving up" as the process of metanoia and conversion (Kenosis). Kenosis is the actual challenge of inculturation-incarnation where first of all, the person in formation and the formator journey towards the recognition of gifts and talents (Matt 5:14-16). They share with each other the value of gifts as Jesus did with the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) and the formees are helped to bring out the best in themselves in authenticity and freedom.

In Jesus' "way of formation," all of this happens in an environment of safety, trust and friendship, with both himself and God the Father, as well as with other believers (community), in this way, He offered and fostered a deep sense of belonging. We understand this process as our goal, but at the same time we are aware that this process is slow and takes time. Formation does not happen in a short period of time.

Jesus' "way of formation" was by inspiring, teaching and supporting his followers. He helped them to discover a sense of personal worth and dignity as well as the capacity to realise failures, sins and to offer and accept forgiveness. Jesus confirms through his life the attitudes that are needed in a formator: listening, observation, dialogue, presence, ability to challenge, to foster self-awareness, self-acceptance and decision making, exploring implications, sharing information, making connections, always advocating life, conversion (metanoia) and maturity in freedom (Cf. John. 4:5-42; Luke 24:13-17) in constant self giving.<sup>85</sup> For example, Jesus repeatedly retold the vision of the Kingdom (Luke 6:20,22-23).

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<sup>84</sup> Gerald Arbuckle, *op. cit.*, "From Chaos to Mission" p. 194.

<sup>85</sup> cf. Carmen de Santiago Perez. "*Leadership in Formation*" (Unpublished Thesis for Tangaza Institute of Spirituality and Religious Formation. 1998), pp. 11-16.

He modelled for his disciples a life of prayer and action (Matt 14:23; Luke 18:11; 11:1-13; 22:40), constantly repeating truths with direct language, parables and actions (Luke 24:25; 9; 46-50). Jesus was aware that conversion was slow and he helped them understand and learn the aspects of detachment and asceticism (Luke 14:27; Mark 6:8; Matt 8:20) as well as the need of commitment to justice (Luke 4:18) and creativity (Luke 6:39 Mark 12:37 Luke 20:19-44). Jesus developed empathy and freedom in his disciples (Luke 23:34; 19:1-10; 22:61 John 19:26-27; 5:6) as well as a sense of humor (John 10:10), rooted in the detachment of oneself<sup>86</sup>(Phil 2:6-7; 1 Cor 1:27-28), and total openness and availability to everybody ( Samaritans and Gentiles John 4:1-42). Nowadays, this is what we could describe as multi-cultural formation.

Jesus also experienced the difficulties of being a formator. He coped with the incoherence and lack of understanding of the disciples with patience and unconditional love, as the Father loved Him. Jesus' attitude invites the disciples to put themselves "on the way" that is on an unfinished journey where the focus is the Kingdom, the will of the Father (John 6:66-67; 2:17; 16:7; 20:17).

With the above-mentioned, we can confirm that the best way to explore the process of formation is to look at the mystery of the Incarnation: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). "He emptied himself, becoming as human beings are and being in every way like a human being" (Phil 2:7). The self-emptying of the Incarnation brought Christ to be fully human and fully alive. In that way He became the way, the path of wholeness, a dangerous memory of our call to be who we are called to be.

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<sup>86</sup> Gerald Arbuckle, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-200.

Therefore we can conclude that formation is a journey, a process of accompaniment and discernment. It is a process whereby the person, in and through community, becomes the responsible agent of her/his growth in Christ, in the service of the Church, according to the Charism and Spirituality of her/his own particular Congregation. This involves a personal and a sociocultural liberation.<sup>87</sup> Hence, formation never ceases.

The person will be helped, in the first place, to know the self and what it means to be human. Christ will be presented as the model of what the human person should aim to become, each in his or her own way. The formators are there to provide the means to be used and the skills necessary to progress.

Formation will take place when awareness is fostered. The one accompanying the person must constantly raise questions, enabling the person to remember past experiences and articulate them within the daily experiences and the challenge of following Christ. This implies in the formee an availability to communicate with others in simplicity and truth as well as to confront others when necessary, to deal reasonably with conflict and to accept others as they are. Growth takes place through learning to know and handle ourselves in the encounters and experiences of daily life, seeking professional help when needed. Hence, it is of great importance that those involved in formation, in this path of discipleship, be aware of its implications. Those called to serve in formation need to have it clear that it is a call to "share in the work of the Father, who through the Spirit fashions the inner attitudes of the Son in the hearts of the young man and woman."<sup>88</sup> This requires from the person the ability to live in a constant attitude of openness and docility to the action of the Holy Spirit. Thus,

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<sup>87</sup> John Paul II, The Consecrated Life (Africa: Paulines Publications, 1996), No. 65

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 66.

through experience and self-awareness she/he may be able to help others in the same process.

It is necessary as well that those in formation work have a general knowledge of the documents, traditions, Constitutions of the Institute and of the Church. As well as a deep understanding of the Scriptures. They must also understand the basis of human development, being aware of the need to attend to the individual in the different aspects of their lives, background, culture and behaviours appropriately. One of the great needs and challenges in formation, for me, is that of being present, accompanying those in formation in a variety of ways. Disclosing in togetherness the beauty of the following of Christ. All of these aspects are involved in the preparation of people for the total consecration of themselves to God in the following of Christ at the service of the Church's mission.

Formees must be open to the growth process, being open to the action of the Holy Spirit, travelling the road of formation with generosity and accepting in faith the means of grace offered by the Lord.<sup>89</sup> The person in a continuous process of transformation that never ends, will gradually identify her/himself with the attitudes of Christ (Beatitudes) towards the Father. This process will involve the whole person in every aspect of their personality.

The cornerstone for both formator and formee will be the moments of personal dialogue in an environment of confidentiality, trust, honesty, safety, understanding and prayer. Both of them will be able to share, evaluate, read the signs of the times in order to practise discernment that leads the formee towards decision making, always seeking the will of God and the good of the person.

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 65.

Formation in Africa finally, will take place when a deep human and spiritual transformation takes into account our African cultures and is imbued with the values of the Gospel. This will be ongoing.

In order to achieve an integrated or holistic formation we must bear in mind the need of a well planned program that will provide human, cultural, spiritual and pastoral preparation, which pays special attention to the harmonious integration of all its various aspects.<sup>90</sup> For this purpose, formation programmes and structures have to be carefully thought out and prepared. Programmes should pay attention to a method which needs to be progressive and will lead those who wish to consecrate themselves to put on the mind of Christ.<sup>91</sup>

Therefore formators, through a well-planned formation program, must give the person space to ponder Christ's call and its implications in their lives. The disposing factors in this process are theological reflection and study, prayer, suffering and skilful accompaniment. It is a reflective attitude that must remain always as the one of Mary, the faithful disciple, and Jesus, the Incarnate Word. The person in freedom takes responsibility for her/his own growth in co-operation with the Spirit throughout the rest of life. Therefore those in charge of formation should be sensitive to the action of grace. They must form the young men or women in genuine freedom.

The primary place for this process to take place is the community where good practical experiences are provided. Here the candidates test their skills in the apostolate as well as their spirit of initiative and their ability to adapt and to persevere in difficulties.

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 65.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 68.

Hopefully this will be a prolongation of the irruption of God in their lives. That is the experience of the love of God and his grace that makes the individual become more incarnated, more who she/he is called to be. This happens if she/he in freedom opens the door to the adventure of conversion, of encounter... of Christification as formee and formator.

What has been said so far, has prepared us to enter into the challenge of how to live this in our daily living (spirituality). I would like us to enter in to our next chapter by reflecting upon the necessary elements for a personal spirituality as well as a study of the spirituality of the Incarnate Word Sisters so as to conclude this long essay looking at the Spirituality of the Beatitudes as a spirituality of conflict for current times in our Congregation, in the Afrincan Continent and in the whole world.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **3. Incarnation-Inculturated and Spirituality.**

In the previous chapter we were talking about Inculturation-Incarnation as a personal call, a personal choice, an universal witness. This is the challenge for religious life in the third millennium.

Consequently each one of us plays an important role in our historic development. This demands of us to become more aware of the need to deepen the charism and spirituality of our institutes in such a way that it may enable us to stand firm in this moment of chaos or transition. Thus, to give birth to that which has never been in existence before. This will happen when each individual, aware of her/his own cultural background (enculturation), enlightened by the gospel values and cross-culture encounters (Inculturation-incarnation) may integrate in her/his own life the common vision - style of life- of the Institute (Personal/Congregational Charism and Spirituality). It is then when the specific mission of each institute will find new and unique ways of expression being at the same time the source of life and stem of unity in our contemporary society.

For this purpose I will present the necessary elements for a personal spirituality that will serve as a foundation for our reflection and understanding of the Incarnate Word Sisters spirituality, based on the Beatitudes and its actual implications.

### 3.1 Necessary elements of a personal spirituality:

I believe that a healthy or wholistic<sup>92</sup> spirituality cannot be built on the ruins of the human person. A personal spirituality respects human wholeness<sup>93</sup> and "is not in opposition to holiness and religious commitment. It is a religious outlook as well as a way of structuring one's life in order to embody religious values. A religious orientation question can be: How is God leading and loving us in all aspects of our life?"<sup>94</sup> Therefore, a personal spirituality acknowledges that all aspects of a person's life must be subjected to the transforming influence of the Spirit. It attempts to embrace the totality of a person's existence, including one's relationship with others, with one's work and with the material world. God's Spirit dwells and acts in all aspects of our lives. Hence, a personal spirituality sees ongoing human growth as essential to religious maturation.

A spiritual life not built on a solid human development is born of struggle and is liable to be superficial and escapist. Growth in religious life can best happen in the situation which best fosters personal growth. Sanctity, if it is to be genuine, must be bound up with authentic human life and thus with the uniqueness, the limited capabilities and potentialities, and the emotional maturity of the individual. Generally the spirit of God respects the natural laws of human development as it interacts with human beings in their struggle towards holiness and wholeness.<sup>95</sup>

The good news for those struggling to grow spiritually is that God is intimately involved in the process.

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<sup>92</sup> Holism is an aspiration to deal with one's life adequately giving each significant factor its due. It is here where the importance of noticing a key experience in the daily life situation, its relation with God and its fruits find its place, see Wilkie Au, SJ, By Way of the Heart (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), p. 18.

<sup>93</sup> A personal spirituality must respect the psychosomatic or body-spirit unity of the person. Holistic Spiritual growth must include the ongoing struggle for integration and wholeness.

<sup>94</sup> Wilkie Au, SJ, *op.cit.* By Way of the Heart. p. 18.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Therefore we can say that the heart of a personal spirituality is to love God with our whole being and others as we love ourselves. From the twofold commandment, one can derive five kinds of love: love of God, neighbourly love, communal love, particular love and self-love. These express themselves through prayer, ministry, community, friendship and self-esteem, balanced by humor, leisure, generativity and self-denial.<sup>96</sup> In short, holistic spirituality must be characterised by being developmental,<sup>97</sup> experiential<sup>98</sup> and integrative<sup>99</sup> in a transformational process.<sup>100</sup> Holiness, like wholeness, is ultimately not of our own making, but God's. Yet the call to wholeness and holiness is issued to each of us and requires that we prayerfully consider that, like Jesus, we too must stay in touch with our inner call and the Spirit-inspired vision for our lives through prayer and reflection. Thus, to discover our personal path and to pursue it faithfully involves individuation<sup>101</sup> which exacts a price pain and suffering.<sup>102</sup> In the life of Jesus, the path of individuation was the "way of the cross." And so it is for us. It necessitates getting to know our shadow and confronting our unknown motivations and attitudes by going deeper into ourselves. Finally, "a holistic Christian spirituality calls for individuals to be faithful to the struggle of loving, to be open to change and trust in the guidance of the ever-present Spirit of love. True spirituality consists

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-56.

<sup>97</sup> Growth as a balanced gradual process, see *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>98</sup> Allows for trial and error and leaves room for mistakes. Goal: to bring together head and heart, see *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Concerned with unified growth. It respects the psychosomatic unity of the person at work, at prayer and in relationships, see *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>100</sup> Ongoing conversion of individual and group life, see *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Process by which we become conscious of ourselves, of our shadows, co-dependency, perfectionism, envy, overwork, intimacy, etc., see *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> This is one of the sure signs that contemplation is happening. Gives us the pain of knowing that some of our convictions are shallow, inadequate, wrong. Contemplation first deprives us of familiar comforts. Then replaces them with inner emptiness in which new truth (alien and unsettling) can emerge.

in walking by the light of the Spirit. Wholeness will result as a kind of by-product of our earnest struggles to love."<sup>103</sup> The Spiritual journey entails moving from unconscious to conscious love.

The problem now is how to achieve this? I will present a study of Jeanne de Matel's and Paul's theology of Spiritual progress, as one of the means to achieve the above mentioned wholistic spirituality. I do so, by means of taking the symbolic language of Jeanne inviting us to build a Spiritual Temple wherein the Incarnate Word may dwell within us and we may be transformed in Him. "All the Christocentric spirituality that Jeanne de Matel <sup>104</sup>desired to have her daughters be imbued with is incorporated herein."<sup>105</sup>

### **3.2 What does it mean to be Christ-centered?**

When I was reading about Paul's doctrine of union with Christ I was amazed at the strong relationship I found with Jeanne de Matel's spirituality. But after reflecting I came to the realisation that if both of them are eminently Christ-centered what else can I expect?

Now, the important point is to clarify what it means to be Christ Centered. To be Christ-centered is to be in Christ. To have Christ in oneself denotes a vital union between Christ and the Christian. In this way all the actions of the person are performed under Christ's influence. At the same time it is to be of Christ. With this I mean that the Christian belong to Christ, hence they do not live for themselves but for Christ. Lastly it means that

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Jeanne de Matel is the foundress of the Incarnate Word Sisters. She was born in France in 1596 and died in 1670. She was a contemporary of Saint Vincent de Paul, John Jacob Olier and Francis de Sales. She was influenced by the schools of spirituality of the epoch, principally the French School of Cardinal Berulle.

<sup>105</sup> Jeanne Chezard de Matel "On the Eight Beatitudes." Positio for the Cause of the Servant of God, Vol. I p. 505.

Christ abides in each one of them. Christ dwells in the Christian, and by the indwelling of Christ in the individual, Christ dwells in the Community.<sup>106</sup>

It is for this reason that we can say that Christ has become a new self in them, principle of new life. Consequently, the community is born through the growth of Christ in individuals.

Hence Paul's [as well as Jeanne's] theology of Spiritual progress has as its starting point the initial consecration by which Christians have been constituted (founded, built) in a state of union with Christ that makes some moral demands on them. To attain their full development, they must ever more deeply 'be rooted' 'be founded' in their union with Christ. This demands a greater deepening and rooting in faith, hope and charity. They are to mature in wholeness. Their strength, however is not to be confused with human success and supports. It is quite compatible with infirmities and especially with buffeting by the world's great. In a special sense the truly strong is the one who, fully enlightened on the nature of Christian life, and having outgrown the warped psychological framework foreign to it, uses his liberty with a delicacy inspired by charity refusing to wield it indiscriminately at the expense of others. This growth in strength is produced by the Father and the Son, through the Holy Spirit. This means that God produces within the faithful, an ever greater union with Christ by increasing their faith, hope and charity.<sup>107</sup>

The above mentioned is the foundation of the Spiritual Temple that Jeanne proposes to all those who want to grow into maturity in Christ in faith, hope, love through the beatitudes.

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<sup>106</sup> Cf. George T. Montague, SM, "Maturing in Christ: St. Paul's Program for Christian Growth" (USA: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1964), p. 74. and Alfred Wikenhauser, "Pauline Mysticism: Christ in the Mystical Teaching of St Paul" ( Herder and Herder, 1960), p. 19.

<sup>107</sup> Montague, *op.cit.*, p.74.

### 3.3 The Spirituality of the Beatitudes

There have always been and I believe continue to be, people in the church who are so moved by love of Jesus Christ and his kingdom values that they come together forgoing marriage to be of service as groups to their neighbours within the Church and the society at large. They publicly commit themselves to live the Beatitudes of Jesus in a particular contemporary way. They share his concern for the out cast and marginalized in society his acceptance of the equality of woman, his earnest desire to listen to children... It is a vision liberating all people from oppressive values systems<sup>108</sup>

Based on Arbuckle's inspiration, I decided to take Jeanne's image of the Spiritual Temple (see Appendix No. 4) as an instrument to achieve the above mentioned. I am convinced that the spirituality of the Beatitudes comprehends and fosters self-awareness based in the true knowledge of Christ that leads us in to the Trinitarian life that must be reflected in our communities<sup>109</sup>. This is our challenge as religious entering into the third millennium. It constitute our contribution to the "Family of God in Africa."<sup>110</sup> At the same time it will be an universal witness, eagerly expected in the Church and in the Society, that of a "prophetic love."

Hence, I invite you to imagine this Spiritual Temple as a traditional African hut and the implications that its building brings forth for the community. As well to keep in mind the symbolic aspect of wholeness and fullness of life represented by the circular shape of it.

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<sup>108</sup> Gerald Arbuckle, *op. cit.*, From chaos to Mission (Refounding Religious Formation) pp. 11-33.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Michael Crosby, - House of Disciples - Church, Economics of Justice in Mathew. *Orbis.* p. 152.

<sup>110</sup> John Paul II The Church in Africa Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa.* P. 15.

### 3.4 Growth into maturity in Christ (Building the Spiritual Temple)

Jeanne Chezard de Matel bases religious life on two central elements:

1. The following of Christ.
2. Construction of the Kingdom

By means of building a Spiritual Temple where the first foundation on which she places the Columns is faith, which before all else we profess.<sup>111</sup> Pauline literature leads us to confirm that faith is the foundation of the spiritual edifice in Colossians 1:23. Thus, it is by faith that Christ lives in Christian's hearts (Gal 2:20) as his home (Eph 3:17).<sup>112</sup> Faith will be the foundation of our joy and peace and will work by charity. Faith implies receiving the word and believing in it, hence, acting according to it through the power of the Spirit (cf. Rom 15:13)

The joy of faith is at the very heart of Christianity. Faith is essentially a glad and grateful acceptance of the saving truth and entails a total commitment to it... The joy of the Lord is the very strength that transforms us into witnesses and servants of our brothers and sisters.<sup>113</sup>

On this foundation Jeanne will set the eight Beatitudes which will be the eight columns; two will be placed on the west, two on the east, two on the north and two on the south. Hope will surround this temple. Because hope fires the struggle (1Tim 6:12) and the race (Phil 3:14) in the spiritual warfare (Eph 6:11, 17:1; 1 Thess 5:8)<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Cf. George Montague, *op.cit.*, pp. 51, 180-182.

<sup>113</sup> Bernard Haring, "The Beatitudes: Their Personal and Social Implications" (Great Britain: St. Paul Publications, 1976), p. 1.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. George Montague, *op.cit.*, p. 183.

Although we are weak daughters, we will not shrink from undertaking this edifice, confiding in the Providence of Him who will not be lacking to us, if we are not first lacking in fidelity to Him.<sup>115</sup>

It is for this reason that Jeanne said that hope surrounds the Temple because it will provide the fundamental atmosphere of the Christians' life from the moment of their embracing the faith (Rom 8:24). Our trust is in God, as Jeanne said. This hope energises in us the capacity to be creative and look for all the alternatives to fulfil our goal despite our weaknesses because "His grace is enough for us."

The First Column is peace. Peace is the dwelling place of the Incarnate Word. Jeanne invite us to be lovers of peace, giving it an important place in our souls by having good will, which is really God's. This calls us to set aside our own will that is the source of trouble. It is for this reason that Jeanne makes us aware of three goals or distinctions of peace to be considered. The first is peace with God, because the soul that is in peace without being in God's grace is in a false peace. It is necessary, then to be in grace and love, and at peace with Him, because grace is his throne. That is why Paul's favourite expression is that God is a God of Peace (Rom 15:13; 16:20; 1 Cor 14:33). Hence our need to safeguard and cultivate these gift of God with a conscious response.

Christ came for the reconciliation of all peoples among themselves, and with the Father. We cannot honour Christ as Prince of Peace unless we foster peace to the best of our ability.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> cf. Positio for the Cause of the Servant of God Jeanne Chezard de Matel., *op.cit.*

<sup>116</sup> Bernard Häring, *op.cit.*, p. 2. And cf. Severino Maria Alonso, CMR, p. 156.

Consequently the second peace is with oneself, because, when the soul is troubled, says Jeanne, she cannot recognise good sense. "Let us not be troubled (cf. John 14:1), then, but let us control our passions, and we will enjoy the second peace."<sup>117</sup>

Messianic peace tell us that we are accepted by God as his children. God himself comes to meet us where we are in order to lead us to the fullness of our dignity as his children. We therefore see our whole life in a new light: we view the shadows and the difficulties of our own character, the shadows and the tensions in the world around us. The whole comes to be seen in time in a totally new light and in fresh perspectives with the firm hope that we shall grow to the fullest stature of the sons and daughters of God.<sup>118</sup>

But it is necessary, moreover Jeanne said, to have peace with our neighbour. She invites us to strive to maintain peace with others and to procure it. If they do not have this peace, each one is obliged to foster it in whatever way is possible. "Let us be mediators between our neighbour and God."<sup>119</sup> We should always be mindful of our mission to bring peace to all the people we meet.

The second Column will be gentleness. To gain the inheritance of our king and celestial Father, that is, Jesus himself and his Kingdom, one must be gentle. Through humility that is hidden in the heart, but God sees it very clearly. Learning from Him to be meek and humble of heart (cf. Matt 11:29). Through gentleness says Jeanne, we will possess Jesus, the Divine son of Mary, who loves to be welcomed by gentle souls; as well through it we will bring back our brothers and sisters that are separated Him.

Patience and gentleness, however, must not be misunderstood as a kind of inertia or laziness. In the best Catholic tradition, gentleness, patience and non-violence are considered the most noble part of the virtue of fortitude. They point to the insuperable energies of love, benevolence and respect for others; they constitute that specific

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<sup>117</sup> Cf. Positio for the Cause of the Servant of God Jeanne Chezard de Matel, *op.cit.* p. 506.

<sup>118</sup> Häring *op.cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>119</sup> Positio for the Cause of the Servant of God, Jeanne Chezard de Matel. p.506.

strength that gathers all the energies of the heart, the emotions, the intellect, the will and all our passions into a firm commitment to the gospel of justice, peace and love. Blessed are we if by our kindness, benevolence, reverence and gentleness we can convince people that the kingdom of God has come!<sup>120</sup>

The Third Column is poverty. Jeanne invites us to renounce everything and render ourselves truly poor to possess the kingdom of heaven within ourselves. "Notice that our Lord does not make the truly poor in spirit wait for this heavenly kingdom at some future point. Instead, He says: 'The kingdom of God is within you' (Luke 17:21)."<sup>121</sup>

Jesus manifests the meaning of his state of poverty and of service to the poor when he insists that he did not come to seek his own glory and to do his own will but to seek the glory of the Father. He unmasks the lust for power and reveals the kingdom of the Father by his humble service. He shares more specially in the kingdom of the Father in that he reveals this kingdom through his total dedication to the service of all people.<sup>122</sup>

The Fourth Column is purity of heart (cf. Matt 5:8). This beatitude is of great importance for each religious, but concretely for each one of the Incarnate Word Sisters. It is an interior attitude that must be reflected in our behaviour at all times. Jeanne de Matel stresses its importance as follows:

The child likeness that the Lord desires to see in us is not childish helplessness. Rather it is a purity and candor that is found in children through the grace of baptism and through a habit they have of not being afraid to be punished or for not knowing how to discern good from evil, since they do not have the use of reason. But you will perhaps tell me that religious have the use of reason. I answer that the grace received at Baptism and that of entering a monastery and embracing religious life though the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience make one return to the original innocence of children who are naturally candid and guileless in their actions.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Bernard Häring, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>121</sup> Positio for the Cause of the Servant of God Jeanne Chezard de Matel, p. 506. And cf. Francisco Manuel Lopez Garcia "El Sermon de la montana hoy reflexiones en torno a las Bienaventuranzas" p. 15.

<sup>122</sup> Bernard Häring, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>123</sup> Positio for the Cause of the Servant of God Jeanne Chezard de Matel, p. 507.

It is for this reason that Jeanne says that with the mind of a child who trusts in a God that is love, we long day and night for greater sincerity. This will be a constant challenge to live in truth and coherence that will set us free and then we 'shall see God' (cf. Matt 5:8) and witness his great love.

Purity of intention, absolute candour and sincerity in communications, is indispensable for those who have dedicated their lives to the service of the gospel and to the fostering of human dignity.<sup>124</sup>

The Fifth Column is Mercy. Jeanne de Matel invites us to become aware that God our Creator loves mercy so much that He makes it appear to be superior to all his works. Therefore he claims to prefer mercy to sacrifice. Hence, we are invited to "be merciful as your Heavenly Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). Jeanne invites us to show mercy to our Creator by belonging totally to Him through love. Jeanne understood that our creator felt sorrow and injury for having created people so feeble that sin has wounded them to the point of death, that is, to the point of separating them from Him. "And his heart was grieved" (Gen 6:6).<sup>125</sup>

It is through the experience of the great love of our Creator that our mercy should reach out to our neighbour, says Jeanne reflecting upon Jesus' saying, "Whatever you do to the least of these will be an act of mercy to Me."

Consequently one of the concrete ways to put into practice mercy for Jeanne is the one of teaching. For her teaching implies good example. In other words she invite us to perform the office of an evangelist as the Samaritan woman and Mary of Magdala.

I believe, says Jeanne, that they are sent by the Saviour Himself Who commissioned the Samaritan woman in Samaria. After his Resurrection, He entrusted a mission to his beloved St. Magdalene. It was such an eminent one that thereby she became an

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<sup>124</sup> Bernard Häring, *op.cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Positio for the Cause of the Servant of God Jeanne Chezard de Matel, p. 507.

evangelist to the very Apostles. He told her: 'Oh, tell my brothers that I am ascending to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God.'(John 20:17). She was the holy evangelist with regard to the Prince of the Apostles. Great were the mysteries that our Lord taught these women and delegated them to proclaim. I certainly could not enumerate the women or virgins whom the good Master commissioned and to whom He extended his mercy.<sup>126</sup>

Jeanne invites us to put into practice this office of evangelist especially with young people, challenging us to possess humble charity so as to teach with useful purpose. Because she well knows that if we are proud we will be like balls inflated with wind, the plaything of people. Hence, apart from humble charity, mercy implies forgiveness and prayer as a mean to reveal the merciful love of God as Jesus did.<sup>127</sup> We are invited to put our trust in the same mercy of the Father, the Incarnate Word, who will accomplish the work He has already started in us.

The Sixth Column. "Blessed are those who mourn" (Matt 5:5). Jeanne understands the act of mourning as one of repentance, contrition and love for our acts of self-love, acts that are a hindrance to our union with God.

St. Paul distinguishes clearly the affliction that aligns us with the sinful and frustrated world from the sorrow that is the bearer of salvation: 'The wound which is borne in God's way bring a change of heart too salutary to regret; but the hurt which is born in the way of the selfish world brings death' (2 Cor 7:10)<sup>128</sup>

At the same time when we realise our own selfishness and separation from God, turning back to Him, we are invited to be sorry for our sins as well as for those of our neighbours and their blindness.

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* and cf. Severino Maria Alonso, *op.cit.*, pp. 152-153.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Bernard Häring, *op.cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

This mourning voice is what He cherishes most of all when it is produced and prompted by the movements of his pure love which He came precisely to impart to us by the fire He brought us. He want it to burn brightly in our hearts so that its perfume may spread and its fragrance exhale to the heavens. This water gushes forth there, and it is distinct from that of earth, for it returns to its source, the Holy Spirit.<sup>129</sup>

The Seventh Column: Hunger and thirst for justice. For Jeanne justice means that God is loved with an incomparable love and that all creatures should give Him glory. Jeanne invites us to desire that we give what God asks of his creatures, to be ravenous to strive for perfection by the help of his grace. We are also asked to assist our neighbour by fervent words, good acts, as well as by meditations and humble, ardent prayer at the feet of our Divine Master. But more than that, Jeanne invites us to hunger especially for the Holy Eucharist, that is, for true unity in diversity.

In the eyes of Jesus, all ritual sacrifices without justice count for little, and therefore, he offers himself totally to the service of his brethren; he gives himself fully to the honour of the Father so that in the world justice may prevail. Hence, if we gather around Christ, we shall then discover that the real sins are those against justice and peace among people and among social classes. Consequently this faith which we celebrate in the Eucharist when gathered around Christ who continues to proclaim his beatitudes, is a living and saving faith only if it prompt us to commit ourselves to social justice, to peace among all nations. If the awareness of our union with God is growing, we shall become so conscious of our solidarity that we shall hunger and thirst for justice and find appropriate ways to give witness.<sup>130</sup>

The Eighth Column: Persecution for justice. The invitation of Jeanne in this beatitude is to suffer all kinds of torment and contradiction for the glory of Jesus' name, the one who is most just. Because He humbled Himself and was obedient even to the death on the Cross. We can only undergo persecution for justice if we fix our eyes in Him, so to suffer and obey Holy Love with Him and through Him, even to the death on the Cross, the

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<sup>129</sup> Cf. Positio for the Cause of the Servant of God Jeanne Chezard de Matel, p. 507.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-47.

Name of Jesus was given Him through justice, loving even those who are against us and praying for them is our call in this beatitude.

Yet what we suffer and give is nothing at all, because our hope is that through the Son we shall rejoice in his glory. In union with Jeanne, following him along the difficult paths He has traced for us, helps us attain the happiness of his eternal kingdom where we will rejoice in his Divine Being, says Jeanne.

The floor that must be put in to the Temple should be humility, which this great God regards with delights says Jeanne. Following this, we should regard ourselves to be useless servants, having fulfilled only our duty, because our ability is nothing. It is through Divine Mercy that we have our being.

Now, after all the Columns are in position and the walls are erected, and the floor is in place, we must naturally add a roof to this temple of to the Incarnate Word. The roof of the temple in question ought to be charity, states Jeanne, the greatest of all virtues and the principal part, because it is to cover the building, protecting those who live there from the ravages of the weather. The proof of all is seen through the performance of good works, which accompany charity. Charity comprises both the love of God and of neighbour.

According to the Apostle Paul, charity is patient and kind to all. It is the tree that produces sweet fruit that satisfies those in heaven and on earth. "Faith and hope are good, but charity still surpasses them" (1 Cor 13:2-3). "Love is stronger than death" (Song of Songs 8). It is love that makes lovers equal. There is nothing exempt from being burning by love. Jeanne says when someone renounces everything for charity, it is really nothing in comparison because charity surpasses it all in eternal love. "Let us love everyone in Him and our neighbour."

Lastly but not least, there are three doors of the temple: patience, fervent prayer and a sacrificial holocaust of ourselves. Patience is the mark of the Apostle that is based in the attitude of holding to the word through prayer and a sacrificial holocaust, with perseverance (Luke 2:7) by persevering in good deeds (Rom 2:7) and its fruit are charity as much as hope (1 Cor 13:7).

We now have the fundamental information needed to build up the dwelling place for the Incarnate Word where "God may be worshiped in Spirit and Truth." Through Christ, God the Father has revealed to us the essence of our being. This is summarised in the Beatitudes. It is upon each one of us to respond to this grace by putting action in our "being." It is only in this way that "our happiness will be complete." It is through the dynamic process of inculturation-incarnation that we will be better able to integrate our being with our attitudes, "Be - attitudes," as Mary, the faithful disciple, of the Word Incarnate. Hence, the source of our joy: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour; because he has looked upon the humiliation of his servant.... for the Almighty has done great things for me, Holy is his name, and his faithful love extends age after age to those who fear him..." (Luke 1:46-48a, 49-50)

The beatitudes, gradually integrated and owned by the individual, will be manifested in seven traits that characterises the Spirituality of the Incarnate Word Sisters. Let us briefly look at them.

### **3.5 Traits of the Spirituality of Incarnate Word Sisters.**

Through our Foundress, the Word Incarnate wished to imprint in our Congregation the traits of a spirituality that gives us a distinctive identity in the Church and is characterised by being:

**3.5.1. Theological:** Our spirituality is based upon the great dogmas of Christian theology: The mysteries of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation. Thus our religious life is Christ-centered and Trinitarian.

**3.5.2. Ecclesial:** It is born as a demand of the mystery of the Incarnation which fructifies and extends through the body of Christ which is the Church.

**3.5.3. Biblical:** Coming upon the rich spiritual treasure of our Foundress, we find in her a love and deep understanding of the Scriptures.

**3.5.4 Eucharistic:** The word is inseparable from the Eucharistic Sacrament: "The Word was made flesh." In his flesh Christ gives himself to us as our nourishment. We live the sacrifice of this Body and Blood of Christ as an extension of his "Kenosis." In this sacrifice, we praise, adore and offer ourselves to the Father through our loving devotion to our brothers and sisters.

**3.5.5. Liturgical:** United in Christ, we are called to live in an attitude of adoration in spirit and in truth, to the Father.

**3.5.6. Marian:** In coming to Mary and resembling her, we recognize her as the Mother of God, of the Church and as Mother of the Order.

**3.5.7. Apostolic:** We are called to be bearers of the Word, to take the light of the Lord to the ends of the earth and teach all people to love as the Incarnate Word loved. We have been sent to extend the kingdom and to be in the world, a loving presence of the Gospel by the Testimony of our life and through the Word.

### **3.6 Actual challenges for the Incarnate Word Sisters.<sup>131</sup>**

To live the Spirituality of the Beatitudes, we as Incarnate Word sisters are called to open ourselves to the action of the Holy Spirit that is encouraging us to creatively reinterpret the original charism we have inherited from our Venerable Mother Jeanne Chezard de Matel, in order to respond to the great challenges and needs of our present society, with a more significant commitment.

Knowing the reality of the Congregation and the world we live in, we are invited to commit ourselves to a personal and communitarian discernment. This will enable us to respond to the requirements of the Incarnation today and to the challenges of Inculturation-Evangelization.

TO LIVE AND ANNOUNCE THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD is the synthesis of our common vocation and mission. Our call must lead us to study the Person of Jesus in depth. By doing so we will see what it meant to Him to become one ("to dwell among us") in the history and culture of His people with the object of making the salvation of the Father present and active. That is why our constitutions urge us to foster a community life where respect for diversity exist as well as a continuous effort to create unity.

Jeanne de Mattel describes the religious community as a reflection of the Trinity where we can find perfect unity in the diversity of the Divine Persons. The most evangelical decisions are those that are taken after a proper community discernment with the guidance of God's Word. Consequently it is urgent that we form our members for the living of fraternity and unity in plurality, with new structures and stronger commitment. It involves a

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<sup>131</sup> Based on the Capitular Document of Incarnate Word Sisters: Demands of the Incarnation Towards the Construction of the Kingdom Facing the XXI Century. XIII General Chapter 1997.

commitment to prayer, the testimony and bold apostolic action that must be characteristic of those following Christ.

Hence, only the Gospel can, at this time of frustration and addiction, of disenchantment and disillusion, give hope to those men and women who have lost it. Happiness and prosperity and the style of life followed by Jesus, Incarnate Word, are good news that open the way to trust within the Father's merciful love and the bounties of His Kingdom. This is the reason why Jeanne Chezard de Matel urges us to base our life on the Beatitudes.<sup>132</sup>

It is at this point, we can say that as we started this chapter by describing the necessary elements of a wholistic spirituality we can not fail to conclude that the Spirituality of the Incarnate Word Sisters is clearly a wholistic Spirituality. The Spiritual Temple and the traits of the Incarnate Word Sisters Spirituality provides a very concrete way to develop a wholistic approach to the person and to religious life. Once again it is a personal call, a personal choice that need to be responded to so as to be an universal witness. It is my hope that each one of us, Incarnate Word Sisters, may with the grace of God take time to deepen the basic information that we have shared here and may put it into action in a creative and unique way. I ask this through Christ our Lord in the company of Miriam of Nazareth and Jeanne de Matel. Today, 19th of March, in the solemnity of Saint Joseph protector of our Order.

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<sup>132</sup> Cf. Demands of the Incarnation towards the construction of the Kingdom, facing the XXI century. Capitular Document of the Incarnate Word Sisters. XIII General Chapter 1997. pp. 1-9.

### **3.7 A Proposal for Incarnate Word Sisters Formation Programme**

As we have seen, in our process of growth into maturity in Christ, we need a model that may enable us not to lose the essence of our call. At the same time this model must have concrete points, helping us to be faithful to the grace that constantly we receive.

In this process, team work and skilled accompaniment is essential so as to be objective, clear and encouraging. For this reason I propose that we as Incarnate Word Sisters may integrate at the core of our formation programmes the Spiritual Temple so that:

1. In the Aspirancy-Postulancy stage the building of the temple may help the formee to focus on the central aspects of Christian life. It will be essential to foster a healthy encounter between self - awareness, cross-cultural communication and gospel values through the Beatitudes.<sup>133</sup>
2. In the Novitiate stage the focus of the Temple's construction will be the integration of the personality with the Charism and Spirituality of the Institute through a deep encounter with Christ. Consequently, the Christocentric aspect will distinguish this stage. At the same time, following the companionship model, the person will get to know and deepen the life of our Foundress and her Spirituality.
3. In the Juniorate stage, that for me is a crucial stage in the formation and consolidation of a religious person, our focus will be the spirituality of the Beatitudes leading the person to a deeper encounter with the Trinity. This experience, hand in hand with a very close and free accompaniment, will foster in the person enough maturity to cope with the challenges of apostolic life and wholistic understanding and experience of the vowed life.

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<sup>133</sup> Cf. Warren Carter, What are they saying about Matthew's Sermon on the Mount? New Jersey: Paulist press.

Other writings of our Venerable Mother will be of great help to support and enrich this experience. One example is the following<sup>134</sup>:

1) For Postulancy: God's union with Human Nature.

2) For Novitiate: God's union with Mary

God's union with Jeanne

3) For Juniorate: God's union with the Church.

This consequently will bring forth the challenge of a systematic study of Jeanne de Matel's writings for the Incarnate Word Sisters and its inculturation according to the context where they are called to be and serve.

Hopefully this study will bring us to develop an attitude of openness, sharing, learning, respect valuation, acceptance of our brothers and sisters in general. "In the Spirit of the Beatitudes" <sup>135</sup>we are called to foster an ecumenical attitude and dialogue with our brother and sisters, believers or non believes so that, in union with them, we may be promoters of the kingdom of God in our own environments and life styles, living the spirituality of the Beatitudes.

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<sup>134</sup>Cf. Jeanne Chezard de Matel, "Treatise on the Three Sacred Marriages and Treatise on the Four Sacred Marriages" Positio for the Cause of the Servant of God. Vol. I. I decided to change Marriages for Union because to understand Jeanne's vocabulary we need to keep in mind that is a French woman, born in the 16th. Century.

<sup>135</sup>Cf. Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November, 1964. No. 31.

## CHAPTER 4

### 4. A Spirituality of conflict for current times (General Conclusion)

After reflecting on the actual situation of the society, the Church and religious life facing the challenges of Inculturation-Incarnation, I am able to conclude that this long essay is just the starting point for us religious -all over the world- to develop a spirituality of conflict for current times. Having at least the basic knowledge and awareness of our milieu, we are invited to embody the Gospel, summarized in the Beatitudes as a spirituality of Conflict.

Based on this I am able to say that the faith crisis we are undergoing today and is manifested in the love of power, money and knowledge in the society, is also due to lack of faith within our communities, within ourselves. Hence, it is indispensable to keep these realities in mind in order to be able to give a solid biblical and theological basis to our consecrated life, beginning with the initial formation and continuing in an ongoing formation of our members in order that our lives may be meaningful to the Church and to the world with renewed enthusiasm.<sup>136</sup>

As we live in a dehumanized global cosmopolitan society it is necessary to give great importance to the person's development. This includes fighting against the excess of consumerism, individualism and hedonism, in a word, all that militates against the person's dignity.

A person's mystery is only clarified with the mystery of the Incarnate Word thus, the Church becomes a promotor of humankind's dignity within the integrity of its being. We, then, are also responsible for giving a special place to the defense of human rights, inside and

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<sup>136</sup> Cf. Capitular Document of Incarnate Word Sisters: Demands of the Incarnation Towards the Construction of the Kingdom Facing the XXI Century. XIII General Chapter 1997. P. 1-9.

outside of our communities, committing ourselves to work on the personal growth of each woman and man who crosses our path. In this way we will be faithful to the spirituality of the Beatitudes in the power of the Spirit.

Consequently, this will bring us to foster the promotion of women in general, as a sign of our times. At this point I urge each one of the religious of Africa as well as in other continents, to take responsibility and part in this. Hence, we need to read with new light the attitude of Jesus towards women. The Church must be a prophetic sign for the world. Reflecting on the experience of discipleship, on Mary, Jeanne de Matel and each one of our fondresses/founders, as a rich source of inspiration, religious need to reclaim the strength and tenderness combined which enrich the Church and challenge from within oppression and injustice. We need to do so with discernment and fraternity (Mc. 10.12.8).

I suggest that, for Inculturation of religious life to be effective, Women Religious need to reflect more on the life and message of Christ. The old practice must die, giving rise to new understanding. Christ's message was life giving. Christ confirmed and at the same time challenged the practice of the people to move towards renewal. African Religious Women are Africans in all aspect, influenced by African values and attitudes. Whether they are consciously aware of it or not, if they are to be integrated African Women Religious, they will need to express and articulate their values and identity. Even if they have been influenced by other cultures due to the internationally of the Congregations, they need to spell out and own their proper identity. This will give greater meaning to their lives as authentic African Religious.<sup>137</sup>

The above mentioned challenge of inculturation of religious life makes us confirm and become more aware that in the dynamism of an integral formation it is very important to center ourselves around the person. In this process we must take the individual's history and circumstances into consideration, inclusive of an interest in becoming acquainted with her/his psychology, characteristics and cultural background. We must follow a gradual and

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<sup>137</sup> Paulette Ankrah, *"Catholic religious life considered in the context of some traditions of African Religion"* Unpublished MA Thesis Proposal, Nairobi: MIASMU (2000), pp. 9-10.

personalized process within an atmosphere of freedom and opportunities to become entirely responsible. We must accompany the person with an attitude of listening and confrontation, being faithful to the Holy Spirit in order to live with greater consistency our call to follow Jesus-Christ.

It is necessary to offer a formation that will contribute to the person's integral growth, emphasizing a human and personalized formation based on a free and generous consecration to the Incarnate Word.

Formation should involve the whole person, in every aspect of the personality, behaviour and intentions, it should be characterised by wholeness and the commitment to it never ends. Initial formation, to be whole, must provide a human, cultural, spiritual and pastoral preparation of all its various aspects. Sufficient time should be given to it since it is a process of development which passes through every stage of personal maturing, psychological and spiritual, theological and pastoral....<sup>138</sup>

Another of today's great challenges is the formation in truth, rectitude and sharing in fraternity and in a generous and disinterested commitment to the construction of the Kingdom. Because we are living in a world where neoliberalism, corruption, lack of credibility, poverty of the masses, racism, fratricidal and genocidal wars are prevalent. The renovation of our fraternity and communion in a world divided by injustice and selfishness represents a great challenge in religious life and concretely in religious formation today. In a world where individualism and self sufficiency are united as essential elements to efficiency and success, giving emotional maturity a relative and rather ambiguous value, religious life must encourage interpersonal relationships, and support the person from within the community so that the person herself can be the creator of her own realization/formation.

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<sup>138</sup> The Consecrated Life No. 65.

We conclude with the following points<sup>139</sup> to be considered in the Formation programs of our institutes:

- ◆ To foster an integral human development that may lead the person to greater authenticity and freedom through self-awareness.
- ◆ To help candidates and formators to integrate the cultural values in their daily living, making them a source of life and a stem of unity. This may lead the person, either formee or formator, to be truly African Religious (if African) or either to be able to promote the Africanization of Christianity, thus being a source that can nourish, enrich and enlighten the situation of the local Church and the society at large.
- ◆ To enrich and challenge each other through a formation team.
- ◆ To develop, in formation work the ability to recognize in oneself how one has been shaped by one's own culture.
- ◆ To empty oneself as a formator of stereotypes, labels, and prejudices so as to be able to listen and learn from others.
- ◆ To show respect for diversity
- ◆ To create a safe space where one finds acceptance and can be oneself. Credibility or legitimization of the relationship will come when the candidate feels accepted.
- ◆ To help each religious to recognise his/her uniqueness and universality.
- ◆ To foster in-depth understanding of the culture.
- ◆ To know as much as possible the cultural background of the candidates with whom one works.

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<sup>139</sup> Some of this conclusions are based on the inspiration of Bernard Spitzley, SVD, "Reflections on Cross-cultural formation: Meeting God in the Other" Reflections on Cross-cultural Formation, pp. 261-265 Formation.

- ◆ To meet the person where she/he is.
- ◆ To enter as deeply as possible into the situation, the life, and experience of the persons in formation, with them, not for them.
- ◆ To be attuned to the individual's feelings, to be compassionate with the person as she grows in self-knowledge and awareness of her vocation (Companionship model).
- ◆ Constantly to reflect on our formation programs.

For all the above, Bible sharing is a major tool (See appendix 3) that helps us recognise the uniqueness of varied cultural traditions, among others. It focuses our attention on the actual life situations of the persons participating. It also gives evidence of the transforming presence of the Spirit, giving opportunity to the Word to become alive in the heart of the persons concerned.

It is in this way that in a world that proclaims as values individualism, egocentrism, selfishness and experiences many wars and divisions, we will be new witnesses of hope, forgiveness, peace and solidarity, thereby making present the kingdom of God in our daily lives. Above all our lives need to be marked by love so that we will merit to be described as Jesus' followers.

**"... See how they love each other".**

**“ Father... I pray... so that they may all be one,  
as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us,  
that the world may believe that you sent me.  
And I have given them the glory you gave me,  
so that they may be one as we are one...”**

**"Consecrate them in the truth;  
your WORD is truth"**

**(Cf. John 17:21-22, 17)**

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **FIELD RESEARCH: SUMMARY**

1. Hekima Collage, Nairobi, Kenya. July 1,2000. To interview a lay Philosopher about the connection between traditional values and its connection with Religious Life.
2. Comboni Theologate. July 3,2000. To interview a superior on his experience of culture shock in Religious Life and apostolic Life.
3. Franciscan Sisters of Assisi Community. July 2,2000. To interview a Sister from Zambia about the relation between cultural values in the traditional society and Religious Life.
4. Comboni Theologate. July 1,2000. To interview a formator on his experience of formation, culture shock and encounter with cultural values.
5. Marist Centre. July 3,2000. To interview a Brother that has experienced culture shock in Africa and outside the country. About the traditional values and its connection with vows in Religious Life.
6. Comboni Theologate. July 3, 2000. To interview a seminarian from Costa Rica about his experience of culture shock and formation programs.
7. Comboni Theologate. July 3, 2000. To interview a seminarian from Mexico about his experience of culture shock and other experiences of cultural encounter.
8. Comboni Theologate. July 3,2000. To interview a seminarian from Southern Sudan about the cultural values of his tribe, the experience of culture shock and formation environment.
9. Lyke Community. July 8, 2000. To interview a member of the Community about his experience of culture shock and new hope after a difficult situation, social conflict and its resolution.
10. Lyke Community. July 8, 2000. To interview a lay Canon lawyer in his experience of community life, culture shock and procedure in different cases.
11. Apostles of Jesus. July 9,2000. To interview an African priest with experience in formation and encounter with different cultures in the country and outside the country about cultural values, culture shock and Religious Life.
12. Apostles of Jesus. July 15.2000. To interview a priest from Rwanda about the cultural values of Rwanda's people in relation to Religious Life.
13. Blessed Virgin Community. July 10,2000. To interview a sister with experience in formation and in culture encounter in the country and outside the country about the encounter of cultural values in Religious Life.
14. Incarnate Word Community July 16.2000 To interview a Comboni Missionary about his experience in Southern Sudan.

## APPENDIX 2 (A)

### CULTURE SHOCK (JOTTINGS '92/99 MIASMU<sup>140</sup> PROGRAM)

[Page references in these notes refer to Luzbetak 1991, cf. Bibliography]

Understanding the culture shock process makes the period of adjustment in a new culture even shorter. Everyone experiences some form of culture shock in one way or another. It could be a mere tiredness, homesickness, or be a little more pronounced in some other way. Confronting people different than yourself requires a period of adjustment. Being informed can ease the transition for everyone.

As we have shared before culture shock is the result of 'the constant jolting and the consequent stress and fatigue associated with living in a society (social environment) that has different ways and values from those that have become second nature to the outsider who was 'socialised'<sup>141</sup> in another social context.

#### Kinds of problems experienced

1. Physical adjustment
2. New, unfamiliar interpersonal relationships (e.g., status and roles, different sexes, friendship, age differences)
3. Conventions of behaviour as rules of etiquette and politeness... what is considered proper and dignified (greetings, causes of offence, when and how to express apologies, etc.)
4. Issue of 'territoriality'/use of space (e.g., conversational space as intimate, personal, social) (Cf. Hall 1959, 1966)
5. Manner of dealing with time
6. Apparent cultural incongruities or incompatibilities (e.g., foods eaten and how combined, patterns of sleep and rest, sexual markers associated with types of clothing or hair styles)
7. Verbal and non-verbal communication (e.g., appropriate use of touch, gestures, eye contact, silence)
8. Starting point of reasoning, reacting and motivating ('mentality')... underlying premises, Emotionally-charged attitudes, basic drives (e.g., patterns of belief, thought, emotion and evaluation) (159)
9. Competing image of stranger and measure of incorporation/acceptability (e.g., identification in food, dress, language, participation, sharing confidences)
10. Sense of humour conception of beauty (e.g., music, art forms)

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<sup>140</sup> MIASMU: Maryknoll Institute of African Studies St. Mary's University.

<sup>141</sup> Socialization: process by which members of a group/society come to be inducted/educated in given organized relationships (e.g., kinship system), role assignments (e.g., parents-children, senior and junior siblings), social perceptions of reality, verbal and non-verbal language) and other forms of systematized interaction with other members of the group (e.g., etiquette and politeness, expression of emotion), see Louis Luzbetak (1991) *op.cit.*, p. 166.

## Pattern of social adjustment (218ff)

Initially one reacts to the shock of a different, changed cultural environment first by the tendency to judge the new cultural reality up against one's own culture as being inferior/superior, 'better than'/'worse than', rather than seeing the second culture simply as 'different from'. This can show itself in two ways, both of which are 'over-reactions' that serve as a kind of escapism.

**'Going native'** escapism by an indiscriminate, uncritical embracing of a new culture even by throwing off totally one's own (neurotic identification out of desire to be accepted and free from being 'out of step')... often leads to a 'romanticising' of new culture which is viewed uncritically.

**'Going anti-native'** escapism by withdrawing into a comfortable shell to insulate self from unfamiliar social environment; transfer blame for discomfort from one's own lack of accepting the other and adjusting to the new reality of the different culture which is seen as crude/infantile/uncaring and unwelcoming. " The only country where everything is 'right' is the person's own home-country."

## Symptoms of culture shock

1. Growing negative and suspicious view of the 'strange' people and their ways and values;
2. Homesickness, loneliness, boredom, lethargy, and a tendency to withdraw;
3. Rising stress, an overall feeling of dissatisfaction, disgust, irritability, and depression.
4. Physical illness, especially chronic headaches and hypertension;
5. Over concern about one's health;
6. Excessive drinking or some other form of compensation (e.g., over-working; withdrawing to 'one's own group'; misplaced inordinate/exclusive affection for animals, babies, children, chosen friend).
7. Character weaknesses and old faults which one had thought long brought under control begin to re-emerge and reassert themselves

## Situations where often seen:

New communities, transfer to new work environment, novitiates, military camps, diplomatic corps, migrants.

## Prerequisites

- need to bide time, observe, name experience, adjust to reality by re-owning and re-defining self in new social context
- recognise helpfulness of objectifying experience to self, with a representative of the new cultural group.
- if possible, use advantage of a cross-cultural perspective.

## Suggestions for coping with culture shock

1. Identify stable parts in your life (e.g. schedule, prayer, meals, etc.)
  2. Maintain as much stability as possible.
  3. Have in your 'home environment' (i.e. personal space) at least a few items that give an 'at home feeling' for you.
  4. Establish and nurture friendships that have the possibility to be stable (i.e., long-term).
  5. Identify 'negative factors' and ways to deal with them (e.g., which people, friends, climates, foods, expectations, etiquette, mannerism are different).
  6. Affirm the good; don't concentrate on the bad.
  7. Avoid surprises... ask others to fill you in/inform yourself
  8. Cultivate meaningful leisure time to refresh yourself physically, psychologically and spiritually.
  9. Take time out regularly to evaluate spiritual and practical goals and objectives... do this with a friend, or at least share it with a friend.
- Am I satisfied with my spiritual state and development? What am I doing regularly to maintain or improve that state?
  - What am I doing regularly to maintain my physical well being? Regular exercise?
  - How adequately am I covering my work responsibilities? What can I do to improve my performance and maintain an efficient working environment?
  - What are my relationships with my colleagues, family and friends like (barometer of stress)
  - What am I doing with my time off? Do I make sure I get adequate leisure time to maintain my equilibrium?
  - What records do I keep to help me plan and evaluate my life and achievements?
  - Do I have someone with whom I can share my joys and frustrations? To whom can I be vulnerable and weak? Who really knows me as I am?

## Inhibiting factors in living through culture shock

- perfectionism and fear of making a mistake.
- impatience with re-learning a 'social map'
- inability to accept one's own being different
- lack of objectivity and inability to bring to consciousness the causes for the experience of alienation
- refusal to own up to the natural tendency to be ethnocentric (judging others as better/worse rather than seeing and accepting them as simply being different)

## Stages of cultural adjustment

1. Tourist stage: honeymoon period when cultural differences of the new setting seem not only novel but interesting, amusing, fascinating, exciting, challenging...not yet felt as threatening and uncomfortable ('I like the place, it is so interesting. I am staying!'). One sees the situation from 'without', as an observer looking at the reality from the perspective of what others do (ideal time for detailed journalling).

2. Stage of disenchantment: novelty wears off and the newcomer is taken for granted... person realises what she has been observing is what she herself is invited to do...she begins to feel the discomfort and disorientation that comes with culture shock ('I want to go home!')
3. Stage of resolution: one begins to face the symptoms, name them, recognise the source of the pain and re-examines basic motivation.
4. Final stage of adjustment: one feels relatively comfortable and more at home in new social environment, having learned its 'code'... develops a 'second sense' for local way of seeing, thinking, reacting ('Yes, I can be at home here and want to stay')

**'And he came and pitched his tent among us, to be one with us... Emmanuel.**

**And we saw his glory' (John. 1:14 )**

**'I must the more decrease so that the, the Lord, might increase' (John. 3:30)**

Points to be considered:

1. Don't be surprised if you experience culture jolts. They commonly occur when we meet unfamiliar situations.
2. We can all experience culture shock. It can happen when we least expect it, e.g. after many years of successfully living in a culture that is not our own.
3. If effective action is not taken, culture shock can become chronic, that is, it can unknowingly cripple the evangeliser's apostolic effectiveness for years.
4. Seek advice from others from time to time about how they see your attitudes and actions, if you are working in a culture/subculture that is foreign to you.
5. Frequently remind yourself of Phil 2:6-11. Jesus chose to identify himself totally with us that he might reveal to us our full humanity. Pray over Eph 3:18-19. Open self to continuing revelation of the unfathomable mystery of the Incarnation. Grow in other-centeredness, loving empathy (1 Cor 9:22; Is. 42)

## **APPENDIX 2 (B)**

### **DEALING WITH MIXED FEELINGS**

(Notes from a workshop on self-awareness with Joe McKee, Marist Brothers  
at Incarnate Word Sisters, January 2001)

When we are in a state of confusion or when we feel threatened by the circumstances we can find ourselves reacting in different ways. The most common and not accepted experience is anger. There are all sorts of feelings that can be experienced the reader can just replace anger with the feeling or emotion that is stronger in his/her personal experience. Hence, the more in touch we are with our own anger, the more likely we are to be able to deal with it in others.

### **STEPS TO TAKE IN DEALING WITH ANGER**

1. Acknowledge and accept the feeling of anger that you are presently experiencing.  
Allow yourself to experience the anger, labelling the intensity of the emotion.
2. Become calm. What can I do right now to calm myself so I can begin to think through the situation?
3. Try to identify the need, want, attack on self-esteem or injustice that has stimulated the anger. Try to move past the trigger and identify the belief(s) or conviction(s) that are really causing the anger.
4. Determine how essential for me is the belief at issue is for me.
5. Decide what action I want to take to express my anger:
  - Look at the situation itself. How would I rate its importance in my life?
  - Is this situation of enough consequence that I need assistance in working through my feelings?
  - What is my motive in expressing my feelings? What do I hope to achieve by expressing them?
  - Are my perceptions of the situation distorted?
6. Look at the situation and the individuals involved when deciding upon the most appropriate action.
  - Do I want to return to the person (s) and state my feelings?
  - Do I want to initiate another action that would be more suitable, given the cause of the anger?
  - Do I want to channel my energy into a creative outlet?
  - Do I choose to change my belief that caused the anger?
7. Decide to forgive.

The following observations should be considered when handling others' anger.

- Being in touch with your own responses enables you to anticipate the ineffective response you might be inclined to give and thus forestall it.
- When others attack, the anger may be unrelated to the present situation. Remembering this helps you to listen patiently and let others know that you are trying to understand their needs. Their anger will become diffused as they express it and feel that they are being heard.

- Angry feelings need to spill out. As they flow freely, the anger begins to dissipate. Just talking is cathartic. To interrupt only rekindles the anger.
- Accept the right of others to be angry, whether you agree or disagree with the reason. Feelings are real, and as long as they are being expressed there is a certain integrity. Identity and personal worth cannot be tied up with your agreement or disagreement, they are separate from the anger expressed.
- Listen carefully to the anger and show by your attitude that you respect and affirm those expressing it. Through your non-verbal behaviour, let them know you are listening and trying to understand. Nod affirmatively. Don't crowd or move in any way that might indicate anger on your part.
- Keep cool. Expresses your acceptance of the angry feelings; an angry outburst indicates that the issue must be important. Through your attitude, allow others to know that you appreciate the importance of their feelings.
- Keep the pain of the other in mind. Since anger is usually a reaction to hurt, either real or imagined, it is more beneficial to deal with the individual or issue that "caused" of the hurt than with the anger itself. If you can focus on the other's hurt, your own anger and anxiety will be diffused.
- Above all, remain silent until the angry person is ready to hear you. Silence when you are being attacked can be difficult but very rewarding. Respond only to the feelings that you have heard expressed. Do not try to justify yourself. Through your verbal and non-verbal behaviour, let the person know that you recognise the importance of the situation and are sympathetic. This caring and concern can be communicated even when you don't completely understand the person's attitude.
- After listening, if you have been part of the problem, admit it fully and willingly. No reconciliation can take place if you cannot acknowledge your own responsibility. When action is needed, it is better to act than to sit around listening and sympathising.
- Restore closeness with the angry person. This can be done by noting some positive elements in your relationship on which you both can agree. This step is not just a technique. It is a way of restoring areas of common interests to be pursued.
- Communicate positively in setting up expectations that others can handle. Don't challenge them to the point that they feel frustrated and powerless.
- Anger must be dealt with. If we expend all our energy repressing anger, we will have little left to invest in love. We cannot be stifling feelings of anger and at the same time hope to be experiencing love. Anger and love do not operate in separate compartments.

When we can begin to deal with our own anger and to accept anger in others, as a community we are on our way to healing. Refusing to admit difficulties may anaesthetise the situation, but it will not resolve it. Anger will not be fixed by saying prayers and waiting for it to go away. Honest expression clears the air and brings problems out into the open so that the community can handle them.

## **Appendix 2 (C)**

### **Resources for personal and group reflection**

(Taken from MIAS'00-COURSE OUTLINE & REFLECTION GUIDE)

#### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

Consider these questions from the point of view:

- 1) of your own people among themselves as you experienced relationships before you entered;
- 2) of the people among whom you have worked;
- 3) of your own experience in your religious community.

Try to think about them in very concrete terms, without making any initial judgements...describe what is observed behaviour. The questions are meant to serve as stimulants for reflection on experience...select the ones you find more meaningful and adapt any of them as you like.

#### **SCRIPTURE REFERENCES**

Reflect on the meaning of the text and how sensitively to respond to them in your own cultural context...push beyond their literal meaning.

#### **LOCAL MODELS OF RELATIONSHIPS**

- 1) Sense of belonging and identity:
  - Where do you see your most basic social identity: family, religious community, ethnic group? Is this an area that often/occasionally causes tension?
  - How important in religious community is group solidarity? When is this most clearly expressed?
- 2) The horizontal model of social relations (members of the same relative age/generation)
  - Among your people are particular words of address (titles) used for brothers and sisters? If so, are they different for men and women? For younger and older? Do you use any of these titles in community?
  - What do younger religious expect of their 'senior contemporaries'?
  - How do you refer to your religious sisters/brothers when you are speaking in the vernacular? Do you use the same terms for expatriate members, if there are any?
  - Is it usual that the less preferred tasks in community are served by the younger members? What about places at table? In the car on long trips?
- 3) The vertical model of social relations (members of different generations, e.g., age of children, parents, grandparents,...'ancestors')
  - Among your people are particular words of address (titles) used for persons of one's parents' generation? If so, are they different for men and women? Do you use any of these titles in community? Would the same terms be used for expatriate religious?
  - Is there anyone considered to be the Mother/Father of your congregation? How is she or he honoured?
  - How are superiors addressed in your community? Is there any different word used when speaking in the vernacular?
  - Does your religious congregation include now many generations of members? How do you see the relationship across the different age groups?

- Are there particular areas of tension? What has helped/hindered good relations among the groups?
- Are you yourself at home with persons of different ages in community? To whom (generation) would you go for counsel?
- Do you more readily accept criticism from persons of your own age or those who are older than you?
- What do younger religious expect of older religious? And what do the elders expect of younger ones?
- Is there any particular group/individuals in your congregation who are considered the mothers/fathers? Aunts/uncles? Grandmothers/grandfathers? How is this shown in behaviour?
- How are the 'living-dead' of your congregation honoured?
- Do you refer to/relate to certain 'living -dead' as being 'ancestors'/intercessors on your behalf? Has this been ever ritualised by your community or congregation? Would it be appropriate to do so?

4) The extension of kinship terminology, kinship by marriage and 'alliances' (i.e., in-laws), by association and common experience:

- Whom do you consider to be members of the 'extended family' of your religious community?
- Do religious of different congregations have a special relationship to one another? How is this seen?
- Do women religious have a special relationship with priests? If so, how is this expressed? Does this pose difficulties? What of brothers?
- How do members of the community incorporate families into rituals when their daughters/sons become religious?
- How does the community express its bond with the families of its members?

5) Distinctiveness of religious community (i.e., counter-cultural element):

- In community do sister/brother principals and hospital matrons receive more respect than other members?
- How do you see the difference between religious community relationships and those of the family? Does the family-experience of members affect how they perceive community? Is there a more helpful analogy?

Scripture references:

Eph 2:19-22; Gal 3:28	all from one community
Titus 2:2.6-8	age relationships
Luke 9:46-68; Matt 18:1-4	greatest is the least
John 21:15-17	growth in selflessness
Luke 22:24; Matt 20:25 ff.	different model of authority
1 Cor 2:15-3:3	signs of lacking maturity
Col 3:16	sisterly correction
1 Tim 4:12	respect for youth
1 Cor 9:19-23; Rom 12:15	become all things for all
Deut 5:16	honour due to parents
2 Macc 12:41ff	union with dead in prayer
Luke 14:12-14; Matt 5:46-48	universal welcome

## **LOCAL MODELS OF CHIEFS...**

### **1) Chief deciding all:**

- Are there areas in community life where the superior's word is absolute? Describe these.
- If a superior offers a point of view during a discussion, are other members free to contradict the superior or give other ideas? Cite examples.
- If a decision taken does not hold, do the members of the community react in the same way if the decision had been taken by the superior alone as they would if the decision had been taken by the group as a whole? Cite examples.
- Is there time given to the initiation of new superiors? If so, how is this done?

### **2) Chief deciding with group through consensus:**

- What kind of decisions in community are usually done in a communal consensus manner? How? Who would be the usual facilitator? Would it ever be the superior? Does the latter arrangement work?
- Are there members of your congregation who are gifted as facilitators? Are they encouraged to use their gift?
- Is there generally in the community broad and free communication and consultation outside of official meetings before major decisions are made?
- Do most members freely contribute to discussions during community meetings? Are decisions ever delayed to allow for further reflection? Do you ever feel that closure has come too soon to the discussion? Do decisions made in the case of the latter stick?
- How would you typify the description of the exercise of authority in the Constitutions of your congregation? Are there areas of confusion?
- Think of a very difficult decision that your community had to make... How did you go about deciding what to do? Were most members at home with the decision? Did all in the end support the decision?

### **3) Local conceptions of authority:**

- How would you typify the model of authority projected by local/national civic leaders? By local Church leaders?
- Are there distinct different expectations of local authority on the part of the young and the old? On the part of villagers and city folk?

### **4) Comparison of local arrangements of authority and decision making and that in the community:**

- Is there a necessary accommodation of styles because of the mixed composition of the community membership?
- Where are there basic differences between the two social groups; local society, religious community?
- Does an age gap between the superior and members of the community make a significant difference?
- Have you had an opportunity to attend and participate in a formal clan gathering to observe the role of the chief and a facilitator figure, if there was one?

### Scripture references:

Luke 20:20 ff.

Luke 2:51; Luke 2:46-47

Matt 20:28

domains of authority

respect for and acceptance of authority

model of servant

Mark 11:27-30; John 13:12-17	model of Christ
Matt 18:15-18	communal decision-making
Phil 1:9-11; 1Cor 2:13-16; Eph 1:17-18	discernment-gift
Phil 2:1-4; 1 Cor 1:17-25	Christian way
Acts 15:16-21	gift of Spirit given to all
Rom 12:1-13	communal co-operation
1 Tim 4:13-16; 2 Tim 1: 6-12	use gift and courage of convictions
1 Tim 5: 1,2	treat all with due respect
Matt 13:52	wisdom of the ancients
Matt 5:25	search for reconciliation
Mark 10:41-42; John 8:1-11	sympathy for the weak
Dan 13	description of a biblical facilitator

## **EXPRESSION OF SOCIAL CONFLICT**

### **1) Factors specific to religious:**

- Do you yourself easily accept and admit when you are angry?
- Have you ever lived in a community where there was a long protracted conflict between two or more members? How did it show itself? What was the effect on the community?
- Do you seek counsel when you find yourself in a conflict with another community member? If so, to whom do you go?

### **2) Causes of social conflict:**

- What do you think are most commonly the causes of tension/conflict in community? Jealousy? Comparisons? Competing loyalties (i.e., community and family)? Lack of communication? Oppression-consciously or unconsciously- of minority groups by a majority?
- Do older religious resent younger ones who have more qualifications and greater responsibilities?
- How could tensions caused by the above be lessened?

### **3) Expression of social conflict:**

- What are the most common signs that there exists a conflict between two community members (the obvious and the less obvious)?
- Do the non-involved parties try to ignore the conflict? Make efforts to help the parties sort themselves out? Refer it to the superior?
- If conflicts drag on over a period of time, do other persons become involved and take sides?
- How do unresolved conflicts begin to affect other areas of community life?
- How might a community member involved in a misunderstanding discreetly defuse the situation (i.e., ease the tension before dialogue is cut off)?
- Do communities of different ages and background need to create for themselves a common understanding/ generally recognised and accepted gestures to enable members to better communicate with each other when tensions arise? How might such a consensus be developed?
- How might communities encourage in their member more simplicity and frankness in their manner of relating to one another to allow steam to be released when 'kettles begin to boil'?

## DEALING WITH SOCIAL CONFLICT

### 1) Resolution of interpersonal conflicts:

- In the cultural context with which you are familiar how do persons of the same relative age mend broken relationships? What are the factors that are particularly helpful?
- What of situations where the two parties involved are of different generations?
- Is it acceptable to ask the assistance of a third party? If so, when and under what conditions? What would the role of this person be? In a religious community, might this person be a superior?
- When there is a conflict between two members of a community, how might the other sisters help reduce tensions and aid the parties to work out their differences (i.e., assume their responsibility to be 'ministers of reconciliation')? Can there also be other communication when this is not done sensitively?
- How important is timing when a conflict is addressed?
- Are gestures sometimes more helpful than words? Give examples.
- Is it 'culturally acceptable' for an elder to ask the pardon of a junior?

### 2) Generalised social conflicts in community:

- What might community members do to prevent small conflicts from becoming protracted (lengthy) ones? And, thereby, reduce the likelihood of the development of alliances...
- Have you ever had the experience of a communally celebrated reconciliation after a painful conflict? Or do sisters prefer simply to handle the matter between themselves even if it has affected the whole group?
- Have you ever experienced a conflict within community effectively treated by the whole group as in a palaver? When might this be a more appropriate approach? Under what conditions would it be done? What would the role of the superior be?

### 3) Community meetings and group gatherings:

- What measures do you use to judge the quality and effectiveness of community meetings?
- Do communities give enough consideration to the importance of offering occasions for members to renew their mutual commitment to each other (e.g., by word, gesture, ritual)?

### 4) Other expressions/forms of social conflict observed in community:

- Have you seen the dynamics of using a 'scape-goat' in community? What purpose does a 'scape-goat' serve?

### 5) Comment on your experience of the value of ritualising in communal life...

#### Scripture references

1 Cor 3:2-4,8; 1 Pet 5:1-5

1 Cor 7:7; Gal 3:26-28

1 Cor 12; 1 Pet 1:5-11

Gal 5:25-26; Eph 5:19-20

Phil 2:5-11; Mark 10:42-45

1 Cor 13:11-12; Rom 12:16-18;

Eph 4:29-32; Acts 2:42

Rom 15:1-2; Luke 22:31-32

maturity in relationships

respect for each, for gift of each

centrality of love

living in harmony

humility

communal life

mutual support

Gen 3:9-13	accepting personal responsibility
Prov 10:19; 15:1,2; Luke 6:42	hurt done by words
Matt 5:22; 21:12-13; Eph 4:26	expression of anger
Eph 6:2-3	relationships between generations
Gal 6:1-5; Matt 11:28-30; John 8:7	empathy, compassion, gentleness
Eph 4:15	speak truth with love
Prov 12:15; Sir 8:8-10	accept counsel
Sir 19:13-16; Eph 4:25	frankness in relationships
Sir 1:23	patience
Luke 15:22-24,32; 17:3-4 Matt 5:23-24;	
Mark 11:25; Col 3:13-14; Sir 28: 2-3	forgiveness
Matt 18:15-17; Jas 5:19-20	forgiveness in community
2 Cor 5:16-18	ministry of reconciliation
Heb 10:23-25; Acts 15:1-21	communal gatherings
Luke 16:9ff	'scape-goat'

## **SENSE OF COMMUNITY**

### **1) Manifestations of one heartedness:**

- What has been for you experiences of solidarity with your fellow religious?
- Do you find that the members of your family appreciate and experience in a concrete way solidarity with your religious family? Give examples.
- When members of your community seem to withdraw, do you seek them out? How do you express your concern?
- In community do you make concessions in favour of members who belong to different cultural traditions? (Sample areas: food, recreation, practices of hospitality, expression of sympathy in bereavement)?
- What is the more common form of recreation in your community?
- Do the retired and chronically ill members of the congregation remain dispersed in ordinary communities, or are they grouped in a 'special house' for them?
- Is there a significance for a common way of dressing?
- How do the people see the dress of religious? Would they more readily identify religious with a particular social class because of their manner of dressing? Their house? Their life style?
- How does the community celebrate together? What would be the major causes for feasting? Are others invited to join the community (who and when)?

### **2) Manifestations of mutual aid:**

- Can the members of the community easily absent themselves from their work in order to be present at a wake for a member of their own or another brother's/sister's family? Do their lay colleagues at work have the same facility?
- Do you find particular support and encouragement when you pray with others? Do you prefer to make your personal prayer with others or privately?

### **3) Relationship of religious with members of her/his/one another's families:**

- How do you explain to your family the vow of poverty?
- Does the community help family members in need if it is able to? How do they decide who needs most help, particularly if resources are limited? Are there members who find means themselves to help their families?
- Is it difficult to avoid comparisons in community?

- Is it true that becoming a member of a religious congregation is seen by many as a form of social promotion for most? Can this affect one's motivation?
- What material advantages accrue to a family through members who belong to a religious congregation?
- Do religious very readily share with their families that they are sick?  
In what family events do religious join?

#### 4) Relationship between personal and communal lives of members:

- At what times and in what places do the members of the community seem to share most freely with one another?
- In societies that increasingly attach importance to diplomas (i.e., paper qualifications) and use these as a measure of status, does this same thinking affect how religious value one another?
- Are there in the community certain 'common charges' that are regularly neglected by the majority? Who ends up doing them?
- Are there some members of the community who guard very carefully their 'private lives' and do not want to be accountable to the group for their use of time, resource, leisure? How is this seen by the community?
- Do members of the community generally respect confidences?
- With the great importance placed on group solidarity, is there a risk that members will be inhibited in developing their personal gifts and showing initiative? Is it more difficult for persons with strong personalities to live the 'common life'?
- If a member has shamed the community, how is he/she brought back into the 'fold'?

#### Scripture references

1 John 3:18; 1 Thess 4:9,10; Rom 12:10	mutual love
Matt 18:20	community in Christ
Ps 133	communal life of fellowship
Luke 22:32; Rom 12:15	mutual support
2 Tim 1:6-12; Matt 25:14-30	developing and using one's personal gifts
John 8:1-11	compassion for the weak

#### **SOCIALISATION OF NEWER MEMBERS**

- What counsel would you give to a young woman who wishes to enter a religious community if her family is totally opposed?
- Are there particular difficulties in the area of affectivity related to the religious living as a celibate in a community of adult women which is very different from the life which she has been 'socialised' in her growing up?
- How might the affective formation of the religious be continued after she leaves the noviciate and as she matures in religious life?
- Are there any similarities between local initiation rites or the rituals of marriage with the manner in which candidates are incorporated into the religious community?
- In your cultural area are initiation rites existent? Are any of them a more significant model for the incorporation of religious into a congregation? How do the religious themselves see this question?
- What might be the perspective of the male religious on the above?

### Scripture references

John 21:38-39	initial contact with religious community
John 21:18-19	totality of commitment
Matt 10:37-39; Luke 9:57-62	priorities
Matt 13:10-12	mystery of vocation

## **CELIBACY AND THE METAPHOR OF MATERNITY**

- 1) Perception of religious vis-à-vis their people:
  - Do religious refer to/address one another differently with persons outside of the community than how they do among themselves?
  - Are there specific terms in the vernacular that are used to address men and women religious, priests? What are they and what is their meaning? What of terms of reference (i.e., words used for these persons when they are not themselves present)? And their meaning?
  - How do people describe sisters/brothers/priests to children or persons who are not familiar with these categories of 'church-people'?
  - Are women religious considered as 'mothers by the people'?
- 2) Hospitality of religious and 'life-structure':
  - Does the gospel justify welcoming one class of society more than another? What was the preference of Jesus?
  - To what extent do religious choose to adopt in their communities a more Western/colonial life-style (e.g., dress, food, entertainment and use of leisure, times of availability, type of lodging, dependence on domestics, relationship with employees...)?
  - Do people generally feel welcomed in religious communities and 'at home'? Why yes or why not?
- 3) 'Authority/influence' of religious among the people of God:
  - On the work scene (in the apostolate and ministry), what specific kind of support do colleagues of religious expect of them?
  - In what areas do people look to religious for a 'moral authority'?
  - Do you yourself as a religious have a particular moral authority in your family?
- 4) Religious as a recognised 'consecrated person'
  - Are there recognised 'consecrated persons' in the society where you work? If so, who are they and how do the people regard them? What kind of behaviour is expected of them? Do they have any particular responsibility to intercede with the ancestors for the people? Is there any transfer of this to religious?
  - Are religious particularly expected to serve in a 'ministry of reconciliation' among the people? Among women in particular?
  - May a religious be partial to her family in her ministry?
  - Is the initiation and formation of the religious at all similar to the initiation of 'consecrated persons' in the local society?
- 5) Religious community of sisters and women's associations (application to male religious?)
  - What has been your experience of solidarity with members of your religious family?
  - Does your family appreciate the bonds of solidarity that you have with your sisters in community? Give examples.

- Do you think community life - seen as an expression of solidarity - is of particular importance in attracting young women to the religious life? Is this equally so among men's congregations?
- How do women religious express their solidarity with lay women?
- Do women seem to have more biting tongues than men? Does this show itself in community life?
- In community is there a generalised equality among members, or do sisters tend to attach importance and status to holders of degrees and offices? Are sisters sometimes 'competitors' with one another? Can jealousy develop in communities because of these things?
- Does there appear to be any 'touchiness' of some sisters about what they consider to be their 'private life'? Give examples.
- Do people understand and value Christian humility? Do religious?

6) Religious celibacy:

- How do the people understand religious celibacy?
- What analogies are helpful in explaining religious celibacy?

7) What might be the perspective of a male religious on the above?

Scripture references

John 10:10	vocation to give life
John 19:25-27	'mother for the church'
Luke 14:12-14	universality of welcome
Luke 6:38	hospitality
John 13:12-17	service of others
Mark 2:13-17; 18:10-12; Matt 9:10-13; Gal 3:28	universality of association
Matt 7:7-11; Mark 11:24; Luke 11:2-4; 1 Tim 2:1	ministry of prayer for others
1Thess 5:11-13; 4:9-10; Eph 2:29; 1John 3:18; Phil 2:1-4	selflessness, edification of others
Luke 22:32; Rom 12:15 John 8:1-11	solidarity in weakness
Matt 12:36; Ps 133	solidarity in community
1 Tim 4:10-14; Matt 25: 14-30 2 Cor 12:4-13	respect for gifts of all
Matt 12:36	use of tongue
Luke 14:7-11; 22:24-27; Phil 2:5-11; Matt 20:24-28	Christian humility
Matt 10:28-30; 37.38	priorities
Matt 19:11-12; 1 Cor 7:34	celibacy for the Kingdom

## Appendix 3

### General Barriers to Inculturation

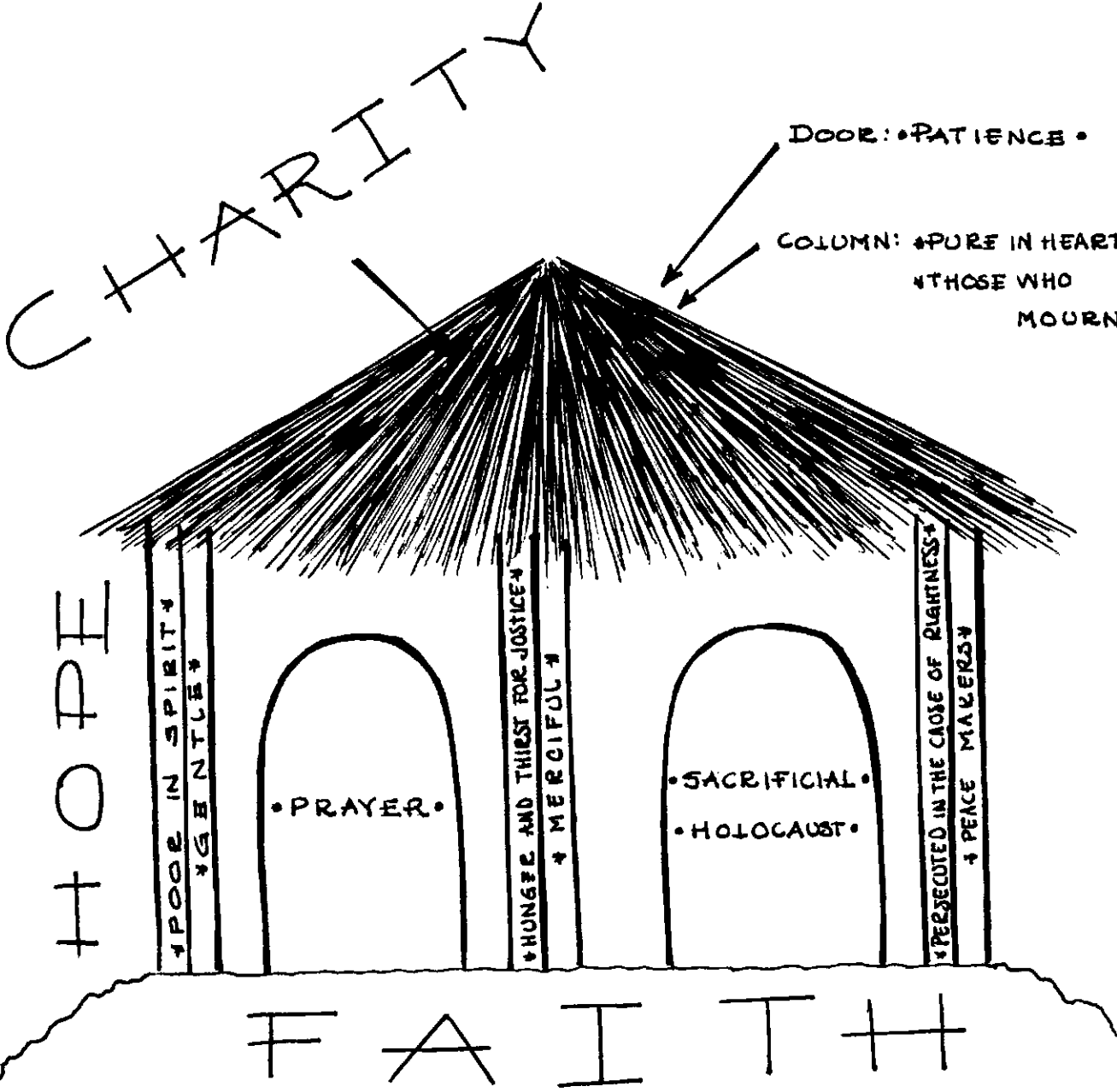
(From John Kirby "Earthing theology" Faculty Seminar, CTU. 21 January 1992)

1. **Perceptual Barrier:** "What you see is not what is there!" Language and Culture learning are not "extras," but are an essential part of ministry learning. It includes:
  - The Language Barrier (the perceptual side)
  - The Non-verbal communication barrier (the perceptual side)
  - The Barrier of pre-judgments, preconceptions and stereotypes.
2. **The Stress Barrier.**
3. **The Organisational Barrier.**
4. **The Communicational Barrier:** "What you say and do will miscommunicate!" Language and Culture-learning involves more than intellectual assent. They require a whole new way of thinking, speaking and acting, in short, the appropriation of a new cultural identity.
  - The barrier of words and using language. (The medium is the message).
  - The barrier of actions and meanings. (Learning in holistic contexts).
5. **The Reality Barrier:** or **The symbolic barrier:** "Your symbols and myths will lack meaning and power in your adopted culture." As you move deeper into your adopted culture and the life of the people, you will be required to integrate your new cultural identity with your own faith, by discovering the vital symbolic imagination of your new culture. This involves a personal conversion process.

### Personal Competencies

1. **Personalising Observations:** Being able to recognise and accept that one's personal perceptions may not be shared by others; knowing and accepting that "my way is not the only way"; use "I" not "you" messages.
2. **Paying Attention to your Feelings:** Being able to self-reflect on one's thoughts, feelings, and stress level in order to stay grounded in situations.
3. **Managing Personal Biases/Stereotypes:** Being able to treat people as individuals, recognising that everyone belongs to many groups and that no one represents a group.
4. **Being Non Judgmental:** Being able to stop one's tendency to negatively judge others who are different.
5. **Listening Carefully:** Being able to pay close attention to what is being said both verbally and non-verbally.
6. **Observing Attentively:** Being able to watch and make mental notes of behaviour patterns of others in order to understand the meaning of behaviour (e.g. non-verbal messages).
7. **Assuming Complexity:** Being able to assume and perceive a range of alternatives in situations; to recognise that multiple perspectives and outcomes exist.
8. **Tolerating ambiguity/uncertainty:** Being able to respond to unpredictable situations without getting stressed and cranky.
9. **Being Flexible:** Being able to readjust quickly and effectively to changing situations.
10. **Having Patience:** Being able to stay calm, stable and persistent in trying moments.
11. **Being Resourceful:** Being able to respond skilfully and promptly in new, uncertain situations. Seek information about the cultures of those with whom you interact.
12. **Having a Sense of Humor:** Being able to laugh at oneself and with (not at) others; finding humor in the irony of life.
13. **Showing Respect:** Being able to behave in a respectful manner towards others who are different.
14. **Displaying Empathy:** Being able to vicariously feel the toughest attitudes and experiences of another. Results from respecting and interacting with diverse others.

[The foregoing has been adapted from C. Dodd and F. Montalzo (1987)]



# THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE

THE HOUSE OF THE FAMILY OF GOD IN AFRICA

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