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**MATURITY AND ITS ASSESSMENT FOR ADMISSION INTO RELIGIOUS LIFE
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO INSTITUTES IN ZIMBABWE**

by
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**A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Canon Law,
Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada, in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Religious profession, by which certain Catholics publicly profess the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience according to ecclesial law, is a juridic act. Consequently, professed members assume certain obligations and rights in the Church.

The serious nature of the obligations of religious profession, obliges superiors of religious institutes to be vigilant in admitting into their institutes only those candidates who meet certain requirements. Canon 642 specifies some of these requirements. These are, the required age, health, suitable disposition and sufficient maturity to embrace the proper life of an institute. While it recommends the use of experts in determining the presence of these qualities, if necessary, the canon, also cautions superiors to respect individual privacy (c. 220) in the process.

Apart from age which is easy to ascertain, each of the other listed requirements is so abstract, broad and difficult to define that the deliberate choice was made to simply focus our study on “sufficient maturity.” The thesis attempts to define religious life and maturity and also explores methods of assessing the maturity required for admission in the novitiate of an institute. Even then, although maturity is mentioned several times in the Code, it is nowhere defined in clear terms seemingly because the law lacks the language and the tools to elaborate on its complex nature. As a result, an analytical inter-dialogue between theology, spirituality, canon law and psychology is used to bridge the gap between the legal requirements and the psychological concepts.

The first chapter of the thesis presents a brief description of the essential elements of religious life, based on magisterial documents since the Second Vatican Council. It also defines personal maturity in its several aspects primarily from a psychological point of view.

In order to reveal the relationship between the obligations of religious life and the personal maturity that is required for the life in its ideal state, chapter two examines in detail the role maturity plays in living out the three vows, common life and prayer life.

In chapter three, the thesis analyses the methods currently used to assess the maturity of candidates admitted into religious life. The two main methods of psychological assessment identified in this study are psychological testing and behavioural assessment. Necessary measures to guard against unlawful violation of individual privacy of candidates during assessment are also discussed.

The content of chapter four is centred on the applicability or suitability of the conclusions of our study to religious life in Zimbabwe.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
ABBREVIATIONS	ix
INTRODUCTION	x
CHAPTER ONE:	
THE NOTION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE ACCORDING TO THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL AND PERSONAL MATURITY	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 - THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE	3
1.2 - THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE	7
1.2.1 - The Vow of Chastity	7
1.2.2 - The Vow of Poverty	9
1.2.3 - The Vow of Obedience	11
1.2.4 - The Perpetuity of Religious Profession	12
1.2.5 - Common Life	14
1.2.6 - Prayer	15
1.3 - PERSONAL MATURITY	18
1.3.1 - The Concept of Personality	18
1.3.2 - The Concept of Personal Maturity	21
1.3.3 - Psychosexual Maturity	23
1.3.4 - Affective Maturity	27
1.3.5 - Intellectual Maturity	29

1.3.6 - Moral Maturity	32
1.3.7 - Social Maturity	39
1.3.8 - Spiritual and Christian Maturity	40
CONCLUSION	46
 CHAPTER TWO:	
THE NECESSITY OF MATURITY IN RELIGIOUS LIFE	48
 INTRODUCTION	48
 2.1 - MATURITY AND THE VOCATION TO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE	49
 2.2 - MATURITY AND THE VOW OF CHASTITY	53
2.2.1 - Maturity and the Choice of the Vow of Chastity	55
2.2.2 - Maturity and Loneliness in the Vow of Chastity	57
2.2.3 - Maturity and Celibate Sexual Desire	62
2.2.4 - Maturity and Friendship in Consecrated Celibacy	66
 2.3 - MATURITY AND THE VOW OF POVERTY	70
 2.4 - MATURITY AND THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE	74
2.4.1 - The Need for Responsibility	76
2.4.2 - Discernment	76
2.4.3 - Openness to Dialogue	79
 2.5 - MATURITY AND COMMON LIFE	83
2.5.1 - The Nature of the Religious Common Life	84
2.5.1.1 - Self-knowledge, Loving and Accepting Oneself	86

2.5.1.2 - Community Intimacy	88
2.5.1.3 - Called Together as We are	88
2.5.2 - The Dynamics of Community Intimacy	89
2.5.2.1 - Transparency	89
2.5.2.2 - Challenge and Confrontation	90
2.5.2.3 - Respect of the Individual's Space	92
2.6 - MATURITY AND PRAYER	93
2.6.1 - Prayer as a Relationship with God	94
2.6.1.1 - Contemplative Prayer	95
2.6.1.2 - Affective Prayer	97
2.6.2 - Obstacles to Growth in Affective Prayer	97
2.6.3 - Fruits of Prayer	99
CONCLUSION	100
 CHAPTER THREE:	
ASSESSMENT OF MATURITY	103
 INTRODUCTION	 103
 3.1 - THE NEED TO KNOW BEFORE ADMISSION	 105
3.1.1 - The Importance of the Novitiate in Religious Life	105
3.1.2 - To Facilitate Formation Programmes	108
3.1.3 - To Eliminate Unsuitable Candidates	109
 3.2 - METHODS OF ASSESSING MATURITY	 112
3.2.1 - Traditional Assessment	113

3.2.1.1 - Strengths of Traditional Assessment	115
3.2.2.1 - Weaknesses of Traditional Assessment	115
3.2.2 - Behavioural Assessment	116
3.2.2.1 - Weaknesses of Behavioural Assessment	118
3.2.2.2 - Strengths of Behavioural Assessment	119
3.3 - PAPAL AND CURIAL DOCUMENTS ON PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT .	120
3.3.1 - Psychological Assessment Before the 1983 Code	120
3.3.2 - Psychological Assessment in the 1983 Code	124
3.3.3 - Psychological Assessment and Confidentiality in Admission of Candidates	126
3.4 - TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS FOR ASSESSING MATURITY	129
3.4.1 - Recruitment of Mature Candidates	129
3.4.2 - The Vocation Director	131
3.4.3 - The Pre-admission Stage and Workshops Encouraged During This period	132
3.4.4 - Immediate Assessment Programme	138
3.4.4.1 - What kind of Psychologist?	138
3.4.4.2 - Orientation	139
3.4.4.3 - Areas Focussed on in Assessment	141
3.4.4.4 - Tools for Obtaining Background Information and Social History	143
3.4.4.5 - Assessing Intellectual Maturity	144
3.4.4.6 - Self-rating Tests of Personality	145
3.4.4.7 - Assessing Psychosexual Maturity and Screening for Pedophilia	148
3.4.4.8 - Assessing Spiritual Maturity	153
3.4.4.9 - The Assessment Report	154

CONCLUSION	156
 CHAPTER FOUR:	
APPLICATION OF ASSESSMENT OF MATURITY IN ZIMBABWE	160
 INTRODUCTION	160
 4.1 - A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE	161
 4.2 - PERSONAL MATURITY IN THE ZIMBABWEAN CULTURE	163
4.2.1 - The Indigenous Zimbabwean World View/Values	164
4.2.1.1 - Religion	164
4.2.1.2 - Community-mindedness	167
4.2.2 - Definition of Personal Maturity in Zimbabwe	170
4.2.3 - The Culturally Mature Young Person	172
4.2.4 - Christian Maturity in Zimbabwe	174
4.2.4.1 - Inculturation of Christianity in Zimbabwe	174
4.2.4.2 - Can Ancestor-veneration and <i>Kurova Guva</i> be Christianized?	177
4.2.4.3 - Toward a Christology and Ecclesiology for Christian Maturity in Zimbabwe	180
 4.3 - CULTURAL PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT/CHALLENGE MATURITY IN RELIGIOUS LIFE IN ZIMBABWE	184
4.3.1 - The Notion of Religious Life in the Zimbabwean Tradition ...	184
4.3.1.1 - <i>Mbonga</i> (Traditional Vestal Virgins)	185

4.3.1.2 - Cultural Challenges/Supports to the Notion of Religious Life	185
4.3.1.3 - Cultural Practices Supporting the Vow of Chastity in Zimbabwe	187
4.3.1.4 - Cultural Practices Challenging the Vow of Chastity in Zimbabwe	189
4.3.1.5 - Cultural Practices Supporting/Challenging the Vow of Poverty in Zimbabwe	193
4.3.1.6 - Cultural Practices Supporting/Challenging the Vow of Obedience in Zimbabwe	196
4.3.1.7 - Cultural Practices Supporting/Challenging Common Life in Zimbabwe	198
4.3.1.8 - Cultural Practices Supporting/Challenging Prayer Life in Zimbabwe	200
 4.4 - ASSESSMENT OF MATURITY OF CANDIDATES FOR RELIGIOUS LIFE IN ZIMBABWE	203
4.4.1 - The Need for Assessment of Maturity for Admission into Religious Life in Zimbabwe	203
4.4.2 - Recruitment of Vocations to Religious Life	206
4.4.3 - Pre-novitiate Programmes	208
4.4.4 - Criteria for Assessment of Candidates	208
4.4.5 - Methods of Assessing Maturity of Candidates	210
4.4.5.1 - Psychological Testing	211
4.4.5.2 - Behavioural Assessment	212
4.4.5.3 - Assessment of Intellectual Maturity	214
 4.5 - PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE ASSESSMENT OF CANDIDATES	214

CONCLUSION	215
GENERAL CONCLUSION	217
APPENDICES	225
ONE: Vows for Nonviolence	225
TWO: Candidate's Release Form	227
THREE: Record-Filing Policy	228
FOUR: Pictures of some Inculturation of Religious Life in Africa	232
BIBLIOGRAPHY	236

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	Acta Apostolicae Sedis
c. cc.	Canon, canons
CIC/17	Code of Canon Law, 1917
CIC/83	Code of Canon Law, 1983
CICLSAL	Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
CLD	Canon Law Digest
CLSA	Canon Law Society of America
CLSGBI	Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland
EE	Essential Elements
ES	Ecclesiae sanctae
ET	Evangelica testificatio
GS	Gaudium et spes
LG	Lumen gentium
MR	Mutuae relationes
no, nos	Number, numbers
OT	Optatam totius
p., pp.	Page, pages
PC	Perfectae caritatis
PO	Presbyterorum ordinis
RC	Renovationis causam
RD	Redemptionis donum
RfR	Review for Religious
StC	Studia canonica
VAT. II	Vatican Council II
VC	Vita consecrata
ZCBC	Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference

INTRODUCTION

It is a matter of universal knowledge that religious life entails serious obligations and rights which necessarily presuppose in prospective candidates certain personal qualities to enable them effectively and fruitfully to live the life. The ecclesiastical legislator is not incognizant of this fact, for we find clearly identified in c. 642, certain personal qualities as prerequisites to be possessed by all candidates before being admitted to a religious institute. A quick look at the context and wording of the canon should be helpful to our analysis.

The general context of c. 642¹ is Part III of Book II of the 1983 Code,² treating the People of God. It is situated in Section I under Title II: Religious Institutes, Chapter 3: The Admission of Candidates and the Formation of Members, Article 2: Admission to the Novitiate, being its immediate context. Like most of the canons in this section which attempt at legislating for charisms, the wording of c. 642 is exhortatory in nature as it merely urges and reminds superiors of their responsibility to select carefully the candidates they admit into their institutes.³

The canon identifies several specific qualities for admission, namely the prescribed minimum age, health, suitable disposition and sufficient maturity. The assessment of these qualities is necessary to determine the suitability of a prospective candidate to religious life in general and to that of a particular institute. Presupposed in these requirements is the fact

¹ Canon 642: "Superiors are to exercise a vigilant care to admit only those who, besides being of required age, are healthy, have a suitable disposition and have sufficient maturity to undertake the life which is proper to the institute. This health, disposition and maturity are to be established, if necessary, even by the use of experts, without prejudice to can. 220."

² *Codex iuris canonici*, auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus, Vatican City, Libreria editrice Vaticana, 1983. *The Code of Canon Law*, New revised English translation, prepared by the Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland in association with the Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand and the Canadian Canon Law Society, London, Harper Collins Publishers, 1997. The translation used in this study is from this source. Hereafter canons will be cited c. for canon, cc. for canons followed by the canon number(s).

³ G. SHEEHY et al., (eds), *The Canon Law: Letter & Spirit: a Practical Guide to the Code of Canon Law*, prepared by the Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland, in association with the Canadian Canon Law Society, MN, Liturgical Press, 1995, pp. 354-355.

that the prospective candidate is already a person in the Church (cc. 96-112).⁴

Most of the terms used in describing the qualities mentioned in c. 642 connote very broad and abstract concepts and, therefore, present considerable difficulty in interpretation. While age may be easy to verify, good health, suitable disposition and sufficient maturity are not easy to define and identify. As a result, commentators on the canon often propose different criteria for interpreting and identifying those qualities.⁵

It is also probably due to this abstract nature of the requirements that the legislator wisely made this canon merely exhortatory and, therefore, non-invalidating.⁶ The criteria that would come under health, suitable disposition or maturity also seem to be so much and so involving that a thorough treatment of each one of them could easily lead to several studies of a scientific nature. This is the principal reason for restricting our study to only one requirement specified in c. 642.

While the law allows the use of experts, medical and psychological if necessary, the dignity and privacy of candidates can in no way be violated in the process of the assessment. Therefore the stipulations of c. 220 are to be strictly adhered to in whatever method is used in assessing the qualities mentioned in c. 642.⁷

It is in the light of this predicament arising from the complex nature of the canon that

⁴ R. SMITH, "Admission to the Novitiate [cc. 641-645]," in J.P. BEAL, J.A. CORIDEN, T.J. GREEN (eds), *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law, Commissioned by the Canon Law Society of America*, Paulist Press, New York, NY/Mahwah, 2000, p. 807. The canon is also connected with several other canons namely 217, 220, 574 §2, 586 §1, 597, 620, 643 §1 1°, 646, 652 §2, 656 1°, 658 1°, 720-721, 735, 738 §1.

⁵ See L. CHIAPPETTA, *Il Codice di diritto canonico: commento giuridico-pastorale*, Napoli, Edizioni Dehoniane, 1988, no. 2641, p. 739. See also D.J. ANDRÉS, *El derecho de los religiosos, Comentario al código*, Madrid-Roma, Publicationes claretianas y comentarium pro religiosis, 1984, pp. 255-265: ID., "De la admisión en el noviciado(cc. 641-645)," in A. MARZOA, J. MIRAS, R. RODRIGUEZ-OCANA (eds), *Comentario exegético al Código de derecho canonico*, Pamplona, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1997, pp. 1613-1615.

⁶ "Dotada de clara imperatividad, no obstante carece de fuerza invalidante para las admisiones contrarias, debido a la complejidad de los conceptos que definen dichas cualidades, difíciles de encerrar en términos taxativos y claros." (ANDRÉS, "De la admisión en el noviciado," p. 1613.) See also ID., *El derecho de los religiosos*, p. 256.

⁷ Ibid., p. 1615. See also SMITH, "Admission to the Novitiate," p. 807.

our thesis will focus only on “sufficient maturity.” An in-depth treatment of maturity and its assessment for admission into religious life also seems to presuppose or incorporate most of the other required qualities.

[...] it is reasonably easy to identify outstanding worthy priests, the sort of priest every bishop and parish priest longs for, but to isolate more precisely what it is that makes him a capable and outstanding priest in terms of his human capacity, qualities and gifts, is less easy. It is even less easy to determine the presence of these gifts and qualities, or at least the potential of them, in candidates for priesthood.⁸

What P. Smith says about the difficulty involved in assessing the suitability of candidates for the priesthood could very well be said also of candidates for religious life. When superiors of institutes try to understand the norm of c. 642, which concerns sufficient maturity needed for admission of candidates into their institutes, they would probably wonder what on earth this maturity truly implies and how one can possibly assess its sufficiency for religious life in a particular institute. A survey conducted among religious institutes in Zimbabwe also confirms such a general concern with regards to the need for effective assessment of candidates.⁹

Although religious life has existed in the Church for centuries, the theology and spirituality about it has evolved with the years affecting its nature and practice. In terms of the human qualities needed for admission to religious life, although c. 642 has no direct precedent in the 1917 Code, several magisterial documents had frequently dealt with those qualities that they considered essential to religious life.¹⁰ The image of religious life

⁸ P. SMITH, “Lack of Due Discretion and Suitability for Ordination,” in *S/C*, 21 (1987), p. 126.

⁹ The survey was carried out during the years 1998-1999.

¹⁰ See PIUS XI, Apostolic letter, *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, 150, 19 March 1924, in *AAS*, 15 (1924), pp. 133-148. English translation in G. COURTOIS (ed.), *The States of Perfection According to the Teaching of the Church: Papal Documents from Leo XIII to Pius XII*, translated by J.A. O’FLYNN, Dublin, M.H. Gill, 1961 (= COURTOIS, *The States of Perfection*), p. 64. Living a saintly life is indeed very challenging. In his address to bishops on testing of candidates before they are promoted to orders, Pope Pius XI also describes the priestly ministry as “... a responsibility which would be a serious one even for angels...” See SACRED CONGREGATION FOR SACRAMENTS, Instruction

presented in those documents and the requisite qualities seem to be now embodied in the term maturity in c. 642.

Whenever magisterial documents discussed the human qualities required for religious life, they almost always also reminded superiors to ensure that their candidates possessed them before they accepted them as members of their institutes. This implied employing effective methods of assessment which c. 642 also reiterates. Therefore, the following questions will be explored in response to this problem. What are the current essential elements of religious life? What constitutes maturity? What part does it play in religious life? What methods can be used to assess it prior to the admission of candidates with due respect of the individual's right to privacy?

Apparently, in the first world countries, the issues raised in this work have been under discussion for many years. In their book, *Screening Candidates for the Priesthood and Religious Life*, Arnold and his collaborators give the rationale behind screening of candidates for the seminary and religious life. They describe the qualities that are expected in both seminarians and religious. They also go on to describe and evaluate several methods of assessment that have been tried by different institutes.¹¹

In a similar work, B. Frison explains the selection of candidates for the seminary and

on the Testing of Candidates Before They are Promoted to Orders, 1, 27 December 1930, in *AAS*, 23 (1931) pp. 120-127, English translation in *CLD*, 1 (1917-1933), p. 463-482. The reference is on page 463. For other similar magisterial references, see SACRED CONGREGATION FOR SACRAMENTS, Circular letter, 27 December 1955. English translation in *CLD*, 4 (1953-1957), p. 306; PIUS XII, Apostolic constitution, *Sedes sapientiae*, 31 May 1956, in *AAS*, 48 (1956), pp. 354-365. English translation in *Apostolic Letter of Pius XII, Sedes sapientiae*, Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 1957. In no. 16, p. 5 of the translation, the Pope describes priesthood and religious life as "a multiple vocation" showing how involving it is. Speaking about the general qualifications for future priests, which would also be relevant to religious, Pope Paul VI states: "... this call involves more than the spiritual faculties of the candidate - his intellect and free will. It involves also his senses and his very body. The whole person must be equal to the harsh burdens of the ministry and ready, if need be, to lay down his life as did the Good Shepherd." See Apostolic letter, *Summi Dei verbum*, 4 November 1963, in *AAS*, 55 (1963), pp. 979-995. English translation in *The Pope Speaks*, 9 (1964), p. 244.

¹¹ See M. ARNOLD et al., *Screening Candidates for the Priesthood and Religious Life*, Chicago, Loyola University Press, 1962.

for religious life according to the norms of article 31-34 of Pope Pius XII's Apostolic Constitution *Sedes sapientiae*, 31 May 1956.¹² In doing this, Frison looks at both the canonical and the psychological requirements for selection of candidates, offers recommendations and also raises questions that are left unanswered in both *Sedes sapientiae* and *Monitum*, 15 July 1961, an instruction issued by the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office.¹³

Previous work that is very close to this study in terms of being directly aimed at candidates admitted to religious life is that edited by W.J. Coville and others. It deals with the criteria for admission of candidates in some depth. It also deals with the assessment of those criteria with the assistance of psychologists, spelling out their role and their need to handle the results with due respect for confidentiality.¹⁴ A very recent work that comes closest to our thesis and is also situated in the 1983 Code is R. Geisinger's doctoral dissertation entitled *On the Requirement of Sufficient Maturity for Candidates to the Presbyterate (c. 1031 §1), with a Consideration of Canonical Maturity and Matrimonial Jurisprudence (1989-1990)*.¹⁵ Essentially Geisinger tries to answer the question: "What constitutes sufficient minimal maturity for one to be ordained a priest, or analogously, for one to be a worthy spouse capable of giving effective consent, able to undertake the obligations of marriage?" Geisinger traces the mind of the legislator regarding sufficient maturity for priesthood, from Sacred Scripture, Gratian, the Council of Trent, the 1917 Code right up to the 1983 Code and *Pastores dabo vobis*.¹⁶ He also examines Rotal jurisprudence

¹² See footnote no. 4.

¹³ SUPREMA SACRA CONGREGATIO SANCTI OFFICII, *Monitum*, 15 July, 1961, in *AAS*, 53 (1961), p. 571. English translation in *Canon Law Digest*, 5 (1958-1962), p. 196.

¹⁴ See W.J. COVILLE et al. (eds), *Assessment of Candidates for the Religious Life*, Washington, DC, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 1966.

¹⁵ R. GEISINGER, *On the Requirement of Sufficient Maturity of Candidates to the Presbyterate (c. 1031 §1), with a Consideration of Canonical Maturity and Matrimonial Jurisprudence (1989-1990)*, Roma, Gregorian University Press, 1999.

¹⁶ JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 25 March 1992, in *AAS*, 84 (1992), pp. 657-804.

specific to maturity and marriage 1989-1990 and compares it with the maturity for presbyteral ordination. While Geisinger's work links cc. 1031 § 1 and 1095, our work limits itself to only part of c. 642. Whereas Geisinger's work traces mainly the evolution of the concern for sufficiency of maturity for the priesthood, our work focuses principally on concretizing the idea of sufficient maturity for religious life today.

Although much has been written in terms of qualities required for candidates to religious life and how to assess them, none of the available material, however, has been directly related to "sufficient maturity" mentioned in c. 642 because the canon did not exist when most of the works were written.

Many issues examined in this work will certainly overlap with those of the cited authors, but this work will focus only on candidates to religious life. It will also discuss maturity and its assessment more from the point of view of our contemporary world and particularly in the context of Zimbabwe. It is hoped that this dissertation will be enriched by the latest research on maturity both worldwide and in the Zimbabwean culture. By describing and evaluating several methods of assessment of maturity currently in use, institutes in Zimbabwe may benefit by being able to choose and consolidate models that best suit them.

To answer the main question raised in this study, a mixed method will be adopted. It will include a historical, doctrinal and analytical approach. The work will involve a scientific dialogue between theology, psychology, spirituality and canon law.

Since religious profession, which is the ultimate goal of religious life, is a juridical act involving the subject, object and capacity, chapter one will briefly define its essential elements theologically and legally in light of developments that have taken place since the Second Vatican Council. It will also define personal maturity in its various aspects, from a psychological point of view.

Chapter two will very briefly begin by tracing the evolution of the magisterial concern about the human qualities needed for religious life and their assessment in order to determine the sufficient maturity required by c. 642. It will then attempt to illustrate why and how maturity is necessary for religious life.

Chapter three will contain a brief analysis of the magisterial teaching on maturity and its assessment for admission of candidates into religious life since the beginning of the twentieth century. Based on some recent research, the chapter will also examine the methods currently used to assess candidates in the first world and the precautions adopted to safeguard candidates' privacy in the process.

Chapter four will focus on the application of the principles derived in the study to religious life in Zimbabwe. It will do this by exploring the notion of religious life and personal maturity from the Zimbabwean culture's point of view. Spiritual and Christian maturity will be discussed in depth as they are foundational to religious life. The chapter will also illustrate how some cultural practices both challenge and support religious life. The chapter will conclude by examining the assessment of the maturity of candidates for admission into religious institutes in Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER ONE

THE NOTION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE ACCORDING TO THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL AND PERSONAL MATURITY

INTRODUCTION

Any state of life chosen according to the law of the Church is, at the core, a human act which has consequences in law. It is a juridical act, which has been defined as “an externally manifested act of the will by which a certain juridic effect is intended,”¹ or “a social human act which is legitimately placed and declared, and for which a determined effect is recognized in law, because and in so far as that effect is intended by its agent.”²

The valid performance of such an act in canon law is governed by the norms contained in c. 124 (CCEO c. 931³). According to this canon, one of the essential subjective requirements for placing a juridical act is that “it be performed by a person who is legally capable (*habilis*).”⁴ Among the different types of capacity (*habilitas*)⁵ implied in law for

¹ “[...] voluntas actum externe manifestatum quo certus effectus iuridicus intenditur” (O. ROBLEDA, *Questiones disputatae iuridico-caninicae*, Rome, Libreria editrice Università Gregoriana, 1969, p. 13). For an analysis of this definition, see M. HUGHES, “A New Title in the Code: On Juridical Acts,” in *SlC*, 14 (1980), pp. 392-396.

² “[...] actus humanus socialis legitime positus et declaratus, cui a lege ideo et eatenus effectus iuridicus determinatus agnoscitur, quia et quatenus effectus ille ab agente intenditur” (G. MICHIELS, *Principia generalia de personis in Ecclesia: commentarius libri II Codicis iuris canonici, canones praeliminares 87-106*, ed. altera, Tornaci, Desclée, 1955, p. 572).

³ *Codex canonum Ecclesiarum orientalium*, auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus, Vatican City, Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1990. English translation in *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, Latin-English edition, translation prepared under the auspices of the Canon Law Society of America, Washington, DC, Canon Law Society of America, 1992. Where used, the translation of the canons of this Code will be from this source. Hereafter canons will be cited c. for canon cc. for canons, followed by the canon number(s).

⁴ “Ad validitatem actus iuridici requiritur ut a persona *habili* sit positus, [...]” (c. 124; emphasis added).

⁵ There are four types of capacity which may be required to place juridical acts: 1) natural capacity; 2) basic canonical capacity; 3) specific capacity; 4) competence. See J.M. KUZIONA, *The Nature and Application of Juridical Acts According to Canon 124 of the Code of Canon Law*, JCD diss., Faculty of Canon Law, Ottawa, Saint Paul University, 1998, pp. 134-136.

valid performance of juridical acts is the “natural” *habilitas*, or the “psychological capacity” to elicit a human act. In essence, this requirement demands that the person intending to place a juridical act have the psychological capacity proportionate to the nature and consequences of that act. In other words, there must be proportion between one’s psychological capacity and the weight of the rights and obligations arising from the placement of a particular act. To put it simply, the person placing a juridical act must be endowed with the psychological maturity or maturity of personality proportionate to the object of that act.

Religious profession through which a particular ecclesial state in life is embraced is a juridical act. It is an act through which a person freely and willingly commits oneself to assume and fulfil the essential obligations and rights proper to that state in life.⁶ These obligations and rights are serious in nature (cf. cc. 662-672) and the one who intends to assume them must enjoy the psychological capacity (*habilitas*) proportionate to them. The rights and obligations proper to the religious state are the object of one’s juridical act of religious profession.

In line with this reasoning, anyone intending to embrace religious life must be endowed with a psychological maturity proportionate to the essential obligations and rights proper to it. These obligations and rights are directly related to the essential elements of religious life. In order to establish proper criteria for assessing a person for admission to religious life, it is important to determine first the essential elements of religious life. Therefore, through a systematic analysis of the conciliar and magisterial teachings and relevant canons of the present Code of Canon Law, we will try to identify the essential elements of religious life which are the source of obligations and rights one assumes through the act of religious profession. Then we will study in-depth the notion of personal maturity. The main questions we will try to answer in this chapter are: What are the essential elements of religious life? What is personal maturity that must be proportionate to the obligations and rights which emanate from one’s act of religious profession?

⁶ Canon 607 § 2 spells out the constitutive elements of religious life, but these will be considered more in-depth later in this chapter.

1.1 - THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

In the introduction to his Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, 25 March 1996, Pope John Paul II situates consecrated life directly within the context of Jesus' life and teaching. He says:

The consecrated life, deeply rooted in the example and teaching of Christ the Lord, is a gift of God the Father to his church through the Holy Spirit. By the profession of the evangelical counsels the characteristic features of Jesus - the chaste, poor and obedient one - are made constantly 'visible' in the midst of the world, and the eyes of the faithful are directed toward the mystery of the kingdom of God already at work in history, even as it awaits its full realization in heaven.⁷

This statement of the Holy Father reinforces the affirmation of the very source of consecrated life identified in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*) of the Second Vatican Council. In *Lumen gentium*, 43, we read: "The teaching and example of Christ provide the foundation for the evangelical counsels of chaste self-dedication to God, of poverty and of obedience."⁸ We find the same echo in the Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Up-To-Date Renewal of Religious Life, *Perfectae caritatis*,⁹ and in the revised law drawn from it. According to this document, religious life is the following of Christ, "Who, virginal and poor (cf. Mt. 8:20; Lk. 9:58), redeemed and sanctified men, by obedience unto death on the cross (cf. Phil. 2:8)."¹⁰ Hence the *sequela Christi* is the final norm for religious life and it must be taken as the supreme rule by all religious institutes

⁷ JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Consecrated Life and Its Mission in the Church and in the World, *Vita consecrata* (=VC), Libreria editrice Vaticana, 1996, p. 3.

⁸ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* (=LG), 21 November 1964, in *AAS*, 57 (1965), pp. 5-75. English translation in A. P. FLANNERY (gen. ed.), *Vatican Collection: volume 1 revised ed.*, Northport, Costello, 1988 (= FLANNERY, *Conciliar Documents*, vol.1) pp. 350-440, n. 43, p. 402. [Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of conciliar and post-conciliar documents are taken from FLANNERY, and will henceforth be referred to by the name of the document followed by the number].

⁹ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on the Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life, *Perfectae caritatis* (=PC), 28 October 1965, in *AAS*, 58 (1966), pp. 702-712. English translation in FLANNERY, *Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1, pp. 611-623 (n. 7, p. 615).

¹⁰ PC, 1. See also cc. 573 and 575.

(c. 662).

Religious life could be examined on three levels: the personal, the charismatic-institutional and the ecclesial. The source of religious life for each member is a unique personal call from God out of his gratuitous love. The call reflects the loving benevolent glance of Jesus towards the rich young man (Mk. 10:21). According to *Vita consecrata*, the vocation has a Trinitarian nature in that the Father takes the initiative and, through the Holy Spirit, invites the individual to imitate closely Christ's way of life. It likens this call to the three apostles' experience of the transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-9).¹¹ It is a call that embraces the whole person and requires a response of the same measure, the offering of one's entire being.¹² This divine call is an invitation to a special consecration to and deep unity with Christ, one that has a nuptial character and engages all the affectivity of a person. *Perfectae caritatis*, 5 is full of expressions describing the exclusive nature of this deeply personal relationship. It says that religious are invited to become :

[...] dead to sin (cf. Rom. 6:11) ... renouncing the world also ... [that] they might live for God alone ... leaving all things for Christ's sake (cf. Mk 10:28) [religious] ... should follow him, regarding this as the one thing that is necessary (cf. Lk. 10:39) and should be solicitous for all that is his (cf. Cor. 7:32) ... cleave to God by mind and heart ... seek and love above else God who has first loved us (cf. 1 Jn 4:10 ... take care to foster a life hidden with Christ in God (cf. Col. 3:3).¹³

Still on the personal level, religious life is also a call to continuous conversion, an attempt to being conformed to Christ by learning to be detached from externals and allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and sustain one's life in all its aspects. Rooted in baptism, one's consecration to God "should stimulate and foster the exercise of the virtues ... of humility and obedience, fortitude and chastity, by which they share in Christ's emptying of himself

¹¹ VC, 14-16, pp. 20-24.

¹² CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *Directives of Formation in Religious Institutes*, Rome, Canadian Religious Conference, 1990, p. 10.

¹³ Canons 573 and 607 also have echoes of the nature of this relationship.

(cf. Phil. 2:7-8).”¹⁴ As implied in the title of this decree, religious life is ultimately a call to perfect charity. The religious’ love of God can be revealed only through love of one’s neighbour (1 Jn. 4:20-21). Religious are meant to live a life completely permeated with the love of God and humankind. According to *Vita consecrata*, it is “loving with the heart of Christ” and showing through their works that “divine charity is the foundation and stimulus of freely given and active love.”¹⁵

Religious life is also charismatic and institutional in the sense that one responds to the divine call and consecrates oneself through an institute with a particular charism (c. 574, §2). It is based on charisms, gifts given to certain Christians (founders of institutes) by the Holy Spirit who is always at work in the Church.¹⁶ A particular charism is that which characterizes the uniqueness of each institute by its particular way of following Christ, through contemplation (c. 674) or dedication to an apostolate (c. 675, §1). It is in the fidelity and continuous response to this fundamental option that the authenticity of religious life lies. Since it is for the good of the Church, institutes have their own proper character and functions. *Perfectae caritatis* urges institutes to accept and retain faithfully the spirit of their founders. However, in order to witness effectively, the institutes are urged to be sensitive to the signs of the times and adapt themselves to the changing circumstances.¹⁷

Religious life is essentially ecclesial in nature for it can only operate within the life

¹⁴ VC, 36, p. 62.

¹⁵ VC, 75, p. 138.

¹⁶ PC, 1. See also PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious Life, *Evangelica testificatio* (=ET), 29 June 1971, in AAS, 63 (1971), pp. 497-526. English translation in FLANNERY, *Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1, pp. 680-706 (n.11, p. 685). The same document goes on to elaborate on the charismatic nature of religious institutes: “In reality, the charism of the religious life, far from being an impulse born of flesh and blood ... is the fruit of the Holy Sprit who is always at work within the Church” (11). See also *Directives on Formation*, p. 19; c. 598, §1 and § 2.

¹⁷ PC, 2b. See also ET, 11. Canon 578 reiterates this exhortation and *Vita consecrata* appropriately refers to the dynamism between fidelity to the spirit of the founder and adaptation as “creative fidelity” by which religious institutes are “courageously invited to propose anew the enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness of their founders and foundresses in response to the signs emerging in today’s world” (VC, 37, p. 63.)

of the Church. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church has for centuries interpreted the evangelical counsels and promulgated laws to regulate their practice and established stable forms of living them. Since Vatican II, it has assumed more of a supervisory and protective authority over religious institutes.¹⁸ It is the Church that approves the constitutions of religious institutes thus giving them canonical status and committing itself to fostering and protecting their spiritual patrimony.¹⁹ The Church acknowledges and embraces different kinds of institutes as varieties of gifts from the Holy Spirit.²⁰ In recognition of the multiplicity of charisms and in respect of each institute's proper character and functions, *Perfectae caritatis* decided "to deal only with the general principles of the renewal of the life and discipline of religious orders while leaving their special characters intact ... Particular norms for their exposition and application will be determined after the council by the competent authority."²¹

Although religious life is neither hierarchical nor sacramental, it belongs to the life of the Church and her holiness (*LG* , 44; c. 207, §2). Apart from its eschatological witnessing to the hope of a new heaven and a new earth (*LG* , 44; c. 607), it also enriches her through the several works of charity which religious institutes carry out by her mandate and in her name (c. 675 §3). Appreciating the work of religious institutes in the Church, *Perfectae caritatis* comments:

¹⁸ *LG*, 45. Canon 576 repeats the Council's teaching almost verbatim.

¹⁹ *LG*, 45. See also SACRA CONGREGATIO PRO RELIGIOSIS ET INSTITUTIS SAECULARIBUS, Instruction, *Renovationis causam*, 6 January 1969, Introduction, in *AAS*, 61 (1969), pp. 103-120. English translation in FLANNERY, *Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1, pp. 634-655; Canons 573 and 595.

²⁰ *PC* , 8. Religious institutes are one of the three categories that fall under Consecrated Life in Part III, Section I (cc. 573-746) in Book II of the CIC/83 entitled "The People of God." The three categories are the hermits (c. 603), religious institutes (cc. 607-709) and secular institutes (cc. 710-730). Religious institutes can be further subdivided into contemplatives and apostolic institutes.

²¹ *PC* , 1 and 10. See also cc. 586 and 587.

This has considerably contributed towards enabling the Church not merely to be equipped for every good work (cf. 2 Tim. 3:17) and to be prepared for the work of the ministry unto the building-up of the Body of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:12), but also to appear adorned for her husband (cf. Apoc. 21:2) and to manifest in herself the multiform wisdom of God (cf. Eph. 3:10)²²

Without being hierarchical, religious life does have a juridical status since it has specific obligations and rights in the Church (cc. 662-672).

1.2 - THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

According to *Lumen gentium*, 44, anyone who joins a religious institute “binds himself to the practice of the three evangelical counsels by vows or by other sacred ties of a similar nature.” It also goes on to describe religious life as “being ... constituted by the evangelical counsels.” *Perfectae caritatis*, 2e picks up the theme and states, “Before all else, religious life is ordered to the following of Christ by its members and to their becoming united to God by the profession of the evangelical counsels.” *Vita consecrata*, 1 echoes the same message, for it states, “by profession of the evangelical counsels, the characteristic features of Jesus - the chaste, poor and obedient one - are constantly made ‘visible’ in the midst of the world.” It is therefore evident that religious life is centred on the public profession of the evangelical counsels. In order for any religious institute’s statutes to be approved by the competent Church authorities, they must, according to c. 598 §2, include the substantive content of cc. 599, 600 and 601.²³

1.2.1 - The Vow of Chastity

The Second Vatican Council emphasized the positive aspects of chastity, describing it as a precious gift of divine grace towering among the evangelical counsels.²⁴ Chastity is embraced in imitation of Christ who remained a virgin throughout his life (Mt. 8:20) and

²² PC, 2. On the same issue, *Vita consecrata*, 3 also describes religious life as being “at the very heart of the Church as a decisive element for her mission” (p. 5). See also c. 675 § 3.

²³ Canons 559-601 give both the theological motivation and the practical obligations of the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience.

²⁴ LG, 42.

also to bring about close union with him. It is described as “uniquely freeing the heart of man (1 Cor. 7:32-35) so that he becomes more fervent in love for God and for all men.”²⁵ It provides a freedom of the human heart, enabling a person to love other people without domination or exclusiveness. *Vita consecrata* describes it as “a joyful liberating experience.”²⁶

Chastity is embraced for the sake of the kingdom (Mt. 19:22) as it is meant to foster and facilitate the life of charity dedicated to God.²⁷ According to the Council Fathers, it is “... a sign and stimulus of love, and as a singular source of spiritual fertility in the world” (LG, 42). It is a loving gift of oneself expressed in fraternal charity, and in this way, it becomes fruitful. Chastity also has an eschatological dimension, pointing towards the prospect of new life after resurrection. It is a symbol of God’s marriage with his Church which will be fully manifested in the next world.²⁸

For the individual embracing the vow of chastity, it means being caught up in Christ’s loving passion that led him to love so much that he even gave up his own life. It is trying to live for something greater than oneself. It is loving with open hands without trying to possess, control, manipulate or own. It is loving without expecting anything in return. It is a love that frees the loved one. The painful moments of struggling to let go and choosing the most loving response in a given situation are the inevitable consequences of living out this love and part of growth in chastity. The vow of chastity does not mean that members should be non-sexual or anti-sexual. It actually means that even the goodness of the genital expression of one’s sexuality can be deliberately and legitimately given up for the sake of the kingdom. A healthy community life is considered to facilitate the living of this vow.

Juridically, the vow of chastity involves bodily sexual abstinence, permanent

²⁵ PC, 12.

²⁶ VC, 88, p. 160.

²⁷ PC, 12.

²⁸ Ibid., and also VC, 88, p. 161.

celibacy and perfect continence (cc. 277, §1 and 599). The perpetual and public religious vow of chastity is an impediment invalidating marriage (c. 1088). Canons 694 § 1, 2°, 1394 and 1395 prescribe penalties for all religious who violate the vow of chastity by attempting or contracting marriage. They also spell out penalties for living in concubinage or remaining in another scandalous external sin against the sixth commandment. Paragraph two of c. 1395 also deals with penalties for a cleric who commits an offence against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue with force or threats, or publicly or with a minor below the age of sixteen.

1.2.2 - The Vow of Poverty

The Second Vatican Council reiterates the doctrine which sees poverty as a symbol of following Christ who though rich, for our sake chose to become poor so that humanity might, through his poverty become rich (Mt. 8:20; 2 Cor. 8:9).²⁹ *Vita consecrata* sees evangelical poverty also as a reply to today's challenge of materialism and insensitivity to the need for balance of natural resources.³⁰ Religious are meant to be poor both in fact and in spirit, having their treasures in heaven. Religious poverty implies that members have respect for the dignity of labour, earn their living and not ask for unnecessary property, but learn to depend on and trust in God's providence.³¹ Religious institutes are to enact norms to foster, protect and give expression to poverty according to their charism and also to deal with some practical issues.³²

Hard as it is indeed to legislate for different institutes in different situations, as well

²⁹ PC, 13. See also the first part of c. 600.

³⁰ According to VC, 89, p. 162: "The reply of the consecrated life is found in the profession of evangelical poverty, which ... is often expressed in an active involvement in the promotion of solidarity and charity."

³¹ PC, 13. According to *Vita consecrata*, 90, p. 163: "... the primary meaning of poverty is to attest that God is the true wealth of the human heart."

³² PC, 13. There are also, however, several other canons that are linked to this vow: cc. 277; 285; 286; 287; 289; 634; 640; 702, §2 and 1267.

as for institutes to set a standard regarding the observance of the vow of poverty, there is however a model for all institutes. It is Jesus on whose counsel and example the vow is based. Since love and service of one's neighbour is the rationale behind it, living the vow calls for continuous personal conversion leading to morally right choices. When one is really concerned about the welfare of the other, the dependence and the limitation in one's use of material goods and sharing will be the natural outcome. It will not be an imposition but a choice in preference for a greater good. This approach prevents reduction of the vow of poverty to a merely legalistic level. On the part of the institute's public advocacy for the poor, poverty in its different forms (economic, political, spiritual, educational, etc.) is an effective witness to the vow of poverty. Sharing one's resources with the poor as an institute and opening up one's facilities for use by the poor are also a way of living out the vow. Joan Chittister, in her book, *The Fire in These Ashes*, refers to this as "deprivatization of religious property." Speaking about the danger of too much privacy among religious to the point of losing touch with the poor and thus failing to live the vow effectively, she warns: "The religious congregation that forgets its mission to poverty becomes really poor of soul. Turned in upon itself, it dies because it has no reason to live other than to preserve its privacy, safeguard its institution, insure its comfort and secure its pension fund."³³

Canon 668, however, provides some norms regulating the relationship of the individual religious to property. Based on an interpretation of the canon, at profession a member usually signs three documents relating to temporal matters:

- the agreement not to demand compensation for services rendered, or for future considerations;
- the cession of administration of goods presently owned, or to be acquired in the future; and
- the last will and testament determining how any personal goods are to be disposed of after death.

Depending on the nature of an institute and its proper law, a religious can be obliged to renounce all currently owned possessions at profession. It can also be optional and done

³³ J. CHITTISTER, *The Fire in These Ashes: A Spirituality of Contemporary Religious Life*, Kansas, Sheed & Ward, 1995, p. 111.

wholly or in part with the superior's permission at a stage prescribed by proper law. Renunciation should be done with independent legal advice from a civil lawyer.

1.2.3 - The Vow of Obedience

Like the other evangelical counsels, the vow of obedience has a scriptural foundation. According to *Perfectae caritatis*, 14, obedience is lived:

After the example of Jesus Christ who came to do his Father's will (cf. Jn 4:34; Heb. 10:7; Ps. 39:91) and taking the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7), learned to obey through what he suffered (cf. Heb. 10:8) ... an endeavour to attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:13).

The same document summarizes the characteristics of obedience as:

The following of Christ to the point of being so united with God's will such that one participates in the salvific mission of the Church here and now, through a distinctive submission to human authority within a specific ecclesial context (*PC*, 13).³⁴

The vow of obedience is a life of faith and love which enables one to acknowledge formally the mediating role of the legitimate superior in a member's desire to follow God's will. It is not just a matter of doing this or not doing that in response to a superior's command. Rather it is an encompassing attitude which orients one's entire being toward the will of God. Obedience is an expression of the deep Christian hope in the Church. It is not based on trust in human ingenuity, but trust in the action of God breaking into history. It is based on contentment with the rhythm in which God continues to bring out the truth in his own way. It is a respect for God's time, which is not an inactive complacency, but an attentive waiting and responding. Since the paschal mystery is at the root of Christianity, obedience will often demand suffering. However, mature obedience will be characterized by a freedom from resentment and bitterness, especially when truth is not readily accepted. Frankness needs to be combined with docility in order to establish and preserve the atmosphere of peace necessary for the truth to emerge. Far from limiting one's freedom and

³⁴ See also c. 601. Legitimate authority in institutes includes general chapters and all superiors within their competence. Constitutions of each institute would spell out the details. CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR INSTITUTES, "Norms for Religious Life," ('Essential Elements') 16, 31 May 1983, in *CLD*, 10 (1986), p. 50, has similar views about obedience.

lowering one's dignity, religious obedience paradoxically and mysteriously enhances it and "leads it to maturity by extending the freedom of the sons of God."³⁵

Religious authority is also obliged by the vow of obedience because:

[...] they will have to render an account of the souls committed to their care (Heb. 13:17). They should be docile to God's will ... exercise authority in a spirit of service ... govern their subjects ... with respect for them as human persons ... foster in them a spirit of voluntary subjection ... train their subjects to cooperate with them.³⁶

There is need to strike a healthy balance between meeting the needs of the individual and respecting authority. Superiors, however, still retain personal authority by which they have the final decision in any issue.³⁷

Other implications of c. 601 which defines obedience, come out clearly only in the 1983 Code when viewed in conjunction with the other canons related to it.³⁸

1.2.4 - The Perpetuity of Religious Profession

Religious profession of the above-mentioned evangelical counsels has a number of characteristics. It is supposed to meet the requirements of a vow as defined in c. 1191, §1. This canon refers to the required disposition, competence of the subject and impediments that would render it invalid. Canons 656 and 658 spell out impediments specific to religious profession.

³⁵ *PC*, 14. *VC*, 91 argues along the same line: "In an especially vigorous way, this obedience repropounds the obedience of Christ to the Father and, taking this mystery as its point of departure, testifies that there is no contradiction between obedience and freedom" (p. 165). Evangelical obedience is also seen as a challenge to distorted use of freedoms which promote injustice and violence in some people's lives.

³⁶ *PC*, 14. See also *ET*, 25. This doctrine on the exercise of authority in religious life is transferred into the Code of Canon Law in cc. 617-619. *VC*, 43 describes this authority as "fraternal and spiritual" (p. 75).

³⁷ *PC*, 14. *ET*, 25, addressing the same issue states that "this labour of seeking together must end, when it is the moment, with the decision of the superiors whose presence and acceptance are indispensable in every community." See also c. 618 and *VC*, 43, p. 75.

³⁸ The following are canons related to the vow of obedience: 587, §1; 590, §2; 608; 617; 618; 630; 654; 665, §2; 678, §1 & §2 and 697.

Profession of the evangelical counsels also has to be done in a form recognized and acceptable to the Church. It has to be public (cc. 607, §2 and 654) and accepted in the name of the Church by a legitimate authority (c. 1192, §1).³⁹

The other characteristic of the religious profession is that it is meant to be permanent. The term 'stable' which is used to describe religious life in *Lumen gentium*, 44, refers to this fact. The term is also used in c. 573 which gives a comprehensive description of consecrated life. The permanency of this state of life is meant to correspond to the depth and totality of the consecration.⁴⁰ The consequence of this doctrine in law is that it is imperative for members of religious institutes to profess perpetual evangelical counsels (c.607, §2). Some candidates make perpetual profession soon after the novitiate.⁴¹ In most cases, however, permanent profession is preceded by temporary vows, but always with the understanding that they would be renewed and ultimately pronounced for life. The form and duration of temporary commitment is determined in proper law, but always retains the three evangelical counsels as their basis.⁴² The period from the end of the novitiate, however, to the time of perpetual profession should not be less than three years but not more than nine years (cc. 655-658).

³⁹ *ET*, 7, also brings out this public and ecclesial context of religious profession: "Such is your consecration, made within the Church and through her ministry - both that of her representatives who receive your profession and that of the Christian community itself, whose love recognizes, welcomes sustains and embraces those who within it make an offering of themselves." This is based on *LG*, 45.

⁴⁰ According to *RC*, 7, "For him who has heeded the call of Jesus to leave everything to follow Him there can be no question of how important it is to respond generously and wholeheartedly to this call from the very outset of his religious life ..." (7). The same document also refers to the appropriateness of the permanency of religious profession as bringing about "a total consecration to God, who alone is worthy of such a sweeping gift on the part of a human person" (2).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴² The same document also explains that the period of temporary vows often helps the candidates who are not yet ready for perpetual profession at the end of their novitiate to attain sufficient religious maturity by living their life in community.

1.2.5 - Common Life

The way *Perfectae caritatis* speaks of common life indicates that it is indeed an essential element of religious life.⁴³ It reveals its scriptural foundation, its characteristics and both its material and spiritual benefits. It states:

Common life in prayer and the sharing of the same spirit (Acts 2:42), should be constant after the example of the early Church, in which the company of believers were of one heart and soul ... Religious, as members of Christ should live together as brothers and should give pride of place to one another in esteem (cf. Rom. 12:10), carrying one another's burdens (cf. Gal. 6:12). [Religious are described as]... a community gathered together as a true family in the Lord's name ... [and that] ... the unity of the brethren is a symbol of the coming of Christ (cf. Jn 13:35; 17:21) and is a source of great apostolic power (15).

Pope John Paul II gives an equally beautiful image of an ideal community when he describes it as "a luminous sign of the new Jerusalem ... the dwelling of God with men (Rev. 21:3) ... characterised with joy and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52).⁴⁴

Canons 607 and 665 also make common life a basic canonical requirement for religious institutes. According to c. 602, community life, by which all members are united together like a special family in Christ, is to be organized in such a way as to provide mutual support to all members in fulfilling their vocation. It is to be an example of the communion of all Christians rooted in baptism and love. Canon 607, §2 clearly prescribes common life as a requirement for religious life.

In the name of common life, c. 665, §1 obliges religious to live in their own house

⁴³ This is very debatable. See M.D. GALLAGHER, *The Common Life: An Element of Apostolic Religious Institutes of Women*, JCD Dissertation, Faculty of Canon Law, Ottawa, Saint Paul University, 1995. However, Rolheiser, who refers to religious community life as a paradox, brings out the real truth about it. He says: "On the one hand, biblically and theologically, one-roof community is not prescribed as normative. One heart and the communal sharing of resources, irrespective of communal or solitary roofs, is what is prescribed. Hence, one can live alone and be solidly within community, just as one can live with others and not be in community. On the other hand, religious life gives its strongest witness to the world, is most transparent and sustains its members the best when it issues forth from one-roof community, when a group can precisely live fully together." See R. ROLHEISER, "Religious Life in America Faces a Change of Epoch," in *Papers Prepared for the Inter American Meeting*, Toronto, Conference of Major Superiors of Men, Leadership Conference of Women Religious, May 1999, p. 13.

⁴⁴ VC, 45, p. 77.

unless, for a just cause, if it is a question of a lengthy absence, the major superior, with the consent of her council, can grant permission for living outside the house of the institute, but, not for more than a year. However, for the purpose of health or studies or undertaking an apostolate in the name of the institute, permission for living outside the house of the institute can also be granted for longer periods. Paragraph two of the same canon obliges superiors to seek solicitously after those who unlawfully absent themselves from the religious house with the intention of withdrawing from the power of their superiors. Although proper law determines each institute's expression of this common life,⁴⁵ other legislation linked to it points to common life as the general norm.⁴⁶

Common life is also closely related to the vow of poverty (c. 600), since according to universal law, members have all their resources in one fund (c. 668, §3) and depend on their superior for the provision of their daily needs and whatever is necessary to pursue their vocation (c. 670).

Common life becomes a right that one acquires after professing one's vows (c. 654). Consequently, a problematic member might be forced into involuntary exclaustation so that others may continue to enjoy common life (c. 686).

1.2.6 - Prayer

Although prayer is not listed as one of the essential elements of religious life, it is fitting to include it here as it is quite indispensable for the life. Without it, religious life

⁴⁵ SACRED CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR INSTITUTES, "Regarding Small Communities," in *Consecrated Life*, vol. I, no. 2 (1975), pp. 141-145.

⁴⁶ The following canons are closely linked to common life. Canons 608 and 665, §1 oblige religious to live in houses (houses here refer not to buildings, but to communities) legitimately constituted by the competent authority with prior consent of the diocesan bishop (c. 609, §1). The house needs to be situated where it will be useful for the Church and for the institute, and where the life of the institute can be realistically lived with both the spiritual and the temporal needs of the members being adequately met. A house established in this way also becomes a juridic person (c. 634), bound by the canonical norms for temporal goods (cc. 1254-1310). Such a house also enjoys legal perpetuity until formally suppressed by the competent ecclesiastical authority (c. 120). A religious house erected in this way enjoys the right to live the life of the institute, according to its character and purpose (c. 611).

would not exist and if neglected, the life would shrivel to death. The quality of one's prayer determines the quality of one's life. According to *Lumen gentium* 11, religious, like other Christians, are mandated to worship, which is proper to the baptismal character, enabling them to share in the priestly dimension of the Church in a manner which is different from the ministerial priesthood.⁴⁷ *Perfectae caritatis* urges members of religious life mutually to blend action and contemplation. It exhorts them to foster a life hidden with Christ in God, to "assiduously cultivate the spirit of prayer itself, drawing on the authentic sources of Christian spirituality ... their apostolic activity must needs have in intimate union with [Christ]."⁴⁸ This is echoed in c. 607 which describes religious life as a consecration of the whole person, thus consummating a full gift of oneself as a sacrifice offered to God so that one's whole existence becomes a continuous worship of God in charity. Canon 675, §2 also reiterates the importance of this union with God.

Although it is difficult to legislate for something so spiritual and broad as prayer, since prayer can be both personal and liturgical, the 1983 Code does translate the Conciliar teaching into some obligations for members of the religious life regarding prayer (c. 663 §1). Of particular emphasis is the obligation for members to participate in daily Eucharist (c. 663, §2).⁴⁹ Consequently, according to c. 608, each house is to have at least an oratory in which the Eucharist is celebrated and reserved so that it may be truly the centre of the community.

Apart from daily celebration of the Eucharist, c. 663 also urges religious to read the

⁴⁷ *LG*, 11.

⁴⁸ *PC*, 5-6 and 8.

⁴⁹ This is based on the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium* 10, 4 December 1963, in *AAS*, 56 (1964), pp. 97-138; English translation in FLANNERY, *Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1, pp. 1-153, according to which participation in the Eucharist is so important because "from the Eucharist, grace is poured upon us as from a fountain, and the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God ... are achieved with maximum effectiveness." According to *PC*, 6, daily celebration of the Eucharist is a source of refreshment and nourishment so that, from it [religious] "set forth in loving service of their neighbours." It is fitting that the rite of profession of the evangelical counsels is within the Eucharistic liturgy, linking religious life to its source. See also *ET*, 47-48; Canon 897.

Sacred Scriptures, practice mental prayer, celebrate the liturgy of the hours, have retreat, devotion to the Virgin Mother of God including the rosary. Frequent celebration of the sacrament of penance is encouraged in c. 664.

This part of the chapter set out to give a brief outline of the nature of religious life and its essential elements. For the doctrine behind religious life, the latest major documents on religious life, *Perfectae caritatis* and *Vita consecrata*, have been used as the main sources. The 1983 Code has been the source of the juridical aspect of the life. Religious life exists in the Church and operates within it. For centuries the Church has been interpreting religious life and providing general guidelines as to how it should be practised. According to the Church, at the heart of religious life are the three vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. The vows are commonly referred to as the evangelical counsels because they are a way of following Christ who was chaste, poor and obedient. Basically, all the vows are an expression of the love of God and one's neighbour. They are embraced in response to divine love initially extended to certain individuals called to live this life. The vows are perpetual in nature, that is, they are embraced for life. The Church has also laid down the form by which they are to be pronounced for the juridic effects. Common life and prayer are also some of the essential elements of the life.

1.3 - PERSONAL MATURITY

There are a number of canons in the 1983 Code that explicitly or implicitly mention personal maturity as a requirement for placing certain juridic acts like ordination to the priesthood and marriage.⁵⁰ Although in some cases the Code spells out some of the elements of maturity that are required for certain juridic acts, it does not define personal maturity or describe its characteristics. For that we will need to consult other ancillary sciences, such as theology, philosophy, psychology, psychiatry etc. Before we begin to discuss personal maturity, we need to understand what is meant by personality.

1.3.1 - Concept of Personality

The concept of personality is a very complex one.⁵¹ As a result, no substantive definition of the term can be applied with generality.⁵² The matter is complicated by the fact that personality means different things to different people. This is due to the fact that each school of thought has its own theoretical model and scientific research method in defining and explaining the nature and origin of normal and abnormal personalities.⁵³

⁵⁰ Canons 241, §1; 245; 642 and 1031 point out personal maturity as a requirement for admission to ordination to the priesthood or profession of vows. All the canons that set up age limits and express the need for freedom in placing certain juridic acts are in some way related to personal maturity.

⁵¹ Speaking about the complex nature of personality, J. Feist observes that it is: "... a subject clouded with mystery and misunderstanding." See J. FEIST, *Theories of Personality-II*, Chicago, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1990, p. 5. Carver and Scheier call it "an elusive concept." See C. CARVER, M. SCHEIER, *Perspectives on Personality-II*, Boston, Allyn & Bacon, 1992, p. 3. See also S. FESHACH, B. WEINER, A. BOHART, *Personality-IV*, Lexington, Mass., D.C. Heath, 1996, p. 573ff.

⁵² C.S. HALL and G. LINDZEY, *Theories of Personalities*, New York, Wiley, 1970, p. 9. See also A. MENDONÇA, *Antisocial Personality and Nullity of Marriage*, JCD Diss., Ottawa, Saint Paul University, 1982, p. 55; FEIST, *Theories of Personality-II*, pp. 5-7;

⁵³ HALL and LINDZEY, *Theories of Personalities*, has 13 mainline theories of personality; S.R. MADDI, *Personality Theories: A Comparative Analysis*, Homewood, IL, The Dorsey Press, 1972, contains more theories; each of the theories of personality will have a corresponding psychotherapeutic approach to what it considers as disorders of personality. See R. CORSINI, *Current Psychotherapies*, Itasca, IL, F.E. Peacock Publishers, 1973. Feshbach et al. also give a similar analysis of theories on personality. See FESHACH et al., *Personality-IV*, pp. 59-181. While many psychologists agree that personality is best approached from the point of view of integration, the

The oldest and most famous definition of personality, however, is one given by Boethius in the sixth century. He summed it up thus: "A person is an individual substance endowed with rational powers."⁵⁴ This is based on the Aristotelian doctrine of the human personality as essentially a combination of a material substrate and formal principle of reason. Among numerous definitions of personality, S. Carver and M. Scheier's seems to cover considerable ground. They describe personality as: "a dynamic organisation, inside the person, of psychophysical systems that create the person's characteristic patterns of behaviour, thoughts and feelings."⁵⁵

An analysis of this definition reveals that personality is indeed an organization because of the connectedness of the systems. A single rational principle permeates all levels of the organism and vitalizes all of the functions of the human person.⁵⁶ These systems operate in such an organised way that gradually they form patterns or hierarchies of ideas and habits which dynamically direct a person's activities. Personality is also dynamic in that it changes, i.e., while it acts upon the environment, it is also acted upon by it.⁵⁷ The

matter remains complicated because different theories emphasize different aspects. See *ibid.*, p. 574.

⁵⁴ "Persona est substantia individua rationalis naturae" (BOETHIUS, "The Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy," in *Loeb Classical Library*, New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1918, ["Against Eutyches," 3, 5], p. 85). See also G.W. ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961, p. 25.

⁵⁵ CARVER, SCHEIER, *Personality-II*, p. 5. This definition is a very slightly adapted version of Allport's which describes personality as: "the dynamic organization within the individual of the psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behaviour and thought." See ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, p. 28. This definition was originally formulated by Allport after reviewing 50 definitions of personality in his book *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1937, pp. 25-70. The first definition which only slightly differs from this one is on page 48. Allport's definition seems to have gained considerable acceptance by psychologists. D. Fiske focuses on personality in the context of vocationers and so, defines it as: "... the way the person interacts with the world outside him and the world within him." See D. FISKE, *Measuring the Concepts of Personality*, Chicago, Aldine-Atherton, Inc., 1971, p. 3. L. Rulla et al., also adopt and work within the framework of this definition. See L. RULLA et al., *Entering and Leaving Vocation: Intrapsychic Dynamics*, Rome, Gregorian University Press, 1976, p. 4.

⁵⁶ T.J. GANNON, *Psychology: The Unity of Human Behaviour*, Boston, Ginn, 1954, p. 415.

⁵⁷ A. MENDONÇA, "The Effects of Personality Disorders on Matrimonial Consent," in *StC*, 21 (1987), p. 70.

reference to *behaviour*, and *thought and feelings*, emphasizes the dynamic and psychophysical dimensions of personality. What goes on inside will have external repercussions both on the individual and in relation to other people.⁵⁸

Physique, temperament, intelligence and character are the basic psychosocial systems whose dynamic organisation constitutes personality. According to Allport, the first three form the 'raw material' out of which personality is fashioned. But their normal growth and maturation depend largely on character.⁵⁹ Physique refers to the body in its structural and functional aspects, its state of health or sickness, its beauty or deformity, especially as it is perceived by the subject and influences his behaviour. For example, one who is self-conscious about his physical size may behave in certain ways to compensate for what he thinks is missing. Temperament refers to the chemical climate or "internal weather" or "native disposition" in which personality evolves. Affectivity and feelings are included in this concept. Intelligence includes all cognitive functions including insight or depth, readiness or perception, ability to learn, memory functions and the ability to plan or project into the future. Character, in its ethical sense, is the "power of self-control, or the capacity of regulating one's life according to principles." In its psychological sense, character consists of the fundamental set of values a person consistently strives to achieve. Three essential components constitute character: a) conscience, or a person's sense of responsibility; b) sociability, or the attitude toward others; c) habit.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ibid.; This dynamism enables the individual in the self-directed pursuit of values enabling him to enter into the complex relationships of human society as an active and responsible member. See GANNON, *Psychology*, p. 417. See also CARVER and SCHEIER, *Personality-II*, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁹ ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, p. 54. T. GANNON refers to one's physique, temperament and intelligence as one's 'constitution' and rightly argues that although they may be affected, modified and improved by one's social experiences, to a great extent they are a given, that is, inherited from one's parents. See GANNON, *Psychology*, pp. 417-418.

⁶⁰ See GANNON, *Psychology*, p. 417; J.F. DONCEEL, *Philosophical Psychology*, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1961, p. 363; D.P. AUSUBEL, *Ego Development and the Personality Disorders: A Developmental Approach to Psychopathology*, New York, Grune and Stratton, 1952, p. 13; MENDONÇA, "Effects of Personality Disorders," p. 417.

1.3.2 - The Concept of Personal Maturity

Personal maturity is also such a complex amalgam of different elements that the numerous definitions of it often fail to encompass its full reality. R. Guiry's definition, however, does cover considerable ground. He states: "Maturity is, within reasonable limits, the age appropriate to the concordance of autonomous behaviour, response emotion and cognition, in accordance with the cultural, familial and gender milieu of the individual."⁶¹

Two important characteristics that feature in almost every definition of personal maturity are that it is a result of a developmental process and that it has to do with equipping an individual with the ability to cope with life. Webster's dictionary has described maturity as a "ripeness ... the state of having attained the normal peak of natural growth and development ... being fully grown and developed."⁶² Many well-known developmental psychologists agree that the individual attains maturity in progressive stages, with each stage dependent on the other. Many have come up with theories describing the human person's psychological maturing process revealing how influential early life experiences are in determining this development.⁶³ In line with this argument, personal maturity can be relative

⁶¹ R.W. GUIRY, "Immaturity, Maturity and Christian Marriage," in *SiC*, 25 (1991), p. 98. R. Guiry also quotes CUSCHIERI, who, in a decision of the Regional Tribunal of Toronto, Canada, gave a very comprehensive definition of personal maturity, stressing the personal attainment of inner equilibrium of all one's faculties and extending it beyond oneself while maintaining one's self-value, and self-autonomy. See Judgement of 31 May 1982, in *SiC*, 19 (1985), p. 195.

⁶² B P. GOVE et al., (eds), *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*, Springfield, Mass., G & C Merriam Company, 1981, pp. 1394-1395.

⁶³ GANNON cites childhood, adolescence, adulthood and senescence as the four important stages in a personality's development towards maturity. See his *Psychology*, p. 443. According to E. ERIKSON, maturity is attained in eight progressive stages at different ages. Six of these stages are: Infancy - basic trust; Early childhood - a sense of initiative; Adolescence - personal identity; Young adult - intimacy; Adulthood - generativity; Mature age - integrity and acceptance. See *Childhood and Society*, New York, W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1963, chapter 7. J. Piaget has four stages, the neonate and the infant stage, early childhood, childhood and adolescence. See J. PIAGET *Six Psychological Studies*, translated by A TENZER, New York, Vintage Books, 1968. No definite chronological age limits can be attached to a particular period, hence the differences in the theories. A well-known text on psychiatry actually notes: "... physical maturation peaks early in the life cycle, usually by the late teens and twenties, but socioeconomic maturation comes around middle age." See H.I. KAPLAN, B. SADOCK, *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry-IV*, Baltimore, Williams and Wilkins, 1985, p. 1283. H. Sullivan argues that personality development begins even before the child is born. See H.

in the sense that one can be expected to have attained a certain level of maturity by a certain age.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, while it is often true that one mellowes with age, and may generally attain greater maturity through confronting and dealing with different problems, it does not necessarily follow that maturity of personality corresponds to chronological age.⁶⁵ Personal maturity is also relative in that it can be culturally nuanced so that what is considered to be mature behaviour in one culture may be considered as the opposite in another culture. While in some regions mature behaviour is following one's tradition and promoting the welfare of one's tribe, in the Western world individuality is given more emphasis.⁶⁶

Personal maturity is also described as a post-adolescent equilibrium which allows a person to pursue his or her chosen or given life without undue stress and strain. It is when one can cope with the inevitable frustration and conflicts of life with a minimum of infantile behaviour. It is a becoming aware of, and in some way partner to, all the discordant conditions of one's existence.⁶⁷ Rather than defining personal maturity, some authors list some criteria for it. Allport provides the following list:

- 1 - Effective organization of work toward goals, steady, able to resist stress, more adaptable and resourceful;
- 2 - Correct perception of reality, better judgement and self insight;
- 3 - Character and integrity in the ethical sense, dependable, serious, responsible, tolerant;
- 4 - Interpersonal and intrapersonal adjustment, less defensive, less egotistical, less distrustful,

SULLIVAN, *Personal Psychopathology: Early Formulations*, New York, W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1972, p. 38. According to Freud, the essential elements of one's character are established by the age of three. See E. JONES, *The Life and Works of Sigmund Freud*, Garden City, N Y, Doubleday, 1963, p. 24. See also ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, p. 79; ID., *Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1955, p. 33. For an overview of these developmental theories, see MENDONÇA, "Effects of Personality Disorders," p. 71-72.

⁶⁴ N. CAMERON, *Personality Development and Psychopathology*, Boston, Houghton, 1985, p. 112.

⁶⁵ ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, p. 277. See also GANNON, *Psychology*, p. 443.

⁶⁶ ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, p. 276.

⁶⁷ CAMERON, *Personality Development*, p. 112. See also ALLPORT, *Becoming*, p. 79.

happy.⁶⁸

H. Maslow has the following criteria: 1) more efficient perception of reality and more comfortable relations with it; 2) acceptance of self, others, nature; 3) spontaneity; 4) problem centering; 5) detachment; 6) independence of culture and environment; 7) continued freshness of appreciation; 8) limitless horizons; 9) social feeling; 10) deep but selective relationships; 11) democratic character structure; 12) ethical certainty; 13) unhostile sense of humour and 14) creativeness.⁶⁹

It is clear from the cited definitions of personal maturity that it touches personality as a whole. The mere mention of the term brings in the notion of health - physical, mental, emotional ethical, spiritual, etc. During the Second World War, psychiatrists were required to determine mental fitness of recruited candidates and their ability to adjust themselves to army life and discipline. J. Campbell decided that intelligence, emotionality, conscience, psychosexuality and sociability were of primary significance.⁷⁰ As has been indicated in the first part of this chapter, religious life implies dedication of the whole person. Therefore, for our purposes, the same aspects also seem to be the focal points of adjustment in a mature personality and we will go on to examine closely the characteristics of maturity on the psychosexual, affective, intellectual, moral, social and spiritual levels.

1.3.3 - Psychosexual Maturity

This personal development is very much connected with one's sense of identity, and

⁶⁸ ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth*, p. 279. The original source of the criteria is F. BARON, "Personal Soundness," in *University Graduate Students Publications in Personality Assessment and Research*, no. 1, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1954.

⁶⁹ This is an abbreviated list of criteria provided by Allport. See ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth*, pp. 280-281. This list is based on A.H. MASLOW, *Motivation and Personality*, New York, Harper, 1954. See also D.J. ANDRÉS, *El derecho de los religiosos, Comentario al código*, Madrid-Roma, Publicationes claretianas y comentarium pro religiosis, 1984, p. 262.

⁷⁰ J. CAMPBELL, *Everyday Psychiatry*, Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott Company, 1949, pp. 3-7.

is sometimes referred to as psychosexual identity.⁷¹ It is the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity prepared in the past are matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others.⁷² Self identity is personal integrity and self sufficiency enabling the individual to fulfill an adult role in life. This has to do with one's self-image which holds a central position in the human person. R. McAllister describes it as: "the vortex around which the currents of emotional life must move ... the pole around which the winds of life experiences must centre ... the pivot from which one forms opinions about others and about life itself."⁷³ While it has steadily developed from infancy, adolescence, according to Erikson, is the phase during which the critical factor of self-identity should be attained. Introjection, identification and identity formation are the steps by which the self acquires maturity.

Introjection usually takes places during childhood. It is the incorporation or receiving of another's image into one's ego. It depends for its integration on the satisfactory mutuality between the mothering adults and the mothered child. Only the experience of such initial mutuality provides the child with healthy foundational self-feeling from which it can reach out to others in love. The second step is identification, which depends on the child's satisfactory interaction with trustworthy representatives of a meaningful hierarchy of roles as provided by the members that form the child's environment. Identity formation is the third and final stage which begins when the usefulness of identification ends. This arises from selective renunciation and mutual assimilation of childhood identifications and their absorption into a new image, a new unique individual. The young individual needs to be recognized and accepted for what he or she has become. Sometimes the family or community displays surprise and pleasure in recognition of the newly emerging individual.

⁷¹ The main proponent of this theory is E. ERIKSON. See his two books *Childhood and Society*, (1963) and *Identity Youth and Crisis*, New York, W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1968.

⁷² ERIKSON, *Childhood and Society*, p. 261.

⁷³ R.J. MCALLISTER, *Living the Vows*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1986, p. 24. See also J.B. ZUSY, *Psychic Immaturity and Marriage Nullity*, JCD Diss., Ottawa, Saint Paul University, 1980, p. 167.

There is, however, often some initial mistrust.⁷⁴

This adolescence phase is also crucial because the human person at this stage experiences physiological change by which womanhood and manhood emerge from the child. Consequently, the adolescent is concerned with how he or she appears before others and also how this image compares with his or her own concept of self. To a great extent, adolescent love is an attempt to arrive at a definition of one's identity by projecting one's diffused ego image on another and by seeing it thus reflected. Adult tasks also loom large ahead and the adolescent realizes that skills are needed to cope with self-support. One may begin to think about a vocation.⁷⁵ Sixteen to eighteen years of age is the period of completion of sexual identification. It is marked by further autonomy and detachment from parent supervision and there is more involvement in heterosocial activities. There may be increased sexual activity due to more frequent peer social life.⁷⁶ At its best, the sense of identity is experienced when one enjoys the feeling of being at home in one's body, a sense of knowing where one is going and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count.

True psychosocial intimacy largely depends on psychosexual identity formation. It is only the young adult emerging from the search for and insistence on identity who is ready for intimacy. Erikson describes intimacy as the capacity to commit oneself to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such

⁷⁴ ERICKSON, *Identity Youth and Crisis*, p. 159. See also ID., *Childhood and Society*, p. 262. D. Ausubel also refers to this process as the "adult emancipation and preparation crisis" arising from emancipation from the parental home and preparation to assume free and independent adult life in society. It is accompanied by development of greater moral responsibility, more realistic aspirations and self-critical ability. The crisis occurs between middle and late childhood. See D.P. AUSUBEL *Theory and Problems of Child Development*, New York, Grune and Stratton, 1970, p. 272. According to Zusy, mature self-identity is the culmination of the process of independence from docility and submissiveness of childhood to attainment of volitional freedom and self-assertiveness. See ZUSY, *Psychic Immaturity*, pp. 163-164.

⁷⁵ ZUSY, *Psychic Immaturity*, p. 166. See also MENDONÇA, *Antisocial Personality*, p. 73.

⁷⁶ ZUSY, *Psychic Immaturity*, p. 202. See also A.M. FREEDMAN, H.I. KAPLAN, B.J. SADOCK (eds), *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry-II*, 2nd ed., Baltimore, Williams and Wilkins, 1975. pp. 1396-1397.

commitments even though they may call for significant sacrifices and compromises.⁷⁷ A. Mendonça aptly describes it as “a counterpointing as well as a fusing of identities” and argues that it is only possible when identity formation is well on its way.⁷⁸ A person who is unsure of his or her identity may either avoid interpersonal intimacy or throw himself or herself into acts of intimacy without true fusion. Lack of identity may also lead to avoidance of intimacy because of fear of ego loss which may lead to a deep sense of isolation and unhealthy preoccupation with self.

Fusion of identities has to do with loving and caring. Its natural outcome is generativity which includes productivity and creativity. Most people apply this drive to raising offspring of their own. Those, who from misfortune or because of special and genuine gifts in other directions cannot raise their own children, still need to channel this drive to other forms of altruistic concern and creativity. Nothing can replace this as a distinctive mark of a crisis in development. The ability to lose oneself in a project that fully engages one's mind and body leads to gradual expansion of ego interest and to the satisfaction of the generative urge. Where such enrichment fails altogether, regression to an obsessive need for pseudo intimacy takes place, often with a pervading sense of stagnation, boredom and interpersonal impoverishment.⁷⁹

Psychosexual maturity, therefore, is that stage in a person's life when one has a sense of self, is comfortable with one's body and personality and can relate to other people in an intimate life-giving manner. It also involves appreciation of both the psychological and physiological differences between the sexes. Such an achievement may be regarded as an important indicator of a well-integrated mature personality.

Psychosexual maturity is important for anyone, but much more so for a religious

⁷⁷ ERIKSON, *Childhood and Society*, p. 263.

⁷⁸ MENDONÇA, *Antisocial Personality*, p. 73. E. Kenel also describes intimacy as a moment when individuals find themselves “being deeply or wholly touched by another.” She goes on to explain that this “being touched” is not synonymous with tactility and does not require being physically touched. See E. KENEL “A Celibate's Sexuality and Intimacy,” in *Human Development*, 7, no. 1 (1986), p. 15. This is important for vowed celibates.

⁷⁹ ERIKSON, *Identity Youth and Crisis*, p. 138.

especially regarding living out the vow of chastity in a life-giving manner. This will be illustrated further in the next chapter.

1.3.4 - Affective Maturity

Physiologically, affectivity is a complex reaction pattern of changes in the nervous, visceral and skeletal tissues in response to a stimulus. The type and intensity of the reaction is appropriate to the stimulus. It also has widespread physiological repercussions, like increased heart rate, inhibitions in the movement of the bowels, etc.⁸⁰ Our concern for now, however, is the psychological aspect of affectivity. It is a whole system of internal and external reactions to satisfaction or non-satisfaction of motives and needs. It is the capacity of proving sentiments and emotions. It is the degree of response to pleasure, pain and other emotional stimuli. The term actually covers a range of experiences that make up the affective life of an individual: joy, love, pleasure, fear, anger, anxiety, violence, hatred, worry, sadness, despair, envy, sexual feelings, etc.

Affective states and perception, cognition and memory mutually influence each other.⁸¹ J. Piaget is the chief proponent of the theory concerning the inextricable unity between intelligence and affectivity. He describes them as “indissociable” and constituting the two complementary aspects of human behaviour.⁸² However, although it is extremely difficult to separate the affective from the cognitive state in an emotional complex, it must not be concluded that their distinction has only theoretical significance. A clear grasp of the fundamental distinction between thought and feeling is the basic principle of the hygiene of emotional life. While emotions make one aware of certain situations, one still has to think, evaluate and decide.⁸³

⁸⁰ M.R. GOLDENSON (ed.), *Longman Dictionary of Psychology and Psychiatry*, New York, Longman, 1984, p. 254. See also H.J. EYSENCK, M.W. ARNOLD, R. MEILI (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Psychology*, New York, Herder and Herder, 1972, p. 321.

⁸¹ AUSUBEL, *Theory and Problems*, p. 414; See also GANNON, *Psychology*, p. 236.

⁸² PIAGET, *Six Psychological Studies*, pp. 33-34.

⁸³ GANNON, *Psychology*, p. 235.

Like all the other elements of personality, affectivity is developmental so that early emotional experiences influence later personality development. Normal emotional growth requires that persons are not only aware of recognition, attention and acceptance, but also that they be frequently reassured of their worthiness.

The main point of this section is affective maturity. What is it? In general, it involves awareness of the several drives and emotions in oneself, such as anger, love, fear, etc., and acknowledging, accepting and handling them well. An important aspect of affective maturity is "frustration tolerance" which means learning to live with one's emotional states without being driven into impulsive acts detrimental to oneself or to the well-being of other people. While one will always experience some insecurity at one time or the other, such insecurities will not be blown out of proportion. In other words, one has learned to be cautious without panicking. Mature affectivity is marked by internal stamina, some inner strength enabling one to resist disintegration or losing grip on oneself or contact with one's surroundings due to disturbing effects of excessive fear, anger, anxiety or grief. It is strength that enables one to continue to act sensibly in the face of probable failure when things appear hopeless.⁸⁴

A mark of this aspect of maturity is the ability to express one's convictions and feelings with due respect for other peoples' convictions and feelings without being threatened. One can satisfy one's own fundamental needs without damaging equilibrium and social relations. One's feelings are neither ignored nor is one dominated by them.⁸⁵

An important mark of affective maturity is the capacity to give mature altruistic and oblation love and to consider sexuality as an integrated value.⁸⁶ It is not just spreading a little love very thinly over a multitude of people; it is loving individuals deeply. Mature love is characterized by respect of the loved one and respecting what R. McAllister calls the

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 448.

⁸⁵ ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, pp. 287-288.

⁸⁶ According to L. J. Saul, mature emotional growth is from the child's intense need for love to the ability to give love. He also discusses factors that may hinder development of affective maturity. See L.J. SAUL, *Emotional Maturity*, Philadelphia, Lippincott, 1960, pp. 50-79.

“porcupine index” or the “emotional quotient” of the other person. This is the degree of closeness to another that brings maximum warmth and minimum irritation. If love goes beyond the limits of reason, then it becomes infatuation. Mature love needs to preserve the integrity of the one who is loved, a basic respect for the person and the personality, his or her worth as an individual without violating inner freedom. Although aware of the loved one’s weaknesses, mature love does not take advantage in order to inflict pain on the other person. Mature love will, in return, demand respect of one’s integrity from the other person.⁸⁷

The affectively mature person possesses an intra-personal, interpersonal and self-objectifying wholeness of vision. One has meaningful values and goals and will not be swept off balance by irrational regrets about events of the past or fears of the future. One’s life will be marked by personal effectiveness. This develops from the sense of striving towards a worthwhile goal, filling one with enthusiasm and the joy of achievement. The effectiveness arises from full participation in a project, helping one not to pay undue attention to one’s imaginary hurts and disappointments. This enables one to maintain a certain amount of youthfulness of spirit despite the advance in years.⁸⁸

Again, it will be illustrated later, how vital a role affective maturity plays in the life of the religious. This is needed in one’s intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, in and outside one’s community and in ministry.

1.3.5 - Intellectual Maturity

Allport defines intelligence as: “The innate potential of a person for making appropriate judgements for profiting from experience, or for meeting adequately new problems and conditions of life.”⁸⁹ Does this mean having a high IQ? Yes and no, unless one

⁸⁷ MCALLISTER, *Living the Vows*, p. 39. ID., *Conflict in Community*, Collegeville, MN, St. John University Press, 1969, pp. 96-97.

⁸⁸ GANNON, *Psychology*, p. 449.

⁸⁹ ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, p. 63.

has his or her intelligence accompanied by emotional balance and intellectual organization, one may not be regarded as mature enough.⁹⁰ A basic intelligence is, however, required for memory ability, verbal power and problem solving. Intelligence includes learning ability which helps one to utilize her experiences. Memory helps connect with the past and to plan effectively for the future. Included in intellectual maturity is the art of realistic perception - the ability to perceive things as they are, and to operate accurately.⁹¹

Several psychologists give similar definitions of intellectual maturity which is normally attained between the adolescence and early adulthood stages. It is characterized by development from concrete to formal operational logic, deductive reasoning, causal thinking and scientific explanations for events. It is when an individual:

- pays attention to the form as well as to the content of an argument;
- reasons about his own reasoning;
- answers problems by considering all possibilities, the real and the unreal, anticipating problems;
- can think abstractly.⁹²

Some of the abstract issues one considers during this early adulthood are morality, love, and nationalism. Some important abstract questions the young adult explores are, "Who am I?" "Where am I going?" "What do I want from life?" "How do I feel about love, commitment

⁹⁰ See L M. Terman, H. Oden, *Genetic Studies of Genius: IV. The Gifted Child Grows Up*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1947. This text is quoted by Allport, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, p. 289.

⁹¹ Allport, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, pp. 261-263.

⁹² J.P. McKinney, H.E. Fitzgerald, E.A. Stommen, *The Adolescent and Young Adult*, Homewood, IL, Dorsey Press, 1977, pp. 131-133. J. Piaget shares similar views and describes an intellectually mature person as one who has attained a certain level of critical judgement and the construction of a value system. It is when one has devised a life plan on his own - a philosophy of life which serves him as a source of discipline for the will and an instrument of social cooperation. See Piaget, *Six Psychological Studies*, pp. 65 and 69. According to Gannon, "The aspects of intelligence that enter actively into personality are insight, or depth, readiness of perception, ability to learn, memory functions and the ability to plan or project activity into the future." See Gannon, *Psychology*, p. 419. For full intellectual development, D.J. Levison et al. recommend a mentor for the young adult. Such a person should be several years older than the young adult and of greater experience and seniority in the world. See *The Seasons of Man's Life*, New York, Knopf, 1978, pp. 97-101. These authors are also quick to point out, however, that while some people acquire formal operational logic during adolescence, some adults never acquire it at all.

and sex?" The adolescent is preoccupied with the quest for self-identity.⁹³

Some of the practical effects of intellectual maturity are that one acquires a quickness and accuracy in sizing up situations and people and determining one's reactions. In the soul-searching introspections that follow upon disappointment and failure, an intellectually mature person is able to get clear insight into one's own emotional and impulsive life. This is an important safeguard against projection and a host of other related defence reactions. This insight helps also to provide the starting point for any program or rehabilitation.⁹⁴

Included in this aspect of maturity is the ability to be problem-centred, losing oneself in one's work or responsibility so as to divert one's attention from obsessive concern with one's egoistic impulses like pride and defensiveness. An intellectually mature person will always have an important task to complete.⁹⁵

Closely linked with intellectual maturity is the sense of humour which, according to Allport, is the "ability to laugh at the things one loves (including, of course, oneself and all that pertains to oneself), and still to love them." Both the sense of humour and insight are based on self-objectification - a sound perception of oneself. "The man /woman who has the most complete sense of proportion concerning his or her own qualities and cherished values is able to perceive their incongruities and absurdities in certain settings."⁹⁶ Humour and insight help to curb affectation and deception. Insight increases one's sense of reality and the effort to cope with it or modify it. The intellectually mature person will, however, also realize his or her limitations to modify every situation and will work within those limits.

A certain degree of intellectual maturity is needed for religious life which requires a lot of self-knowledge, and good judgement. Self-knowledge comes out of objective

⁹³ D. HOLMES, F. MORRISON, *The Child*, Monterey, Brooks-Cole, 1979, p. 384.

⁹⁴ GANNON, *Psychology*, p. 419. See also ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, pp. 290-291.

⁹⁵ ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, pp. 289-290.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

reflection and grasping of abstract concepts. In fact, religious life itself is based on faith, hope and love which are very abstract and so, intellectual maturity is indispensable. Intellectual immaturity may even interfere with the religious' community and prayer life. More will be said about this in the next chapter.

1.3.6 - Moral Maturity

Moral maturity is reached when one has attained a relatively clear self image, enabling the person to know and choose freely what he or she wants to do and not necessarily ought to be done because of some external pressures. It is the transition from "must" conscience, which is usually tied to the fear of external or self-determined punishment, to "ought" conscience which is no longer sustained by fear of punishment. It is when one acts from a sense of obligation and not of coercion.⁹⁷

It is difficult to speak of a person's moral maturity before discussing conscience which plays a vital role in determining one's morality. Moral maturity actually depends on a mature conscience. Conscience is an expression of the whole person. It is "me coming to a decision." It includes not only cognitive and volitional aspects, but also affective, intuitive, attitudinal and somatic aspects. It is the whole person's commitment to values and the judgement one must make in light of that commitment to apply those values.⁹⁸ The variety of definitions of conscience reveal its centrality in the life of the human personality. Some definitions are psychological, some are philosophical and others are theological.

According to Allport, conscience is an indicator - something like a fever

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 303 and 134.

⁹⁸ R. GULA, *Reason Informed by Faith*, New York, Paulist Press, 1989, p. 130. C. Van der Poel also shares this view about the way one's moral decision touches the whole person. He states: "When faced with a situation, the verdict comes out of the whole human personality in its fundamental drives and its particular expressions. The past, the present and the future seem to merge into a oneness. The background which led to this decision, the circumstances which gave it this specific form and the impact it will have on the future, intellectual knowledge and emotional attitudes fuse into one reality which finds its concrete expression in one specific action." See C. VAN DER POEL, *The Search for Human Values*, New York, Paulist Press, 1971. p. 105. See especially pp. 102-145 for a clear analysis of the development of personal conscience and its dynamics both from the psychological and theological points of view.

thermometer that tells us that some activity on our part is disrupting, or has disrupted, an important part of our self image. It is one's sense of responsibility to self and to others. It includes a person's philosophy of life, self ideal, responsiveness to moral values and ability to stick to a goal or objective despite obstacles and disappointments.⁹⁹

D. Ausubel describes conscience "as the cognitive-emotional organization of an individual's moral values." He goes on to ascribe to it the following elements:

1. Capacity for personal assimilation of external standards of right and wrong, good and evil and accepting them as one's own moral standard. Then an obligation arises to live by these standards so that one feels accountable for failing to abide by them.
2. Capacity to anticipate the moral consequences of one's actions before carrying them out and then deciding whether or not one wants that. This calls for volitional and inhibitory control.
3. Self-critical capacity: the ability to appraise objectively one's own intentions and behaviour in the light of internalized moral principles.¹⁰⁰

A moral act is conducted in an internally procedural manner. One first appeals to one's internalized norms, then judges whether or not the norm applies to the situation at hand and then decides and carries out the appropriate action.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ ALLPORT, *Personality*, p. 214; ID., *Becoming*, pp. 89-90; ID., *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, p. 134. See also MENDONÇA, *Antisocial Personality*, p. 69; ZUSY, *Psychic Immaturity*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁰ AUSUBEL, *Theory and Problems*, pp. 470-473. Gula also describes similar dimensions of conscience. His first dimension of conscience is *synderesis* - the basic tendency or capacity within the human person to know and to do the good. The second is moral science, the process of discovering the particular good which ought to be done or the evil to be avoided. This involves engaging in exploring the reality-revealing questions of situational analysis - What? Who? When? Why? How? What else? What if? The third dimension is what he calls conscience, that is the specific judgement of the good which I must do in this particular situation. See GULA, *Reason Informed by Faith*, pp. 131 and 147. T. O'Connell also talks about dimensions of conscience and refers to them as conscience 1, 2, 3. His descriptions of them are similar to those by Ausubel and Gula. Expanding on conscience 3, he describes it as the moral decision emerging from and expressing me by realizing my fundamental stance. See T. O'CONNELL, *Principles for a Catholic Morality*, New York, Seabury Press, 1978, pp. 88-93. For other definitions of conscience and its role in the life of an individual, see also GANNON, *Psychology*, p. 421; W.N. CLARKE, "The Mature Conscience in Philosophical Perspective," in W. BIER (ed.), *Conscience: Its Freedom and Limitations*, New York, Fordham University Press, 1971, p. 359. Although Campbell argues that conscience is hereditary (see CAMPBELL, *Everyday Psychiatry*, pp. 37-40), Gannon does not agree (see GANNON, *Psychology*, p. 421). Gannon seems more accurate for if conscience is to be regarded as hereditary at all, then it is only in its first dimension, the *synderesis*, which is imprinted within every human person.

¹⁰¹ AUSUBEL, *Theory and Problems*, p. 473.

Conscience, however, is not without its complexities. It is also the strange contrast of experiencing at the same time both a freedom and an obligation with respect to the same human action. While autonomous, it is also highly dependent on other influences. While it presents itself as sacred and absolute, it is still subject to constant changes. While directing itself to an individual action, it encompasses the whole being.¹⁰²

When, then, is someone regarded as morally mature? What are the signs and characteristics of a morally mature person? According to R. Gula, one is morally mature when one's actions are no longer directed by one's superego but by one's conscience. The superego, which is often mixed up with the conscience, is the internal censor made up of all the "shoulds" and "have-tos" which one absorbs in the process of growing up under the influence of authority figures. These authority figures can be parents, teachers, police, etc. The superego uses guilt as a weapon to regulate one's conduct. It develops from childhood based on the need to be loved and approved. Fear of withdrawal of love is even stronger in children than fear of punishment. "Shoulds" and "have-tos" belong to someone else while "wants" belong to the individual.¹⁰³

Gula provides a very useful and enlightening comparison between the characteristics of the superego and those of the conscience.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² VAN DER POEL, *The Search for Human Values*, pp. 103-106.

¹⁰³ GULA, *Reason Informed by Faith*, pp. 126-125. Gannon shares similar views: "Superego restricts the genesis of conscience solely to the child's supposed identification with the moral values of authority figures." See GANNON, *Psychology*, p. 474. Van der Poel refers to the superego as an authoritarian conscience which has merely internalized the values of external authority. The standard of morality in this case is the letter of the command and the expectations of authority. There is little personal approach to life in this conscience and it tends to be lax. For him, the healthy conscience is the integral one. See VAN DER POEL, *The Search for Human Values*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁴ GULA, *Reason Informed by Faith*, p. 127. For a very interesting analysis of the dynamics of a moral conscience, see chapter 9. According to Ausubel the transition from the superego to conscience occurs in the third of his three stages of development towards moral maturity, the one he calls the de-satellizing stage. In this phase, one has developed feelings of moral accountability based on more abstract principles of justice and responsibility. See AUSUBEL, *Theory and Problems*, pp. 481-482. According to J. Piaget, moral maturity is achieved in three stages: 1) the moral constraint of the adult; 2) cooperation and finally 3) moral autonomy. See J. PIAGET, *The Moral Judgement of the Child*, trans. by M. GABAIN, New York, Free Press, 1965, pp. 195-196.

SUPREGO

Commands us to act for the sake of gaining approval, or out of fear of losing love.

Turned in toward self in order to secure one's sense of being of value, of being lovable.

Tends to be *static* by merely repeating a prior command. Unable to learn or function creatively in a new situation.

Oriented primarily *toward authority* : not a matter of responding to value, but of obeying the command of authority "blindly."

Primary attention is given to *individual acts* as being important in themselves apart from the larger context or pattern of actions.

Oriented toward the *past*: "The way we were."

Punishment is the sure guarantee of reconciliation. The more severe the punishment, the more certain one is of being reconciled.

The transition from *guilt to self-renewal* comes fairly easily and rapidly by means of confessing to the authority.

Often finds a *great disproportion* between feelings of guilt experienced and the value at stake, for extent of guilt depends more on the significance of authority figure "disobeyed" than the weight of the value at stake.

CONSCIENCE

Responds to an invitation to love; in the very act of responding to others, one becomes a certain sort of person and co-creates self-value.

Fundamental openness that is oriented toward the other and toward the value which calls for action.

Tends to be *dynamic* by a sensitivity to the demand of values which call for new ways of responding.

Oriented primarily *toward value*: responds to the value that deserves preference regardless of whether authority recognizes it or not.

Primary attention is given to the *larger process or pattern*. Individual acts become important within this larger context.

Oriented toward the *future*: "The sort of person one ought to become."

Reparation comes through *structuring the future* orientation toward the value in question. Creating a new future is also the way to make good the past.

Self-renewal is a gradual process of growth which characterizes all dimension of personal development.

Experience of *guilt is proportionate* to the degree of knowledge and the freedom as well as the weight of the value at stake, even though the authority may never have addressed the specific value.

Maturity of conscience gives freedom of thought and activity because the mature person is not restricted by taboos, fears, obsessions, ambivalence, or other restrictive forces.

Such maturity gives an incentive to seek greater freedom which gives even greater maturity and hence greater peace of mind.¹⁰⁵

According to Van der Poel, theology alone provides the integral concept of conscience which is the ultimate judge of morality of human action. There is need to combine psychology and theology for the comprehension of conscience, much more so because the human person aspires towards the divine. In its relationship with the divine, the integral conscience sees the person as a reality endowed with an autonomous value which, however, is in every respect dependent totally upon his or her creator and whose ultimate destiny is total union with God. It is based on the belief that human life and human history are at the same time God's speaking to humanity and humanity's response to God. The integral conscience responds to the whole human reality, individual and interpersonal, material and transcendent.¹⁰⁶ In fact, in this context, it is the passionate love towards a transcendent or ultimate ideal intuitively known or experienced that generates and maintains one's commitment to doing good.¹⁰⁷ When one commits oneself to doing good and practises it, gradually good judgement and good decisions become intuitive and spontaneous without too much analysis.

The integral conscience takes into account its own individual abilities and capacities but its motivation is not limited to mere self-preservation. It goes beyond its individual self into the transcendent and interpersonal perspectives of its being without losing sight of its individual value. It is a self-realization in which the condition of the creature finds its fullest realization. The integral conscience does not lead to disregard for laws or authority; rather, it tries to see the proper meaning of authority as the crystallization of values and an indispensable source of guidance in human self-realization, while still retaining one's

¹⁰⁵ J.R. CAVANAGH, "The Mature Conscience as Seen by a Psychiatrist," in BIER, *Conscience*, p. 384. The morally mature person is authentic to oneself and acts from intrinsic motives. The opposite would be acting from extrinsic motives such as fear, desire for reward or conformity to social pressures. See CLARKE, "The Mature Conscience," p. 359.

¹⁰⁶ VAN DER POEL, *The Search for Human Values*, p. 143. See also ZUSY, *Psychic Maturity*, p. 213.

¹⁰⁷ CLARKE, "The Mature Conscience," p. 359.

personal responsibility.¹⁰⁸

The morally mature conscience is different from self-centred subjectivism which disregards traditional moral wisdom, that is, community experience, customs, legitimate authority or the will of God. Sometimes the individual might even choose to follow authority or the traditional moral wisdom. The importance lies in the individual's judgement of the rightness of the choice for that moment. The highest development of a morally mature conscience with respect to God is when one can internalize and make one's own the will of God, so that his voice becomes identical with one's deepest and authentic self.¹⁰⁹

The more one becomes mature, the more he or she realizes that, in most cases, one's own good is inseparably connected to the good of other persons, the common good. According to Clarke, "this is a wisdom gained by experience and good living ... there is no unfolding to the freedom of the person except in relation to the freedom of other persons, there is no authentic happiness or self realization of the individual self except in communion with other selves, including the ultimate Infinite Self of God Himself."¹¹⁰

A characteristic of growth to maturity is learning to base one's moral judgement not so much on self-centred individualism but on the common good which is not necessarily the same as common opinion or common pressure. The truly mature person is humble enough

¹⁰⁸ VAN DER POEL, *The Search for Human Values*, p. 144. See also D.T. ASSELIN, "Christian Maturity and Spiritual Discernment," in *RfR*, 27 (1968), p. 594.

¹⁰⁹ CLARKE, "The Mature Conscience," p. 360.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 362. This is similar to the reasons for doing right in L. Kohlberg's Stage 6, the post-conventional or universal ethical principles. The human person, as a rational being, believes in the validity of universal moral principles and develops a sense of personal commitment to them. See L. KOHLBERG's *Psychology of Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1984. E.H. Cousins also notes that as one's moral awareness becomes more personal, it becomes most social and universal. He continues to argue: "The reason why one's deepest individuality coincides with the greatest universality is that in their moral centres, all men coincide before the absolute call of God ... The morally mature man is at one with himself, with God, and with the universe ... At this point of convergence he is beyond conflict, for in pursuing his true self he is pursuing God and in pursuing God he is pursuing all things." See E.H. COUSINS "Mature Conscience in Theological Perspective," in BIER, *Conscience*, pp. 371-372.

to admit that his circumstances, actions and consequences are similar to those of other people, but has the wisdom to “discern the dosage of uniqueness in each case and its relevance for the moral judgement.”¹¹¹

The morally mature conscience in action helps one to evaluate prudently a situation and choose the best good in the here and now. In order to do this, the conscience needs to be well-informed of the facts of the situation at hand. It also needs to possess a well-developed sense of the consequences of certain types of actions based on personal and social experiences. Such experience is normally obtained from respectful but critical consultation of the traditional moral wisdom, principles and customs of the community.¹¹²

Since there are very few moral principles that are absolute, an important characteristic of a morally mature conscience is its ability to relativize its judgement by being able to situate the problem at hand within the widest possible relevant context of value and reality. One who is well on the road to moral maturity learns to judge with flexibility and is able to see things not in terms of extremes but in terms of nuances, shadows and distinctions. Normally things exist in a mixed state, with a lot of grey areas even within one's self and one needs to learn to tolerate this in both oneself and in others.¹¹³ When the morally mature conscience has obtained the functional certitude and reached a decision, one needs to have a certain amount of detachment from the results humbly and trustingly leaving them to the providence of God.¹¹⁴

Moral maturity plays a very important role in religious life, especially regarding the motives for choosing the life. It is also indispensable for living a responsible life in which one necessarily encounters constant challenges which one has to examine, judge, decide and choose.

¹¹¹ CLARKE, “The Mature Conscience,” p. 363.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 365.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 363. See also R.W. GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, Dayton, Ohio, Pflaum, 1968, p. 100. This is similar to the process of discernment clearly analysed by Gula in his book *Reason Informed by Faith*, pp. 321-328.

¹¹⁴ CLARKE, “The Mature Conscience,” p. 367.

1.3.7 - Social Maturity

It is true that, when one's adjustment is satisfactory in the areas of intelligence, emotionality, conscience and psychosexuality, then sociability will already have been achieved.¹¹⁵

One's sociability is one's general attitude toward others, alone or in groups. The attitudes may range from genuine warmth and friendship to hostility. Sociability is a very important aspect of personality because one's ability to establish and maintain good relations depends on it. Even one's support in times of disappointments and frustrations depends on it. A socially mature person is one who, while being aware of one's individual rights, also respects others' rights. It involves engaging in frank and unstrained contacts with a wide variety of personalities which affords some of the most satisfying experiences. Empathy, which is the ability to project one's emotions or consciousness into another being, plays an important role in this. Closely connected to empathy is compassion, which is "fellow-feeling" and acting positively about it.¹¹⁶

Social maturity is knowing the right balance of intimacy. It is when one manages to strike the right balance between one's capacity for love and one's capacity for detachment. It means knowing how much warmth and compassion to offer someone without possessing or smothering them or intruding into their privacy. This is based on genuine respect for and appreciation for the human condition of all people. It is genuinely expressed love and respect without any obligations attached.¹¹⁷

Social maturity is attained through the process of gradually incorporating and integrating the socio-cultural aspects of one's environment into one's personality. One's early home conditions determine one's origin and development of a sociable character. Favourable home conditions foster what Allers describes as the child's will-to-community, but over-protection of parents or unchecked will-to-power produces a self-centred,

¹¹⁵ GANNON, *Psychology*, p. 439.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 422. See also ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, p. 285.

¹¹⁷ ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, pp. 285-287.

aggressive and anti-social type of person.¹¹⁸

Social immaturity is characterized by an unreasonable need to satisfy one's immediate desires without any effort to organize one's life according to priorities. An adult with that level of immaturity would impatiently demand that every wish be immediately gratified, and if not, could easily get into a tantrum, become violent and destroy property. One who is well on the road towards social maturity is very much aware of oneself and has long-term goals, "a hierarchy of interests," "loves and loyalties," which would not be sacrificed for impulsive transitory satisfactions.¹¹⁹

Religious life involves relating to a variety of people of all age groups in different circumstances both in community and in ministry. The religious is also expected to play several different roles on different occasions. Without a certain amount of social maturity, the religious cannot cope.

1.3.8 - Spiritual and Christian Maturity

Spirituality is based on the belief that every person whether he or she professes a particular religion or not has his or her own ultimate presuppositions about life that strongly influence behaviour. It is the human person's "passion for integrity and for a meaningful relation to the whole Being in his most distinctive capacity." It may be based on internal convictions flowing from a faith response to a divine call.¹²⁰ Such convictions arise from one's answers to basic life, mystery-oriented questions like those raised by James Fowler in his book, *Stages of Faith*:

- What are you spending and being spent for? What commands and receives your best time and energy?
- What goals, dreams or institutions are you pouring out your life for?
- As you live your life, what power or powers do you fear or dread? What power or powers do you rely on and trust?

¹¹⁸ See also R. ALLERS, *The Psychology of Character*, trans. by E.B. STRAUSS, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1934, pp. 119-149; also see GANNON, *Psychology*, p. 423.

¹¹⁹ ALLPORT, *Becoming*, p. 29.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 96 and 98.

- To what or to whom are you committed in life? In death?- With whom or with what group do you share your most sacred or private hopes for your life and for the lives of those you love?
- What are those most sacred and compelling hopes and purposes in your life?¹²¹

In many cases, people adhere to a religion and yet the degree by which they are influenced by their religion is relative to their spiritual maturity. Growth in spiritual maturity very much depends on one's temperament and training, some of which might arrest or retard growth and thus leave an individual with an infantile religious belief.¹²² For those who believe in God, one's image of God will depend on one's level of spirituality. God could be a hard, judgmental determinist who has already established the moral pattern of our lives or a loving God who is constantly inviting us into a loving relationship but leaves us free to choose.¹²³ Individuals well on the way to spiritual maturity have grasped both concepts regarding the complete interaction between the transcendence and immanence of God, how he becomes apparent in history and in revelation. This total integration makes possible universal solidarity with all human beings. The realm of God creates meaning, not in options detached from the world, but rather in a truly social perspective. Every person becomes a unique contributor to and participant in divinity, and it is understood that the divine is universal through human universal connectedness. Suffering and death are part of this integrative human solidarity.¹²⁴

¹²¹ J. FOWLER, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1981, p. 3.

¹²² According to G. Allport, "Neurotic insecurities may demand an immediate and compulsive ritual of reassurance. Sometimes extreme rigidity of training in the home or Church presents only a partial criterion for testing truth, with the result that the child may either grow fiercely partisan and intolerant or else at a later age react against his training and embrace a negative attitude." See ALLPORT, *Becoming*, p. 96.

¹²³ GULA, *Reason Informed by Faith*, pp. 318-319.

¹²⁴ F.K. OSER, "Toward a Logic of Religious Development: A Reply to My Critics," in J.W. FOWLER, K.E. NIPKOW, F. SCHWEITZER (eds), *Stages of Faith and Religious Development: Implications for Church, Education and Society*, New York, Crossroad, 1991, p. 41. This is a summary of the fifth of his developmental stages of the image of God which has characteristics of spiritual maturity. In the same text (p. 25), J. Fowler refers to beginnings of mature faith as "individuated-reflective." This is expected to begin from young adulthood onwards when one can

Arising out of this understanding is a characteristic of spiritual maturity which J. More refers to as valuing of people in general. It involves weakening of even one's most cherished prejudices so that one no longer hates, fears or feels threatened by another person simply because he or she is different. This would be a failure to appreciate the image of God in that person.¹²⁵ Spiritual maturity is also characterized by friendship with other people with whom one can talk about one's desires and aspirations, to whom one can confide one's fears and failures while also being a source of inspiration and consolation for them. The spiritually mature person is a master at listening lovingly, compassionately and also selectively. Spiritually mature people are marked with a delightful sense of childlike wonder that makes everything new. "Wonder leads to openness and surprise, contentment and faithfulness, curiosity and enthusiasm."¹²⁶

Although they may see a lot of ambiguity in life, spiritually mature people are able to embrace it heartily as a major component of human life. While still dependent on other people, they are able to live and act in freedom from outside control, coercion or manipulation. They can exercise their self-objectification, detaching themselves from a situation and critically examining it, thus providing themselves with a criterion of conscience.¹²⁷ Genia's following ten criteria for spiritual maturity seems to summarize it all very well:

1. transcendent relationship to something greater than oneself;
2. style of living, including moral behavior, is consistent with spiritual values;
3. commitment without absolute certainty;
4. openness to spiritually diverse viewpoints;
5. A mature faith is divested of egocentricity, magical thinking, and anthropomorphic God concepts;

exercise "Critical reflection upon one's beliefs and values, utilizing third-person perspectives taking; understanding of others and the self as part of a social system; the internalization of authority and the assumption of responsibility for making explicit choices of ideology and life-style." According to him, at this stage, one is ready for critically self-aware commitments in relationships and vocation.

¹²⁵ J.B. MORE, "Spiritual Maturity," in *R/R*, 57 (1998), p. 590.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 591

¹²⁷ More has suggested several hints on growing in spiritual maturity. See *ibid.*, pp. 592-594.

6. A mature spiritual outlook includes both rational and emotional components;
7. Social interest and humanitarian concern;
8. Mature faith is enhancing and growth producing;
9. Meaning and purpose in life;
10. Mature faith is not dependent upon a particular dogma, set of practices, or formal religious structure;¹²⁸

Spiritual maturity is the basis of religious life. At its core, it is the relationship between the individual and the transcendent Being. It is the quality and the degree of one's experience of this relationship and response to it that leads one to embrace and persevere in religious life. It is therefore a very essential element.

While one's spirituality is something general, Christianity could be regarded as a more focused branch of spirituality. This centres upon one's belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Therefore, the life of faith in a person is mature to the extent that it involves a capacity to reflect upon, understand, discriminate between and respond to the inner spiritual stimuli that one experiences. The path to Christian maturity begins with the realization that God calls persons by name (Is. 43:1; Jn. 10:3; Jer. 1:5; Ps. 139). It grows to the extent that one recognizes the one who is calling him or her and also responds by name.¹²⁹ This involves one's answer to the fundamental questions of Christology and mandate, "Who do you say I am (Mk. 8:29)?" "Do you love me?" "Feed my lambs (Jn. 21:15-17)." Mature faith-response to the Lord's call can only come out of personal encounter with him in one's prayer life. Christian maturity is acknowledging Jesus Christ as God's fullest revelation of the invitation of divine love to humanity and the fullest human response to God. It is looking upon Christ as the norm and model of what the Christian moral life ought to be.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ V. GENIA, "The Spiritual Experience Index: A Measure of Spiritual Maturity," in *Journal of Religion and Health*, 30, no. 4, 1991, pp. 338-339.

¹²⁹ ASSELIN, "Christian Maturity", p. 585.

¹³⁰ GULA, *Reason Informed by Faith*, p. 185. According to Cousins, "The Christian's conscience and his moral decisions are bound up with the mystery of Christ and the life of the Spirit ... [the conscience] is one that is illumined by the Spirit and conformed to Christ, and through Christ is united to the Father" See COUSINS, "The Mature Conscience," p. 370. See also ASSELIN, "Christian Maturity," p. 586.

Character is formed in community by committing one's freedom to a particular object of loyalty and internalizing its images, stories, rituals, traditions, etc. In a similar way, the level of one's Christian maturity will depend on how much one has committed one's freedom to Jesus Christ and to internalizing the images, the stories and traditions which communicate his cause, namely, to proclaim the nearness of God's reign.¹³¹

Some of the elements of character informed by one's commitment to Jesus Christ are one's perspectives, dispositions, affections and intentions. One's perspective is the stance or point of view from which one looks at experiences and interprets them. Commitment to Jesus Christ does shape one's perspective so one is able to see things in his light. It is making Christ one's reference point so that moral judgements are enlightened by faith, bound up with the mystery of Christ and the life of the Spirit. It is a faith awareness which will envelop and guide everything that is done so that one will not be able to love anything or anyone, save in the Lord Jesus Christ. According to R. Gula, "The general perspective then which one can acquire in the light of the stories of Jesus supports the confidence that goodness ultimately sustains life and that goodness can break through even in moments of adversity."¹³²

Christian maturity is not mimicking Jesus; that would be some form of fundamentalism. It is putting on Christ, his mind (Gal. 3:27), so that one can say with Paul "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). It is imitating his attitude and applying it in a creative response to new issues in a new era (Phil. 2:4). Christian maturity is being caught up in Jesus' Abba experience of divine love which he became aware of during his baptism in the Jordan. It implies being aware of God's love for us and in our turn embracing the whole world in love. It involves discarding all our surrogate loves and surrendering ourselves to the gracious offer of divine love which makes

¹³¹ GULA, *Reason Informed by Faith*, p. 186.

¹³² Ibid., p. 187. See also J. GUSTAFSON, *Christ and the Moral Life*, New York, Harper and Row, 1968, pp. 264-265; COUSINS, "The Mature Conscience," p. 370.

us truly free and fulfilled.¹³³

According to D. Asselin, the authentic Christian maturity of faith manifests itself in four ways: 1) reconciliation with the Lord in a spirit of prayerful sonship crying "Abba;" 2) within oneself by the peace that replaces the shame of guilt; 3) with one's neighbour by the love that replaces anger and fear; and 4) with physical creation by a resurrection.¹³⁴

Growth in Christian maturity is a continuous challenge in imitation of Christ through the dispossession of our self-based securities, property (Mk. 10:21), affection (Mt. 10:37), ambition (Mk. 10:43) and even life itself (Mk. 10:45). These are to be replaced by a different kind of power, the kind that does not seek to control and dominate, but to liberate as demonstrated by Jesus in his teachings, his healings (Lk. 13:10-17) and his washing of his disciples' feet (Jn. 13:6-10). It is also a power that does not dominate in the name of service (Mt. 23:5-10) nor exclude through refusal to forgive (Mt. 18:21-35). It is a power that engenders life through a total emptying of oneself and dying on the cross. This kind of maturity is best achieved through the solidarity and the support of a community of believers.¹³⁵

A mature Christian, however, acknowledges that the Church is still pilgrim and will

¹³³ GULA, *Reason Informed by Faith*, p. 191.

¹³⁴ ASSELIN, "Christian Maturity," p. 595.

¹³⁵ GULA, *Reason Informed by Faith*, pp. 193-197. On community as a healthy environment for growing in Christian maturity, Asselin argues, "There is no opposition, then between the community-growth and individual fulfilment; we reach full personhood in the community of the Lord's people by sharing an awareness of God's personal presence and glory. We celebrate this in our daily Eucharist. We announce these Christian facts of life and we promote them there. We increase and grow in our realization of them by listening privately and together to the word of God, and together and in private responding wholeheartedly." See ASSELIN, "Christian Maturity," p. 594. Speaking on the inevitability of suffering in the life of a Christian, Cousins also reiterates: "The second quality of a mature conscience (which is characteristic of a mature Christian) is a certain tragic sense - an awareness that maturity involves suffering and that true spiritual growth takes place through the mystery of death and resurrection ... that profound moral growth, both personal and collective follows the way of the cross." See COUSINS, "The Mature Conscience," p. 375. On a more personal note, Asselin also comments: "There is no possibility of mature faith growth unless, between the beginning and the end of its spectrum, there is inserted personal, incommunicable experience of entrance into the mystery of Christ's dying and rising." He also describes the paschal mystery as "... the matrix of all Christian formation and maturity." ASSELIN, "Christian Maturity," p. 591.

be prepared to face up to the ambiguities, complexities and limitations of living in history. He or she will not, like an adolescent, be scandalized and disillusioned when it is discovered that "his or her idols have clay feet" namely, that evil exists where it was not expected. He or she will also not be quick to rail in outraged indignation against the evil forces in the universe or pass harsh judgement acknowledging that he or she also is part of it and will need mercy.¹³⁶

Another mark of Christian maturity is the ever-growing sense of responsibility regarding moral issues, not only on the tribal or community scale, but also globally for now and for the future. It means asking oneself the question, "What contribution can I make to the expansion of human freedom and moral consciousness in history?"¹³⁷

Religious life, as a following of Christ, will need most of the above-mentioned beliefs, convictions and aspirations as the bases of embracing and living the life.

CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed religious profession in terms of a juridical act composed of a subject and an object. The subject in this case is the person making the profession while the object are the rights and obligations of religious profession. The first part of the chapter therefore explored the nature of religious life and its essential elements. Basically, religious life is a result of a vocation from God to follow Christ by taking the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience and living common life in prayer. It operates within the Church which authorizes it, regulates its life and spells out its rights and obligations.

The second part of this chapter dealt with the subject's capacity required for embracing religious life, which is personal maturity. Maturity in this context is best examined in terms of personality which is quite complex. It is an organised, systematically connected mechanism with mental, affective, volitional and somatic faculties all interacting in service of the human person. It is dynamic and progressive. What goes on inside has

¹³⁶ COUSINS, "Mature Conscience," p. 375.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 376.

impact on behaviour, which, due to some consistency, forms patterns characteristic of the particular individual. The complexity of the human personality necessitated examining the mature personality in its several aspects, namely, the psychosexual, affective, intellectual, moral, social and spiritual. These were singled out as key focal points of adjustment in the development of personality.

Psychosexual maturity involves self-awareness and developing and achieving a sense of identity. Affective maturity is attained when, after attaining a sound sense of identity, one is able to engage in healthy intimate relationships. Intellectual maturity has to do with development of one's mental faculties which facilitate the maturation process in the other aspects. Moral maturity involves one's sense of responsibility over one's behaviour. Spiritual maturity refers to the individual's experience and relationship with the transcendent Being and how that influences one's relationships with other people and creation as a whole. Social maturity is one's expression of all the other aspects of maturity.

Since, like personality itself, these are developmental and often relative to age, the chapter focused only on those stages at which the normal human person is generally considered to have acquired the necessary level of maturity to make a life commitment. Since the human person is a unit, most of these aspects overlap.

Canon 642 urges superiors to be vigilant about admitting to religious life only those who have sufficient maturity to embrace the particular life of an institute. There is some evident seriousness and urgency in the tone of the canon, and among the several requirements mentioned, there is emphasis on maturity.

Chapter one has briefly outlined the essential elements of religious life from the doctrinal and legal points of view. It has also discussed the capacity (personal maturity) required in order to embrace the life. The next chapter will explore maturity in religious life.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NECESSITY OF MATURITY IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

INTRODUCTION

The requirement of maturity in candidates for religious life, as stipulated in canon 642,¹ is the culmination of a concern that had long been expressed in several magisterial documents. The main reason, from among the many, prompting that concern, was that candidates had to be sufficiently mature to meet the serious challenges of religious life. The gravity of the challenges was often expressed in the language used in describing religious life. Canon 538 of the 1917 Code describes the challenges of religious life as “burdens” to be borne.² Pope Pius XI quotes his predecessor’s warning to superiors of the Order of St. Dominic, “... you shall avoid the hasty admission, or acceptance in groups, of young people, when it is uncertain whether their choice of this ‘saintly way of life’ is of God’s inspiration.”³

Without being too negative about it, religious life is indeed very challenging and requires some degree of personal maturity in its several aspects. Joan Chittister describes religious life in positive but also in realistic terms as: “... very personal, very human, very spiritual, a very life absorbing thing ... a time-honoured way of being Christian in the world.”⁴ She goes on to describe religious life with a caution as:

[...] the story of the whole of creation writ large in a single person’s life. Those who

¹ Canon 642: “Superiors are to be vigilant about admitting only those who, besides the required age, have health, suitable character and sufficient qualities of maturity to embrace the particular life of the institute; this health, character, and maturity are to be attested to, if necessary by using experts, with due regard for the prescription of canon 220.”

² Canon 538: “In religionem admitti potest quilibet catholicus qui nullo legitimo detineatur impedimento rectaque intentione moveatur, et ad religionis onera ferenda sit idoneus.” See *Codex iuris canonici, Pii X Pontificis Maximi iussu digestus, Benedicti Papae XV auctoritate promulgatus*, Romae, Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1917.

³ See note 4 on pp. x - xi of this text.

⁴ J. CHITTISTER, *The Fire in These Ashes: A Spirituality of Contemporary Religious Life*, Kansas, Sheed and Ward, 1995, pp. 90 and 99.

foolishly expect or romantically assume that life in a religious community makes for life without the pressures of the real world, know little about the life and less about the human responsibility to co-creation. They make a myth of a gospel that casts out demons and challenges pharisees, suffers temptation and raises up figures who show the greatest fragility under the least of pressure.⁵

This caution implies that a person choosing religious life must possess the inner resources proportionate to the expectations and responsibilities inherent in such a life. In the preceding chapter we have briefly identified and described the essential elements of religious life. To be effective in a person's life, these documents must be interpreted and applied in the dynamics of the life itself among the members of the religious. The goal of this chapter is to illustrate some of the challenges of the life which demand personal maturity in those who embrace it. Therefore, we will examine the part played by maturity in the several aspects of religious life, the vocation to the life, the vows, chastity, poverty and obedience, common life and prayer. The twofold question that will be answered in this chapter is: Why and how is personal maturity necessary for embracing and living religious life?

2.1 - MATURITY AND THE VOCATION TO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

The main challenge in embracing religious life lies in discerning the vocation and accepting it as a life commitment. As much as it is a gift from God, it is also an intellectual choice which needs to be based on a seasoned process of deliberation and decision. All this entails personal maturity.⁶

⁵ Ibid, p. 91. In fact, this need for maturity is emphasised by the general tone of one of the papers given at a recent inter-American meeting of men and women leadership of religious held in Toronto. The paper suggests and encourages maturational growth both for individual religious and communities as a way to respond to the present situation in religious life in America and Western Europe. See the chart on pages 5-6 in R. ROLHEISER, "Religious Life in America Faces a Change of Epoch," in *Papers Prepared for the Inter-American Meeting*, Toronto, Conference of Major Superiors of Men, Leadership Conference of Women Religious, May 1999.

⁶ R. MCALLISTER, *Living The Vows*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1986, p. 8. See also J. RIDICK, *Treasures in Earthen Vessels: The Vows, a Wholistic Approach*, New York, Alba House, 1984, p. xv.

The dynamics of the actual call and response are so personal and specific to each individual that others may understand them only when individuals share their experiences. One's experience may be as dramatic as that of St. Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9), or according to Jean Vanier:

[...] a fundamental experience, as if the stone of their egoism had been struck by Moses' staff and water had sprung from it, or as if the stone which was over the tomb had been lifted and the deep self had been able to emerge ... It is the discovery that we are a spring of eternal life ... It guides our steps in revealing our final destiny... There is nothing more deeply personal than this moment of wonder ... It makes us feel that we have glimpsed the promised land, found ourselves 'at home', found our place ... It is like having glimpsed heaven."⁷

Barbara Fiand calls this experience "insight," by which "we are struck in our very being by the lightning flash of Being ... In insight we ourselves are gazed upon."⁸ While of course, one is free to pursue this experience or not, it normally has a lasting impact on a person's dispositions and attitude. It often takes someone into a community or leads to changing the orientation of his or her life.⁹ The call and response may also be a long, slow process ending with the decision of commitment. This requires much reflection and

⁷ J. VANIER, *Community and Growth: Our Pilgrimage Together*, Toronto, Griffin House, 1979, pp. 36-37. S. Rossetti, refers to this kind of experience as an eschaton, which he argues begets eschatological fervour bringing about conversion and providing forceful energy for self-giving, commitment and service. See S. ROSSETTI, "The Celibacy Experience," in *RfR*, 41 (1982), p. 673.

⁸ B. FIAND, *Living The Vision: Religious Vows in an Age of Change*, New York, Crossroad, 1990, p. 45. R. Gula refers to this as "'evaluative knowledge'[whose] quality and value, [he says] must be caught through personal interaction and encounter. Since quality and value are not easily detached from knower and situation, communication is difficult and must be discovered to be appreciated. This knowledge is a personal grasp of value. This is what makes our actions truly our own. With this knowledge we act on the basis of what we truly value. Moral growth and conversion happen through the experience of value and acquiring evaluative knowledge." See R. GULA, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality*, New York, Paulist Press Mahwah, 1989, p. 86.

⁹ FIAND, *Living The Vision*, p. 45. Speaking about the direct relationship between one's disposition and behaviour, Fiand goes on to say: "If the disposition is not ours, neither is the action. It may be automatic, coerced, performed through manipulation-'playing the game', as some call it - but unless what I do arises out of who I am, out of the integrity of my *being*, it is not mine" *ibid*. See also VANIER, *Community and Growth*, p. 37.

discernment.¹⁰

Although it is God who takes the initiative by offering this gracious invitation, some degree of personal maturity is necessary to become aware of that invitation and respond to it. Such an important decision is grounded in the dispositions and attitudes of a person and are intrinsically connected with the maturation process.¹¹

The call to religious life remains a mystery and a mystery is often characterized by much doubt, uncertainty and anxiety. This often leads one to seek answers and reassurances from others. Parents and spiritual directors are to assist aspirants in making their own decisions.¹² Those aspirants who do not decide for themselves are likely to experience problems later and may find it hard to respond wholeheartedly to the values of their decision.¹³

Since religious life is a permanent commitment, fidelity and perseverance become forces to reckon with. Fidelity involves willingness to forge ahead in order to achieve one's ideals. It means staying with a thing and working through the difficulties encountered on the way without abandoning it. It means sometimes making mistakes and falling, but always getting up and struggling on towards the ideal. This implies deep faith and trust in God's control over the situation. In fact, God's continued presence and love is part of the vision

¹⁰ The period between Paul's vision on the road and the time Ananias came to help him get back his sight could have been spent in reflection and discernment (Acts 9: 8-19). On a similar note, K. Rahner advises "Be still for once ... Give ... deeper realities of the spirit a chance now to rise to the surface ..." See K. RAHNER, *The Practice of Faith: A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality*, New York, Crossroad, 1983, p. 63.

¹¹ FIAND, *Living The Vision*, p. 45.

¹² MCALLISTER, *Living The Vows*, pp. 13 and 21. See also L. IRIARTE, "Giving Support To One's Vocational Journey," in *Consecrated Life*, 21, no. 1 (1997), p. 99; R. W. GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, Dayton, Ohio, Pflaum, 1968, p. 103.

¹³ Some religious who later left religious life admitted having been pressured into religious life by their over-pious parents or guardians. Then at a certain stage in religious life they became aware of this tension in them and had the courage to free themselves. Others confessed that they did not return to the world when they felt like it for fear of failing to readjust. See, SCHLECK, "Departures from Religion," p. 683. See also IRIARTE, "Giving Support to One's Vocational Journey," p. 98; MCALLISTER, *Living The Vows*, pp. 11-12.

which keeps one faithful.¹⁴

The pronouncement of vows, however, is the beginning of a dynamic process which B. Fiand describes as “a trust-filled movement into possibilities, not as an accomplished fact that identifies us once and for all in a particular state of perfection that can be clearly measured, evaluated and verified through predictable behaviour.”¹⁵ Therefore, in some cases, leaving religious life may be the mature thing to do, when one is convinced of it. Merely remaining a member does not necessarily imply commitment.¹⁶ A living commitment involves continuous self-evaluation, discernment, decision-making, choosing again and again that which one feels called to do at any given time. It is responding to a beckoning God.¹⁷ Rigidity, complacency, insincerity and failure in doing one’s part are the obstacles to fidelity and commitment.¹⁸ Fidelity to one’s commitment, then, necessarily depends on one’s moral maturity. It has to do with remaining true to oneself and to one’s own vision. Conscience is the final arbiter in a conflict of commitments.¹⁹

¹⁴ FIAND, *Living the Vision*, pp. 83-89. Along the same lines, Schneider refers to commitment to religious life as one between two persons the individual and God and says that it is “... the ultimate realization of faith, hope and love in their interrelationship. We believe that this person is worth the love we promise and so we trust that this self-gift will bring about the true fulfilment of our deepest longings in this one and only life we have.” See S. SCHNEIDERS, *New Wine-Skins: Re-Imagining Religious Life Today*, New York, Paulist Press, Mahwah, 1986, p. 201.

¹⁵ FIAND, *Living the Vision*, p. 49.

¹⁶ In response to the dwindling number of religious, in certain parts of the world, Chittister has coined the term “The Spirituality of Diminishment” which urges society to learn to specialize in the quality and substance of religious instead of their numbers. See CHITTISTER, *The Fire in These Ashes*, pp. 68-77.

¹⁷ According to Chittister, fidelity means “... being willing to change in order to remain the same ... [It] does not lie in standing in place but in consistently moving toward whatever brings to more and more wholeness of heart, certainty of soul, clarity of mind and integrity of behaviour until we finally know deep in our deepest selves what stars really guide us.” See CHITTISTER, *The Fire in These Ashes*, pp. 82-83.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

¹⁹ Speaking about fidelity as a moral issue, Schneider argues: “Our fundamental challenge is not fidelity to our commitments, but fidelity to the truth. It is this fidelity which discerns and actualizes our commitment to God in the heart of our choices and which, finally justifies our relative

2.2 - MATURITY AND THE VOW OF CHASTITY

The need for maturity in order to embrace and live out the vow of chastity in a meaningful and fulfilling manner is becoming more and more evident now with the better understanding we have of sexuality. While in the past there was the tendency to limit sexuality to the sexual act, now there is a broader understanding of it.²⁰ Sexuality pervades every person's life and existence. In its broadest sense, it means femaleness and maleness. It influences one's being so much so that many experiences, which are not sexual in the strict sense, are nevertheless sexual in nature.²¹

The limited view of sexuality was derived from the tendency to associate it only with the body, which was also regarded as distinct from and inferior to the spirit. Strongly associated with this view was the tendency to consider sex as bad and that the way to deal with sexual feelings was to control them. Marriage was considered inferior to celibacy and undervalued as a way of sacramental love and holiness. The emphasis was that sexual intimacy and joy was something merely permitted by God for procreation.²² This thinking

commitments and strengthens us to live them in hope." See SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 83.

²⁰ This transition from the narrow to the broader definition of sexuality is very evident in the responses to one of the items in S. Murphy's questionnaire to religious in which she stated: "Since making vows, I have engaged in behaviour I would label 'sexual'." Response to this necessitated defining the term, and this was quite revealing. See S. MURPHY, *A Delicate Dance: Sexuality, Celibacy and Relationships Among Catholic Clergy and Religious*, New York, Crossroad, 1992, p. 58.

²¹ ROSSETTI, "The Celibate Experience," p. 664. See also E. O'DOHERTY, *Vocation, Formation, Consecration & Vows: Theological and Psychological Considerations*, Staten Island, NY, Alba House, 1971, p. 136. G. May also argues along the same lines: "In its fullest sense then, sexuality is nothing other than creative spirit: basic energy directed towards the enrichment and expansion of life. All endeavours that point toward greater depth and breadth of life can be said to be sexual." See G. MAY, *Will and Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1982, p. 190.

²² This philosophy of the human person known as "anti-corporeal" and "anti-material," the belief that the spirit is good and the body is evil, was based on the gnosticism of the late apostolic times, Manicheism of the time of Augustine, the Albigensian heresy, Puritanism and Janseism, Angelism and Victorianism. See D. O'NEILL, *Priestly Celibacy and Maturity*, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1965, p. 45. Many other authors denounce this kind of philosophy. See, MAY, *Will and Spirit*, p. 191. Murphy thinks that this mentality still causes a lot of confusion among middle-aged religious of today. See MURPHY, *A Delicate Dance*, pp. 52-54. According to B. Pierce, this attitude causes

prevented a celibate from achieving the primary purpose of total personal commitment to celibacy.

Sexuality is in fact so closely connected to the whole humanity and spirituality of each person that it should be seen as a unity between the body and the spirit. Warning against this separation, Frederick von Gager says:

We must not take too lightly the danger of looking upon the spiritual as something that hovers more or less remotely above or around the bodily and tangible. Thus we banish it to the periphery whereas, in reality, it is the flesh that is peripheral and the spirit central. Thus separated from the bodily aspect, the spirit assumes the role of a thing apart and it becomes easy to thrust the blame for evil upon the flesh. It is our mental and spiritual personality that is responsible for our decisions, and thus for good and evil, and not the flesh. It is more correct and honest to speak of 'the weakness of my personality' than to speak of the 'weakness of the flesh [...].'²³

According to this explanation, any spiritual searching could be called a sexual undertaking and conversely, any effort toward integration of sexuality is fundamentally a spiritual exercise.²⁴

In the light of this understanding of sexuality, consecrated celibacy has also assumed a more positive and challenging stance entailing a certain level of personal maturity. Formerly, celibacy was regarded as a denial of the body with the result that many religious became a-sexual or anti-sexual, which was seen as a sign of human perfection. Particular friendship was greatly discouraged so that, according to Chittister, "Life existed to be

tension in relationships between different age groups. See B. PIERCE, "Friendship and Celibacy: Seeing Beauty from a 'Holy Distance'," in *RfR*, 58 (1999), pp. 175-178.

²³ F. VON GAGER, *Difficulties with Sex Education*, Cork, Mercier Press, 1953, p. 7. O'Doherty also describes sexuality as human and belonging to the realm of conduct and moral responsibility. He explains: "While things like sleep, or coughing are physical occurrences emanating from the body as a living organism, sexuality is ego-initiated, ego-directed and ego-permitted. It is for this reason that no culture has dispensed with the ritual and symbol of marriage." See O'DOHERTY, *Vocation*, p. 136. Along the same line of argument, Ridick clearly defines and illustrates sexuality on three levels, the psycho-physical, psycho-social and the spiritual-relational levels. Each level is dependent on the other. See RIDICK, *Treasures*, pp. 30-46.

²⁴ MAY, *Will and Spirit*, p. 190. There is a very succinct definition of sexuality in a poem quoted by Sipe, it reads: "Our sexuality is the dimension in us where the physical earth and material creation join in the deepest intimacy with the world of spirit and with God." See SIPE, *Celibacy*, p. 18.

negated ... Work compensated for involvement with people, etc.”²⁵ In recent years, however, there has been a shift in the understanding of celibacy influenced by what Rossetti describes as “the new human model of spirituality.” He elaborates on it as follows:

This modern growth-model uses existential concepts such as freedom, human development, holistic growth and personal responsibility. It understands development in the spiritual life as growth in love and intimacy. It stresses the importance of psychology, self-knowledge, wholeness and all that is authentically human.²⁶

For the individual who chooses celibacy, it becomes a way of living one’s sexuality, one’s femininity or masculinity, something to do with who one is. It shapes one’s relational capacity or potential for self-transcendence in love for others. It becomes crucial in determining one’s happiness, health, holiness and personal fulfilment.²⁷

2.2.1 - Maturity and the Choice of the Vow of Chastity

The greatest challenge faced by the consecrated celibate lies in the choice itself, a choice that implies giving up the direct and complete gratification of one’s sexual desires for the whole of one’s life. From the point of view of contemporary culture which is so

²⁵ Many authors on religious life mention this and denounce it. See CHITTISTER, *The Fire in These Ashes*, pp. 117-119; O'DOHERTY, *Vocation*, p. 44; T. RADCLIFFE “The Affective Life,” in *Religious Life Review*, 37 (1998), p. 197; C. HARMER, *Religious Life in the 21st Century: A Contemporary Journey into Canaan*, Mystic, CT, Twenty-Third Publications, 1995, p. 84; FIAND, *Living the Vision*, p. 87.

²⁶ ROSSETTI, “The Celibacy Experience,” p. 663. Even magisterial documents have also come out in support of this model. The 1971 Synod of Bishops advised priests to obtain: “Human balance through well-ordered integration into the fabric of social relationships, fraternal association and companionship with other priests and with the bishop.” This can also apply to religious. See *The Ministerial Priesthood: Justice in the World*, Washington, DC, US Catholic Conference, 1972, p. 24; SYNODUS EPISCOPORUM, *Ultimis temporibus*, 30 November 1971, in *AAS*, 63 (1971), pp. 898-922. English translation in *The Pope Speaks*, 16 (1971), p. 373; PAUL VI, Encyclical letter, *Sacerdotalis caelibatus*, 24 June 1967, in *AAS*, 59 (1967), pp 657-697. English translation in *The Pope Speaks*, 12 (1967), p. 318.

²⁷ SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 210. Siipe, who also stresses the centrality of celibacy in the life of the religious, says: “[Celibacy] is intimately bound up with how a person integrates three factors, relationships, inner resources and the sequential challenges.” See SIPE, *Celibacy*, p. 210.

permissive, consecrated celibacy is meaningless and irrational.²⁸ Even from the human point of view, the choice of celibacy is like choosing death. It is no wonder that the early Church considered it as the strict equivalent of martyrdom. Sandra Schneiders describes the human implications of this choice:

Not to marry, not to found a family, is a choice not to build oneself into the future of the race, not to immortalize the self in the only way known to human wisdom. It is to make one's own death final from the human point of view ... With terrifying clarity and absolute irreversibility, one chooses what can only be seen, from the human point of view as death. There is no verifiable assurance that there is any value in this act, that there is anything on the other side of this death.²⁹

A choice so total in its commitment, in its intensity and extension requires a lot of maturity in its several aspects but first and foremost is the spiritual aspect. The origins of such a drastic measure can only be spiritual and mysterious as the vow itself. The person who chooses celibacy is convinced for reasons of the heart that may never be clear to others and even to oneself. Like the choice of religious life as a whole, celibacy is a result of a religious experience, which, according to Sipe is "the internal mystical awareness of reality where love holds a supreme and all-encompassing place, where Truth is personal. It is based on faith, without which such an apparently 'suicidal' endeavour would remain as

²⁸ See ROSSETTI, "The Celibacy Experience," p. 674; T. RADCLIFFE, "Brothers, the Eucharist, Poverty and Chastity," in *Religious Life Review*, 37 (1998), p. 9. CHITTISTER, *The Fire in These Ashes*, p. 114.

²⁹ SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 128. M. Svoboda also very openly talks about the concrete sacrifices she has made by embracing celibacy. These are sacrifices which she says she is reminded of every time she holds a baby, glances at her family tree and sees no apples on her branch, or crawls into her bed alone at night, or gazes at a pair of geese on a pond and finds herself envying their 'pairhood.' She continues: "[The sacrifices] ... can gnaw away at our spirit, eventually even inducing us to take back or regret the commitment we once made with such abandon." See M. SVOBODA, "Consecrated Celibacy as Means, Peril and Delight," in *RJR*, 56 (1997), p. 69. See also RIDICK, *Treasures*, pp. 53-55. It is a pity that, for religious life, chastity comes as a given, that is, as part and parcel of the life because the fact that one actually chooses it is important for the reasons behind it and for the way one will live it. O'Neill describes the experience of some priests who seemed restless and insecure, as if they were vainly searching for some elusive peace of mind. He says: "[The priests] had come to feel that the theoretical commitment of their forward step when receiving subdiaconate had not really been a deep and solid dedication of their inner person, but only an outward act of conformity and obedience at an immature level, full of the unrealism of a youthful enthusiasm." See O'NEILL, *Priestly Celibacy and Maturity*, pp. 52-53. See also RIDICK, *Treasures*, p. 49.

meaningless and wasteful as the death of Jesus was regarded as that of a criminal by the bystanders.”³⁰ When it is personally chosen in response to a personal vocation, it helps to make one conscious of the ultimate all-sufficiency of God as the centre of one’s life. It enables one to find full personal meaning and satisfaction in seeking the reign of God as a celibate.³¹

2.2.2 - Maturity and Loneliness in the Vow of Chastity

So far, celibacy has been described in terms of love relationships, with God and with other people. However, love, according to Sipe, “is a lonely business.” Loneliness is part of the human condition, “the price we pay for love, consciousness and self-consciousness.”³² It must be part of the restlessness of the soul that Saint Augustine talked about and said it can only rest in God. Even married people will experience loneliness one time or another, but the consecrated celibate will experience it in all its mysterious paschal density. In Schneiders’s words, the celibate chooses to live that loneliness “in a particularly stark and vibrant way, to drink to the dregs as it were, the mystery of human aloneness, in the confident hope that the other side of loneliness is union with God.”³³

³⁰ SIPE, *Celibacy*, p. 43. Commenting on the mysterious nature of celibacy, Svoboda describes it as “... essentially a religious experience rooted in the unfathomable mystery of God’s radical mad love ... in the final analysis, celibacy is something flaming. It is a fire ... It is always somewhat baffling ... as anything that touches the sacred is ... celibacy can never be fully analysed or adequately explained.” See SVOBODA “Consecrated Celibacy,” p. 69. Also referring to the mysterious nature of consecrated celibacy, Schneiders calls it an ‘icon’ which while it reveals something of the mysterious experience, it, at the same time, withholds the totality of its meaning. While the celibate life remains the same, “... its being lived by different individuals as integral to their own experiences allows for different facets of the mystery to appear ...” See SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, pp. 118-119. See also RADCLIFFE, “The Affective Life,” p. 196.

³¹ SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p.131.

³² SIPE, *Celibacy*, p. 77. See also chapter 4 of K. CLARK, *Being Sexual and Celibate*, Notre Dame, IN, Ave Maria Press, 1986, pp. 47-62. The chapter is entitled “To be Human is to be Lonely Sometimes.”

³³ SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 212. According to Vanier, “We all carry our own deep wound, which is the wound of loneliness. We find it hard to be alone, and we try to flee from this in hyperactivity, through television and in a million other ways ... We cannot accept it until we discover

Embracing consecrated celibacy implies beginning a certain kind of journey of faith and transformation. An element of this journey is an inevitable reality of the growth process in coping with loneliness. The goal of this process is life, life in abundance according to the mind and heart of Jesus (Jn. 10:10). In fact, that is the spiritual goal of both marriage and celibacy.³⁴ This is in line with the urge for generativity that psychologists have pointed out as essential in anyone's life.³⁵ It takes some degree of personal maturity in its several aspects to embark on this challenging journey and to persevere in it.

Based on research carried out among priests interviewed and reviewed by Sipe, it has been possible to trace the development toward free acceptance and integration of the spiritual challenge of consecrated celibacy. Five steps emerged in the process.³⁶

The first step that will enable the celibate to begin the process is some awareness of the loss that is entailed and the gain that comes out of it. Then one needs to face rather than avoid it. Loneliness is like fear, the more one avoids it the more power it gains over its victim. This stage may be accompanied by a physical distress or illness. Since most initial training programmes of religious life encourage group identification, it is best that one attain one's celibate identity before one enters. Celibate identity can occur only when one has achieved some degree of personal identity. Celibate identity, however, can begin any time in one's life.³⁷

The second step is the pain of difference which the celibate usually experiences between two and five years of ordination or vows. The celibate becomes aware of his

that we are loved by God, just as we are, and that the Holy Spirit, in a mysterious way is living at the centre of the wound." See J. VANIER, *Community and Growth: Our Pilgrimage Together*, Toronto, Griffin House, 1979, p. 78.

³⁴ SIPE, *Celibacy*, p. 79.

³⁵ See E. ERIKSON, *Identity Youth and Crisis*, New York, W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1968, p. 138. Muto, also argues that celibates need to be generative in order to remain whole, they need to see the fruits of their labours, otherwise they die. See "Foreword," in SIPE, *Celibacy*, p. 2.

³⁶ SIPE, *Celibacy*, pp. 80-91. There is no doubt that religious also follow similar steps in their spiritual growth through their handling of their loneliness.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

separateness from most of the people he ministers to. Sipe refers to this crisis as one of "like me/not like me." One recognizes very good people among non-celibate Christians. The sense of isolation may be so acute that one may be tempted to experiment. Some priests and religious actually abandon their commitment at this time, if not physically, spiritually. Since they are not prepared to be themselves, that is, different, they may end up searching for love from others rather than for others. Work might end up being a companion rather than service. Embracing one's differentness and uniqueness is a very lonely experience. However, for every death there is some resurrection. Coming to terms with this loneliness yields some renewed self confidence and freedom for ministry.³⁸

The third step in the celibate's coming to grips with loneliness occurs generally after thirteen to eighteen years of celibate life. One is tempted to compromise growth by becoming a functionary by which mere external appearance and conformity is promoted at the expense of interiorization. The crisis is a struggle between interiorization, being in control of one's self and being controlled by the environment or system. It has moral overtones and again has something to do with identity and integrity. A successful handling of this crisis enables celibates to acquire a certain amount of freedom and responsibility enabling them to "transcend even their own institutions and their supports to be their own person - to claim their celibacy at a mature level."³⁹

Sipe goes on to describe this period as the time "we buy into the Spirit or sell out to the system." While community fellowship can assist the celibate to ease some of the tensions arising from the struggle, one cannot rely on a group to internalize one's celibacy. Each has to endure the pain for oneself.⁴⁰ In fact, by the end of the first ten years in celibate ministry, one has established one's style of life. This comes out in one's relationship to work, to power and to prayer. One's self knowledge, quality of service and awareness of others are all solidified in ways that indicate what is internalized. In these areas, one either

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 81-82.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 83.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

achieves true integrity or just functions to conform, to keep others happy and to receive advancement.⁴¹

The fourth step is one that Sipe calls "The Other Side of Pain." It generally occurs between twenty-two and twenty-seven years of practising celibacy, in one's late forties and fifties. At this stage one struggles between loneliness and aloneness and asks oneself "Has it been worth it all?" This is a crisis of generativity, when one looks at what one has generated or helped to generate. One may find it so good and satisfying that he or she would do it all over again. This enables one to face old age with a sense of integrity.⁴² On the other hand, one can review his or her life-achievement and end up in despair discovering the reality to be very different from the earlier ideals. One may look around and see that one's friends are successful in business and professional fields while he or she has little to show.⁴³

According to Sipe, "The dividends of the celibates' willingness to negotiate loneliness cannot be confined to themselves; their transformation glows in their service."⁴⁴ For many, their struggle with celibate existence and its meaning is very beneficial both to themselves and to others. It brings about a joy and a freedom difficult to describe. It frees one from clinging to material things and people and even to life itself. It allows for objectivity and seeing things as they really are - the truth-and to speak it out prophetically.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 85. Speaking about the benefits of celibate love, Meister Eckhart quoted by Sipe says: "Whoever has accepted this sweet burden of the bridle of love will attain more and come much further than all the penitential practices and mortifications that all the people of the world acting together could ever carry out." See SIPE, *Celibacy*, p. 134.

⁴² E. ERIKSON, *Young Man Luther*, New York, W.W Norton, 1958, pp. 236-237. See also M. PABLE, "Skills Needed for Celibacy," in *RJR*, 57 (1998), p. 285. For him, generativity, for happy and healthy religious, is a labour of love that spills over and enlivens them.

⁴³ O'NEILL, *Priestly Celibacy and Maturity*, p. 138. See also G. GREENE, *The Power and the Glory*, London, Heinemann, 1940, p. 273.

⁴⁴ SIPE, *Celibacy*, p. 88

⁴⁵ PIERCE, "Friendship and Celibacy," p. 182. Svoboda shares a very bright and rich experience of her celibacy. See SVOBODA, "Consecrated Celibacy," p.70. According to Schneiders, "A fulfilled celibate life is a sacrament of human solitude transubstantiated by the love of God into the life-giving bread of human solidarity." See SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 212. In Vanier's words, "People who have learned to use their loneliness enjoy their old age, they project the wonder

It is out of such an experience that Saint Paul is able to boast, "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? And are you not my work in the Lord?" (1 Cor. 9:1).

The final stage of embracing and plunging into loneliness leads to finding one's true self, others and God, the core experience of a successful celibate life. Sipe refers to it as "All - one - ness".⁴⁶ It is actually a growth in one's sense of identity and spirituality. In a word, it is growth in maturity.

Sometimes one's attitude towards one's death reveals how much one has come to grips with loneliness. Excessive fear of death has its roots in despair and disgust which is the failure to achieve the goal of final integrity. E. Erikson clearly shows how this is intricately connected with one's negative sense of identity. He says:

I can add, clinically that the lack or loss of this accrued ego-integration is signified by despair and an often unconscious fear of death: the one and only life cycle is not accepted as the ultimate of life. Despair expresses the feeling that the time is short, too short for the attempt to start another life and to try out alternate roads to integrity. Such a despair is often hidden behind a show of misanthropy, or a chronic contemptuous displeasure with particular institutions and particular people - a disgust and displeasure which (where not allied with constructive ideas and a life of cooperation), only signify the individual's contempt of himself.⁴⁷

of a child, but the wisdom of maturity as well. They are gentle and merciful, compassionate and forgiving." See VANIER, *Community and Growth*, p. 79.

⁴⁶ SIPE, *Celibacy*, p. 90-91. Other authors refer to it as 'solitude,' which Pable describes as enjoyment of one's own company. He points out that if it is not yet achieved by then, it is one of the tasks for mid-life. See PABLE, "Skills Needed for Celibacy," in *RJR*, 57 (1998), p. 278. M. Wolff-Salin describes it as the space where if one is prepared to, goes and stays until it speaks to the individual, giving him or her the chance to be "who I need to be, to do what I need to do, to breathe freely without having other people or things around all the time." See M. WOLFF-SALIN, *The Shadow Side of Community and the Growth of the Self*, New York, Crossroad, 1988, p. 128. See also G. MALONEY, *Prayer of the Heart*, Notre Dame, IN, Ave Maria Press, 1981, pp. 47, 48 and 54; RAHNER, *The Practice of Faith*, p. 63; FIAND, *Living the Vision*, the section entitled "Our Homesickness for God," pp. 99-106; RIDICK, *Treasures*, p. 71; S. MOORE, *Inner Loneliness*, New York, Crossroad, 1982, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁷ E. ERIKSON, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, New York, International Universities Press, 1959, p. 98. Carl Jung also explains an unhealthy attitude towards death as "a question of personal immaturity - the self - same childish covetousness, of the same fear, the same obstinacy and willfulness, in the one as in the other." See C. JUNG, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1933, pp. 128-129. On the same subject, O'Neill argues that a religious

2.2.3 - Maturity and Celibate Sexual Desire

Part of the religious' achievement of solitude is revealed by her or his handling of sexual desires which remain a force to reckon with throughout one's life. There are, however, certain stages when the sexual demand is very acute, of which one needs to be aware. Boys usually experience this acute sexual desire in their late teenage years while girls experience it around 22 years of age. This desire is usually a feeling of emptiness, an objectless sense of yearning for something which one is not clear about. A girl might say that she is sick, or is unable to swallow or throw herself on a bed or sob her heart out or get angry for no reason. Young sisters in the novitiate or after the novitiate may be preoccupied with their daily tasks or studies so that they may escape having to face this problem. They, however, remain vulnerable and the crisis might strike at a later stage.⁴⁸

The peak period of sexual desire is between the ages 32-35 or even after 40. It is a period of maximal disturbance especially for some women. Some writers refer to this experience as mid-life infatuation.⁴⁹

This mid-life infatuation is marked by both physical and emotional characteristics of an adolescent who has fallen in love.⁵⁰ This can lead to some people leaving religious life

celibate who has fully understood and lived out its eschatological dimension needs to be able to "link together in a final synthesis all the human values of his growth and self-identity into a pattern of worthwhile meaning for himself and for others. This synthesis must lead him to that confidence in his destiny, that trusting assurance of the performance of love, which will enable him to feel that death is the final act of his human maturity as well as his ultimate self - donation to the love of the Holy Spirit." See O'NEILL, *Priestly Celibacy and Maturity*, pp. 142-143.

⁴⁸ O'DOHERTY, *Vocation*, p. 147.

⁴⁹ PIERCE, "Friendship and Celibacy," pp. 176-177. See also L. LEVO, "Mid-life Infatuations," in *Human Development*, 19, no. 4 (1998), pp. 14-18. SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 227.

⁵⁰ According to L. Levo, at the thought or sight of the other person, one may have the feeling of walking in the air, a pounding of the pulse, dry mouth, trembling in the hands and the legs or even giddiness. During most of the waking hours, one is often thinking and fantasising about the other. There is an intense emotional sense of incompleteness without the other, an urge towards fusion and a strong sense of emotional dependency necessitating frequent contact, either physical or by phone. Sometimes there is also much projection of one's desired qualities of the other at the expense of reality. One tends to become blind to the other's weakness and will tend to defend him or her at all

if they choose to act on their erotic feelings, or they may end up engaging in relationships which violate their boundaries, leaving them feeling guilty. Those who leave claim that they want to pursue what they describe as a mature and loving relationship, probably their first.⁵¹

If handled properly, however, a mid-life infatuation can be a real learning experience. It is an encounter with the mystery of love. If one is open and willing to be challenged, advised and supported by good trusted friends, it can be an integral part of ones' psychological and spiritual growth. One can come out of it much wiser.⁵²

Skills required for the celibate's handling of her or his desires depend, to a great extent, on one's personal maturity in all its aspects. Over and above achieving the basic psychosexual level of maturity which implies working out and resolving the issue of one's gender, sexual orientation and identity, the religious also needs to learn more about one's sexual desire. Although genetically determined, it is also influenced by external circumstances but remains very personal. Each person has her or his own quantity, quality and rhythm of sexual desire. One needs to know one's main objects of excitation. While in general people can be excited through sight, sound, smell, touch and mental images, each person has her or his own main ones.⁵³ These excitations also prove the impulsive and irrational nature of desires. They just occur without any choice on the part of the individual and so one need not feel guilty about them or try to run away from them.⁵⁴

costs. If this infatuation is reciprocal and is gratified, it brings intense happiness that approaches ecstasy. If rejected, one may become so depressed that one may even contemplate suicide. Such a relationship need not involve any genital interaction at all. See LEVO, "Mid-life Infatuations," pp. 14-15. See also FIAND, *Living the Vision*, p. 103.

⁵¹ LEVO, "Mid-life Infatuations," p. 14. K. Clark gives accounts of priests and religious who changed their life commitments at an advanced stage in their lives due to choosing to act on their feelings. See CLARK, *Being Sexual and Celibate*, p. 76ff. See also RADCLIFFE, "The Affective Life," p. 210.

⁵² RADCLIFFE, "The Affective Life," p. 210. See also, LEVO, "Mid-life Infatuations," p. 16.

⁵³ SIPE, *Celibacy*, pp. 221-222.

⁵⁴ CLARK, *Being Sexual and Celibate*, p. 70. See also RADCLIFFE, "The Affective Life," p. 195.

Paying attention to one's desires is vital for self-knowledge because, as has been hinted at before, one's sexuality is closely intertwined with one's whole being. Again this has serious repercussions for one's personal and spiritual integration. Sipe brings out this point clearly when he says:

We can approach the Divine Mystery only as our true selves. Our desires tell us who we are and where our treasure really resides. Our heart with all its desires cannot be concealed when we pray or when we pursue our service to others. No matter how we might try to hide behind activity or images, our true self with all of our fundamental desires will leave its mark on all we do.⁵⁵

Self-knowledge is also an important basis for freedom of choice. If every sexual impulse comes as a shock and is met with guilt, denial, and repression, then one may never learn how to handle it fruitfully. One is likely panic, to lose control and end up confused or doing something regrettable.⁵⁶

Apart from just paying attention to one's sexual desires, one also needs to acknowledge, befriend, stay with and respond to them in a gentle manner. One can adopt a contemplative stance as a response to sexual arousal. This involves engaging in some meditative practices centred on the encounter which help diffuse or channel the feelings in peace without condemnation or compulsion or letting oneself be overwhelmed. According to Barbara Fiand, "... the very disposition that allows something to be (without reacting to it or acting on it), frees the experience which is then viewed simply as a phenomenon - something that appears and gives itself over for our contemplation."⁵⁷

Prayer is also the place to stay with one's desires, confronting them fearlessly and

⁵⁵ SIPE, *Celibacy*, p. 68. For some very deep insight on the relationship between desire and self-knowledge and its importance in the life of a religious celibate, see pages 68-73 of this same text. See also PABLE, "Skills Needed for Celibacy," p. 275.

⁵⁶ SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 214. On the importance of self-knowledge as the basis for sound choices, Pable illustrates: "If I know when I am feeling sad or discouraged, I will have important data for making better decisions, whereas if I am unaware of these internal states, I will likely fall or be driven into choices without really intending them." See PABLE, "Skills Needed for Celibacy," p. 275.

⁵⁷ B. FIAND, *Wrestling With God: Religious Life in Search of Its Soul*, New York, Crossroad Pub. Co., 1997, p. 103.

assessing their implications for one's life and work. What one chooses to do or not to do with one's desires will very much depend on the centre of one's sexuality which, for the consecrated celibate, is God. Such an occasion becomes a chance for renewal, hearing once again Christ call and responding affirmatively.

All emotional experience is grounded in the same kind of 'root' energy of the spirit that permeates one's whole being. Therefore, an acute sexual desire can be directed and liberated into a deeper desire - God who is most satisfying. A sexual stimulus can result in spiritual feelings and vice versa. Factors that determine the response are environmental settings, preceding experiences, pre-existing thoughts and fantasies, habitual inclinations and personality styles.⁵⁸ Intentionality or choice are, however, the ultimate determinants, and these depend on one's level of maturity.

2.2.4 - Maturity and Friendship in Consecrated Celibacy

There is a lot of emphasis on the need for intimacy in the relationships of consecrated celibates as a way of growing in their intimacy with God. As we recall, although intimacy is based on achievement of a sense of identity, the two dynamics continue to interact in a spiral manner, each enhancing the other. To a great extent, one finds out who one is by finding out what one means to others and especially to particularly significant others. Consequently, affective immaturity also affects spiritual maturity.

The natural and ordinary integral path to the full development of the human person is to enter into a permanent committed relationship with another, to express love in a genital way and to have children. To deliberately exclude these from one's life is quite dangerous since celibacy can be lived poorly and for the wrong reasons.⁵⁹ According to Sandra

⁵⁸ RADCLIFFE, "The Affective Life," pp. 195 and 201. Other authors refer to this as, "transmutation of energy." This means channelling the raw emotional energy or processing it in the right way, i.e., the way chosen or intended. See FIAND, *Living the Vision*, p. 103. Other chief proponents of this argument are MAY, *Will and Spirit*, pp. 185-186; MOORE, *Inner Loneliness*, p. 127; D. O'MURCHU, *Religious Life: A Prophetic Vision: Hope and Promise for Tomorrow*, Notre Dame, Ind., Ave Maria Press, 1991, p. 138.

⁵⁹ SVOBODA, "Consecrated Celibacy," p. 69. B. O'Leary also warns: "To shut oneself off from human love either through fear or inhibition or anxiety or some stoical ideal of spirituality is to

Schneiders, "... unless the religious can find an alternate path to this human intimacy, the chances are very good that he or she will sabotage the very project for which consecrated celibacy was undertaken."⁶⁰

In order to love God, one needs to love people and to have been loved first. Openness to God demands openness to people not just in the abstract but as individuals. Real love implies genuine encounters with people. The religious experiences the flowering and the fruitfulness of his or her celibacy in her union in love with God, but one cannot be united to God unless one is united to people.⁶¹

It seems there are two paradoxical requirements for the celibate. On the one hand, one is supposed to enter into deep relationships for mature human and spiritual growth and yet, on the other hand, one has to achieve that growth in solitude, in a manner compatible with the religious commitment. This implies avoiding possessiveness, exclusiveness, manipulation, exploitation, etc. Personal maturity is inevitably needed in order to maintain this delicate balance.⁶² It is in this context that we are going to explore friendships in religious life, examining the challenges one might encounter and how maturity enables one to face up to them. It is indeed a delicate balance and, as Svoboda observes, "One can fail against celibacy by going too far in relationships or by not going far enough."⁶³

All people whether celibate or married need a variety of friends of both sexes. For

cut oneself off from the possibility of touching and being touched by the divine." See B. O'LEARY, "Celibate Friendship," in *RfR*, 39 (1980), p. 179. See also MURPHY, *A Delicate Dance*, p. 47; RIDICK, *Treasures*, pp. 63 & 65.

⁶⁰ SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, pp. 220-221.

⁶¹ GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, Dayton, pp. 25 and 143.

⁶² The first part of the title of Murphy's book which addresses these issues is very appropriate. She describes religious friendships as: "A Delicate Dance." Chapter two of this text is entitled, "Intriguing Intimacy," and is mostly made up of quite interesting accounts of religious' personal experiences of their friendships. Consecrated celibate friendship is indeed a delicate dance. See MURPHY, *A Delicate Dance*, pp. 31-48.

⁶³ SVOBODA, "Consecrated Celibacy," p. 69. See also O'LEARY, "Celibate Friendship," p. 180.

religious, this will mean friends both within and outside one's community. Friendship is the mutual acceptance of each other by two people, without evaluation, although aware of each other's faults. With friends, one can be oneself without needing to wear a mask or act out an expected role. Friends are those with whom one can share not just ideas, projects or things, but one's very self including feelings, fears and hopes. In some cases it involves making self-sacrifices for each other. It can be quite frustrating as a celibate grows older to realize that no one really cares about him or her. Although the fact of some degree of loneliness will always remain, knowing that some people somewhere really care, is a great help.⁶⁴

Although friendship is to some extent a miraculous gift, it is also an achievement by people who have developed sufficient maturity enabling intimacy. Living through and working out the complexities of relationships with peers in and outside community is a very rewarding exercise and becomes handy especially in old age.⁶⁵

The degree or depth of the friendship will vary. It is in the deep, loving, special relationship where one's celibate commitment becomes an issue to reckon with. Some religious are afraid to respond to that kind of relationship, but others agree to take this risk of deep loving which is part of God's call to respond to his love. Such a relationship may develop between experienced religious of the same or opposite sex. It may develop naturally from knowing each other well through shared ministry and relaxation, common interests in and outside of work. The friendship may also have deepened from freedom of communication, deep sharing at several levels and the mutual comfort of being together. It may be characterised by mutual confidence and trust in the other's loyalty and love. In other words, the intimacy that such a friendship involves makes it special, but can also often give birth to a deep desire for total expression of that intimate love in physical union. This is one

⁶⁴ SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 225. See also O'DOHERTY, *Vocation*, pp. 162-164.

⁶⁵ Speaking about the gift of true friendship, Schneiders describes it as "the climate for that total sharing of gifts, human and divine that is possible only occasionally in life but which, when it is realized, involves an experience of intimacy that surpasses even that which can be achieved in and through sexual union." See SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 224.

of the most difficult challenges a religious has to face.⁶⁶

A certain amount of personal maturity will enable an individual to develop and apply certain skills to help to make such a relationship grow with integrity. The two people involved need to be open and honest with themselves and with each other. Only the individual knows when a situation is getting out of her or his control. They may need to remind each other of their prior commitments and choose to act it them rather than on a romantic urge.⁶⁷

Another skill is the setting of appropriate boundaries in the relationship. Boundaries are essential for good and satisfying relationships. This may lie in one's general celibate stance which is a clear, definite attitude arising from an internalized choice of one's state of life. It implies being celibate in a conscious and communicative way, that is, being personally but not sexually available in one's relationships. It implies being personally open but sexually self-contained. This is communicated by one's way of dressing, walking, talking and relaxing which can be genuine and warm but not seductive.⁶⁸ Appropriate boundaries are also determined by one's general asceticism (self-discipline) which comes out in one's approach to life in general, one's eating, working and relaxation habits.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ SCHENIDER, *New Wineskins*, p. 227.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 233. See also CLARK, *Being Sexual and Celibate*, p. 76. Speaking on the same issue, Pable rightly points out that many professionals also have to deal with this in their various work places. See PABLE, "Skills Needed for Celibacy," p. 37. He describes it as: "A 'no' in service of a 'yes'."

⁶⁸ SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 229. See also CLARK, *Being Sexual and Celibate*, pp. 76-81. According to Clark, this may be culturally determined. See also O'LEARY, "Celibate Friendship", pp. 180-181. Speaking about boundaries, Pierce describes the appropriate attitude towards a special friend as: "Holy Distancing", which is a contemplative stance allowing the friend enough space and freedom so as to see her or him with the eyes of God and love with a deep but non-possessiveness passion. See PIERCE, "Friendship and Celibacy," pp. 179-181.

⁶⁹ According to D. Goergen, celibates need to ask themselves: "Is our approach to our sexuality consistent with our approach to life as a whole? What good does it do to be sexually abstinent if we are addicted to work, are first rate consumers and enjoy almost all the comforts our society offers us?" See D. GOERGEN, "Calling Forth a Healthy Chaste Life," in *RfR*, 57 (1998), p. 262. See also SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 23; SIPE, *Celibacy*, p. 105. For some virtues necessary for an effective celibate life on the psycho-physical, psycho-social and the spiritual-rational levels,

Anyway, the two involved in this special relationship still need to work out their own boundaries since love is communicated by the balance between necessary frustration and supportive gratification. They need to know the mutual effect of certain gestures and touches according to their capacities, which will differ according to individuals.⁷⁰

There has been talk about what is referred to as “the third way”, which seems to imply a sexually active life by professed religious outside marriage. As has been pointed out before, behaviours reveal meanings; romantic behaviour suggests pursuing it further to marriage; and genital sex by human beings is meant to be a promise to be there for each other forever. Such a relationship, by its very nature, will demand possessiveness and exclusivity which cannot be mutually guaranteed. Ultimately this is likely to lead to unhappiness and hurt because it is like living a lie to oneself, to the other person, to one's institute, to the Church and to the public at large. In reality, such a choice is irresponsible and mutually uncharitable. It is using each other for selfish ends.⁷¹

It is a mark of maturity to be able to confide one's feelings to a third trusted person regarding a special friendship. That way there is room for objective assessment of it by someone not directly involved. Prayer is another very safe place to bring one's special friend. God who knows both the religious' goodwill and their human weaknesses will

see RIDICK, *Treasures*, pp. 56-57. While the term ‘asceticism’ has often been presented negatively, J. Futrell also clearly illustrates its positive and attractive fruits. See J. FUTRELL, “Asceticism Today,” in *Human Development*, no. 1 (1986), pp. 6-9.

⁷⁰ SIPE, *Celibacy*, p. 115. According to Murphy, “one person's affection is another's foreplay, so there are no universally standardized lists of ‘acceptable affections’.” See MURPHY, *A Delicate Dance*, p. 57. Sipe, however, warning against extremes says: “A rigid character, lacking flexibility, sets celibates up for ‘cracking’ under pressure or inclines them to ‘split’ their private and public affectional life ... The naive also run a risk: that of blindly stumbling into situations and relationships that subvert celibate practice or violate sexual boundaries and inhibit growth.” See SIPE, *Celibacy*, p. 119. See also RIDICK, *Treasures*, pp. 65-66.

⁷¹ SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 217. See also CLARK, *Being Sexual and Celibate*, pp. 76-81. According to A. Guindon, genital activity on the part of committed celibates is a language inconsistent with the social reality of partners. See A. GUINDON, *The Sexual Language*, Ottawa, The University of Ottawa Press, 1976, p. 83.

provide the necessary strength.⁷²

Ultimately the health of the relationship will be revealed by its fruits. Something is wrong when one becomes jealous and suspicious and begins to pry into the other's private life. A life-giving relationship must allow the other's continued growth in his or her vocation and relationships with other people. It will be acceptable and not a threat to the others. It will enhance the religious' prayer life, community life and their ministry.⁷³

2.3 - MATURITY AND THE VOW OF POVERTY

There are many practical questions surrounding the vow of poverty today. R. Gleason articulates them well:

Does religious poverty establish us in any solidarity with the genuinely dispossessed? Or does it mean working in order to bring to a higher level the economic standard of the poor surrounding us? Is it just the common sharing of goods which constitutes the meaning of religious? What would be the goal of this common sharing? What about collectivism? With this, the amount of material goods held and their quality and the general style of life is so high that one could hardly call it poor.⁷⁴

As has already been hinted at in chapter one, it is quite difficult and futile to try and define, regulate or standardize the practice of poverty without becoming too legalistic.⁷⁵ In fact sometimes it is when an institute imposes too much control that problems in the area of

⁷² SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 233. See also O'LEARY, "Celibate friendship," p. 181; PABLE, "Skills Needed for Celibacy," p. 282.

⁷³ See O'LEARY, "Celibate Friendship," p. 181; SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, pp. 234-235; ROSSETTI, "Celibacy Experience," p. 666. Clarke gives a clear and helpful description of eight dimensions of relatedness. See C. CLARKE, "Dimensions of Human Relationship," in *Human Development*, 16, no. 3 (1996), pp. 5-11.

⁷⁴ GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, p. 166. See also, FIAND, *Living the Vision*, pp. 53-55.

⁷⁵ FIAND, *Living the Vision*, p. 65. Also speaking about the futility of standardization of poverty, T. Radcliffe points out how hard it is to make an objective judgement as to whether or not a religious or a community is living a simple life and observing the vow of poverty, judging by the budget. He goes on to ask, how far, in this consumerist society, a superior can refuse someone permission to obtain the latest computer, the clothes they want, the holiday they dream without infringing on their human rights. See RADCLIFFE, "Brothers, the Eucharist," pp. 5-6.

personal maturity occur.⁷⁶

Even when almost all the possible rules have been drawn up, the general standard of living for most religious will always be higher than that of the very poor people. Religious will often eat well, be widely-travelled and be very well-educated. Even within the same institution, the practice of poverty will differ according to the region of operation.⁷⁷

Within the same community, it is not possible to have the same life-style. There will always be differences. Some will always be "more equal than others" due to several factors. Some apostolic ministries will necessitate the use of cars by some members, some will provide professional perks and fringe benefits. While some members come from rich families or have friends who provide them with lots of extras, by way of clothing, etc., others may not even have close relatives.⁷⁸

What, then, is a mature living of the vow of poverty? It is in the personal spiritual realm that personal maturity plays a central role in one's living out of the vow of poverty. All external behaviour is meant to be an expression of one's internalization of the vow and what it means for the individual. It is the "Why" one does what he or she does that is important.⁷⁹ The spiritual, Christian and moral aspects of one's personal maturity play an

⁷⁶ FIAND, *Living the Vision*, pp. 55 and 65. According to Fiand, in institutionalized religious life, the way to live out one's poverty was a given and one had no chance to decide in one's day to day life and that engendered a very damaging dependency. She goes on to ask "... if there is external compliance, what about the change of heart? She suggests that economic structures of institutions need to give way enough to the adequate economic independence that precedes any ability to share. No one can freely share when the sharing is dictated extraneously." See, *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67. One could also argue that the freedom was given when the vow was pronounced, but it is true that it does need day to day renewal. See also SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 178; GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, p. 166; MCALLISTER, *Living the Vows*, p. 93.

⁷⁷ SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, pp. 178 and 189. See also FIAND, *Living the Vision*, pp. 54-55; RADCLIFFE, "Brothers, the Eucharist," pp. 5-6.

⁷⁸ FIAND, *Living the Vision*, pp. 67-69.

⁷⁹ According to Ridick, it is possible to live poorly due to compliance, expecting some reward, or in fear of punishment or due to the need to identify with others living a similar lifestyle. See RIDICK, *Treasures*, p. 12. However, speaking about how poverty is an internal and personal issue, Fiand says: "Poverty is first and foremost something we are and are becoming. If ... the insight and subsequent experience of our own inner poverty has not graced us and called us forth, our words will

important part. A mature living of the vow involves poverty of spirit as a disposition of total emptiness before God, totally accepting God and depending on his providence without trying to control one's destiny. S. Schneiders describes it well when she says:

Poverty has the capacity of evoking pure religion. A religion like that of the anawin, the poor of Yahweh who learned to depend completely on God. They experienced God as he really is and accepted God on God's own terms. They were the poor, the empty, the lowly whom God alone could fill, exalt and satisfy. [Schneiders goes on to describe poverty as] ... the most basic conversion of all, the final and total acceptance of creaturehood in the face of God's creator - love, the reversal of original sin which is the desire to be our own God.⁸⁰

Poverty is something that one needs to feel attracted to and to embrace enthusiastically and feel the pinch of, in order to help someone in need in one's institute or in society. With a spirit of poverty, all one's activities acquire a new meaning.

The spirit of poverty does have some recognizable fruits. Simplicity of life is one of them. Moral maturity plays a part in the individual's continuous choice to avoid that which may become a spiritually crippling luxury. It involves putting up with some of the challenging restrictions and insecurities necessarily found in religious life. A kind of dispossession of one's life, time, one's status and power. It also means doing that cheerfully, guarding against boredom, apathy or cynicism.⁸¹ The spirit of poverty fosters good

be empty and our actions without energy. See FIAND, *Living the Vision*, p. 65. According to Örsy, poverty is an intangible gift: an attitude which grows out of a relationship between two persons who love each other. It is initiated by God through the gift of himself to us. See L. Örsy, "The Modern Problem," in *The Way Supplement*, 9 (1970), p. 11.

⁸⁰ SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 177. Also speaking about the spiritual basis of the vow of poverty, Radcliffe argues: "Rather than being a matter of quantifiable possessions, poverty is an invitation to reshape one's heart, to confront one's desires and needs with a new freedom. It is not so much the renunciation of desire as the discovery of one's deepest desires - God." See RADCLIFFE, "Brothers, the Eucharist," p. 7. According to Ridick, poverty is "an integration, a liberation and a revelation. It is a realization of the givenness of all things-that is, an acute awareness of all God has given us at our own core levels ... a way of giving our finiteness to the Giver of all good things so as to be completed and transformed in Him. [As a result of this freedom] ... some objects, some levels of our being, while remaining vital and necessary, decrease in importance: others become rich in meaning." See RIDICK, *Treasures*, p. 5.

⁸¹ For a fuller treatment of the practical challenges of the vow of poverty on the psycho-physical, psycho-social and spiritual-rational levels, see RIDICK, *Treasures*, pp. 16-20.

stewardship, proper use and maintenance of community property, like cars, buildings, etc.⁸² Conversely, in this area, there are also signs of non-internalization of the vow of poverty.⁸³

Another fruit of the spirit of poverty is a keen sense of gift in life which engenders a general respect of all creation including one's body. This involves making sure that one eats and sleeps well, that one engages in both adequate physical and spiritual exercises. It involves recreation and proper individual time-management. Personnel is the most important resource and prevention of illness is more economic than cure.⁸⁴

Another fruit of the vow of poverty is respect of community financial structures, putting in the time and effort to live communally from the financial point of view. It implies financial accountability, carrying out the necessary consultations and having the required signatures.⁸⁵

While real poverty of spirit enhances the contemplative vision of the material world as gift, at the same time it provides the necessary "distance and freedom to denounce the accumulation of God's gifts in the hands of a greedy minority."⁸⁶ Consequently, another of the fruits of poverty is hospitality and compassion, and it requires a certain amount of

⁸² SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 187.

⁸³ Ridick enumerates some of them: "jealously hoarding possessions; a harsh coldness when one asks for the car for apostolic reasons; too free a use and possession of a community car by one person; stinginess, keeping donations; a fanatic push to obtain the dress or book or crucifix or vacation that Sister or Brother or Father So-and-so has had; grumbling because of minor inconveniences." See RIDICK, *Treasures*, pp. 12-13 and 8-24. According to McAllister's observation, sometimes those whose work brings money into the community create some status for themselves as they demand special privileges due to their financial contributions. Some religious may, as a result, dread aging and retiring from their jobs since that will imply a demotion into the second class unproductive category of the community. With this comes a sense of rejection and unworthiness. See MCALLISTER, *Living the Vows*, p. 99.

⁸⁴ MCALLISTER, *Living the Vows*, pp. 99 and 103.

⁸⁵ SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 188.

⁸⁶ PIERCE, "Friendship and Celibacy," p. 181.

personal maturity to go out of oneself in altruistic service of others in need.⁸⁷

When religious have personally internalized their poverty, then their rules become, strictly speaking, collective vision statements. And each person can claim ownership of them and develop a personal obligation to abide by them.⁸⁸ On the societal level, certain issues need a collective voice, for example, denouncing unjust political and economic systems that create poverty. It implies being well-informed about local events and standing up in support of what seems right. It might also imply providing personnel and resources to work directly with the materially disadvantaged or supporting good causes with one's vote.⁸⁹ This is only possible if one has a certain amount of moral maturity.

2.4 - MATURITY AND THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE

As in the case of the other two vows, chastity and poverty, personal maturity is a necessary prerequisite for living out the vow of obedience in religious life. A prominent author on religious life, Ridick, has actually tried to illustrate this by drawing a parallel between certain human developmental stages and the corresponding quality of obedience at each stage.⁹⁰ Although things may not always be as simple and clear cut as suggested by

⁸⁷ Vanier supports this point when he says: "Some people don't manage to commit themselves to those in distress because they are too blinded by their own tears; they do not hear the cry of the poor because they are deafened by their own desires, their own projects. [He urges] Serving the poor by presence or by any other way leads to discovery of the sacrament of the poor and entry into the mystery of compassion." See VANIER, *Community and Growth*, pp. 33-34. For criteria for evaluating one's personal spirit of religious poverty. See RIDICK, *Treasures*, pp. 21-22.

⁸⁸ T. CLARKE, "Discerning the Ignatian Way in Poverty Today," in *The Way Supplement*, 19 (1973), p. 95.

⁸⁹ SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, pp. 183-184. Chittister raises this issue and enumerates quite a number of ministries religious can engage in in contemporary society. She also suggests a corresponding spirituality that goes with that kind of service. See CHITTISTER, *The Fire in These Ashes*, pp. 167-169. See also C. HARMER, *Religious Life*, pp. 100-107. Rolheiser outlines a similar spirituality with the following characteristics: 1) becoming mystics; 2) dreaming and living within community and 3) gathering ritually around the Word and the Eucharist. See ROLHEISER, "Religious Life," pp. 10-16.

⁹⁰ RIDICK, *Treasures*, pp. 116-126. Ridick clearly brings out this connection by comparing Loevinger's levels of ego development and the corresponding quality of obedience by a religious at

Ridick's comparisons, a closer analysis of the dynamics of religious obedience does confirm that personal maturity plays an important role.

While all Christians are called to whole-hearted obedience to God, it is only the context of religious life that differentiates religious obedience. It arises from one's belief that it is God who has called him or her into a particular institute. In this context, one also believes that the rule, the leaders, members and the mission of the institute become a vehicle of mediation of God's will for that individual. The main point, however, is that all obedience is directed towards God and that it is basically a matter of one's response to God's love and union with him.⁹¹ It is in the living out of this mediation that personal maturity is called for in all parties involved. Spiritual, moral and intellectual aspects of one's personal maturity feature high in the vow of obedience.

The issue of freedom of choice of the vow of obedience and the commitment involved has already been discussed under vocation to religious life in general. This section will focus on the skills needed for growth in obedience within the individual, in relationships among members and between the member and the authority figures.

that level of development. The religious at the *pre - social level* has not got much sense of self, regards other people as merely 'useful' and obeys because he or she cannot do without the other. Religious at the *impulsive level* obey because they would feel ashamed or guilty if they did not obey. They might also insist on getting what they want at all costs without any consideration of others. At the *self - protective level*, religious' obedience is erratic, vacillating between submissiveness and passive resistance and domination. Religious at the *conformist level* obey because of identification with authority which is believed to know more and better. They have no regard for means or consequences. Religious at the *conscientious level* of ego development act out of internalized values not just because the rule says so. Religious at the *autonomous - integrated level*, though aware of their limitations and failures, continue to strive towards greater union with Christ within the framework of others and the suggestions of superiors. See RIDICK, *Treasures*, pp. 120-122. Ridick has a similar parallel with L. Kohlberg's six levels of Moral development. See *ibid.*, pp. 123-126. For another similar parallel, see O'DOHERTY, *Vocation*, pp. 226-227 and 200-213.

⁹¹ For an elaborate treatment of the theology of mediation, see SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, pp. 143 - 167; GULA, *Reason Informed by Faith*, pp. 261-263; E. McDONOUGH, "Canonical Counsel: The Evangelical Counsel of Obedience: Key Current Legislation," in *RfR*, 57 (1998), p. 545. While both Schneiders and Gula strongly warn against the danger of idolizing mediation which can easily creep into this system, Chittister is quite suspicious of it as she recounts historical incidents in the Church when the system was apparently abused. See CHITTISTER, *The Fire in These Ashes*, pp. 125-128.

2.4.1 - The Need for Responsibility

Personal responsibility is one of the most important qualities of mature obedience. Members cannot totally abdicate responsibility to the superior for their decisions and behaviour, i.e., their spiritual growth. They need to be involved actively in discerning the will of God and as much as possible carry it out. Obedience is not supposed to create a power structure that kills initiative making one passive. Instead, it is supposed to channel and guide it.⁹² In fact one needs strength of will and determination to seek God's will and surrender to it all the time, in all situations of one's life, important and apparently insignificant ones. One needs to develop the habit of, in any event, "choosing the greater good, the deeper command".⁹³ This is only possible through a certain amount of renunciation and asceticism.

Another practice that facilitates responsible obedience is self-forgetful service, i.e., the willingness to generously serve the Church, the community or the brother or sister next to me without counting the cost. The cost might lie in serving someone who may not be as attractive and appealing as one would have preferred. It might mean receiving back unkind criticism instead of appreciation. According to Ridick, these small events prepare for major formal ones.⁹⁴

2.4.2 - Discernment

Responsible obedience entails a lot of discernment. According to R. Gula, discernment is "the quality of perception and the capacity to discriminate degrees of importance among various features before making a judgement. [It] ... involves keenness of perception, sensitivities, affectivities and capacities for empathy, subtlety, and

⁹² RIDICK, *Treasures*, p. 112. See also GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, p. 25; MCALLISTER, *Living the Vows*, p. 57; O'DOHERTY, *Vocation*, pp.177-180. Emphasising the importance of responsibility, Chittister states: "Obedience is not about childish dependence, however trusting; obedience is about life gone wild with the personal awareness of personal responsibility." See CHITTISTER, *The Fire in These Ashes*, p. 130.

⁹³ RIDICK, *Treasures*, p. 143.

⁹⁴ Ibid., *Treasures*, pp. 143-144.

imagination.”⁹⁵ Discernment, consequently, requires a high degree of intellectual and affective maturity as it involves a lot of objective reflection. As Ridick puts it, the task requires asking questions: 1) about ourselves; 2) about the object itself, i.e. the proposed course of action; 3) about consequences of the action; 4) about motives for the action and 5) about its consistency with Gospel values.⁹⁶

For the religious, in particular, growth in discernment implies constant clarification of Christ's values and one's own ideals. This can be done through regular deep, reflection on the latest theologically objective interpretations of the Gospels and trying to implement them in one's life. It means continuous clarification of the institute's ideals in the light of the Gospel values through reading of constitutions, discussions and letters of the major superior.⁹⁷

In order to discern, one needs to be able to listen objectively. Real listening involves the whole person. It is, in fact, a general attentiveness and readiness to respond to God's call for service wherever it may be needed. In the process of discernment in religious obedience, one listens to Scripture, the Word of God, to the Church which is the Body of Christ to the other person and to one's heart. Obedience is evident in a keen interest in the spiritual needs of the universal Church through awareness of current magisterial and local teachings. It also implies an openness to the Holy Spirit working in one's local environment, in the needs of people, the youth, the aged, the poor, etc. Discernment also calls for radical honesty in acknowledging and acting on what one hears.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ GULA, *Reason Informed by Faith*, p. 315.

⁹⁶ RIDICK, *Treasures*, p. 114. These questions very much tally with Gula's "Reality-revealing questions," which he argues are a mark of a mature conscience in any one using them to discern. See GULA, *Reason Informed by Faith*, pp. 147-150. On the same note, the three stages which O'Murchu says are needed for discernment, namely perceiving, distinguishing and choosing, do indeed call for considerable maturity. See O'MURCHU, *Religious Life*, p. 151.

⁹⁷ GULA, *Reason Informed by Faith*, pp. 144-145.

⁹⁸ RIDICK, *Treasures*, pp. 114 and 146-147. Speaking about obedience and listening, D. Asselin also states: "The fundamental attitude of the believer is of one who listens. It is to the Lord's utterances that he gives ear. In as many different ways and on as many varied levels as the listener can discern the word and the will of the Lord manifested to him, he must respond with all the Pauline

While the individual member can carry out all the above-mentioned suggestions for oneself, the real test of obedience comes in the crucible of one's relationship with authority figures. Mature religious, conscious of their vow of obedience, express a spontaneous and loving attitude toward people in positions of authority. They remember that holders of positions of authority are human and weak like everyone else. In fact, their weaknesses become more exposed by their responsibilities, and so are in greater need of one's support and sympathy. This attitude fosters genuine cooperation with them in discerning God's will and then leaving "to them in faith and trust the final presentation of what is seen to be the greatest good for fulfilling the plan of the Master in our lives."⁹⁹

Both the individual religious and the superior need to relate in a co-responsible manner. There are strong allegations by several authors that religious obedience tends, or formerly tended, to discourage growth in maturity.¹⁰⁰ The allegations seem to hold some truth, taking into consideration the models on which obedience seemed to have been based. According to O'Doherty, religious obedience was formerly modelled on either the family or the school or the army. The school model was misleading because students are to some extent not entitled to autonomous choices. The army model made obedience analogous to military discipline. The family model is the most misleading of all, because parents have the right to demand conforming behaviour from their children.¹⁰¹

'obedience of faith'." See ASSELIN, "Christian Maturity and Spiritual Discernment," in *RfR*, 27 (1968), p. 594. See also SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 166.

⁹⁹ RIDICK, *Treasures*, pp. 148-149.

¹⁰⁰ See O'DOHERTY, *Vocation*, pp. 173-174; GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, pp. 66-69; MCALLISTER, *Living the Vows*, pp. 54-56 and 80; SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 247; CHITTISTER, *The Fire in These Ashes*, pp. 126-128 etc. On the same issue, O'Doherty observes: "We [Religious] have a great deal of fear within us of the fully responsible adult, hence we tend to hold such a one back from the full level of maturity ... Religious are often regarded as immature whom the world must take care of and yet before entering, one could have been holding a responsible job ... But because they are religious, they are looked upon as 'poor innocent souls' incapable of running their own affairs." See O'DOHERTY, *Vocation*, p. 191.

¹⁰¹ O'DOHERTY, *Vocation*, pp. 182-183, and 204. Gleason suggests Yahweh's authority model which enhances personal freedom as symbolized by the Exodus from Egypt. See GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, p. 70.

There will always be some tension between meeting the needs of the individual, on the one hand, and those of authority on the other. Both are indispensable in religious life.¹⁰² Personal maturity is vital if both sides are to manage to maintain this delicate balance without letting it degenerate into individualism or authoritarianism. In order for them to do this, they need to share the same goal, which is the kingdom of God through a common commitment to their charism and the life of the group. This enables them to possess a similar perspective of life inspired by faith in Jesus. In other words, both are preoccupied with promoting the values of the kingdom of God. This very much depends on their level of spiritual maturity.¹⁰³

2.4.3 - Openness to Dialogue

True listening comes as a result of openness to dialogue, the characteristics of which also depend on personal maturity. Ridick gives the following four characteristics of dialogue:

1. clarity - through exercise of the higher faculties of the person;
2. affability - peaceful, patient, generous, not proud, or pungent, or offensive;
3. confidence - trust in the value of the word each speaks as well as the disposition of each party;
4. prudence - know the sensibilities of the other, keep in mind the moral and psychological dispositions of each, and present discussions in an opportune way.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Chittister confirms and challenges: "Authority is to be respected. Every institution needs guidance, needs order, needs leadership, needs a model, needs a unifying center that raises issues and honors questions. What no one needs, what no one can afford, is to annul the adult obligations of the human soul in the interests of the organization. Prostitution of the mind is not a Christian virtue." See CHITTISTER, *The Fire in These Ashes*, p. 131.

¹⁰³ RIDICK, *Treasures*, p. 113. According to Chittister, "Obedience requires both the leaders and the members of the congregation to choose, not for order, not for independence, not for control, but for whatever best advances the achievement of the gospel in this world, in every situation, at every time." See CHITTISTER, *The Fire in These Ashes*, p. 131. O'Doherty pin-points some specific authority problems like confusing authority with power, with status, with law or with a system. He also suggests hints on safeguarding against such tendencies. See O'DOHERTY, *Vocation*, pp. 235-240.

¹⁰⁴ RIDICK, *Treasures*, p. 115. Gula also speaks about the role of prudence in listening and says: "Prudence listens to experience, one's own and others, it seeks counsel, it looks into the future to anticipate difficulties and to size up consequences." See GULA, *Reason Informed by Faith*, p. 316.

Mature dialogue pre-supposes a willingness to forget oneself and to be there for the other person. It means putting aside one's own cares, prejudices and desires in order to give full attention to the other person. It is an effort to see things through the eyes of other persons without judging them. This requires quite some self-discipline.¹⁰⁵ The quality of dialogue between the religious member and the authority figure will very much depend on how much they value and respect each other. This is only possible if each is aware of one's basic poverty and the belief in the possibility of being enriched by the other's contribution. They may think differently, but both will respect each other. This arises from the confidence and trust of the working of the Holy Spirit in each person.¹⁰⁶

This valuing of each other in dialogue engenders acknowledgement of complementarity and promotes cooperation and the search for the common good which could be that of the community or the institute or the Church at large. It promotes a sense of communion. It is in this spirit that the religious member will allow the superior the final word in the dialogue. One accepts it in faith, hope and love, for "the Church is not based on trust of human ingenuity, but on the action of God breaking into history to save us ... a contentment with the rhythm in which God continues to bring out the truth."¹⁰⁷ This may even imply suffering which is inevitable as the mystery of the cross and the resurrection are strangely part and parcel of Christian obedience.

Personal maturity is also very necessary in recognising and allowing law to play its

¹⁰⁵ W. BARRY and W. CONNOLLY, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, San Francisco, Harper Collins Publishers, 1982, p. 127. Although these two authors are referring to listening in the context of spiritual direction, it equally applies here.

¹⁰⁶ GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, pp. 60-61. See also RIDICK, *Treasures*, pp. 115-116. Elsewhere, Ridick elaborates on objective listening and says: "That means holding off comparisons with self or making immediate, hasty interpretations after each sentence, one phrase, or one meeting ... We must always have an attitude of humble awe as we listen to the other- awe at the mysterious and incomprehensible workings of Providence in each movement within the person. Thus, listening in itself becomes an 'obedience' - a focusing on His Workings and desires and requests in the here and now - a finding God in all things, in all persons." See *ibid.*, p. 146. See also M. SVOBODA, "Talents for Living in Community," in *RJR*, 52 (1993), p. 132.

¹⁰⁷ GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, p. 60. Ridick attributes this Christian stance to the "internalization of Gospel values." See RIDICK, *Treasures*, p. 117.

proper role in religious life. While law is needed for smooth functioning in any organisation, it need not be made an end in itself. The law is there to protect values which, when they are clear, make the acceptance and abiding by the laws easier.¹⁰⁸ When there is over-emphasis on law in the area of obedience, legalism occurs. This is when either laws, customs or practices are purely and simply equated with God's will for the person and obedience is then described as 'blind'. One simply does what the law says without taking into consideration the spirit or the value behind it. S. Schneiders clearly describes the implications:

Obedience then ceases to be the constant actualizing of the love in one's judgements and choices and becomes a more or less willing, but lifeless conformity to law, which is indeed without tension or ambiguity but is also stripped of originality and creativity. The individual personal authority, that is her or his experience of being the author of her or his own decisions which flow from an inner source of union with God, is alienated and comes to be located in persons and laws with whom the person has only an extrinsic relationship.¹⁰⁹

There are many signs of immature obedience which one could watch out for and try to avoid. Excessive hyperactivity and talking which leaves not much room for listening to God can be a sign of weakness in obedience. Then there is compliance, dependency and non-internalized identification which could be a result of mistrust of oneself and others, out of fear of humiliation at the exposure of some weakness or failure. This leads to loss of the necessary freedom required for mature obedience.

Another danger sign is domination which can take the form of being too critical of authority and other members or insisting on conformity with no regard for individual talents. Conformity can be achieved by coercion, "crudely by physical threats or subtly by psychological pressure, manipulation or moral constraint."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ For a very comprehensive analysis of the relationship between values and law, see L. ÖRSY, *Theology and Canon Law: New Horizons for Legislation and Interpretation*, Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1992, pp. 89-101. On p. 100 of the same text, Örsy also makes reference to how mature people handle law in a responsible manner. Speaking of mature handling of law, Schneiders argues, "Law would not be asked to play the role of the ideal which belongs properly to the Gospel, but to function as protector of rights, reminder of responsibilities and minimum standard of community identity." See SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁹ SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 146. See also O'DOHERTY, *Vocation*, pp. 232-235.

¹¹⁰ RIDICK, *Treasures*, p. 133. According to O'Doherty, examples of physical constraint are locking of doors and telephones not to keep out burglars, but to bring about orderly behaviour. There

Dishonesty in dialogue in an attempt to mislead or trap the other person is also a bad sign. Some religious, for the sake of peace or for fear of making mistakes, become what Ridick calls 'nesters' in religious life. This is "a stage of regulated mediocrity, avoiding excitement searching for a smooth comfortable bureaucratic existence."¹¹¹

Another quite disturbing sign of immaturity in religious obedience is individualism which can manifest itself in many ways. Basically, it is a rebellious self-centeredness leading into rationalization of a lot of questionable attitudes and behaviour. This can take the form of self-righteousness, which is a legalistic attitude towards obedience. It is a false idea that one is better than another because of one's style of life, one's attire, one's praying habits or physical presence at certain functions. There is also the danger of nurturing indifferent and bitter hard-heartedness under the guise of obedience.¹¹²

Sometimes self-righteousness takes the form of narcissism, which is a falling in love with one's own plans or visions or ideas or one's body. As a member, one tends to show off one's merits and achievements in order to continue to get permission to carry out one's plans. Sometimes there is downright denial of the commitment taken in religious life through denial of the ends of the institute. These include the spiritual and ministerial goals of the institute as well as the means by which they are to be obtained. If a member pursued her own ends by her own means, this would be a distortion of the spirit of obedience. Sometimes this pride comes out in denial of the reasons for the existence of law.¹¹³

This is closely connected with rationalization, an attempt to explain away certain behaviours using exteriorly acceptable reasons as a cover-up for the real, underlying, not so

can also be moral constraint when someone is made to feel guilty about trifles. See O'DOHERTY, *Vocation*, pp. 175-176. Gleason also has a lot to say about some subtle methods of coercion that may have been used in the past to enforce conformity. See, GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, pp. 66-67. See also MCALLISTER, *Living the Vows*, p. 55. O'Doherty regards conforming behaviour as a process in the learning of obedience, but argues that if it goes no further than that, then there is no virtue because there is no choice. See O'DOHERTY, *Vocation*, pp. 174-175.

¹¹¹ RIDICK, *Treasures*, p. 133.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137.

acceptable reasons. One may do something that is obviously unjust or extravagant and hide behind the fact that she or he had permission from the superior. In some cases, one can actually disobey and rationalize it by blaming it on the harshness or the absurdity of the authority's command.¹¹⁴

Even jealousy can be a result of immature obedience. Jealousy arises out of a certain feeling of inadequacy and dissatisfaction with oneself which leads to comparing oneself with others. This robs one of the freedom and joy of the children of God and fills one with bitterness leading one to regard obedience as a burden to be borne and endured. Ridick gives a fuller explanation:

If we are not intimately secure in Jesus' daily personal love and presence and support, obedience becomes a response to structure, to rule, to obligation, to duty, rather than to a PERSON whom we love. If we have truly fallen in love with Jesus, and He is our all, and we are convinced of His burning love for us personally, what more do we need? Why must we make others the footstool of our insecurity and inferiority within.¹¹⁵

A mature way of living religious life is inevitably connected to the general spirituality on which it is founded. It is helpful to end this section by examining O'Murchu's vision of a mature development of the spirituality of the evangelical vows. He shows how they can be lived in a violent or ambivalent or nonviolent (spiritually mature) way.¹¹⁶

2.5 - MATURITY AND COMMON LIFE

Religious life is a lifestyle with several aspects, of which common life is one. Most of what will be discussed in this section will be closely linked to what has already been mentioned in examining commitment and the vows. Without unnecessary repetition, this

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.139. McAllister provides various practical examples of individualism and attributes them to social immaturity. See MCALLISTER, *Living the Vows*, pp. 59-66; Ibid., *Conflict in Community*, Collegeville, MN, St. John University Press, 1969, p. 85. See also B. COLE, "Consecrated Obedience and Spirituality," in *Angelicum*, 73 (1996), pp. 576-577.

¹¹⁵ RIDICK, *Treasures*, pp. 140-141. Compare this with the older brother's attitude in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:25-30).

¹¹⁶ D. O' MURCHU, *Poverty, Celibacy and Obedience: A Radical Option for Life*, New York, Crossroad, 1999, p. 104. For O'Murchu's diagram contrasting violent, ambivalent and non-violent behaviour with regards to vowed life, see appendix I.

section will define religious community in such a way as to show how it necessarily needs to be made up of mature people. Some of the dynamics that keep a religious community alive and healthy will also be discussed. The acquisition, exercise and development of such skills also evidently requires personal maturity.

2.5.1 - The Nature of the Religious Common Life

The religious community both on the institute and local levels is a faith community. It is a convocation, a togetherness of different people who have given an affirmative response to their personal vocation. In H. Nouwen's words, "Community life is not a creation of human will, but an obedient response to the reality of our being united ... community is a being 'held together'."¹¹⁷ The religious community is also intentional¹¹⁸ in that it is made up of volunteer adults who freely choose this life because they all seriously aim at the same good. Members commit themselves to do each their part and trust that others will also do theirs.

While the religious community is spiritually based, it is not a given; it does not just exist and function like magic; it takes a lot of affective, psychosexual, intellectual, social, Christian, in short, personal maturity for a community to function smoothly and yield desirable fruit.¹¹⁹ Religious community life is not just being physically together; it has to do

¹¹⁷ H. NOUWEN, "Solitude and Community," in *Worship*, 52 (1978), p. 18. Several other authors also speak about this spiritual basis of religious community life. See J. FUTRELL, *The Spirituality of Authority*, Ottawa, Canadian Religious Conference, 1985, pp. 11-12; WOLFF-SALIN, *The Shadow Side of Community*, pp. 24 and 106; D. BONHÖFFER, *Life Together*, trans. by J.W. DOBERSTEIN, New York, Harper and Row, 1954, pp. 17-39; SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 264; VANIER, *Community and Growth*, chapter two.

¹¹⁸ For a comprehensive description of such a community, with its strengths and weaknesses from a sociological point of view and in relation to religious life, see P. WITTBERG, *Creating a Future for Religious Life: A Sociological Perspective*, New York, Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1991, especially chapter two.

¹¹⁹ According to McAllister, "before a religious settles in her mind what it means theoretically to be a sister, what it means theoretically to be a member in her community, she needs to ask herself what it means to be a person, a human being and an individual." See MCALLISTER, *Conflict in Community*, p. 33.

with relationships, loving and life-giving relationships which involve growth both for the individual and for the community.¹²⁰ R. Pannikar prefers to see a community as more of an organism rather than an organization. He clearly distinguishes them thus:

The organization runs when there is money; the organism runs where there is life ... The organism needs a soul, health ... is more than the sum of its components and no component can be replaced by an exact duplicate, because each is unique. If at all, the organism has to regenerate itself from within when it has been wounded. An organism dies when the soul departs, when the heart ceases to beat or the brain to vibrate [...]¹²¹

The religious community relationship also differs from that of other organizations because it is based on the conviction that the other person(s) with whom one lives and the individual have something of the divine in them which makes community sacred, holy ground, and a place of revelation. It is therefore important that members be constantly aware of their goals and expectations, both of each other and of the community as a whole.¹²²

There is evolution in one's growth in community, which occurs with time and effort. Initially one generally has an idealized sense of community when everything and everybody seems perfect. This does not last for very long because within a short time of living together closely there follows a period of disillusionment and let-down. J. Vanier attributes this feeling partly to tiredness, a sense of loneliness or homesickness or some set-back or misunderstanding with authority. Anyway, at this stage one begins to see a lot of faults in other community members. This ushers in the period of realism not only about others but also about oneself.¹²³

¹²⁰ WOLFF-SALIN, *The Shadow Side of Community*, pp. 120, 126 & 180. See also GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, p. 143; SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 257; Speaking about the need for intimacy in community, Radcliffe has this to say: "Our communities should not be places where we merely survive, but places where we find food for the journey ... the bread of life and the water of heaven. See T. RADCLIFFE, "The Apostolic Life," in *Religious Life Review*, 37 (1998), p. 139.

¹²¹ R. PANIKKAR, *Blessed Simplicity: The Monk as Universal Archetype*, New York, Seabury, 1982, pp. 19-20. See also WOLFF-SALIN, *The Shadow Side of Community*, p. 117.

¹²² VANIER, *Community and Growth*, p. 4.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 28. Fiand also gives three evolutionary stages in the process of community growth. They are: 1) disposition, 2) interaction and 3) deepened disposition. For an elaborate description of these stages, see FIAND, *Living the Vision*, pp. 73-106.

Living in community also reveals one's own limitations and egoisms in a very real way and, as Vanier puts it:

We discover our poverty and our weaknesses, our inability to get on with people, our mental and emotional blocks, our affective and sexual disturbances, our seemingly insatiable desires, our frustrations and jealousies, our hatred and our wish to destroy.¹²⁴

It requires personal maturity to handle such a situation in a liberating manner, i.e., accepting it for what it is and working on it. A number of attitudes and skills are required for this.

2.5.1.1 - Self-knowledge, Loving and Accepting Oneself

Interaction with other people provides a good opportunity for self knowledge, especially if one takes time to reflect on it. It has to be an objective, open-minded reflection during which one examines one's reactions and one's feelings, both positive and negative in order to really learn about oneself. Examination of conscience and journalling will eventually reveal one's habits. Paying attention to other people's compliments and criticisms, especially from caring people, and evaluating them also enlightens one about oneself. Wide reading about other people's behaviour in different situations also helps. God helps those who sincerely ask for the gift of self-knowledge and make an effort on their part.

According to Gleason, "by virtue of original sin, we all carry within ourselves a kind of hatred for ourselves ... strange as that may seem. We have to learn to show a kind of benevolence towards ourselves before we can show it towards others."¹²⁵ One's level of affective maturity, i.e., the effect of love one has experienced in one's life and one's Christian maturity, that conviction that one is loved by God unconditionally, will assist one to love and accept oneself.¹²⁶ A clear sense of one's identity, re-enforced by solitude, already

¹²⁴ VANIER, *Community and Growth*, p. 1. Wolff-Salin refers to these weaknesses as one's shadow. See WOLFF-SALIN, *The Shadow Side of Community*, p. 94.

¹²⁵ GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, p. 102. According to Iragui, lack of sufficient self-love leads to selfishness characterised by the childish tendency to dominate, possess and use people for one's ends. See Iragui, *Maturity in Religious Life*, Alwaye, Kerala, India, Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy, 1976, p. 43.

¹²⁶ According to Svoboda, when one holds such a belief, "one has a sense of one's own worth and loveliness with no need to prove their worth through tactics like arguing, overwork, unhealthy

spoken about, also provides the individual with the necessary confidence to face the not so attractive part of oneself. It helps one to accept oneself with no need to pretend or to wear a mask or to feel unnecessary guilt regarding one's weaknesses ¹²⁷

Self-knowledge helps one to handle what Vanier calls "sympathies" and "antipathies". "Sympathies" are the people one easily gets along with, those with whom one resonates, with whom one jokes and shares ideas. Self-knowledge and integrity will not let such friendships stifle one's growth or degenerate into emotional dependency. Similarly, there also are those whom one finds threatening, the "antipathies" those to whom one reacts with either aggression or servile regression. They bring out one's envy and jealousy because they are everything one would want to be but is not. "Their radiance and their intelligence underline our poverty."¹²⁸ Psychologically, these are one's enemies.

There is some truth in the theory of projection by which one tends to see in another what one is experiencing inside oneself. According to Fiand, "A person's hatred is always concentrated on the thing that makes him/her conscious of his/her bad qualities ... Our capacity to perceive both vice and virtue in another is directly proportional to our own propensity in their regard."¹²⁹ The healthiest way to deal with one's shadow is to befriend it, to face those hidden and feared dimensions of one's personality, embrace them and use them towards maturation. The same would apply to dealing with any other feelings like anger. It needs to be acknowledged, expressed and released on its proper object in a healthy

competitiveness and the excessive need for control. A belief in our lovableness puts one at ease with others and facilitates getting along with them." She encourages relationships with family members, friends and above all with God to enhance this sense of lovableness. See SVOBODA, "Talents for Living in Community," pp. 136-137.

¹²⁷ WOLFF-SALIN, *The Shadow Side of Community*, p. 129. Stressing the need to accept oneself, Svoboda reassures: "God has no need for clones, not even clones of his greatest saints. Rather God 'needs' originals, one-of-kind-ers-in short, you and me." See SVOBODA, "Talents for Living in Community," p. 135.

¹²⁸ VANIER, *Community and Growth*, p. 8

¹²⁹ FIAND, *Living the Vision*, p. 93.

way.¹³⁰

Other attitudes that assist the individual to know, love and accept oneself are simplicity, the ability to derive pleasure from the simple things of life through one's senses, humility and honesty. A sense of humour also widens one's perspective of life and helps to bring out the comic aspect.¹³¹ As can be recalled from G. Allport, a sense of humour is a mark of maturity.¹³²

2.5.1.2 - Community Intimacy

The choice of religious community life entails loving the other members and allowing oneself to be loved by them, and that is intimacy.¹³³ The dynamics of it, however, are not easy and require a high degree of personal maturity. Since loving is far from being a reflex action, it takes a lot of strong will and motivation to exercise it. As Vanier puts it: "To love we must die continually to our own ideas, our own susceptibilities and our own comfort ... The roots of egoism are deep in our unconscious: our first reactions of self-defence, aggression and search for personal gratification grow from them."¹³⁴

2.5.1.3 - Called Together Just as We Are

A prerequisite for intimacy is the conviction that the members in one's community are

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 92-94. See also WOLFF-SALIN, *The Shadow Side of Community*, pp. 37-38. MCALLISTER, *Conflict in Community*, pp. 81-82 & 87.

¹³¹ SVOBODA, "Talents for Living in Community," pp. 134 and 138. See also MCALLISTER, *Conflict in Community*, p. 88.

¹³² G.W. ALLPORT, *Pattern and Growth in Personality*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961, pp. 289-290.

¹³³ MCALLISTER, *Living the Vows*, p. 39.

¹³⁴ VANIER, *Growth in Community*, p. 7 and pp. 5-6. See also id., *From Brokenness to Community*, New York, Paulist Press, 1992, pp. 40 and 42. FIAND, *Living the Vision*, pp. 89-90; WOLFF-SALIN, *The Shadow Side of Community*, pp. 35-38. M. Wolff-Salin goes on to advise: "If one chooses to live in community, it is important to be willing to pay the price of the reverence and 'unselving' that results when the choice is really lived." See *ibid.*, p. 118.

not there by mistake but have been called to be there by God. This conviction leads one to accepting and loving all members as they are. It leads one to seek to bloom where one is planted by being close to those one has been given in community on this day. This by no means implies being attracted to all of them equally, but it still demands loving them.¹³⁵

2.5.2 - The Dynamics of Community Intimacy

McAllister's definition of intimacy as respecting the "porcupine index" or the "emotional quotient," i.e., the degree of closeness to another that brings maximum warmth and minimum irritation comes handy in discussing community life.¹³⁶ It is personal maturity that will enable members to maintain this delicate balance between too much and too little love. Many authors on community life emphasise the need for this balance.¹³⁷

2.5.2.1 - Transparency

Intimacy in community implies a willingness to share oneself as much as possible. This means making oneself vulnerable by being just oneself, transparent, without any protective

¹³⁵ VANIER, *Community and Growth*, p. 17. See also id., *From Brokenness to Community*, p. 38; FIAND, *Living the Vision*, p. 95. I find the practice of having a member apply and visit a local community for an interview before it collectively decides whether or not to accept the member as contrary to the love and acceptance referred to here. See MCALLISTER, *Living the Vows*, p. 32; E. McDONOUGH, "Canonical Counsel: Common Life and Houses," in *RfR*, 52 (1993), p. 467. Speaking about acceptance of members as they are, Radcliffe has this to say: "Religious communities are like ecological systems designed to sustain strange forms of life. A rare frog will need its own ecosystem if it is to flourish and make its hazardous way from spawn to tadpole to frog." See RADCLIFFE, *The Apostolic Life*, p. 139.

¹³⁶ MCALLISTER, *Living the Vows*, p. 9. See also H. NOUWEN, *Lifesigns*, Garden City, NY, Image Books, 1986, p. 36.

¹³⁷ VANIER, *Community and Growth*, pp. 24-25. See also id., *From Brokenness to Community*, pp. 47-48; BONHOFFER, *Living Together*, p. 77; MCALLISTER, *Conflict in Community*, pp. 38-39; WOLFF-SALIN, *The Shadow Side of Community*, p. 114; O'CONNOR, *Witness and Service*, p. 65; NOUWEN, "Solitude and Community," p. 19; ASSELIN, "Christian Maturity," p. 590. For issues that require balance in community, see SVOBODA, "Community Living," pp. 429-434.

armour. It means letting others reach me.¹³⁸ This intimacy means sharing one's very life in its several aspects. This also means making an effort to know one another and the discovery is not always pleasant. Human beings are always a mixture of positive qualities and failings, light and darkness, love and hate, altruism and some selfishness. This requires acknowledgement and affirmation of the good as well as patience with the not so good.

2.5.2.2 - Challenge and Confrontation

In spite of all the trust that members may have, tension, conflict and hurt is inevitable in community. Causes for this are innumerable. Some people may be too set in their opinions, others may have values different from those of the others. A community may be evolving new gifts and realities and, for some, this might be happening too quickly while for others it may be too slow. In some cases tension might arise from failing to accept a superior as human. It could be any of the shadows mentioned before or the anguish at the discovery of one's deep wound.¹³⁹ Handling tension is part of intimacy and requires both personal and community maturity. Radical honesty is required to acknowledge the existence of the problem; otherwise there is the tendency for scape-goating. A time of tension is a time for deep reflection, listening intently and prayerfully, and being honest about one's feelings.¹⁴⁰ Sometimes individual members experience a dark night of despair, when everything seems absurd and meaningless. Community members can support them by making themselves available to listen to them. It is part of community intimacy to respect the struggle of the

¹³⁸ VANIER, *Community and Growth*, pp. 18-19. While McAllister is skeptical about the viability of intimacy in religious communities, (see MCALLISTER, *Living the Vows*, pp. 323-328), Wolff-Salin strongly believes in intimacy as indispensable for community growth. She seems correct when she argues, "If there is no sharing and no honesty at all, surely the togetherness is more a travesty than anything else-or an honest bed-and-breakfast situation." See WOLFF-SALIN, *The Shadow Side of Community*, p. 124.

¹³⁹ VANIER, *Community and Growth*, p. 63. See also id., *From Brokenness to Community*, pp. 30-32.

¹⁴⁰ WOLFF-SALIN, *The Shadow Side of Community*, p. 44. See also VANIER, *Community and Growth*, pp. 63-65. Sometimes a community might need outside help, from someone who knows and loves the community and is objective enough to ask the right kind of questions about their vision etc.

member and genuinely share their faith and doubts, praying with and for them.¹⁴¹

Depending on what the problem is, there might be need for challenging and confrontation in order to clarify misunderstandings and assist in making new decisions and choices.¹⁴² Challenging is important for growth and for helping to release tension which might otherwise keep festering underneath until it bursts. The effects of confrontation and challenge will, however, depend on how it is carried out. Challenging is only helpful when it is preceded by love, experienced and not just pronounced love. D. Augsburger summarizes this loving-confrontation as saying: "I love you. If I love you I must tell you the truth. I want your love. I want your truth. Love me enough to tell me the truth."¹⁴³

According to Fiand, "Only intimacy allows for intimacy."¹⁴⁴ A community lacking in intimacy may settle for artificial intimacy which is a product of fear. Nouwen describes his experience with people he feared in these words:

I talk too long with them, laugh too loudly at their jokes, or agree too soon with their opinions. Whether I create too much distance or too much closeness, I always sense a lack of inner freedom and a resentment toward the power they have over me.¹⁴⁵

Consequently, a community in which genuine intimacy is practised will be characterized by admission of mistakes and forgiveness. Knowing how weak each one is, members become

¹⁴¹ RADCLIFFE, "The Apostolic Life," p. 145.

¹⁴² Examples of occasions that might need challenging are when a member is slowly drifting away from community due to some crisis, or when someone is getting locked up in a destructive relationship incompatible with one's commitment, or when someone is suffering from some form of addiction, etc. See respectively, FIAND, *Living the Vision*, pp. 98-99; LEVO, "Mid-life Infatuations," pp. 17-18; WOLFF-SALIN, *The Shadow Side of Community*, p. 108, W. KRAFT, "A Story of Addiction and Co-Addiction," in *RfR*, 52 (1993), p. 457, and A. KRUPSKI, "Addiction Affects Community," in *Human Development*, 6, no. 3 (1985), p. 17.

¹⁴³ See D. AUGSBURGER, *Caring Enough to Confront: How to Understand and Express your Deepest Feelings toward Others*, Scottdale, PA, Herald Press, 1981, p. 8.

¹⁴⁴ FIAND, *Living the Vision*, pp. 97-98. On the dynamics of effective challenge, W. Beaudin states: "Effective challenge and confrontation is clear, direct and calm. It is not a matter of winning an argument or scoring a victory ... The person making a point must approach the other person with gentleness and charity." See W. BEAUDIN, "Maturing Towards Wholeness," in *Human Development*, 13, no. 1 (1992), p. 45.

¹⁴⁵ NOUWEN, *Lifesigns*, p. 31.

more compassionate.¹⁴⁶

2.5.2.3 - Respect of the Individual's Space

The other side of the balancing scale of intimacy is made up of what Vanier calls "the secret of the individual." The community, as a structure, should never take precedence over the needs of the individual. Too much bonding can stifle instead of fostering growth.¹⁴⁷ One of the important needs for the individual is space, silence and privacy for growth in solitude, which has already been defined. While there is danger in escaping from community in the name of solitude, there is equal danger in hyperactivity, attending endless meetings and broadcasting one's emotions indiscretely in the name of dialogue and sharing.¹⁴⁸

Many authors on religious life agree on the complementarity of fellowship and solitude. Solitude leads to a new intimacy with each other and makes one see clearly the common goal and task because, in solitude, one discovers who one really is and that is important for community intimacy. According to Nouwen, "Solitude enables the community to breathe in as well as to breathe out and gives it a healthy rhythm."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ According to Vanier, "[Forgiveness] will take a thousand purifications and pardons, daily efforts and above all a gift of the Holy Spirit which renews us from within." See VANIER, *Community and Growth*, pp. 11-12. Vanier also describes reconciliation in community as discovering that "I too am in part the cause of your being a nuisance, because I have dominated you, hurt you, brought fear up in you or because I haven't listened to you, or was not open to you." See VANIER *From Brokenness to Community*, p. 39. See also FIAND, *Living the Vision*, p. 87.

¹⁴⁷ VANIER, *Community and Growth*, pp. 24 and 40. See also id., *From Brokenness to Community*, pp. 47-48.

¹⁴⁸ VANIER, *Community and Growth*, p. 121. See also WOLFF-SALIN, *The Shadow Side of Community*, pp. 126-127; GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, p. 124. According to Rossetti, "To keep such thing (deepest intimacies of love or of faith) private except from the most intimate of soul friends or from one's spiritual director, is a normal and healthy action ... a sign of true intimacy." See ROSSETTI, "The Celibacy Experience," p. 668.

¹⁴⁹ NOUWEN, "Solitude and Community," p. 23. Nouwen's whole article is an in-depth treatment of the necessary dialectics between community and solitude. According to Bonhöffer, "Only in fellowship do we learn to be rightly alone and only in aloneness do we learn to live rightly in the fellowship ... One who wants fellowship without solitude plunges into the void of words and feelings, and one who seeks solitude without fellowship perishes in the abyss of vanity, self-infatuation and despair ..." See BONHÖFFER, *Life Together*, pp. 77-78. See also RADCLIFFE, "Apostolic Life," p. 141;

Other needs that an individual should be allowed to enjoy in community are leisure and friendships with other members or outsiders. One also needs the chance to exploit one's talents and pursue healthy ambitions. There is need for recognition of an individual's achievements, as they are important in meeting the individual's urge for generativity and can be a source of enrichment for the whole community.¹⁵⁰

How does one recognise a community of mature religious who adequately satisfy each others' needs for intimacy? It is known for its joy and simplicity of relationships among members which spills over in its manner of welcoming visitors, especially the unexpected. Older and weaker members are treated with love and respect and not rejected in the name of efficiency. There is a sense of communion expressed in community rituals. There is constant fervour and fidelity to its own goals, its presence to God and to the poor.¹⁵¹

2.6 - MATURITY AND PRAYER

Just as no definition of God can fully capture or encompass the mystery of God, no one definition can adequately describe prayer. Vanier's observation on this is very true. "Prayer

VANIER, *Community and Growth*, p. 77.

¹⁵⁰ MCALLISTER, *Conflict in Community*, pp. 37-39 and 106-109. See also SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, pp. 260-265. Schneiders, however, cautions that it needs maturity to be able to channel one's instinctive urge for generativity without making it a tyrannical compulsion that inhibits growth both in the individual religious and in those served. See *ibid.*, pp. 260-261. Rolheiser also discusses some dynamics of community intimacy. See ROLHEISER, "Religious Life in America," p. 13.

¹⁵¹ VANIER, *Community and Growth*, pp. 82-83. See also WOLFF-SALIN, *The Shadow Side of Community*, p. 168. According to Wolff-Salin, ritual plays an important part in evoking the Deep Self of a group. She states: "In ritual, we become familiar with the power-from-within, learn to recognize its feel, learn how to call it up and let it go. Ritual in any culture gives the community a soul of its own, a heart, a centre for the people." See the same text, p. 169. Rolheiser also has this to say about the role of ritual in community especially around the Word and the Eucharist: "... ritual brings something that other community gatherings do not, namely transformative power beyond what can be understood and explained through the physical, psychological and social dynamics that are present ... Ritual works in the way a kiss, the most primal of all rituals works. Kisses do things that words do not and there is no metaphysics that need to be written about them ... There is a power in [the kiss] that is precisely beyond the rational ... Rituals can help bring about group unity, healing and other kinds of transformation, for which we cannot lay out a strict phenomenology." See ROLHEISER "Religious Life in America," p. 14.

is like a secret garden made up of silence and rest and inwardness. But there are a thousand and one doors into this garden and we all have to find our own.”¹⁵² Nevertheless, this section of the chapter will try and describe some aspects of prayer, some of the methods used, some hindrances to prayer and the effects or fruits of prayer. Such a description will also prove how personal maturity is inevitably necessary for prayer.

2.6.1 - Prayer as a Relationship with God

Inasmuch as everything that exists on earth is God’s creation, it is in some relationship with God whether or not it is aware of it. But, in the case of the human person, unawareness of this fact may lead to some unexplained loneliness, restlessness and yearning similar to that referred to by St. Augustine when he said that our souls are restless until they rest in God.¹⁵³ When one becomes aware of this and accepts it as true, one is said to possess the gift of faith and enters into a conscious relationship with this God. The quality, expression and degree of this relationship, like any relationship with another human being, depends on one’s personal maturity.

Prayer is characterised by a desire to know God more and more as he reveals himself and as one makes oneself more and more available. The Catholic Catechism defines it as: “ ...

¹⁵² VANIER, *Community and Growth*, p. 119. R. Rolheiser refers to prayer as “‘Elijah’s jug’ ... the sustenance religious need on the long road towards the divine mountain, to move beyond the fatigue, loneliness, laziness, bitterness and bad habits so as to become gracious, happy, self-sacrificing, generative adult religious.” See ROLHEISER, “Religious Life in America,” pp. 10-11.

¹⁵³ W. BARRY, W. CONNOLLY, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, San Francisco, Harper Collins Publishers, 1982, p. 31. In his other book, W. Barry reiterates this point and says: “Unawareness of the God who is so intimately in relationship with us may show itself in occasional anxiety, about the meaning of life, or in a frantic search for answers to life’s mystery, or in overwork or over-indulgence of some kind. Knowing who we are - in our depths - is salutary and freeing even if a bit daunting.” See W. BARRY, *God and You: Prayer as a Personal Relationship*, New York / Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1987, p. 14. On the same note, Keeny describes awareness and response to God as “... a matter of yielding to our own deepest desire, for we are created with the inescapable inner yearning to love and enjoy God forever.” See KEENY, “Unceasing Prayer: Romancing the Divine,” in *RfR*, 57 (1998), p. 528. See also J. MERKLE, *A Different Touch: A Study of the Vows in Religious Life*, Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 1998, p. 163.

the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God."¹⁵⁴ It is an experiential personal encounter with God which becomes some form of communion between him and the human person. Most definitions of prayer bring out the intimacy of this relationship. J. Keeny has actually described prayer as "romancing the divine" which, although it can refer to all other people's relationships with God, is much more appropriate for the celibate religious.¹⁵⁵ Romancing the divine is having God as a lover and soul-mate. How does one get to know more about God so as to make him a soul-mate?

2.6.1.1- Contemplative Prayer

While one can learn about God from what other people say or write about him, there is no better way than a one to one personal encounter. One does this by spending quality time with God, i.e., wanting God to be present. This time can be long, or as short as turning one's mind and heart to God.¹⁵⁶

Just as one can learn about an artist from his or her art, one can learn about God from his creation. Life itself speaks of and communicates God to humanity, the mystery of love and friendship, the grandeur of sunrise and sunset, the uncontrollable forces of nature evident in tornados, hurricanes and floods. This continuous recognition and response to God is called contemplative prayer. In order for one to meet God in this way, one needs to slow

¹⁵⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1992. English translation published in Ottawa, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Publications Service, 1994, p. 519.

¹⁵⁵ KEENY, "Unceasing Prayer," pp. 522-528. Vanier also describes prayer as "... a meeting which nourishes our hearts ... this kiss of God by which we know we are loved and forgiven." See VANIER, *Growth and Community*, p. 120. See also SIPE, *Celibacy*, p. 56; MALONEY, *Prayer of the Heart*, p. 68.

¹⁵⁶ BARRY, *God and You*, pp. 17-18. For religious who are involved in apostolates, it is very important that they strike a balance between work and prayer. As Vanier puts it, "[Without prayer] ... our activity motor will become over-heated and whizz around like a chicken without a head ... Each of us must know how to rest and unwind in silence and contemplation, heart to heart with God." See VANIER, *Community and Growth*, p. 118. See also VC, 38-39, pp. 66-67; ET, 10, p. 685; c. 675 § 2; NOUWEN, "Solitude and Community," p. 20; GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, pp. 15-16; RADCLIFFE, "Brothers Eucharist, Poverty, Chastity," p. 5; DUBAY, "What is Religious Life," pp. 28-29.

down to notice him in the smell of the rose or the stillness of the midnight sky. One needs to listen to him in the cry of bird or the trickling of a running stream. It involves developing a sense of the continuous presence of God who is always there waiting to be discovered in one's life. The more one notices and acknowledges him, the more one's life becomes a continuous prayer of adoration.¹⁵⁷ One can also occasionally have what is known as "religious experience", an experience of explicit communication on both God's and the individual's part. The person actually knows that God is communicating with him or her at this moment.¹⁵⁸

Apart from contemplating God in his creation, Scripture is another place where God is encountered in a special way. Scripture is made up of people's experiences of God at different moments of their lives. Some express praises and gratitude to God for his mercy and love (Ps. 130); others are experiences of God's assurance of his love, protection and comfort in difficult times (Is. 43). Depending on one's current state, one could hear these words spoken to her or him, or maybe not because of certain circumstances which one would then discuss with God. At the same time one may also ask God to reveal himself in the text at hand. Sometimes identifying with some characters in the gospels helps one to understand better oneself and one's attitude towards God. For example, Peter's refusal to let Jesus wash his feet may reveal one's difficulty with accepting Jesus' forgiveness. Regular prayer like this reveals more and more what God or Jesus is like, his values, loves and hates.¹⁵⁹ Since this involves use of all one's faculties, sensations, imagination, mind and will, this might also depend on one's intellectual maturity.

¹⁵⁷ BARRY and CONNOLLY, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, pp. 35-36. For ways of fostering the contemplative attitude in an individual, see *ibid.*, pp. 46-64. See also BARRY, *God and You*, p. 18; J. MCCLOSKEY, "Prayer," in *RfR*, 57 (1998), p. 532.

¹⁵⁸ BARRY and CONNOLLY, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, pp. 13-27

¹⁵⁹ BARRY, *God and You*, pp. 22-26 and 42. See also M. DONZE, "Renewal in Prayer," in *RfR*, 57 (1998), p. 536; KEENY, "Unceasing Prayer," pp. 526-527.

2.6.1.2 - Affective Prayer

Another dimension in one's relationship with God is an exploration of the Lord's affectivity towards the individual. This is very much in line with Keeney's "romancing the divine" which is life-encompassing, affecting all aspects of one's personality. It is "an action of the heart, the soul, the conscious and unconscious mind, the guts, the spirit as well as the body."¹⁶⁰

With regards to the Lord's feelings, Barry confesses:

I not only want to know how he felt toward John, but even more how he feels toward me. Do you love me? Do you forgive me? Do you care for me the way you cared for Israel? Do you delight in what I delight in? Tell me about yourself, Jesus, so that I can know you better, love you more, and follow you more closely.¹⁶¹

Any relationship would have to be mutual in order to warrant the name. While one gets to know more about God's feelings, one necessarily also needs to reveal more and more of one's own feelings to God. These may be expressed vocally or by use of gestures which extend to activities so that gradually the whole of one's life is affected.¹⁶²

2.6.2 - Obstacles to Growth in Affective Prayer

Aware of the overwhelming immensity of God, one may be afraid of meeting up to the challenging demands of an affective relationship with him. On the one hand, one may want to be fully united to God, on the other hand, one may be afraid of this total union. This may also be due to one's image of God which can be influenced unconsciously by one's past relationships. Although traditionally God has been imaged as male, as most people's

¹⁶⁰ KEENEY, "Unceasing Prayer," p. 524.

¹⁶¹ BARRY, *God and You*, p. 28. Barry strongly argues that the conviction that one is loved by God is quite foundational for any relationship with God. See *ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁶² BARRY and CONNOLLY, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, p. 41. Rolheiser also discusses another aspect of prayer which incorporates the paschal mystery. It is mysticism. He describes it as "pondering" which he explains as a willingness to carry tension as Mary did, apparently helpless at the foot of the cross, or as Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. It is carrying tension without giving in to premature resolution as a way of remaining true to one's commitment and personal integrity. See ROLHEISER "Religious Life in America," pp. 12-13.

relationship of God deepens, they experience him as female as well. In fact all one's images of God are in the strict sense idols as they limit and imprison him to whatever view of him one holds at a time.¹⁶³

One may also have feelings of anger and resentment at life's hurts. Like in any other relationship, when such negative feelings are not expressed, the relationship becomes formal and polite and is limited to very external matters. In any relationship, it takes strong will to search for the real truth about one's feelings towards another and to express them. Patience and perseverance through thick and thin are necessary. Until the relationship is tested by revelation of the anger and the resentment, it may not deepen, it may even die. In one's relationship with God, boredom is often a sign of such suppression.¹⁶⁴ One can also have negative feelings about other people which can be a cause of distraction to prayer. Unless God is put into the picture, the problem might persist. God helps to heal one's aggression and to channel it towards a useful end.¹⁶⁵

Sometimes the blockage in prayer arises from the desire to be "good" before the Lord, never admitting whatever one has come to consider as bad, like being angry, or depressed or sexy. While it is hard for anyone to tell God that he or she is angry or jealous of a friend or a brother or sister, it is even harder to admit to lusting after someone. This may be due to traditional spirituality which regarded anything sexual as sinful. Anyway, if there are some issues one feels afraid to discuss with friends or anyone, at least one can discuss them with God. The more transparent one is before God, the more relaxed and trusting one gets towards him.¹⁶⁶ As is evident in all this, affective, intellectual, spiritual and moral aspects of personal maturity come into play.

¹⁶³ BARRY, *God and You*, pp. 29-33 and 38.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-50.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

2.6.3 - Fruits of Prayer

Gradually, in this kind of prayer, God does reveal himself to those who seek him in sincerity and truth. It also enhances self-knowledge and awakens a new sense of self. This kind of prayer deepens the conviction of the reality of God's presence. According to Schneiders:

In its joyful moments, it is an experience of being marvellously and intimately touched, loved, cherished - and enabled to respond from depths one does not control, did not even know possessed. In its moments of suffering, it continues to involve the contemplative in an experience of the Other which cannot be escaped or relativized. Even in times of utter aridity, the longing for the Beloved is a psychological involvement with God whose reality is not simply accepted in willed faith but experienced even in and through God's felt absence.¹⁶⁷

For a religious, this aspect of prayer enables her or him to deal constructively with the absence of a human life partner. It is in fact this profound relationship with God that provides the context for the integration of all other relationships into the celibate commitment.¹⁶⁸

There is truth that, gradually, one becomes more and more like what or who one loves. A close relationship with God makes one adopt some of the qualities of God, an encompassing love of oneself and others which implies being accepting, tolerant, patient, forgiving of oneself and of others.¹⁶⁹ O'Murchu also reiterates the same message, emphasising the more positively relational side aspect of prayer rather than the vertical stance emphasised in the past. He says:

¹⁶⁷ SCHNEIDERS, *New Wineskins*, p. 222.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹⁶⁹ BARRY, *God and You*, p. 39. On the same note, according to Goergen, affective prayer also boosts up one's witness as a religious in and outside one's community, for "the world to which we witness, the brothers and sisters to whom we are joined by profession, are asking us: Do you care? Do you feel?" See GOERGEN, "Calling Forth a Healthy Chaste Life," pp. 269-270. Keeny also has this to say: "A soul-mate can evoke within us qualities of being that were not previously evident. He can inspire a courage to be, to risk, to venture to blossom in ways that never before seemed possible. She can ignite the fires of a passion for living well creatively, with a deep and abiding care for justice, compassion, peace." See KEENY, "Unceasing Prayer," pp. 523-524. See also DONZE, "Renewal in Prayer," pp. 534-535; T. RADCLIFFE, "The Life of Prayer," in *Religious Life Review*, 37 (1998), p. 285.

Unceasing prayer, therefore, is not for the distant, barren deserts of bygone days, but for the desert experiences of the contemporary world. Its focus is action rather than words. It includes all genuine efforts to bring God's healing, love, compassion, and hope to the brokenness of modern life. It seeks to discern God's will for his pilgrim people in the world of today, and strives to empower people to transcend the powerlessness and pain experienced in the struggle to live and survive. It moves beyond ascetical withdrawal to aesthetical involvement, enabling people to rediscover meaning and purpose and ultimate fulfilment, which God alone makes possible.¹⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have tried to illustrate the challenges of religious life and the necessity of personal maturity required for it. Even to become aware of the vocation to religious life and to be able to respond positively requires a certain degree of spiritual and Christian maturity. A clear sense of identity and intellectual maturity is needed to embrace the life on a permanent basis and to persevere in it to the end. This depends on one's ability to visualise some abstract ideals and goals and live up to them.

At the core of religious life are the three vows, chastity, poverty and obedience. With reference to the vow of chastity, there has been a shift in the general understanding of sexuality. While there was the tendency to limit it to strictly sexual activities, now it is known to embrace and permeate one's whole personality. While sex was generally considered negatively, now there is a more positive attitude towards it. This has ushered in a new understanding of consecrated celibacy regarding it not so much as mere denial, but as something more life-giving and fruitful. Consequently, one needs to have high altruistic motives in order to give up something as good as marriage and raising a family and also make the sacrifice worthwhile.

It also takes some degree of affective and psychosexual maturity to handle celibate loneliness, transforming it into solitude. One needs to be mature to be able to handle sexual desires without the normal gratification of genital sex. One also needs to be able to continue to grow psychologically and spiritually by engaging in healthy friendships. This necessarily involves the ability to satisfy one's needs for intimacy in ways compatible with one's

¹⁷⁰ O'MURCHU, *Religious Life*, p. 102.

commitment to the vow of chastity.

The external witness to poverty in religious life is important though difficult to achieve. Much more important is individual and collective spiritual poverty which may then be expressed externally. This is an attitude of complete trust and dependence on God's providence. It is also a deep love and respect of all God's creation and a keen sense of justice leading to the desire to share with those in any kind of need. This comes as a result of spiritual, Christian and moral maturity.

Rather than it being sheer conformity, the vow of obedience is now characterized with more freedom and responsibility in finding God's will and carrying it out. It requires individual and co-discernment through, listening, mutual respect, dialogue and all parties being about the reign of God. It requires a proper understanding and application of law and a spirit of sacrifice. Personal maturity in its several aspects, is needed for all this.

Religious common life involves voluntary living together and sharing lives for the sake of spreading the kingdom of God. An awareness of the sacredness of individual members and the community itself, self-knowledge and self-acceptance, transparency, deep love and acceptance of others with all their strengths and weaknesses, forgiveness and compassion facilitated by dialogue, challenge and confrontation are all skills that come into play in common life. Also very important is the ability to maintain a healthy balance between community involvement and respect and promotion of individual private needs. Spiritual, affective and social maturity is needed to keep the religious community alive and fruitful.

Prayer is relationship with God. While there are numerous forms of prayer, in addition to communal prayer, the contemplative and affective forms have been found to be quite effective for religious. Contemplative prayer is a keen awareness of the presence of God in creation and in all events of one's life and the individual's response to it. This results in continuous communication and union with God which normally affect one's perspective, attitudes and behaviour. Affective prayer involves mutual sharing of experiences with God on the affective level. Relationship with God on such a level also facilitates living out consecrated celibacy effectively. It takes integrity, spiritual and affective maturity to engage in such a relationship with God. The fruits of that kind of prayer are revealed in one's

preoccupation with bringing about the kingdom of God. The quality of one's prayer will be evident in one's relationship with other people and all God's creation.

Having realized the need for maturity in religious life, in the next chapter, we will explore its assessment for admission to the life.

CHAPTER THREE

ASSESSMENT OF MATURITY

INTRODUCTION

Assessment of maturity is a subject we intend to approach with much humble caution because of the enormity of the complications involved in conceptualizing, quantifying and measuring it. Peter Smith has indeed summarized well this difficulty in regard to assessment of maturity in candidates to the priesthood, which can also apply to religious.¹

It is also difficult to assess maturity because attainment of maturity is not a terminal achievement but a continuous growth in awareness and responding to it. Consequently, as Rulla puts it, "... there are no totally integrated [persons] but rather persons who are on their way to such an integration."² This seems true in case of each of us who have responded to God's call for religious life. There are authors on the subject who are well aware of this truth and express their concern for caution. D. O'Donnell articulates it clearly when he says:

Who of us is not a little blind, somewhat lame and often halt most of the time? When some of us are strong, others will be weak; when some of us are weak or weak in part, others can be strong or strong in part. Each of us has his or her moments of depression, anxiety or childishness-again, an inescapable part of the human experience in any way of life. Some of us are rather depressive all the time, or even drug-addicted in mild ways, and many of us are less than ideally motivated and mildly obsessive about our 'thing'.³

¹ P. SMITH, "Lack of Due Discretion and Suitability for Ordination," in *StC*, 21 (1987), p. 126. See also L.M. RULLA, J. RIDICK, F. IMODA, *Entering and Leaving Vocation: Intrapsychic Dynamics*, Rome, Gregorian University Press, 1976; P. CRISTANTIello, "Psychological Factors in Vocational Choice," in *Human Development*, 16, no 3 (1995), p. 29.

² RULLA, *Entering and Leaving Vocation*, p. 158. On the same note, Guiry also observes, that "the perfectly immature or the perfectly mature will exist only in the minds of philosophers and authors." See R. GUIRY, "Immaturity, Maturity and Christian Marriage," in *StC*, 25 (1991), p. 95.

³ D. O'DONNELL, "The Problem Member in Community," in *RfR*, 40 (1981), p. 204. See also C. SCHLECK, "Departures from Religion," in *RfR*, 27 (1968), p. 696; D.T. ASSELIN, "Christian Maturity and Spiritual Discernment," in *RfR*, 27 (1968), p. 589; SMITH, "Lack of Due Discretion," pp. 131-132; J.C. RIPMAN, "Personality Testing for Religious Life," in *Human Development*, 6, no. 4 (1985), p. 23; D. O'CONNOR, *Witness and Service. Questions about Religious Life Today*, New York, Paulist Press, 1990, p. 77. L. Marteau, rather sceptical about psychological assessment of candidates notes how some individuals have used their apparent 'abnormality' to become saints and so wonders who it is to say what is or what is not normal. See L. MARTEAU, "Assessment for Priesthood and Religious Life," in *Clergy Review*, 67 (1982), pp. 31-32.

Sometimes assessment of maturity is further complicated by the fact that whether a candidate is judged as mature or not really depends on the institute. In some cases certain candidates fail to qualify for admission in certain institutes due to the immaturity of members within the particular institute. J. Marie speaks of a certain small dying institute whose biggest problem was that it only admitted candidates exactly like the current members, who were blind to their own shortcomings. "Their shortcomings which were worldliness and lack of imagination about ministry were slowly killing them." Marie therefore rightly challenges: "To what extent does the candidate's maladaptation possibly point to a problem within the order or seminary rather than a problem within the candidate?"⁴

An institute's level of maturity is sometimes demonstrated by how it responds to the crises of individuals in initial formation. Just as the individual's responses to crises reveal their personalities, histories and coping skills, so does an institute's response to individuals in crises reveal its personality, history and coping skills. An institute needs to be clear about what it considers appropriate and inappropriate behaviour for its vowed religious.⁵

Another important factor that needs consideration in assessment of maturity is that a vocation is in the realm of divine mystery. Since it is God who takes the initiative in calling individuals to different ministries, one tries not to be too critical and negative in evaluating candidates who seek to join religious life.⁶

⁴ J. MARIE, "Vocational Assessment," in *Human Development*, 20, no. 2 (1999), pp. 28 and 34. See also L. IRIARTE, "Giving Support to One's Vocational Journey," in *Consecrated Life*, 21, no. 1 (1997), p. 88; E. GAMBARI, *Vita religiosa secondo il Concilio e il nuovo diritto canonico*, 2nd ed., Roma, Ed. Monfortane, 1985, translated into English as, *Religious Life According to Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law*, by the Daughters of St. Paul, Boston, 1986, p. 364.

⁵ Q. CONNERS, "Developmental Crises in Religious Formation," in *Human Development*, 11, no. 1 (1990), p. 7.

⁶ O'CONNOR, *Witness and Service*, p. 60. See also RIPMAN, "Personality Testing," p. 23. On the same issue, M. Azevedo speaks of 'the enigmas of vocation' and warns, "... let us not hinder the surprises of a gracious God." See M. AZEVEDO, *The Consecrated Life: Crossroads and Directions*, translated by Guillermo Cook, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1995, p. 11.

However, with due regard for all the above-mentioned difficulties that are likely to be encountered in trying to evaluate the maturity of candidates for admission to religious life, some kind of assessment still remains indispensable for a number of good reasons. We will therefore explore in this chapter the need for assessment of this maturity for admission to the life and some of the methods and tools currently used. This chapter will answer the following questions: Why is there a need for assessment of maturity for admission to religious life? Why is it carried out at admission into the novitiate? What are some of the methods and tools used and what precautions are required in the exercise?

3.1 - THE NEED TO KNOW BEFORE ADMISSION

Both the institutes and the candidates need to know whether or not the candidates will, to some extent, be able to meet the challenges of religious life as outlined and illustrated in chapters one and two. While one is not looking for a finished product in terms of maturity, it is important to find out whether or not a candidate has the basics of what it takes not to be, but to become, a religious in the light and nature of the institute's charism and ministry.⁷

3.1.1 - The Importance of the Novitiate in Religious Life

Admission is a very appropriate time for assessment because it is at this point that one is admitted into the novitiate and life in the institute begins. The novitiate is meant to be a place for nurturing a vocation, not finding it. According to *Renovationis causam*, "for each

⁷ C. BERTRAND, "Tools and Techniques for Candidate Assessment," in *Horizon*, 17, no. 4 (1992), p. 7. Both F. Morrissey and R. Hill, who have written extensively about religious matters, believe in balancing the right of the institute to know with that of candidates regarding their privacy. See F.G. MORRISEY, "The Issue of Confidentiality in Religious Life," in P.J. COGAN (ed.), *Selected Issues in Religious Law*, Washington, DC, Canon Law Society of America, 1997, pp. 129-130; R.A. HILL, "Screening Candidates: The Need to Know," in *R/R*, 45 (1986), pp. 458-462. See also E. MCDONOUGH, "Canonical Counsel: Admission to an Institute of Consecrated Life," in *R/R*, 58 (1999), p. 432; S.M. COSTELLO, "Psychological Evaluation of Vocations: Human Rights and Responsibilities Evoke Ethical Conflicts," in *Human Development*, 6, no. 4 (1985), p. 38. In support of setting up some standards to go by, J. Chittister also says: "Ideals are like the stars. We never reach them, but like the mariners of the sea, we chart our course by them." See C. SCHURZ, quoted by J. CHITTISTER, *The Fire in These Ashes: A Spirituality of Contemporary Religious Life*, Kansas, Sheed and Ward, 1995, p. 78.

candidate the novitiate should come at the moment when, aware of God's call, he has reached that degree of human and spiritual maturity which will allow him to decide to respond to this call with sufficient and proper responsibility and freedom."⁸ Without this prior discernment and preparation, the objective of the novitiate would be undermined.⁹

In the event of some members ending up ineffective due to serious disorders which assessment at admission could have prevented, neither the novitiate nor the community is really meant to be a place of therapy. Apart from disrupting community life and causing certain harm in their apostolates, psychologically impaired members might also require costly treatment and hospitalization for a good part of their lives.¹⁰ A problem that

⁸ RC, 4, p. 639. This is echoed in c. 646. Canon 652 §§ 2 and 3 also continues to outline the areas of formation that have to be the focus in the novitiate namely: cultivating human and Christian virtues, introduction to a fuller way of perfection by prayer and self-denial; introduction to contemplation of the mystery of salvation and reading and meditating on the Sacred Scriptures; cultivation of the worship of God in the sacred liturgy, training in a way of life consecrated to God by the evangelical counsels and to humankind in Christ; education about the character and spirit, purpose and discipline, history and life of the institute and being imbued with the love of the Church and its sacred pastors. The novices are also meant to collaborate and respond faithfully to the grace of the divine vocation. This is possible only if someone is ready for it. See also RC, 13, p. 646; ES II, 16, p. 627; CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes*, Rome, Canadian Religious Conference, 1990, pp. 28-29; R. MCDERMOTT, "Admission of Candidates and Formation of Members," in J.P. BEAL, J.A. CORIDEN, T.J. GREEN, *New Commentary on The Code of Canon Law*, commissioned by the Canon Law Society of America, New York/Mahwah, Paulist Press, 2000, p. 806.

⁹ J. GIALLANZA, J. GLEASON, "Reflections on Initial Formation," in *Human Development*, 5, no. 3 (1984), p. 12. Speaking about the need for candidates' readiness for the novitiate, the same authors have this to say: "The novitiate is not a catechetical school in which one becomes a Christian, nor is it a department store where the person browses around on the religious life section and then becomes the novice with the attitude, 'I'll try and see if I like it'; least of all is it an endurance test that the novice must 'get over and done with', so that he/she can move on to the real world." See *ibid.*, p. 14. According to Pius XI, "to make a poor novitiate is to build on sand." See SACRED CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS, Private Letter, *New Orientation for Updating the Postulancy and Novitiate in Sisterhoods*, 7 March 1967. English translation, in *CLD*, 6 (1969), p. 483.

¹⁰ W.J. COVILLE, "Basic Issues in the Development and Administration of a Psychological Assessment Program for the Religious Life," in W.J. COVILLE et al. (eds), *Assessment of Candidates for the Religious Life: Basic Psychological Issues and Procedures*, Washington, DC, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 1968, p. 7. See also B. FRISON, *Selection and Incorporation of Candidates for the Religious Life*, Milwaukee, WI, Bruce Publishers Company, 1962, p. 100; MARIE, "Vocational Assessment," p. 34; O' CONNOR, "The Problem People," p. 40; O'DONNELL, "The

sometimes haunts a religious community is when one or more of its members are alcoholics. Several authors have discussed this problem, its possible origins, symptoms, effects on community and suggested ways by which communities can handle it.¹¹ In some cases there is also the possibility of litigation or legal liability for some future negative behaviour.¹²

From the emotional and administrative point of view, it is easier to advise a candidate to continue to discern his or her vocation before admission than afterwards. It prevents wasting time and money and the possible shock of the return to the lay state. According to O'Connor, the process of dismissal for a perpetually professed member especially in an institute of pontifical right is very difficult, costly and can drag on for years. Religious superiors will need substantial documentary proof for the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life in Rome to confirm a decree of

Problem Member," p. 207. On a similar note, McDermott also recommends: "... the careful screening of applicants, though not infallible, will help avoid the presence of persons with potential personality problems which may worsen as time goes on." See R. McDERMOTT, "Dealing with the Difficult Religious," in COGAN, *Selected Issues in Religious Law*, p. 64.

¹¹ See O'CONNOR, "The Problem People," p. 39; ANONYMOUS, "Lost and Found: Notes from an Alcoholic," in *RfR*, 41 (1982), pp. 75-79; S. BARRETT, "The Adult Child of an Alcoholic in Ministry," in *RfR*, 49 (1990), pp. 523-528; H.C. CRONIN, "The Addictions of Clergy and Religious," in *Human Development*, 16, no. 4. (1995), p. 25; G. DOOHER, "Chemical Dependency Among Religious Ministers," in *Human Development*, 8, no. 2 (1987), pp. 7-13; M. EDWARDS, "The Hero Children-ACOA," in *RfR*, 49 (1990), pp. 531-534; J.J. GILL, "The Religious Alcoholic," in *Human Development*, 1, no. 4 (1980), pp. 27-38; W.F. KRAFT, "A Story of Addiction and Co-Addiction," in *RfR*, 52 (1993), pp. 454-460; A. KRUPSKI, "Addiction Affects Community," in *Human Development*, 6, no. 3 (1985), pp. 17-21; M.E. SIROKY, "Recovery Programs and Community Living," in *RfR*, 49 (1990), pp. 535-538; J. WOKASCH, "Addiction in Communal Life," in *Human Development*, 19, no. 4, (1998), pp. 42-43.

¹² M. DI PIETRO, "Legal Considerations in the Use of Pre Admission Psychological Testing," in *CLSA, Proceedings*, 51 (1989), pp. 173-174. Some of the current legal suits are mainly in connection with pedophilia cases among religious clergy. See CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *Ad Hoc Committee on Child Sexual Abuse. Breach of Trust Breach of Faith: Child Sexual Abuse in the Church and Society*, Ottawa, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992; ID., *From Pain to Hope: Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Child Sexual Abuse*, Ottawa, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992; S.J. ROSSETTI, *A Tragic Grace: The Catholic Church and Child Sexual Abuse*, Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 1996. For a recent discussion of legal considerations in handling cases of the above-mentioned nature, see G. INGELS, "Protecting the Right to Privacy when Examining Issues Affecting the Life and Ministry of Clerics and Religious," in *SlC*, 34 (2000), pp. 439-466.

dismissal.¹³

3.1.2 - To Facilitate Formation Programmes

Assessment helps both the institute and the candidate to become more aware of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses so as to provide opportunities for growth and development. In some cases, findings will lead to guidance and counselling of the individual. Assessment helps an institute to develop better general and more personalized formation programmes in the novitiate. In the light of the findings, some candidates may realize the need to re-evaluate their vocational goals and adjust accordingly.¹⁴ There is need to try and ensure that future members will persevere,¹⁵ be happy as religious and be able to carry out

¹³ O'CONNOR, "The Problem People," p. 40. See also FRISON, *Selection and Incorporation of Candidates*, p. 100; G. HOLLINGSWORTH, *Ex-Nuns: Women Who Have Left the Convent*, Jefferson, McFarland, 1985, pp. 55-77. On the difficult procedure of obtaining a dispensation or dismissal, see E. McDONOUGH, "Dispensation and Dismissal," in COGAN, *Selected Issues in Religious Law*, pp. 43-47. McDermott also reiterates some of the canonical problems superiors have to deal with regarding difficult religious. She illustrates this by outlining some processes that normally lead up to dismissal namely intervention, leave of absence, exclaustation, voluntary or involuntary and its implications and finally dismissal. See MCDERMOTT, "Difficult Religious," pp. 57-65. Included in all this is also the need of the institute to ensure that the outgoing members can financially, socially and psychologically survive. See ID., "Canon 702, § 2 - Equity and Charity to Separated Members," in COGAN, *Selected Issues in Religious Law*, pp. 85-91. Although according to D. Jaeger, all the above-mentioned concerns arise from seeking what he calls 'the over-protection of the institute and its finances', it would seem wiser for any institute to at least know and then decide to accept or not, depending on its needs and ability to cope. See D. JAEGER, "Religious Institutes and the Right to Privacy," in *CLSGBI Newsletter*, 79 (1989), p. 29.

¹⁴ COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 9. See also A. ANASTASI, "Psychological Testing and Privacy," in *The Pastoral Psychology Series*, 10 (1980), p. 356. J.C. RIPMAN, "Personality Testing for Religious," in *Human Development*, 6, no. 4 (1985), p. 20; P. D'ARCY, "Planning and Implementing the Assessment Program," in W.J. COVILLE et al., *Assessment of Candidates for the Religious Life: Basic Psychological Issues and Procedures*, Washington, DC, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 1968, pp. 43-44; R. J. MCALLISTER, *Conflict in Community*, Collegeville, MN, St. John University Press, 1969, p. 53. L.M. SAFFIOTTI, "Crucial Issues in Psychological Assessment," in *Human Development*, 18, no. 4 (1997), p. 6.

¹⁵ There has been a long-standing problem of departures of members from religious life and a drop in vocations, especially in Europe and the Americas during the last thirty years. Hollingsworth, has noted that in 1966, there were more than 180 000 nuns in American convents. By 1985, fewer than 120 000 remained. In nineteen years, 65 thousand women left the convent. See, HOLLINGSWORTH, *Ex-Nuns*, p. vii. Gallagher gives even more recent statistics on Canadian sisters. See

the Church's mission effectively. Assessment, to some extent helps to predict that.¹⁶

3.1.3 - To Eliminate Unsuitable Candidates

While faulty formation may have served to aggravate some of the immaturity problems in religious, most authors on religious life strongly believe that most of the underlying problems existed before admission into religious life. According to *Renovationis causam*, "Most of the difficulties encountered today in the formation of novices are usually due to the fact that when they were admitted, they did not have the required maturity."¹⁷

Canon 643 § 1, 1° prescribes: "one is invalidly admitted to the novitiate who has not yet completed the seventeenth year of age." According to most developmental psychologists, by the same age, one is expected to have acquired the normal basic level of maturity¹⁸ which makes admission an appropriate stage for assessing maturity. Another major reason for assessment is also to eliminate unsuitable candidates, namely, those whose levels of

M. GALLAGHER *The Common Life: An Element of Apostolic Religious Institutes of Women*, JCD diss., Faculty of Canon Law, Ottawa, Saint Paul University, 1995, Appendix G. L. Iriarte provides statistics reflecting the global nature of vocations with the problem more prevalent in the above-mentioned parts of the world. See L. IRIARTE "Giving Support to One's Vocational Journey," in *Consecrated Life*, 21, no. 1 (1997), pp. 80-83.

¹⁶ D'ARCY, "Assessment Program," p. 41. See also RIPMAN, "Personality Testing," pp. 22-23. According to the Kennedy and Heckler research report, in some priests, "there was evidence of failure to articulate a deep level of religious faith, so that what should have been central in their lives was peripheral and often superficial." See E.C. KENNEDY, V.J. HECKLER, *The Catholic Priest in the United States: Psychological Investigations*, Washington, DC, Publications Office, United States Catholic Conference, 1972, pp. 11-12. O'Connor also echoes this. See O'CONNOR, *Witness and Service*, p. 76. This obviously took something away from their effectiveness.

¹⁷ RC, 4, p. 639. See also O'CONNOR, *Witness and Service*, pp. 72-76; ID., "The Problem People," p. 38; KENNEDY, HECKLER, *Psychological Investigations*, p. 176; M. WOLFF-SALIN, *The Shadow Side of Community and the Growth of the Self*, New York, Crossroad, 1988, p. 25. According to Rulla and associates, who have carried out considerable research on vocations to religious life, "These insufficiencies of the personality are already present at the moment of entrance before the individuals begin their religious formation. [...] Four years of formation does not change or increase the degree of maturity existing at the time of admission." See L. RULLA, F. IMODA, J. RIDICK, *Psychological Structure and Vocation: A Study of the Motivations for Entering and Leaving Vocation*. English translation by D. BARNES and P. CROWE, Dublin, Villa Books, 1979, p. 16.

¹⁸ See Chapter one of this study, the section entitled "Personal Maturity," pp. 18-43.

psychological disorders are severe enough to disrupt effective religious life.¹⁹ Assessment helps superiors to discover and attend to such problems.²⁰

Other disorders rooted in one's personality are caused by an inability to adjust to environmental stress because of an immature development of personality. There is the sociopathic personality which does not possess an adequate and active conscience. One with this disorder is often manipulative, exploitative, dishonest and lacking in committed and enduring relationships. There is a general rebellion or unwillingness to conform to the demands of society which might lead to delinquent behaviour. Then there is the compulsive personality which is rigid, meticulous, over-systematic, over-inhibited and over conscientious. Although hard workers, such people may create problems in community due to their perfectionism. Scrupulosity would be a major symptom of obsessive compulsive disorder.²¹ Ripman also describes another group of people he refers to as "addictive personalities." These suffer from "compulsive drinking, drug abuse, certain eating disorders, compulsive gambling and kleptomania." He argues that even if one has undergone therapy, the initial emotional problems might still exist.²² There is also the emotionally unstable personality, struggling with underlying hostility, guilt or anxiety which reacts to stress impulsively and with hysteric-like explosiveness. This is often manifested by

¹⁹ D'ARCY, "Assessment Program," p. 43.

²⁰ COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 22-23. See also RIPMAN, "Personality Testing," p. 21; R.W. GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, Dayton, OH, Pflaum, 1968, p. 191; MCALLISTER, *Conflict in Community*, p. 52. Speaking on the same issue, McDermott recommends: "... the careful screening of applicants, though not infallible, will help avoid the presence of persons with potential personality problems which may worsen as time goes on." See MCDERMOTT, "Difficult Religious," p. 64.

²¹ COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 27.

²² RIPMAN, "Personality Testing," p. 21. According to M. Kenel, based on her research, other symptoms of compulsive behaviour include non-stop talking, excessive use of coffee, tea, food, sleep, gossiping and workaholism. See M.E. KENEL, "Convent Stress Revisited," in *Human Development*, 20, no. 1 (1999), p. 40.

argumentativeness, temper tantrums or panic in emergency.²³

Another kind of personality disorder is the passive-aggressive and the passive-dependent personality. The passive-aggressive personality is made up of people who are helpless and indecisive, tending to cling to others. In their relationships, they can be stubborn, pouting or dawdling. They can also be very irritable, reacting with tantrums or destructiveness to even minor frustrations.²⁴ The passive dependent personality, on the other hand, has low self-esteem, expresses resentment by sabotaging relationships and activities, feels victimised, feels entitled to special treatment and is often blind to his or her own irresponsibility. The passive-dependent is also prone to gossip and nursing grudges. According to Coville, unless candidates with this disorder receive considerable counselling and are able to adjust, they are the most poorly equipped group for a mature religious life.²⁵

Other disturbances are psychosomatic in nature. Psychosomatic illnesses are those physical symptoms produced by disturbed body-functioning resulting from improperly regulated or repressed emotions. Emotions commonly repressed formerly among religious were anger and affection. Examples of psychosomatic symptoms are some asthmatic attacks, ulcers, headaches, high blood pressure, fatigue, weight loss, shortness of breath, itching and allergic responses. Such problems are often worsened by either ignorance of their root causes or denial of them.²⁶ Other problems could also arise from various forms

²³ COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 27. See also RIPMAN, "Personality Testing," p. 22.

²⁴ MCALLISTER, *Conflict in Community*, p. 51. See also COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 26. According to Griffin-Shelley, suicide can also be an extreme form of self-destructive aggression which in its milder forms may be expressed in "over-eating, working too hard or too long, driving recklessly, drinking too much, harbouring resentment, being sarcastic or hostile, withdrawing or acting revengeful." See E. GRIFFIN-SHELLY et al., "Suicidal Religious in Community," in *Human Development*, 6, no. 2 (1985), p. 12.

²⁵ MCALLISTER, *Conflict in Community*, p. 52. See also COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 27; RIPMAN, "Personality Testing," p. 22.

²⁶ KENEL, "Convent Stress Revisited," p. 40. See also MCALLISTER, *Conflict in Community*, pp. 68-76; COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 29; RIPMAN, "Personality Testing," p. 22. For a detailed description of different types of disorders in general and their symptoms, see AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (= DSM - IV),

of sexual disorders.²⁷

3.2 - METHODS OF ASSESSING MATURITY

The moment one talks about maturity and its assessment, one is already in the realm of psychology. It seems that, although methods, techniques and tools may differ, the basic approach to assessing maturity remains psychological. It is the psychological interpretation of whatever information is found that determines the assessment.

All psychological assessment is primarily behavioural and is mainly based on two theories, the trait and the psychodynamic theories. According to the trait theory, one behaves the way one does due to engrained personality traits, e.g., aggressiveness, dependency, etc. According to the psychodynamic theory, emotional problems are signs of conflicting needs, drives, or motives.²⁸ Both theories are behavioural because they use the sign approach. Behaviours are regarded as signs of either underlying personality traits or indirect signs of some internal conflict.²⁹ Currently, psychological assessment is generally

Washington, DC, The American Psychiatric Association, 1994. With regards to disorders in the context of religious life and priesthood, in addition to the cited texts, see also SAFFIOTTI, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 6-7; E. WOODWARD, "The Depressed Religious," in *RJR*, 39 (1980), pp. 45-46; D'ARCY, "Assessment Programme," p. 51; O'CONNOR, "Witness and Service," p. 74-80. ID., "Dysfunctional Clergy and Religious," in *Human Development*, 11, no. 4 (1990), pp. 43-48 and "The Problem People in Religious Communities," in *Human Development*, 13, no. 2 (1992), pp. 38-39; O'DONNELL, "The Problem Member," pp. 203-208; KENNEDY, HECKLER, *Psychological Investigations*, pp. 1-178; GLEASON, *The Restless Religious*, pp. 191-195.

²⁷ For a definition of the problem and its characteristics, see *DMS-IV*, pp. 527-528; ROSSETTI, *A Tragic Grace*, pp. 66-67; KELLER, "Sexual Abuse of Minors," pp. 30-31; M. JAKUBIAK and S. MURPHY, "Incest Survivors in Women's Communities," in *Human Development*, 8, no. 2 (1987), pp. 23-24.

²⁸ F.J. KEEFE, S.A. KOPEL, S.B. GORDON, *A Practical Guide to Behavioural Assessment*, New York, Springer, 1978, pp. 3-4. Rulla is a strong proponent of the psychodynamic theory. See RULLA and associates, *Entering and Leaving Vocation*; ID., *Psychological Structure and Vocation*.

²⁹ KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," p. 4. For a clear distinction between modern behaviour therapy and traditional psychodynamic and humanistic/existential psychological approaches, see R.P. CAREY, "Theological and Psychological Perspectives: Theoretical Underpinnings," *Paper Delivered at NCEA Convention*, St. Louis, MO, April, 1992, pp. 3-4.

divided into traditional and behavioural, the latter regarded as modern.³⁰

3.2.1 - Traditional Assessment

Traditional assessment is based on the trait theory according to which it is believed that one behaves the way one does due to engrained personality traits, e.g., aggressiveness or dependency, etc. Since the internal causes of behaviour are thought to be stable, assessment focusses more on what the person has, based on his or her history and less on the current situation. Assessment is then used to draw up an identified personality profile with a diagnostic label.³¹

In general, there are three main techniques used for behavioural assessment, namely, the interview, observation and psychological tests.³² Although traditional and behavioural assessors share some of these tools, their assumptions and resultant implications differ.³³ Generally, traditional assessment seems to prefer psychological testing to the other methods.³⁴ Psychological tests are used to obtain a dynamic and developmental understanding of the person. This can be achieved by procedures that can tap both conscious and unconscious concerns and conflicts in an individual.³⁵

³⁰ See KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," chapter 1; BERTRAND, "Assessment Tools," pp. 7-10; R.P. CAREY, "Realizing the Vision: How does the Diocesan Vocation Office Help Identify and Assess the Candidate?" Reprinted with permission from, *NCDVD, Proceedings National Convention*, 1982, pp. 1-6; R.O. NELSON, S.C. HAYES, "Nature of Behavioral Assessment," in M. HERSEN, S.S. BELLACK (eds), *Behavioral Assessment: A Practical Handbook*, New York, Pergamon Press, 1981, pp. 4-5.

³¹ NELSON and HAYES, "Nature of Behavioural Assessment," p. 4. See also KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," pp. 8 and 10; CAREY, "Realizing the Vision," p. 2.

³² KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," p. 9.

³³ NELSON and HAYES, "Nature of Behavioural Assessment," p. 5.

³⁴ KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," p. 11.

³⁵ M.C. BLANCHETTE, "An Introduction to Psychological Testing," in *NCEA, Seminary News*, 33, no. 2 (1994), p. 8.

Briefly, personality tests are in two types, objective and projective.³⁶ Objective tests are made up of direct and straightforward 'true / false' questions to which candidates have to respond. Common examples of objective psychological tests are the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (MMPI), Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory, the Edwards Personal Preference Scale as well as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.³⁷ Scoring of objective tests is standardized and items are often grouped in scales which comprise a comprehensive personality profile.³⁸

Projective tests on the other hand are made up of a set of ambiguous stimuli to which a candidate is asked to respond. The hypothesis behind projective tests asserts that responses to ambiguous material are signs revealing personality structure.³⁹ The theoretical framework of projective testing is Freudian which contends that projection is a defence mechanism outside of and beyond one's conscious awareness. Since consciously disowned or rejected aspects of the self are thrown outward and imputed to others, projective tests will therefore tap and reveal these less conscious aspects of personality.⁴⁰ Some examples of commonly used projective tests are Sentence Completion, Hutt Adaptation of the Bender Gestalt, Thematic Apperception Test and the Rorschach Inkblots.⁴¹ In practice, a clinician selects

³⁶ For a detailed fairly recent treatment of objective personality assessment, see L.S. KELLER, J.N. BUTCHER, W.S. SLUTSKE, "Objective Personality Assessment," in G. GOLDSTEIN, M. HERSEN (eds), *Handbook of Psychological Assessment*, New York, Pergamon Press, 1990, pp. 345-386.

³⁷ BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Testing," p. 9. See also KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," p. 11. It seems that the Enneagram, a relatively new technique, would also fit into this category. For a basic overview of the dynamics of the Enneagram, see M. BEESING, R.J. NOGOSEK, P.H. O'LEARY, *The Enneagram: A Journey of Self Discovery*, Denville, NJ, Dimensions Books, Inc., 1984.

³⁸ KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," p. 11.

³⁹ MARTEAU, "Assessment," p. 32. Marteau also refers to projective tests as subjective. See *ibid.*, "Assessment," p. 33.

⁴⁰ BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Testing," p. 13.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* See also CAREY, "Realizing the Vision," p. 2; KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," p. 11. For a detailed history and development of Rorschach assessment, see P. ERDBERG, "Rorschach Assessment," in GOLDSTEIN, HERSEN (eds), *Handbook of Psychological*

a number of the above-mentioned tests and these then are referred to as a battery of tests.⁴²

3.2.1.1 - Strengths of Traditional Assessment

Strengths of traditional assessment lie in providing the professional community with a shared language for describing traits. It also provides clinicians with normative data by which to interpret results.⁴³ In this age of technology, it can be very easy and inexpensive to administer as all the scoring can be done by the computer.⁴⁴

3.2.1.2 - Weaknesses of Traditional Assessment

Weaknesses of traditional assessment lie in that the basic assumptions underlying assessment practices have not been adequately supported by personal research. Psychological tests are prone to manipulation by intelligent candidates so that the results can indicate a psychologically healthy person on the surface while, in reality, one may be experiencing a great deal of inner conflict and applying defensive mechanisms.⁴⁵ There is much data to challenge the assumptions that test behaviours are valid signs and symbols of global and stable personality characteristics that determine behaviour across settings. Reliability of projective tests is questionable. Traditional assessment is too much focussed on the past and the diagnostic labels it generates often have stigmatizing consequences. Such labels often lead to the development or maintenance of psychological problems.⁴⁶

Assessment, pp. 387-399.

⁴² BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Testing," p. 8. There is extensive literature on psychological tests, but for a clear, simplified description and explanation of most popular tests in the context of assessment for religious life, see *ibid.*, pp.10-25.

⁴³ KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," p. 13.

⁴⁴ SAFFIOTTI, "Psychological Testing," pp. 7-8. See also KELLER et al., "Objective Personality Assessment," pp. 360-378.

⁴⁵ KELLER et al., "Objective Personality Assessment," pp. 360-378.

⁴⁶ KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," p. 13.

3.2.2 - Behavioural Assessment

Unlike traditional assessment which focusses on one's personality traits, behavioural assessment concentrates on one's behaviour in a particular situation.⁴⁷ It is based on the theory of interrelationship between behaviour and the environment made up of the following variables: 1) the **stimulus events** which may be physical, social or internal; 2) **organismic variables**, that is, the biological condition of the individual, which may be natural or induced; 3) the individual **responses** which can be motor, or cognitive or physiological; 4) **contingency relationships**, i.e., the arrangement existing between behaviour and its consequences, and 5) the **consequences** which may be negative or positive.⁴⁸

In line with its basic assumptions, behavioural assessment emphasizes direct observation of behaviours that can be seen and measured. Candidates are observed in their several natural settings and then, using the several samples of behaviour, hypotheses are made regarding the candidates' situational factors controlling their behaviour. For example, according to Keefe and associates, "poor self-image is best measured by dating frequency, performance at school or at work and by frequency of negative self-statements."⁴⁹

There are several strategies that can be employed in behavioural assessment through observation. There is direct observation in naturalistic or in analogous situations or in a laboratory. Indirectly, observation results can reach the clinician through interviews, self-

⁴⁷ NELSON and HAYES, "Nature of Behavioural Assessment," p. 5. See also KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," p. 7. Carey clearly defines it as: "[...] an approach for gathering information that has its practical and theoretical roots in an area of clinical psychology called a variety of names: behaviour therapy, cognitive-behaviour therapy, and / or social learning theory. [It]... has an interest only in the behaviours and cognitions of a person, and is an approach that looks for what, when, where and under what circumstances a person thinks and acts." See CAREY, "Realizing the Vision," p. 2.

⁴⁸ KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," pp. 5-6. Keefe and associates have expanded illustrations of these variables. See also NELSON and HAYES, "Nature of Behavioural Assessment," pp. 7-14.

⁴⁹ KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," pp. 10-11. See also NELSON and HAYES, "Nature of Behavioural Assessment," pp. 14-15.

reports and ratings by others.⁵⁰ Behavioural clinicians may need to train and use para-professional personnel to assist as observers, recording samples in clients' natural situations. They can also develop or use systems of gathering, coding and presenting data.⁵¹ Letters of recommendation are a way of presenting observed data. Candidates may be asked to name eight or ten people who know them well, and some of these may be asked to write letters recommending them. There is need for guidelines or even a questionnaire with check-lists or numerical ratings. It also helps to allow and encourage additional comments.⁵²

Although letters of recommendation are most likely to present a favourable side of the candidate since they come from people suggested by the candidate, they help to check for consistencies. They are a good supplement to other more objective tests, and the vocation director may also be able to read between the lines and seek further clarification.⁵³

According to R. Carey, interviewing supplemented by self-reports and direct observation is a major tool in behavioural assessment.⁵⁴ The goal for a behavioural interview is to sample an individual's learnings, skills and values based on behavioural evidence. Therefore, a behavioural interviewer focusses on the 'what' and 'how' questions and not on the 'why'. For example, according to Carey, instead of asking:

"Why do you want to be a priest?", likely answers include responses such as "I feel God is calling me," or "I want to serve God and the Church," or "I want to help people." If however, one asks a question such as "What is it that you hope to do as a priest?", "What is it that gives you confidence that priesthood is a good idea for you?", "What gifts or skills do you bring to the priesthood?", one has the opportunity to gather more relevant data. If one hears abstract words such as "generosity," "service," "spiritual life," etc., one can begin to assess what evidence there is *now* that the person acts in generous ways, that the person is of service to others in the life he leads now, that the person does things to improve the quality of his

⁵⁰ KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," pp. 10-11. See also NELSON and HAYES, "Nature of Behavioural Assessment," pp. 19-22.

⁵¹ KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," p. 15.

⁵² See BERTRAND, "Assessment Tools," p. 3.

⁵³ Ibid. See also COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 14-15.

⁵⁴ CAREY, "Realizing the Vision," p. 3.

spiritual life, etc...⁵⁵

In analysing the “what” and “how” of a situation, one takes note of the frequency, the duration, the intensity and the conditions involved.⁵⁶ Successful behavioural interviewing depends on the interviewer’s skills, the most important of which are listening, asking clear questions and making appropriate responses.⁵⁷ Successful interviewing also takes into account cultural differences.⁵⁸ One needs the ability to recognize the data as it comes from the candidate because while describing an incident, one also provides important information about discipline, generosity, decision making and many other personal values and skills. The interviewer, therefore, needs to be able to take copious notes during the interview to allow for accuracy when reviewing and interpreting them. The interviewer may also ask a candidate to talk about oneself in a chronological framework; major gaps would call for accountability.⁵⁹

3.2.1 - Weaknesses of Behavioural Assessment

Behavioural assessment has a number of weaknesses. It has been criticised for relying too much on interviews and paper and pencil tests, violating the basic principle of direct sampling. In some cases, it is difficult to collect representative samples of behaviour. Observational methods are often obtrusive and thus less susceptible to measurement reactivity. The one observed may behave accordingly in order to please the observer. It also

⁵⁵ Ibid. Although these questions are directed to a candidate for priesthood, they can very well apply to candidates for religious life.

⁵⁶ CAREY, “Theological and Psychological Perspectives,” p. 5.

⁵⁷ BERTRAND, “Assessment Tools,” p. 2.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 4. See also MARIE, “Vocational Assessment,” p. 33; SAFFIOTTI, “Psychological Assessment,” p. 8.

⁵⁹ CAREY, “Realizing the Vision,” pp. 3-4. For a synthesized coverage of methods and procedures of a behavioural interview with regards to client-interviewer relationships and ethical considerations, see P.K. MORGANSTERN, H.E. TEVLIN, “Behavioural Interviewing,” in M. HERSEN, A S. BELLACK (eds.), *Behavioural Assessment: A Practical Handbook*, New York, Pergamon Press, 1981, pp. 71-97.

lacks normative behavioural data. In some cases it is more time-consuming, complex and expensive to administer with limited financial and human resources.⁶⁰

3.2.2 - Strengths of Behavioural Assessment

Despite the above-mentioned weaknesses, behavioural assessment has several strengths, the greatest of which is its committedness to empiricism. It relies on empirically discovering functional relationships rather than relying upon established theoretical assumptions. Validity is increased by the use of samples rather than signs and is guided more by measurable effects and less by intuition or assumptions. It is specific rather than global and identifies clear targets and skills of the different religious institutes according to their spiritualities.⁶¹ Behavioural assessment enhances respect of one's individual uniqueness as it explores actual experiences in a person's life. In the context of religious life, behavioural assessment also fosters cooperation between vocation directors and the institute at large since together they can clearly spell out their goals and expectations and then review them.⁶² On the whole, behavioural assessment seems to be very effective; even the criteria for salvation are behavioural (Mt. 25:31-36; Lk. 6:43-47). While psychological tests are very much first-world centered, behavioural assessment is cross-cultural since every culture has skills, cognitions and learnings which an interviewer can look for.⁶³

⁶⁰ KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," p. 14. See also F.N. KERLINGER, *Foundations of Behavioural Research*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1973, pp. 536-540. On the point of being too complex and expensive to administer, Carey, on the contrary, actually asserts that behavioural assessment does not always need specialized personnel. He suggests that a vocation director or a member of an admission team, provided with clearly focussed areas of enquiry, can conduct it. See CAREY, "Realizing the Vision," p. 3.

⁶¹ KEEFE et al., "Behavioural Assessment," p. 14. See also CAREY, "Realizing the Vision," p. 3.

⁶² CAREY, "Realizing the Vision," p. 3.

⁶³ Ibid.

3.3 - PAPAL AND CURIAL DOCUMENTS ON PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Before analysing the different psychological techniques and tools currently used to assess maturity of candidates for admission into religious life, it is appropriate to examine the magisterial stand on psychological assessment in general and with reference to admission of candidates to religious life in particular. We shall do this by making a chronological survey of papal and curial documents on the topic before and after the promulgation of the 1983 Code.

3.3.1 -Psychological Assessment Before the 1983 Code

One of the earliest curial documents pointing to the need for psychological fitness of candidates was in reference to candidates for orders, which could also apply to candidates for religious life. It is an unpublished circular letter addressed to local ordinaries which states:

Very special attention is needed by the student who possibly suffers from sexual psychopathy or hyperesthesia, that is, who must be numbered among those whom psychiatrists classify as neurotics, scrupulous, abulic, hysterical, and, in general, those who are affected by ... some mental disease (schizophrenia, paranoia, etc.) ... Moderators of the Institute should keep careful watch over him and subject him to corporal examination by a doctor who is a real expert in psychiatry, known for his skill, morality and practice of religion...⁶⁴

Although the letter recommends corporal examination for the candidate, the symptoms seem deeper than the physical body. The kind of expert recommended is not only a medical practitioner, but a psychiatrist. It seems as if, though aware of the need to employ experts in assessment of candidates, the Church authorities were rather cautious about it.

The next curial document which recommended a doctor's services in assessing qualities of maturity in candidates for religious life is found in the general statutes attached to Pope Pius XII's apostolic constitution *Sedes sapientiae*. They state:

Both the moral and the intellectual qualities of the candidates must be accurately and thoroughly examined. Moreover, their physical and psychological fitness must also be investigated, relying in this on the medical history and diagnostic judgement of an experienced doctor, even in relation to possible hereditary diseases, especially mental ones;

⁶⁴ SACRED CONGREGATION FOR SACRAMENTS, Circular letter, 27 December 1955. English translation in *CLD*, 4 (1958), p. 312.

the judgement of the doctor must be recorded in the report of each candidate.⁶⁵

In his next address on the subject, entitled *Applied Psychology*, delivered to the Congress of International Association of Applied Psychology,⁶⁶ Pius XII makes the first direct recommendation on the use of psychological assessment, adding the moral considerations that need to accompany it. His main concern is the respect of the privacy of the individual. After enumerating the different levels of information in the human person's psyche, the pope goes on to differentiate between public information and private information which one shares with only a few chosen people. The psychologist needs the individual's consent to extract this kind of private information.⁶⁷ The kind of consent that meets moral standards is clearly informed and freely granted. According to Pius XII,

If the consent is given freely, the psychologist can in the majority of cases, but not always, act according to the principles of his science without contravening moral norms. What must be verified is whether the interested party has not exceeded the limits of his competency and of his ability to give a valid consent.⁶⁸

According to K. McKenna's interpretation, the 'informed consent' mentioned by Pius XII implies that the candidate is able to give consent, that he or she is fully informed of the purpose of the testing, the kind of data gathered and how it is to be used.⁶⁹

Three years after the publication of Pius XII's above-mentioned address, the Holy Office issued a *Monitum* entitled *Psychoanalysis* specifically directed towards psychological testing for seminarians and candidates for religious life. It warned:

⁶⁵ SACRED CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS, The General Statutes on the Religious, Clerical and Apostolic Training to be Imparted to Clerics in the States of Perfection to be Acquired, 7 July 1956, in *Sedes sapientiae and the General Statutes*, 2nd ed., The Sacred Congregation of Religious, pub., Catholic University of America Press, exclusive distributor, 1957, p. 47.

⁶⁶ PIUS XII, Address of Pope Pius XII to a Congress of the International Association of Applied Psychology, 10 April 1958, in *AAS*, 50 (1958), pp. 268-286. English translation in *The Pope Speaks*, 5, no. 1 (1958), pp. 7-20.

⁶⁷ PIUS XII, *Applied Psychology*, p. 15.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ K.E. MCKENNA, *The Right of Confidentiality and Diocesan Clergy Personnel Records*, JCD diss., Ottawa, ON, Faculty of Canon Law, Saint Paul University, 1990, p. 142.

To be condemned is the opinion of those who hold that a previous training in psychoanalysis is altogether necessary for receiving Sacred Orders, or that candidates ... should undergo an examination and tests of a strictly psychoanalytic character. This applies also where there is a question of ascertaining the fitness required of candidates for the priesthood or for the religious profession.⁷⁰

J. Lynch's conclusion that this document could not be an attack against psychiatry in general⁷¹ seems correct, considering the following extract from Pius XII's previous address, *Applied Psychology*, which reads:

Indeed, no one will deny that modern psychology, considered as a whole, deserves approbation from the moral and religious point of view. Yet, if we particularly bear in mind the goals it pursues and the means it utilizes to accomplish them, we will be led to make a distinction ... The goals of psychology ... deserve nothing but praise; but the means used sometimes give rise to justifiable reservations.⁷²

According to Lynch, the exclusion of psychoanalytic training was in line with current Church legislation by which clerics could practice medicine and surgery only after obtaining an apostolic indult.⁷³ Since psychiatry is a recognized field of medicine, it is not surprising that its practice would also be forbidden.⁷⁴ It seems as if what is rejected by the *Monitum* is not the categorical exclusion of psychological testing as an added means of ascertaining the suitability of candidates, but making it the essential part of it. Procedures regarded with suspicion were those strictly psychoanalytical, i.e., dream interpretation, interpretation of

⁷⁰ SUPREMA SACRA CONGREGATIO SANCTI OFFICII, *Monitum*, 15 July 1961, in *AAS*, 53 (1961), p. 571. English translation in *CLD*, 5 (1963), p. 196.

⁷¹ J.J. LYNCH, "Notes on Moral Theology," in *Theological Studies*, 23 (1962), pp. 235-239.

⁷² PIUS XII, *Applied Psychology*, p. 13. Pope Pius XII objects to the use of techniques which provide responses to questions and stimuli over which the candidate has little or no control over the responses given. He denounces the use of the polygraph, lie detector or the penile plethysmograph which records sexual response to various visual or auditory stimuli presented to the person without his or her control over the responses. See *ibid.*, p. 15.

⁷³ *Codex iuris canonici, Pii X Pontificis Maximi iussu digestus, Benedicti Papae XV auctoritate promulgatus*, Romae, Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1917, c. 139, § 2.

⁷⁴ LYNCH, "Notes on Moral Theology," p. 236.

resistance, transference, etc.⁷⁵

With increasing realization of the necessity of maturity in priests and religious and the awareness of what this maturity entailed, the Holy Office's attitude towards psychological assessment shifted from merely condoning it to encouragement of its use in certain circumstances. This is very evident in papal and curial documents issued since Vatican II. In the *Decree on Training for the Priesthood*, we read:

Each candidate should be subjected to vigilant and careful inquiry keeping in mind his age and development concerning his right intention and freedom of choice, his spiritual, moral and intellectual fitness, adequate physical and mental health, and possible hereditary traits.⁷⁶

Pope Paul VI's encyclical, *Clerical Celibacy*, is even clearer on the need to engage experts in assessing candidates for the priesthood. He urges:

It is likewise necessary that the exact account be taken of the physical and psychological state of the candidate in order to guide and orient him toward the priestly ideal; so a truly adequate formation should harmoniously coordinate grace and nature ... These conditions should be ascertained ... with the assistance and aid of a doctor or a competent psychologist ... The life of the celibate priest, which engages the whole man so totally and so delicately, excludes, in fact, those of insufficient physical, psychic and moral qualifications. Nor should anyone pretend that grace supplies for the defects of nature in such a man.⁷⁷

On a similar note, speaking about candidates on probation before admission into the novitiate and the necessity of human and emotional maturity, the curial document *Renovationis causam* also recommends:

⁷⁵ MCKENNA, *The Right of Confidentiality*, pp. 113-134. In the same line of thought, P.L. Golden also notes: "While this canon [241] urges the use of testing to determine the fitness of an applicant's mental health, it does not contradict the *Monitum* of the Holy Office prohibiting the use of psychoanalysis as an admission requirement ... AAS 53 (1961), 571 and CLD 5, 196. Psychoanalysis is commonly understood as an extended treatment (2 years) for probing the unconscious; it differs from psychological and psychiatric techniques." See P.L. GOLDEN, "The Sacred Ministers or Clerics (cc. 232-293)," in *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, p. 182.

⁷⁶ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on the Training of Priests, *Optatam totius*, 28 October 1965, in AAS, 58 (1966), pp. 713-727. English translation in FLANNERY, *Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1, pp. 707-724. The quote is in no. 6, p. 712.

⁷⁷ PAUL VI, Encyclical letter, *Sacerdotalis caelibatus*, 24 June 1967, in AAS, 59 (1967), pp. 657-697. English translation in *The Pope Speaks*, 12 (1967), pp. 291-319. The quote is in no. 3, p. 310. Although both previously cited references are directed towards seminarians, they equally apply to candidates for religious life.

If in certain more difficult cases, the Superior feels, with the free agreement of the subject, that he should have recourse to the services of a prudent and qualified psychologist known for his moral principles, it is desirable, in order that this examination may be fully effective, that it should take place after an extended period of probation, so as to enable the specialist to formulate a diagnosis based on experience.⁷⁸

Apparently, so far, psychological testing is recommended only for difficult cases and not as a rule. The results of the tests are also to be regarded as only one of the criteria used for the overall assessment.

Another curial document recommending psychological testing in order to detect psychological defects, sometimes of a pathological kind which reveal themselves only after ordination, is one entitled *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy*.⁷⁹ In general, the magisterial attitude towards psychological assessment was rather suspicious and cautious at the beginning, but became more condoning and even commendatory towards the time of the issuing of the 1983 Code. In fact, according to F. Morrissey, the principle of psychological testing in assessment of candidates to the priesthood was officially accepted during the preparatory period of the Code of Canon Law in 1981. Although this prescription was not included specifically in the promulgated Code in the section on seminaries, "there is nevertheless, an oblique reference to such testing in c. 642, for religious."⁸⁰

3.3.2 - Psychological Assessment in the 1983 Code

As has been noted before, cc. 241, 1029 and 642 express similar demands for candidates to the priesthood and to religious life. Our attention for now, however, will focus on c. 642. Psychological assessment is now accepted as a useful tool for admission of candidates, but, what has remained controversial is whether or not it is required for every case or just for doubtful ones. The previous American translation did not translate the Latin word *etiam* in

⁷⁸ RC, 11 (3), p. 645.

⁷⁹ SACRED CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy*, Ottawa, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1974. See especially section 38, "Testing Vocations," p. 35.

⁸⁰ MORRISSEY, "Confidentiality in Religious Life," p. 127. See also J.A. ALESANDRO, "The Revision of the Code of Canon Law: A Background Study," in *StC*, 24 (1990), p. 139.

c. 642 implying that the use of psychological testing is an ordinary part of the procedures for screening applicants. Its new translation, however, now renders it as 'even'.⁸¹ It now seems to agree with R. Hill who all along had translated it in such a way as to indicate that psychological testing *may* also be used when needed.⁸² While this may apply to some of the qualities prescribed in the canon, as far as personal maturity in all its several aspects is concerned, it would seem that the previous American translation of the Code is still correct to make psychological assessment part and parcel of the procedure. Otherwise there is no other recognized method that would produce the required results.

An important issue that is closely connected with psychological testing is the need to safeguard the candidates' right to privacy. This close connection is evident in that reference to c. 220 is included in c. 642. Canon 220 reads:

No one is permitted to damage unlawfully the good reputation which another person enjoys nor to violate the right of another person to protect his or her own privacy.

Canon 220 is a new piece of legislation whose origins lie in two documents of the Second Vatican Council: *Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 12 (Decree on Ecumenism), and *Gaudium et spes*, no. 26 (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World).⁸³

There are two aspects to the canon, the right to one's reputation, i.e., maintenance of one's good name, and the right to one's privacy, i.e., the ability and freedom to decide what and how much information to keep to oneself or to share when and with whom. While there are several areas in religious life where issues about the above-mentioned rights arise,⁸⁴ for

⁸¹ *Codex iuris canonici, auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus*, Vatican City, Libreria editrice Vaticana, 1983. Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition: New English Translation, Washington, DC, Canon Law Society of America, 1999.

⁸² HILL, "Screening Candidates," p. 459.

⁸³ See F.G. MORRISEY, "Practical Points for Formation Directors in the New Code," in *Information*, 92 (March/April 1986), p. 1.

⁸⁴ Some areas where these rights come into question in religious life have to do with the general need of the superior to respect the human person in her relationship with other members (c. 618), manifestation of conscience (c. 630, § 5) and certain issues regarding a religious institute and its relationship with a diocese (cc. 394, § 1, 392, § 1, 521, § 2, 586, §§ 1 and 2, 678, § 3, 681, § 2). Another area is the superior's relationship with a therapist treating a member. See MORRISEY,

our purposes, we will just focus on those that emanate from assessment of candidates for admission.

In conclusion to this section, it seems that the Church authorities were, earlier on, rather cautious about psychological assessment but thawed to the idea and even recommended it as they understood the values of the tests for maturity. The 1983 Code seems to provide adequate guidelines for the balance needed regarding this issue. While it sanctions the use of the much needed expertise in the exercise, it, at the same time, safeguards the rights of privacy and reputation of all those involved. Of course the law will always fall short as new challenging issues arise, but at least general guidelines leave room for new interpretation and adaptation.

3.3.3 - Psychological Assessment and Confidentiality in Admission of Candidates

As to whether or not psychological testing for admission of candidates is an invasion of privacy, A. Anastasi summarises it well when she says: "Any assessment technique represents a potential invasion of privacy."⁸⁵ This concern might arise from the methods or instruments used or the range and the depth of the information obtained from the candidates. For example, while Morrissey admits that information about a candidate's family background as to whether or not parents are divorced or whether one has been involved in crime, etc. is

"Confidentiality in Religious Life," pp. 133-134; W. BARRY, "A Superior's Relationship with a Therapist," in *Human Development*, 10, no. 1 (1989), pp. 11-13; J. HARRIS, "Therapy for Religious," in *RfR*, 51 (1992), pp. 282-288; M. MOORE, "Therapist, Client and Superior Relationship," in *RfR*, 49 (1990), pp. 539-544. In general, the 1983 Code's sensitivity regarding the protection of these rights is evident in the number of canons related to the issue. There are those in the area of the seal of confession: cc.983, § 1 and 2; 1388, §§ 1 and 2, and the secrecy binding judges and tribunal personnel, parties, witnesses and experts (c. 1455). Then there is c. 127, § 3, binding councillors who may be called upon to counsel or give consent, c. 377, § 3 regarding selection of bishops, c. 413 § 1 regarding the person selected to govern the See when it is impeded and cc. 489-490 regarding diocesan secret archives. Canons 1717, § 2, 1352 § 2 deal with protecting one's reputation in penal trials. Although not clearly defined, c. 1390 § 2 prescribes a just penalty for harming someone's reputation. However, these rights also have to be balanced by another right, that of the common good. See c. 223.

⁸⁵ ANASTASI, "Psychological Testing," p. 351. This is a concern shared by several other authors on the subject. See also COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 34; HILL, "Screening Candidates," p. 460. MORRISSEY, "Practical Points," p. 6.

important for assessing an individual's personality, he is rightly concerned that demanding that information may be unnecessary prying into someone's privacy. The same applies to demanding to know about someone's sexual orientation or physical integrity, or use of drugs.⁸⁶ This is, however, a very complex, delicate and debatable issue, the detailed technicalities of which will very much depend on an institute's needs and goals and even on individuals and their mutual rapport with the assessors. Anastasi thus clearly articulates the complexity of the matter:

If no firm answers or specific rules have emerged, it is not for lack of effort. Rather, it has become clearly apparent that only broad guidelines can be properly formulated. This limitation stems from the complexity of the issues and the situational specificity of the problems encountered ... there are wide gray areas in which the answer can be reached only after consideration of all the conditions characterizing the particular situation. The solution varies too often with concomitant circumstances to permit the routine application to universal rules. In dealing with individual cases, there is no substitute for the ethical sensitivity and professional judgement of the test user.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, there are some general guidelines and recommendations to ensure confidentiality in assessment of maturity of candidates. Key concepts to consider in the exercise are relevance and informed consent.⁸⁸ The application of these key principles requires that the candidates to be assessed are made fully aware of and consent to the rationale behind the testing and the people who will have access to their reports: how these reports will be used and how they will be stored and disposed of. Candidates need to sign a release form to this effect.⁸⁹ The same would apply in the case of previously married

⁸⁶ MORRISEY, "Practical Points," p. 6. See also ID., "Confidentiality in Religious Life," p. 126. Several other authors also generally believe in the importance of family history in assessment. In McAllister's words, "Family influence on personality is so great that if one were given insight into the many forces operating within a home and upon a given individual, one could predict fairly accurately what sort of personality that individual would have in later years." See MCALLISTER, *Conflict in Community*, p. 22.

⁸⁷ ANASTASI, "Psychological Testing," p. 349.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 351. See also COSTELLO, "Psychological Evaluation," p. 41.

⁸⁹ COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 32-35. See also T.N. MCCARTHY, "The Content and Use of the Psychological Report in Religious Candidate Assessment," in W.J. COVILLE et al., *Assessment of Candidates for the Religious Life: Basic Psychological Issues and Procedures*, Washington, DC, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 1968, p. 68; MORRISEY, "Practical

candidates who have received declaration of invalidity (annulment) of their marriage. To allow an institute access to some personal information in the acts or sentences of their cases, the candidates would need to sign a waiver for it. If psychiatrists or psychologists were involved, candidates could permit the superior to receive reports directly from the experts.⁹⁰

A situation calling for a similar procedure is when a religious transfers from one institute to another.⁹¹ As for who has access to the candidate's assessment report, this will vary according to institutes, but the fewer people the better.⁹²

The last major issue regarding confidentiality in the admission of candidates concerns the preservation of assessment records. Only authorized personnel may have access to files. While candidates may have access to public information in their files, letters of recommendation, university transcripts, etc. given to the superior under promise of secrecy (c. 645, § 4) and details of voting would be out of bounds.⁹³

Another point to consider regarding the filing of candidates' assessment reports is that

Points," p. 6. McDonough recommends that each institute have a policy regarding confidentiality. See MCDONOUGH, "Admission," p. 433. See also SAFFIOTTI, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 9-10. For an example of a release form, see appendix II.

⁹⁰ C.J. DOSKEY, "Declaration of Nullity: Its Effect on Admission to Clerical and Religious Life," in *CLSA Proceedings*, 47 (1985), pp. 122-123.

⁹¹ See MORRISEY, "Confidentiality in Religious Life," pp. 131-132.

⁹² Morrisey notes that decisions concerning persons are generally not collegial, binding the superior to act. Hence the Code prescribes only one person to be in charge of novices (cc. 650-651). See MORRISEY, "Practical Points," pp. 5-6. See also MCCARTHY, "Psychological Report," pp. 89-99. Besides advising institutes to reduce the number of people with access to candidates' reports, the above-mentioned authors suggest spiritual and formation directors as some of the people who may need to see the reports. See also SAFFIOTTI, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 9-10. D'ARCY, "Assessment Program," p. 62. Destruction of assessment reports after use is by analogy, provided for by c. 489, § 2, which reads: "Every year, documents of criminal cases are to be destroyed in matters of morals in which the criminal has died or in which ten years have passed since the condemnatory sentence; but a brief summary of the case with the text of the definitive sentence is to be retained." The psychologist is the best person to retain the report. See D'ARCY, "Assessment Program," pp. 62 and 85-87. See also COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 94-95.

⁹³ MORRISEY, "Confidentiality in Religious Life," p. 127.

they be used only for their primary purpose since they do lose value and validity with time. Several authors suggest destroying the reports when they have served their intended purpose or retaining a summarized version of them. Superiors could either have their own private confidential files or utilize a system of codified filing concealing obvious identification of files.⁹⁴

3.4 - TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS FOR ASSESSING MATURITY

As has been pointed out before, the techniques and tools employed in assessing maturity will to a great extent depend on each institute. It is determined by its charism, its goals and its lifestyle. It is also determined by the assessment resources available to the institute.⁹⁵ Therefore, a very important long term technique and tool in effective evaluation of maturity for candidates to religious life is an assessment programme.⁹⁶ In this section, we will discuss the different components of an assessment programme, namely, vocational promotion, pre-admission programmes, the role of the psychologist and assessing the several aspects of personal maturity.

3.4.1 - Recruitment of Mature Candidates

A very important aspect of recruitment is clarity about the goals of one's institute because what an institute says it is will determine whom it attracts. In C. Harmer's words, " ... it is essential that we convey the core of who we are and why we exist, in both general

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 131. See also ID., "Practical Points," p. 8; COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 35. L. GENDRON, "Some Moral Problems Connected with Psychological Testing of Religious, Seminarians and Candidates," in *Linacre Quarterly*, 46 (May 1979), p.176. E. RINERE, "The Individual's Right to Confidentiality," in *Bulletin on Issues of Religious Law*, 11 (Spring 1995), p. 4. For an example of a filing policy programme, see appendix three, reprinted with permission from the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati record filing policy.

⁹⁵ D'ARCY, "Assessment Program," pp. 48-49. See also O'CONNOR, *Witness and Service*, p. 65; Carey observes that it is the institute's assessment programme that clarifies "what to look for, who is to carry out the assessment, the consideration of the limits of the assessment and what happens to the information obtained by the assessment." See CAREY, "Realizing the Vision," p. 2.

⁹⁶ D'ARCY, "Assessment Program," p. 47.

and specific ways."⁹⁷ There are four major areas in which members of a religious institute need to be clear about, to themselves and to those they wish to invite. These are mission, identity, community and spirituality.⁹⁸

An inevitably very subtle but effective method of recruitment is the witness of religious life by the members themselves. When members try to live their chosen life with integrity and passionate commitment, they attract modern youth.⁹⁹ This is echoed in *Perfectae caritatis* which states: "Religious are, by their exemplary life, meant to advocate and attract vocations."¹⁰⁰

Other more direct ways by which an institute advertises itself and recruits are brochures and contacts with young people. Again in both cases it is important to be clear about mission, community identity and spirituality.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ C. HARMER, "Invitational Vocation Promotion," in *Human Development*, 20, no. 3 (1999), p. 36. See also D. GOTTEMOELLER, "Religious Life: Who is Invited and to What?" in *Religious Life Review*, 36 (1997), pp. 8-10; A. DILANNI, "Religious Vocations: New Signs of the Times," in *RfR*, 52 (1993), p. 748. Barone also has this to say: "Each member contributes to or diminishes the faith environment. Who we are; *where* we are; *how* and *where* we work, live and minister precedes *who* we invite. How and where we work, live and minister influences who will be attracted to our community." See A.C. BARONE, "Role of the Vocation Director-Starring You," in *Horizon*, 17, no. 4 (1992), pp. 4-5.

⁹⁸ HARMER, "Invitational Vocation Promotion," pp. 36-38. In her article Harmer makes practical suggestions of important aspects of religious life, namely mission, identity, community and spirituality which need to be stressed in brochures in order to attract mature and not "just lonely, needy and even sick people." See also DILANNI, "Religious Vocations," pp. 748-754.

⁹⁹ On some insights about what modern youth is searching for, see DILANNI, "Religious Vocations," p. 748. See also B.C. HOOVER, "Youth and Young Adults," in *Papers Prepared for the Inter-American Meeting*, Toronto, Canadian Religious Conference, 1999, pp. 21-24.

¹⁰⁰ PC, 24. Speaking about the need and importance of witness among religious, Gottemoeller notes: "Your task as vocation promoters is impossible if the present members have so compromised the meaning of their lives that you can't credibly explain and defend it." See GOTTEMOELLER, "Who is Invited and to What?" p. 10.

¹⁰¹ Harmer's article is, in fact, focussed on effective use of the brochure in vocation promotion. See HARMER, "Invitational Vocation Promotion," pp. 34-38.

3.4.2 - The Vocation Director

Vocation directors are important figures in the assessment programme, and their specific role will depend on the institute. In general, vocation directors have the double role of serving prospective candidates as well as their community. With regards to their position in the community, A. Barone defines it well thus:

[...] the vocation director collaborates with community leadership and members of the formation team. The vocation director needs to understand and respect the formation process in order to share it with potential members, as well as with the community. Certainly the *who*, *how*, and *for what* of formation will influence which prospective candidates are asked to take center stage. It is important for the team, vocation director, and community leadership to communicate regularly, setting goals, outlining priorities and expectations, citing areas and channels of accountability, and reflecting a model collaboration.¹⁰²

The other role of vocation directors involves establishing and nurturing mature relationships with people discerning their vocations. It is a delicate role that calls for certain qualities and skills. According to D. Gottemoeller, their role is that of "being mid-wives who do not create life but welcome and assist it. [...] Her (the vocation director) chief virtues are patience in awaiting the time, skill in assisting the process and reverence for the form in which the new life emerges."¹⁰³

Barone also highlights the need for the vocation director to be able to reconcile the needs of both the community and the aspirants. She describes the vocation director as someone who must be:

[...] on stage and ready for life *now* ... a person with a sense of self, committed to the community and its vision, and credible to community members ... one who is able to enter into healthy, mature relationships ... a self-starter who can balance collaboration and cooperation with independence ... [one with] ... a flexibility and willingness to live with questions and erratic schedules ... [one who is] ... comfortable speaking to strangers ... is eager to learn formally and through experience, especially in the area of assessment and interviewing.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² BARONE, "Role of the Vocation Director," p. 5.

¹⁰³ GOTTEMOELLER, "Who is Invited and to What?" p. 13.

¹⁰⁴ BARONE, "Role of the Vocation Director," p. 6. Carey describes the vocation director as "confidant, friend, advisor, spiritual director, counsellor ... roles [which] ... call for sensitivity and alertness, if not for the ability to walk on water as well." See CAREY, "Realizing the Vision," p. 1. To a great extent, it seems true that vocation directors do assume all these roles in their work, but K.

From the point of view of administration, Carey cautions superiors about ethical problems likely to arise from combining the roles of the vocation and formation directors into one person.¹⁰⁵

3.4.3 - The Pre-admission Stage and Workshops Encouraged During this Period

The pre-admission stage is vital for the assessment of candidates' maturity. Its structures and content are left to the proper law. The 1917 Code¹⁰⁶ prescribed a six-month postulancy for all women religious of institutes with perpetual vows and for lay brothers. Although the 1983 Code merely requires that there be suitable preparation (c.597, § 2) and leaves it to proper law to decide how to go about it, a later document strongly recommends the postulancy or prenovitiate programme.¹⁰⁷

As far as preparation and assessment of candidates are concerned, there seems to be two main options available. Some institutes have a one to three-year period of candidacy and a six months to one year period of postulancy before admission into the novitiate. In this case, most of the preliminary work of getting to know the aspirants by visiting them and their families and schools will have been carried out by the vocation director. As candidates and postulants, they are formally received and become affiliated to the institute and live in its communities or continue studies but return to communities of their institutes during

Buchheit and M. Lewis also rightly advise that vocation directors learn to refer candidates with special needs to appropriately qualified people such as counsellors and spiritual directors. See K. BUCHHEIT, M.E. LEWIS, "Vocation Director-Yes Spiritual Director, Therapist, Counsellor-No," in *Horizon*, 17, no. 4 (1992), pp. 34-36. On the same note D'Arcy recommends that vocation directors receive some training in psychology. See D'ARCY, "Assessment Program," pp. 49-50.

¹⁰⁵ For a discussion of some of these problems, see R.P. CAREY, "Combining the Roles of Vocation and Formation Director Creates an Ethical Minefield," in *Horizon*, 21, no. 3 (1994), pp. 3-6.

¹⁰⁶ Canon 539, § 2: See also *RC*, 4, 10 (2), 11-12, and 14. The discussion of the special *coetus* on admission to the novitiate can be found in *Communicationes*, 12 (1980), 185-187, and 13 (1981), 151-156.

¹⁰⁷ CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes*, Rome, 1990, no. 42, p. 27.

vacation. They have a member of the institute in charge of them who gives them talks and writes periodic assessment reports on them. The rationale behind such a pre-admission programme is that living within a community which provides a model for what one is aiming at, is the best way to discern and learn. J. Vanier, a chief proponent of this method, has this to say about it:

One of the best ways of learning to pot is to live and work for many years with a master potter. There are things that can be only learned in this way: his love for the clay and the product, his way of welcoming clients, thousands of small details which express his love of his craft ... [Referring to the older members' effect on the candidates, he says] ... People who have already passed through certain stages and perhaps certain trials, and who have found an inner peace and a certain radiance do not give lessons but others enter into their radiance and want to become like them. The young will want to emulate them.¹⁰⁸

The other pre-admission programme model which seems to focus more on assessing candidates' readiness for admission with regards to their level of maturity is more personalized. Proponents of this model are very critical of the first programme institutional model which is considered as artificial and fostering "a dependent institutional attitude that distances the candidates from many of the common tasks required of most of the people to whom they minister."¹⁰⁹

As an alternative to the first model, J. Giallanza and J. Gleason recommend what they describe as

... a smaller formation setting ... [which] ... encourages candidates to grow in self-possession and self-confidence to take responsibility in their formation process, and to make themselves accountable ... small settings ... afford the formation personnel a closer view of the strengths

¹⁰⁸ J. VANIER, *Community and Growth: Our Pilgrimage Together*, Toronto, Griffin House, 1979, pp. 79 and 80.

¹⁰⁹ GIALLANZA and GLEASON, "Initial Formation," p. 14. See also J. GIALLANZA, "Vocation Promotion and Religious Formation," in *Human Development*, 18, no. 2 (1997), pp. 28-34; M.R. FOX, "Providing an Atmosphere for Personality Growth in the Postulancy," in *R/R*, 27 (1968), pp. 613-622. On a similar note, P. Molinari, another critic of the first pre-admission model also says: "In an artificial setting they (candidates or postulants) act artificially. They play the part of the postulant. They will be aware of the eyes of the older sisters watching them and they want to be 'good little nuns' ahead of time. This is to miss the point, because it does not come from the heart." See P. MOLINARI, *The Guiding Principles of the New Document on Formation and Talks on their Practical Application*, Ottawa, Canadian Religious Conference, 1979, p. 64. The new document referred to here is *Renovationis causam*.

and weaknesses of the candidates as unique individuals.¹¹⁰

A clear alternative to the first pre-admission assessment model is one known as "accompaniment." According to this model, when aspirants express a desire to join religious life, institutes, instead of admitting aspirants into special houses with structured courses, assign members to accompany them in the discernment of their vocation taking into account their personal and human needs.¹¹¹ In some cases, there might be need for growth in Christian maturity, in others there might be need for growth in affective maturity or in the area of identity (ability to decide for oneself), or there might be need for deepening one's relationship with God.¹¹²

After discovering the aspirants' personal needs, they are recommended to go into environments where they can grow in the particular areas that need growth. Accompanying members remain in close contact with the aspirants and invite them for weekends or two-week workshops to experience the life of the community. When the aspirants are convinced of their call and have attained the desired level of maturity, then they can ask to be received. This is the literary meaning of *postulare* - to ask with an insistence determined by a conviction.¹¹³

The role and qualities of the accompanying personnel are more that of a spiritual director than anything else. The following are some of the qualities that would enhance the effectiveness of their work:

1. accepting people as they are and where they are and their particular needs;
2. availability, caring and loving;

¹¹⁰ GIALLANZA and GLEASON, "Initial Formation," p. 14. It is however, not clear how this setting differs from the first model arrangement.

¹¹¹ C. FALLON, "Accompanying People Growing in Awareness of a Call," in *Canadian Religious Conference Document*, 401-48 (1983), p. 2.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11. Fallon gives several accounts of real cases where this model has proved to be effective. See *ibid.*, pp. 5-10.

¹¹³ P. MOLINARI, "The Initial Stages of Formation," in *Canadian Religious Conference Document*, 401-39 (1982), p. 8.

3. sensitivity to and respect of both the person and God's work in the person;
4. an attitude of patient waiting especially when nothing seems to be happening;
5. helping candidates to become more aware of and attentive to God's promptings in their lives;
6. providing support and encouragement during times of doubts and darkness. Challenging gently – when it is necessary – not coercing in any way;
7. introducing the aspirants to prayer that fosters personal relationship with God involving speaking and listening to God;
8. encouraging aspirants to search for a more personal knowledge of Christ through appropriate readings;
9. prayerfulness, humility and recognizing that it is God who gives the growth .¹¹⁴

A program similar to accompaniment is practised in some circles and is known as “mentoring.” This is a technique by which an older person maintains personal contact with a young woman or man for some time in order to help initiate them into adulthood. This is based on theories of life development researchers like Daniel Levinson and theologians like James Fowler and Sharon Parks. While Levinson focusses on the psychological development of the human person, James Fowler traces the human person's parallel stages of growth in faith.¹¹⁵

According to S. Sammon, “Mentors help younger people-and at times contemporaries and older folks-to identify the dreams in their life and to give those dreams a place in that life ... They offer example, challenge, acceptance, counsel and at times friendship.”¹¹⁶

A research carried out by Marist Brothers revealed the positive effects of mentoring on

¹¹⁴ FALLON, “Accompanying People,” pp. 11-12. See also MOLINARI, “The Initial Stages of Formation,” pp. 7-8. Molinari goes on to explain that with such a programme, the duration before one is ready for novitiate will naturally vary. He forewarns that although such a programme might feel too vague and unstructured, in the end it is much more rewarding than bringing people together, moulding them in the same way and expecting them to be ready at the same time. See *ibid.*, P. 8.

¹¹⁵ S.W. SYNAN, “Mentoring Improves Vocation Promotion,” in *Human Development*, 17, no. 1 (1996), p. 27. See also footnote 125 of chapter one of this work.

¹¹⁶ S.D. SAMMON, “Psychology: An Aid to Religious Formation,” in *RfR*, 56 (1997), pp. 381. Sammon also explains how mentoring is the same as formation but different from therapy. For a comprehensive explanation of mentoring, a description of the qualities and skills needed by a mentor and the dynamics in a mentoring relationship, see M. BEHA “The Feminine Mentor in Women's Development,” in *Human Development*, 4, no. 4 (1983), pp. 31-33. See also E. SELLNER, *Mentoring: The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship*, Notre Dame, IN, Ave Maria Press, 1990, pp. 15-35; 103-132.

candidates' discerning and maintaining interest in entering a religious vocation. In some cases, when one did not pursue the religious vocation, mentoring still helped young men to take an active role in Church ministries.¹¹⁷ In some cases mentoring is carried out on the diocesan level or by local communities who sponsor people who are considering religious life and then assess the candidates and write reports. Applicants also need to be invited to give some feedback to the vocation director in terms of their experience with a mentor or sponsoring community.¹¹⁸

Anthony Steel offers a model that seems to be somewhere between the two described above. He suggests that after the individual accompaniment and/or mentoring, candidates still need to be in a residential programme for more or less a year. One aim of this is to learn the dynamics of community life with a certain amount of autonomy. The other is to provide them with opportunities for developing "a pattern of prayer, faith sharing, and study which will foster an authentic personal spirituality and promote in them a measure of growth and enrichment as human persons."¹¹⁹

A second look at the above-mentioned techniques and tools of assessment identifies them with the behavioural assessment method as there is much observation of candidates in their natural environments and mutual communication with the vocation director or mentor.

Since the main agents in assessment of maturity for admission to religious life are the candidates themselves, the best way to prepare them for the immediate assessment is to expose them to as many educational programs as possible. For our purposes, most helpful programs would be those that emphasize self-knowledge and greater freedom.¹²⁰

Examples of helpful workshops are those that in general reveal whether one is an

¹¹⁷ SYNAN, "Mentoring," pp. 27-32.

¹¹⁸ BERTRAND, "Assessment Tools," p. 3.

¹¹⁹ A. STEEL, "Prenovitiate Theory and Practice," in *R/R*, 51 (1992), pp. 291. For the elements included in the programme, see *ibid.*, pp. 291-292.

¹²⁰ KENNEDY, HECKLER, *Psychological Investigations*, p. 179.

introvert or an extrovert. Introverts are believed to be more comfortable when relating to the inner world of concepts and ideas whereas extroverts are more interested in people and concrete things. A good example of an enlightening exercise on such issues is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator which has been developed by Isabel Briggs Myers since 1942. The indicator is used to discover certain individual preferences. There is no right or wrong preference; rather, it is a matter of differences. The indicator helps to reveal how one perceives and interprets reality either through perception or judgement or both.¹²¹ Regarding the topic under discussion, Myers-Briggs improves self-knowledge and engenders a feeling of peace and well-being through self-appreciation and acceptance. It is also reassuring to know and understand how another person perceives reality. It fosters cooperation among small groups, accepting that differences need not divide. Understanding and respecting the individuality of the other person is mutually enriching.¹²²

A similar exercise that could be worked through in workshops is the Enneagram by which personalities are divided up into nine types. The Enneagram discusses both the strengths and weaknesses of the different types, their compulsions and avoidances and whether they have the gut, or heart or head as their preferred centers of operation.¹²³ Workshops on spirituality, basic Catholicism and theology are also very enlightening. According to M. Jakubiak and S. Murphy, workshops on incest and sexuality during the

¹²¹ For an expanded but simplified explanation of the dynamics of the Myers-Briggs indicator, see BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 13. In view of the wholistic approach to the development of the human person, E. Liebert offers guidelines for pastoral assessment of symbolic communication which reveals a close connection between ego development and spiritual consciousness. While the assessment seems to have been designed primarily for congregational use, there is no doubt that it can also be adapted to assessment of individual spiritual maturity. See E. LIEBERT, *Changing Life Patterns: Adult Development in Spiritual Direction*, New York, Mahwah Paulist Press, 1992, pp. 198-203. This was adapted from: I. STEVEN, *The Structural-Developmental Theories of James Fowler and Robert Kegan as Resources for Pastoral Assessment*, Ph.D. diss., Forth Worth, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985, pp. 147-148, 150-151 and 161-162.

¹²² BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 13.

¹²³ See BEESING et al., *The Enneagram*, pp. 156-218. This text also suggests ways of conversion and overcoming one's compulsions.

early years of formation can be very helpful too.¹²⁴

3.4.4 - Immediate Assessment Programme

What we refer to here is the actual assessment carried out to select those who may be admitted into an institute. This may be psychological testing or a behavioural assessment interview. Immediate psychological assessment, is best carried out by a trained psychologist. However, it is important to know and choose a psychologist most suitable for assessing candidates for religious life.

3.4.4.1 What Kind of Psychologist?

Professional training is very important in this exercise as it helps the clinician gain the confidence of both the religious authorities and the candidates. Presumably, training makes one more efficient and flexible in administering the tests. One is better able to interpret and impart test results to clients with the necessary sensitivity and tact.¹²⁵ It need not be a psychiatrist because the candidates tested are not suffering from any significant disturbance. The role of the psychologist in this case is identification of apparently normal candidates who are likely to break down under stress later. The psychologist is also meant to help clarify vocation choice in seeking religious life and make recommendations for appropriate functions within the community.¹²⁶

It is helpful if the psychologist is familiar with the following areas: "psychodynamics,

¹²⁴ JAKUBIAK and MURPHY, "Incest Survivors" p. 24. An example of the spirituality workshops that can be organised is "The Spirituality Wheel: A Selector for Spirituality Type," in C. WARE, *Discover Your Spiritual Type: A Guide to Individual and Congregational Growth*, Minneapolis, MN, Urban Institute Publication, 1995, p. 7. This is adapted from U.T. HOLMES, *The History of Christian Spirituality: An Analytical Introduction*, Minneapolis, MN, Seabury Press, 1980, pp. 4-5. Again, there is no right or wrong type, it is just a matter of awareness of differences.

¹²⁵ D'ARCY, "Assessment Program," p. 56. See also FRISON, "Selection and Incorporation," p. 103; SAFFIOTTI, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 8-9; COSTELLO, "Psychological Evaluation," p. 40.

¹²⁶ D'ARCY, "Assessment Program," pp. 51 and 56. See also, COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 9-11; COSTELLO, "Psychological Evaluation," p. 38.

including normal growth and development; psychopathology; psychodiagnostics leading to clinical diagnosis and prediction especially of late adolescents; therapeutic interviewing and counselling; psychology of vocational choice and development; psychology of personnel selection and placement; psychology of religious personnel and the assessment of candidates for religious life and adequate understanding and appreciation of the supernatural elements of religious vocation."¹²⁷

Apart from the professional expertise, the psychologist also needs to be someone who knows and appreciates religious life and is familiar with the jargon. He or she needs to be aware of the varieties of religious communities of the diocese he or she serves. In particular, the psychologist needs to be well acquainted with the spirit, ministries and characteristics of the institute that employs him or her. The psychologist need not be a religious, although a religious would have the advantage of operating from lived experience. In some cases, however, candidates may feel freer with an outsider than with someone they know.

Familiarity with the culture of the candidates also greatly enhances the effectiveness of the assessment. Issues that are well accepted in certain parts of the world may be taboo in others. There may also be a need to adapt an instrument to a new environment. Regarding this issue, S. Sammon observes: "Obviously, an instrument that used a population of middle-income, mid-western United States citizens to establish its scoring criteria needs to be normed anew before being applied to candidates for religious in Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America."¹²⁸

3.4.4.2 - Orientation

Based on the general assessment programme of an institute it is important for the administration to clearly outline the goals and expectations of the psychological assessment

¹²⁷ D'ARCY, "Assessment Program," pp. 58-60.

¹²⁸ SAMMON, "Psychology," p. 381. See also MARIE, "Vocational Assessment," p. 33; SAFFIOTTI, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 8-9; G. COLEMAN, "Taking a Sexual History," in *Human Development*, 17, no 1 (1996), p.13. E. Lapointe, an Oblate Missionary of Mary Immaculate priest with long experience of work in Africa, also strongly supports this point. From notes taken during a discussion with him on 6 December 1999, at Saint Paul University, Ottawa.

process and discuss them with the psychologist. It may even suggest to the psychologist the particular concerns to be addressed regarding all or certain particular candidates. This will determine the depth, coverage and expenses of the procedures employed.¹²⁹

Just as important is the orientation of all concerned regarding psychological assessment. Those who will need orientation include the aspirant's family and friends, parish priests, teaching brothers or sisters, faculties of religious institutes, etc. They need to be informed of the nature and purpose of an assessment program in relation to the requirements of a vocation to religious life.¹³⁰

This helps towards the overall assessment of the candidate with regards to public relations in cases where a candidate is dismissed due to psychological unsuitability, or has to be referred for special professional attention or treatment. Supporters of the candidate's vocation might cause problems.¹³¹

Most important is the orientation of the candidates themselves as the effectiveness of the assessment will to a great extent depend on their cooperation in providing responses to tests. It is important for all to have a positive attitude towards psychological assessment. It needs to be regarded as part of vocational discernment in a well-constructed pre-admission formation program. The general program even needs to specify when and how it will take place.¹³²

During orientation, candidates are made aware of the nature, means and purpose of the assessment. They need to be made aware that the encounter is a service to them, probably the first in their lives. They need to be prepared for the unusual openness that psychological assessment calls for but also be made aware that it can be very educative and engender

¹²⁹ T.M. BATSIS, "How to Get the Most out of the Psychological Report," in *Horizon*, 17, no. 4 (1992), p. 11.

¹³⁰ COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 31.

¹³¹ Ibid. See also D'ARCY, "Assessment Program," p. 53.

¹³² COSTELLO, "Psychological Evaluation," p. 38.

growth.¹³³ In his prior discussion, some candidates may become aware of signs of serious contra-indications to religious life leading them to re-evaluate their plan to join.¹³⁴

Another element of the orientation of candidates is in connection with the report, the kind of report that will be prepared, to whom it will be sent, how it will be used, reassurance about confidentiality, the candidates' right to feedback and the storage and disposition of the raw data. In a contract between the candidate, the institute and the psychologist, the candidate is invited to give written informed consent.¹³⁵

The actual psychological assessment and its success very much depends on the psychologist's professional aptitude and experience. It depends on his or her ability to create good rapport with the candidate.¹³⁶ M. Blanchette illustrates this by describing how he introduces psychological assessment to a candidate:

In doing this, I never use the word test. As soon as the clinician says test, the anxiety level increases. Accordingly, when I introduce the activity of psychological testing, I will invariably say, "These are some procedures that will be used to help you understand yourself better. They are means to be used to gather important information." I thus attempt to engage the person as participant in the process rather than treating the person as an object - something to be examined and about whom a report is written.¹³⁷

3.4.4.3 -Areas Focussed on in Assessment

Most of the areas that institutes focus on in their assessment of candidates for entry into their communities correspond to the several aspects of personal maturity defined in the second part of chapter one of this study. This section will discuss areas currently focussed on and the some of the tools popularly used to assess these areas. Carey has drawn up what

¹³³ Ibid. See also COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 32.

¹³⁴ COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 32.

¹³⁵ COSTELLO, "Psychological Evaluation," p. 38. See also COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 32.

¹³⁶ COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 33. See also L. GENDRON, "Some Moral Problems Connected with Psychological Testing of Religious, Seminarians and Candidates," in *Linacre Quarterly*, 46 (May 1979), p. 177.

¹³⁷ BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Testing," p. 7. See also COSTELLO, "Psychological Evaluation," p. 40.

he refers to as a "Functional Index," listing the following areas as needing exploration in assessing a candidate:

1. Family background - parents' values and how the candidate has been affected by them, the parental modelling, relations with siblings, disciplines and skills learned, difficulties experienced and gratitude held.
2. Educational-occupational background - objective straightforward data: schools attended and the outcome; decision-making about educational and occupational choices, evidence of cooperative skills, discipline, responsibility etc.
3. Social effectiveness factors - trust, self-confidence, goal directedness, positive self identity, perspective taking, conversational skills, sensitivity, etc.
4. Interests - social relationships - leisure time activities, interests and friendships which reveal a lot about a person's values.
5. Faith history - chronological data about being a Catholic Christian; present involvement in a local faith community; how one experiences prayer in one's life; what happens when one prays; how prayer affects one's daily life; models of ministry and of the Church that one values and how one would practise them; evidence of present gospel service to others in one's life; etc.
6. Alternative vocational options - provides evidence about the quality of decision-making that led one to choose religious life.
7. Decision-making skill - evidence of ability to anticipate consequences of decisions, values implicit in decisions, alternative strategies available to be vigilant about, data pertaining to decisions being faced, etc.
8. Psychosexual concerns - one's learning history about sexuality and evidence of psychosexual integration; one's sexual involvement; evidence for necessary skills in living celibately in a healthy and committed manner.
9. Routine areas - individual's health, use of prescription drugs, use of substances (drugs, alcohol, food); status of one's debts; any substantive encounter with the law; etc.¹³⁸

Although the terminology and extent might differ, several other authors on religious vocational assessment cite similar criteria.¹³⁹ A small research study on

¹³⁸ CAREY, "Realizing the Vision," pp. 4-5. Carey is a priest in the United States who has a long experience in assessment of candidates for religious life. He strongly recommends for candidates an ecclesiology modelled on the Second Vatican Council. See ID., "Theological and Psychological Perspectives," pp. 1-2. In assessing candidates' spiritual maturity, other areas that could also be explored preferably with the help of an experienced spiritual director are, "images and experiences of God, preferred biblical texts, prayer practices, vocational story and spiritual crises experienced." See SAFFIOTTI, "Psychological Assessment," p. 7.

¹³⁹ See COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 16-21; GIALLANZA and GLEASON, "Initial Formation," pp. 12-13; COLEMAN, "Taking a Sexual History," pp. 13-15; SAFFIOTTI, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 7-8; MARIE, "Vocational Assessment," pp. 30-34; S.J. ROSSETTI, *A Tragic Grace: The Catholic Church and Child Sexual Abuse*, Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 1996, pp. 67-77;

assessment for admission to religious life carried out on some institutes also revealed similar results. Eleven American institutes who responded to the question, "What specific qualities do you look for in your prospective candidates?", named qualities that would fall into the above-mentioned categories.¹⁴⁰

3.4.4.4 - Tools for Obtaining Background Information and Social History

It seems that all assessment would begin with this stage and although several tools are employed for the purpose, the Assessment Interview (AI) seems indispensable. Much more important, of course, is the administration of the interview in terms of the content and the dynamic relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee.¹⁴¹ There is no limit to the range of questions that can be asked as this depends on the situation, but generally questions would cover family background, childhood, adolescence, education, occupation, adult history and reasons for seeking religious life.¹⁴²

G.L. JEAN, "Screening Candidates," Extract from a personal letter on the subject, Lowell, MA, 30 September, 1998, pp. 3-4. Jean is a member of the Sisters of Charity. She is a psychologist, who has, for the past 25 years, been conducting psychological assessment of candidates for admission to several religious institutes and seminaries in Lowell, MA, Providence, RI and Washington, DC. See also A. MEIER, "Psychological Testing of Candidates for Ministry," *Personal Notes*, Ottawa, Saint Paul University, 1999, p. 1. Meier assesses candidates for ministry to the Presbyterian Church in Canada. It is interesting to see that the criteria for assessment are the same as that required for ministry among religious in the Catholic Church.

¹⁴⁰ This research was carried out between 1998-1999.

¹⁴¹ See CAREY, "Realizing the Vision," pp. 1-6; ID., "Theological and Psychological Perspectives," pp. 1-6. See also BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Testing," pp. 7-8; BERTRAND, "Assessment Tools," pp. 2-4; KELLER et al., "Objective Personality Assessment," p. 348; MEIER, "Psychological Testing," p. 2; JEAN, "Screening Candidates," pp. 3-4.

¹⁴² For a good example of the kind of questions that can be used in a selection interview, see R.M. MYHALYK (ed.), *Selection Interviewing: Screening a Candidate for Religious Life*, [there is no indication of the place of publication and the publisher], 1982. Carey's taped interviews 'Priest Perceiver-Religious Perceiver' are also very popular. According to Bertrand, "they have a set format for questioning centred on various themes such as mission, spirituality, relatedness, etc., and help the interviewer to reach a keen understanding of each person's strengths and talents." See BERTRAND, "Assessment Tools," p. 4. See also M.W. PABLE, "Skills Needed for Celibacy," in *R/R*, 57 (1998), p. 275.

Other tools used to obtain similar information are the Personal Background Questionnaire sometimes referred to as Personal Data Questionnaire or Biographical Inventory.¹⁴³ All the tools mentioned above belong to the behavioural assessment method.

3.4.4.5 -Assessing Intellectual Maturity

Among many, the Weschsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised seems to be the most popular in the assessment of candidates for religious life.¹⁴⁴ It is regarded as the most common and comprehensive test used to discern a person's ability to learn from experience. Apart from measuring the candidate's IQ, far more importantly, it is used for clinical interpretation, for example, to detect brain pathology, visual-motor coordination, etc.¹⁴⁵ The several functions in the device, e.g., verbal subtests on comprehension, arithmetic, similarities, digit span and vocabulary, the other performance subtests like digit symbol, picture completion, block design, picture arrangement, etc., would provide some insight into the candidate's intellectual abilities.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ See BERTRAND, "Assessment Tools," pp. 2-3; MEIER, "Psychological Testing," p. 2; BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Testing," p. 8. The majority of institutes who responded to the questionnaire use questionnaires and interviews. For very useful and practical insights on the use of the autobiography in vocation discernment, see P. GARVIN, "The Autobiography in Vocation Discernment," in *Human Development*, 22 no. 4 (1999), pp. 22-28.

¹⁴⁴ See BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Testing," pp. 8-10; COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 33-34; MEIER, "Psychological Testing," p. 4; JEAN, "Screening Candidates," p. 1.

¹⁴⁵ JEAN, "Screening Candidates," p. 1.

¹⁴⁶ BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Testing," pp. 8-10. For the IQ score scale and a summary of the several intellectual areas assessed by the Verbal and Performance Subtest Scale Scores, see diagrams in *ibid.*, pp. 9 and 10 respectively. For detailed historical foundations and explanation of this test, see J.E. LINDERMAN, J.D. MATARAZZO, "Assessment of Adult Intelligence," in GOLDSTEIN, HERSEN (eds), *Handbook of Psychological Assessment*, pp. 79-101.

3.4.4.6 - Self-Rating Tests of Personality

There are several self-rating objective tests of personality which almost every author on assessment of candidates for religious life or priesthood mentions. The most popular of these is the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (MMPI). According to Keller and associates, it has been translated into 115 foreign languages.¹⁴⁷ According to Meier, this instrument is the most researched psychological test and is used in a broad range of mental settings. "In candidates for ministry, it can be used to identify severe psychopathology, personality disorders, ego/self resources, personality style and personal strengths. It can also be used to suggest growing edges."¹⁴⁸ Interpretation of clients' scores is based on the following ten established and widely used clinical scales: hypochondriasis, depression, hysteria, psychopathic deviation, masculinity-femininity, paranoia, psychasthenia, schizophrenia and hypomania and social introversion. There are also three other special scales, anxiety, repression, ego strength and MacAndrew addiction.¹⁴⁹

Another popular personality test is Edward's Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS). Based on Henry Murray's personality theory, Edwards developed an inventory to assess the strength of need-tension. He drew 15 needs from Murray's research and prepared sets of items whose domain or content appeared to fit each of these needs. The candidate must make a choice, selecting one statement which is more characteristic of his or her need-tension. The rationale behind the scaling is that all people have needs and that attitudes are related to values which originate in their deep and insistent needs.

¹⁴⁷ KELLER et al., "Objective Personality Assessment," p. 348. For references to use of the test in assessment of candidates for ministry, see BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Testing," pp. 10-11. FRISON, *Selection and Incorporation of Candidates*, p. 102; COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 33-34; MEIER, "Psychological Testing," p. 4; JEAN, "Screening Candidates," p. 1; SAFFIOTTI, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 7-8; RIPMAN, "Personality Testing," p. 24. RULLA, *Entering and Leaving Vocation*, p. 51.

¹⁴⁸ MEIER, "Psychological Testing," p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ For an explanation of the administration of the test and a description of these personality characteristics, see BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Testing," pp. 9-10; KELLER et al. "Objective Personality Assessment," pp. 345-380. New MMPI-2 has several new items. See *ibid.*, p. 359.

EPPS is supposed to help to discern the needs motivating behaviour and influencing a person's life.¹⁵⁰ An important aspect of discerning one's vocation is examining one's motives for wanting to join religious life and the tool thus becomes very relevant.

The Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory is also used to discern vocation as it measures interest patterns.¹⁵¹ Other personality tests of the objective type are the

[...] FIRO-B, an instrument derived from a Three-Dimensional Theory of Interpersonal behaviour by Schutz. This is used to measure a person's characteristic behaviour toward other people in the areas of inclusion, control and affection. The Separation-Individuation Process Inventory (S-IPI) assesses boundary, trust and control issues in interpersonal relationships especially where there have been disturbances in the childhood processes of separation and individuation as manifested in adult pathology. There is also the Splitting Scale (SS) which identifies the extent to which splitting is used as a coping strategy. It also identifies borderline and narcissistic disorders and personality styles.¹⁵²

G. Jean likes to use the personality test called NEO-PI-R because "it yields information on 5 important personality factors: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Each of the scales has six subscales which, overall, yield a very good profile of the candidate."¹⁵³ With regards to assessment of motivation, Jean uses the Motivation Analysis Test (MAT). This covers "10 areas of motivation: career sentiment, home-parental sentiment, fear, narcissism-comfort, superego sentiment, self-sentiment, mating, pugnacity-sadism, assertiveness and sweet-heart spouse (the last pertains to affirmation, non-sexual love)."¹⁵⁴

The other category of popular personality tests are those referred to as subjective or projective. The most commonly used ones are the Rorschach Inkblots, the Thematic

¹⁵⁰ BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Testing," pp. 11-12. Meier uses a similar tool called Personality Research Form (PRF) which provides a description of a person's personality style and can suggest areas to consider for further growth and development. See MEIER, "Psychological Testing," p. 2.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² MEIER, "Psychological Testing," pp. 2-3.

¹⁵³ JEAN, "Screening Candidates," p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Apperception Test (T.A.T.), Sentence Completion, Draw a Person and Hutt Adaptation of the Bender Gestalt.¹⁵⁵ Meier gives a simple but clear description of the Rorschach test and its strengths regarding assessment of candidates. He describes it as:

[...] a ten-card inkblot projective test which is extremely helpful to assess the degree to which a person has integrated basic needs, desires and impulses with a value system, is able to control emotions and desires and use inner resources to creatively adapt to the environment. The projective also provides data regarding a person's creative and emphatic resources and the manner in which she/he copes with life situations.¹⁵⁶

According to Blanchette, the Rorschach is regarded as very powerful for "predicting suicide attempts, formulating treatment plans and evaluating the progress of therapy. [...] It also enables a clinician to gather, in one hour, information that would take hours or weeks of ordinary interviews."¹⁵⁷ Most clinicians, however, need at least three courses to prepare them to give and interpret the test.¹⁵⁸ The T.A.T. enables the clinician to understand how a person makes sense out of an unstructured situation by telling a story about it. This helps "to assess personal and interpersonal qualities, styles and patterns, [e.g.] typical coping mechanisms, attitude about life, aspects of self identity, interpersonal patterns and issues of trust and control."¹⁵⁹

Sentence Completion provides a candidate with a wide range of situations to which respond, and responses reveal important information about relationships in a person's life, emotions, fears, attitudes and wishes. The Hutt Adaptation of the Bender

¹⁵⁵ See COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," pp. 33-34; RIPMAN, "Personality Testing," p. 24; SAFFIOTTI, "Psychological Assessment," p. 8; BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Testing," pp.13-15; MEIER, "Psychological Testing," p. 2; JEAN, "Screening Candidates," p. 1; ROSSETTI, *A Tragic Grace*, p. 67.

¹⁵⁶ MEIER, "Psychological Testing," p. 3. For a more elaborate description and explanation of the test and its achievements in tested candidates, see ERDBERG, "Rorschach Assessment," pp. 389-399.

¹⁵⁷ BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Testing," p. 15.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ MEIER, "Psychological Testing," p. 3.

Gestalt involves copying and elaborating with only a few words needed. It gives the defence mechanisms an opportunity to be expressed in writing through drawings without words, thus providing the clinician an opportunity to observe both the product and process of personality functioning.¹⁶⁰ Jean finds the Draw-a-Person Test very useful in detecting sexual problems, the subject's handling of anger, etc.¹⁶¹

There are thus numerous self-rating personality tests available for assessing candidates for religious life. The few discussed in this work appear to be the ones currently used widely in some American institutes. However, while psychological tests appear to be very popularly used in assessing candidates, sometimes there does not seem to be a clear link between the tests and the qualities directly connected with religious life. This is because the tests were obviously designed for other purposes and not necessarily for assessing candidates for religious life.

3.4.4.7 - Assessing Psycho-sexual Maturity and Screening for Pedophilia

While most of the above-mentioned personality tests will reveal something about the psycho-sexual maturity level of candidates, a behavioural interview is much more direct and effective. The goal is not just to detect anomalies, but also to recognize and affirm positive intimacy skills for celibacy. It is, however, very important to watch out for asexuality, which Carey believes, does more damage in the Church than pedophilia.¹⁶²

Taking into account the geographical, cultural, linguistic context of the candidates and also the kind of institute, some of the skills to look out for are:

Self-esteem development; enjoyment of one's company; internal locus of control development; having God as the grounding of one's life; awareness of gratitude in one's life, prizing one's own sexuality; ownership of one's own sexual orientation; being alert for identifying ongoing needs for celibacy skill

¹⁶⁰ BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Testing," p. 15.

¹⁶¹ JEAN, "Screening Candidates," p. 1.

¹⁶² R. CAREY, "Psychosexuality and the Development of Celibacy Skills," *Paper Presented at a Behavioural Assessment Workshop*, St Louis, MO, January, 2000.

development; monitoring fantasy; compassion; caring presence; generosity; being other-centred; appropriate confiding; interpersonal trust; loyalty; appropriate expression of affection; inclusive relationships; commitment; fidelity; taking charge of ones own life; managing ones' life well in regard to health; managing anger well; living from a regularly practised work ethic rooted in discipline; managing disappointments well; setting goals and working toward them; learned resourcefulness. ¹⁶³

It is advisable to ask questions on sexuality towards the end of the interview when the candidate, hopefully, by this time, feels more confident and comfortable in the interviewer to talk about this sensitive issue.

Currently surfacing problems¹⁶⁴ seem to have necessitated an approach more focussed on the issue. Even if there is no single instrument that can reliably identify a potential pedophile, the one believed to be currently most helpful is the intensive psychosexual history interview designed by Stephen Rossetti.¹⁶⁵ The interview needs to be conducted by an experienced clinician who will need to ask very direct questions and be able to detect whether or not the interviewee is telling the truth.¹⁶⁶ Questions will also need to be adapted to the age and culture of the candidates.¹⁶⁷

Since Rossetti's suggested psychosexual history interview is aimed at screening for pedophilia, it highlights what he refers to as "Six Psychological Red Flags." These are signs for potential pedophilia. The first sign is when someone between 25 and 35 years of age is still confused about his or her sexual orientation. Evidence of this

¹⁶³ Ibid., pp. 2-5. See also the section entitled "Psychosexual Maturity" in chapter 2 of this work.

¹⁶⁴ For evidence of these problems, see references in footnote 12 of this chapter. See also A. W. SIPE, *A Secret World: Sexuality and the Search for Celibacy*, New York, Prunner/Mazel, 1990, pp. 136-145.

¹⁶⁵ See ROSSETTI, *A Tragic Grace*, p. 67-78. Rossetti regards "the Abel Screen test, polygraph tests and penile plethysmographics for all male candidates for religious life as pastorally imprudent, insensitive and highly invasive of one's privacy." see *ibid.*, p. 65. In any case the scientific validity of such tests is also questionable. For a description of these tests, see *ibid.*, pp. 64-65. See also SAFFIOTTI, "Psychological Assessment," p. 8.

¹⁶⁶ ROSSETTI, *A Tragic Grace*, pp. 68 and 78.

¹⁶⁷ MARIE, "Vocational Assessment," p. 32.

confusion is the difficulty one might have in explaining how they know their sexual orientation. Possible reasons for such confusion may be naivety from over-protection, major mental illness, having been made to feel ashamed of one's sexual feelings as a child or slowed psychosexual development.¹⁶⁸ A rather sensitive and controversial problem arising from sexual orientation (depending on culture and institute) is when a candidate is homosexual or lesbian. D. Goergen's opinion seems to be the fairest. He argues that there is a difference between being a homosexual [or lesbian], i.e., having a sexual orientation that is predominantly homosexual and being 'gay' which means living according to a certain lifestyle based on the gay culture standards. Several dimensions of gay culture (maintaining a gay network) may be incompatible with religious life. On the other hand, there could be "a homosexual whose deepest source of identity is not his sexuality but his faith and its accompanying required way of life;" he can live religious life happily and effectively. He further argues that the homosexual, like anyone else embracing religious life, needs to choose where one's deepest commitment lies.¹⁶⁹

The second red flag is continued childish interests and behaviour arising from serious emotional immaturity. This is evident in the candidates' hobbies or the movies they watch which may all be childish. While some people are genuinely and specially gifted with children, others emotionally connect well with them because they

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

¹⁶⁹ D. GOERGEN, "Calling Forth a Healthy Chaste Life," in *RfR*, 57 (1998), p. 269. For a similar opinion on the issue, see J. HALSTEAD, J. SCANLON, "Candidate Issues Challenge Formators," in *Horizon*, 17, no. 4 (1992), pp. 25-26; B. PIERCE, "Friendship and Celibacy: Seeing Beauty from a 'Holy Distance'," in *RfR*, 58 (1999), pp. 176-178; T. RADCLIFFE, "The Affective Life," in *Religious Life Review*, 37 (1998), pp. 207-208. According to Carey, a mere label without the behavioural data is insufficient. The assessor needs evidence on attraction, arousal, experience and orientation. He goes on to suggest special skills for gay religious, adult children of alcoholics or adult survivors of child abuse. See CAREY, "Psychosexuality," p. 6. Jakubiak and Murphy express the need for a similar attitude towards incest survivors who may be in religious life and in need of healing. See JAKUBIAK and MURPHY, "Incest Survivors," pp. 19-25. Since homosexuality is taboo in some cultures, admitting that inclination would be extremely difficult for someone in that culture. See COLEMAN, "Taking a Sexual History," p. 13.

themselves are children, and it is difficult to distinguish.¹⁷⁰

The third psychological red flag is lack of satisfying intimate relationships with peers. Potential pedophiles are “basically psychic children without the emotional tools to relate with others of their age ... Relationship with adults may simply be ‘stereotyped - just nice but distant’.”¹⁷¹ They may not even know what an intimate relationship is and so cannot identify one. According to Rossetti, the following questions will reveal whether or not an individual has close friends or mere acquaintances: “How often do you see your best friend? What do you do together? What do you talk about? How do you know when you need emotional support and where do you go to get it? How much of yourself do you reveal to your friends?”¹⁷²

Rossetti’s fourth psychological red flag is the presence of extremes in developmental sexual experiences. It would be suspicious for someone to have had either too deep or too extensive sexual contacts or none whatsoever as a child or a teenager. Sexual contact in childhood can range from normal adolescent individual or group masturbation and dating accompanied by some physical expression of affection such as kissing and fondling. Some adults, however, may have had unhealthy sexual experiences such as compulsive masturbation or incestuous relationships with siblings or other relatives. As adults, people with such a sexual history usually end up as pedophiles (attracted to pre-pubescent minors) or ephebophiles (attracted to post-pubescent minors).¹⁷³

The other extreme are those who deny having had any sexual experience whatsoever, no masturbation and no sexual attraction to anyone. While this may be true,

¹⁷⁰ ROSSETTI, *A Tragic Grace*, p. 70.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid., pp. 70-71.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 72. See also KELLER, “Sexual Abuse of Minors,” pp. 30-31. JAKUBIAK and MURPHY, “Incest Survivors,” p. 23; R.P. VAUGHAN, “Adult Effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse,” in *Human Development*, 18, no. 2 (1997), pp. 38-42; N. SANGAL, “Effects of Incest on Matrimonial Consent,” in *SiC*, 30 (1996), pp. 5-30.

more often than not, the person, afraid to say the whole truth, suppresses one's sexuality and is in danger of cracking at one time or the other, especially during mid-life.¹⁷⁴

The fifth psychological red flag is a personal history of childhood sexual abuse and or deviant sexual experiences. While many people who were sexually abused as children manage to live psychologically healthy lives as adults, some of them end up as adult sexual abusers of children themselves. Rossetti testifies: "Approximately two thirds of the priests we have evaluated for sexual molestation of minors have themselves been sexually molested as children."¹⁷⁵ Sometimes the abuse is unrecognized, but the effects remain until they are admitted and healed. Loose sexual boundaries or excessive exposure to sex in the family may lead to undue interest in pornography as adults.¹⁷⁶

The sixth red flag for potential child abuse is an excessively passive, dependent and conforming personality. People with such a personality are known to suffer from low self-esteem, fearfulness and personal insecurity. They aim at pleasing the interviewer and authority rather than expressing their real feelings, especially the negative ones. In an attempt to be what others want them to be, they lack a certain amount of healthy self-assertiveness. Such personalities are known to become sexual abusers when their personality organisation breaks down.¹⁷⁷

There is no doubt that such an intensive psychosexual history inevitably violates one's privacy and should be treated as an internal forum matter limited only to the clinician and, if need be, to the spiritual director.¹⁷⁸ Whether any previous sexual involvement will lead to non-admittance to religious life in an institute will depend on

¹⁷⁴ ROSSETTI, *A Tragic Grace*, p. 73.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 74.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 75. See also JAKUBIAK and MURPHY, "Incest Survivors," pp. 19-23; HALSTEAD, SCANLON, "Candidate Issues," pp. 27-28.

¹⁷⁷ ROSSETTI, *A Tragic Grace*, pp. 75-77. See also JAKUBIAK and MURPHY, "Incest Survivors," p. 22.

¹⁷⁸ COLEMAN, "Taking a Sexual History," p. 12. See also ROSSETTI, *A Tragic Grace*, p. 78.

its gravity and on the expectations of the institute itself. While some previous experiences are too drastic to accept, others can be worked through and healed.¹⁷⁹

3.3.4.8 - Assessing Spiritual Maturity

There are several instruments which can be used to assess candidates' spiritual maturity.

There is the Religious Orientation Scale which has

[...] three subscales assessing the role of religion in an individual, e.g. faith as being utilitarian versus faith being a value in its own right, the degree to which a person's religion involves an open ended dialogue with existential questions, and a person's problem solving style relative to the place of God in this process.¹⁸⁰

There is also the God Image Inventory, which is a 72 item scale designed to measure not so much an individual's concept of God, but one's personal experience and feelings about God. The items may be reduced to 36. The GII measures the following areas in one's relationship with God:

- 1) Presence: Is God there for me?
- 2) Challenge: Does God want me to grow?
- 3) Acceptance: Am I good enough for God to love me?
- 4) Benevolence: Is God the sort of person who would want to love me?
- 5) Influence: How much can I control God?
- 6) Providence: How much can God control me?
- 7) Do I believe that my God image corresponds to a being who actually exists?
- 8) Salience: How important is my relationship with this God.¹⁸¹

The GII has proved very useful as a screening tool and its administration is currently

¹⁷⁹ ROSSETTI, *A Tragic Grace*, p. 75.

¹⁸⁰ See MEIER, "Psychological Testing," p. 2-3. There are several tests for these qualities. See C. BATSON, P.A. SCHOENRADE, "Measuring Religion as Quest: 2) Reliability Concerns," in *Journal for the Scientific Journal of Religion*, 30, (1991), pp. 430-447; R.L. GORSUCH, S.E. MCPHERSON, "Intrinsic/Extrinsic Measurement: IE Revised and Single Item Scales," in *Journal for the Scientific Journal of Religion*, 28, (1989), pp. 348-354; K.I. PARGAMENT et al., "Religion and the Problem-Solving Process: Three Styles of Coping," in *Journal for the Scientific Journal of Religion*, 27 (1988), pp. 90-104; C.W. ELLISON, "Spiritual Well-Being: Conceptualization and Measurement," in *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 11 (1983), pp. 330-340.

¹⁸¹ R.T. LAWRENCE, "Measuring the Image of God: The God Image Inventory and the God Image Scales," in *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 25, no. 2 (1997), pp. 215-216.

facilitated by its computerization.¹⁸²

There is also the Spiritual Experience Index whose task the author well summarizes thus:

The Spiritual Experience Index was developed to measure spiritual maturity in persons of diverse religious and spiritual beliefs. The scale was constructed from a developmental rather than a multidimensional conceptualization of faith. [...] Higher scores on the SEI were significantly related to lower dogmatism and intolerance of ambiguity. The SEI was also moderately related to higher religious participation and positively correlated with intrinsicness and quest. However, compared with the intrinsic and quest scales, [despite its few limitations] the SEI emerged as the strongest indicator of adaptive spiritual functioning.¹⁸³

The Spiritual Assessment Inventory measures two dimensions in one's relationship with God, namely, one's awareness of "how God is intricately involved in every aspect of one's life [...] the ability to listen to God, to notice his presence and to savour his responses," and the quality of this relationship.¹⁸⁴

A well-conducted behavioural assessment interview is able to gather data for all the above-mentioned categories in one session.¹⁸⁵

3.4.4.9 - The Assessment Report

Before the psychologist issues a report to the institution that has employed him or her to assess candidates, it is important that he or she give the candidate some

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 221.

¹⁸³ V. GENIA, "The Spiritual Experience Index: A Measure of Spiritual Maturity," in *Journal of Religion and Health*, 30, no. 4 (1991), p. 337.

¹⁸⁴ T.W. HALL, K.J. EDWARDS, "The Initial Development and Factor Analysis of the Spiritual Assessment Inventory," in *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 24, no. 3 (1996), p. 237. For details of the development and factor analyses of the Spiritual Assessment Inventory and the actual assessment questions, see this whole article, pp. 233-246.

¹⁸⁵ As for the skills and techniques enabling the interviewer to extract the data from the interviewee, see P. YATERNICK, R.P. CAREY, "Interviewing Skills," *Paper Presented at a Behavioural Assessment Workshop*, St Louis, MO, January, 2000.

feedback on the psychological assessment.¹⁸⁶ After all it is the candidate who has to choose and live the life. This is also only fair, considering the effort and reflection one needs to answer the questions, most of which demand exposure of some of one's most private personal information. Due to the delicate nature of issues at stake, the feedback is best given by the assessor who, in most cases, will know how best to make an individual aware of some findings which may be painful. A candidate may not be aware of what conflicts he or she might have. Suggesting a way of giving helpful feedback to a candidate, L. Gendron distinguishes between merely 'giving information' and 'communication' in which case the information is interpreted so as to fit "the context of one's educational attainments, personal history, belief system."¹⁸⁷ This kind of feedback provides a chance for the candidate to ask questions and for the assessor to obtain further clarification.

Depending on how much the candidate can handle at a time, she or he might need further counselling and therapy. Regarding some of the dangers of lack of this follow-up, some candidates have felt that "the assessment had opened them up as for an operation and then left the wounds open, merely being told they should seek help."¹⁸⁸

The contents of an assessment report will depend on the guidelines outlined by the institute, and since in this case it is aimed at assessing the level of maturity, the areas will be more or less those listed earlier on in this chapter. The style, level and techniques of reporting will depend on the intended reader. In most cases, the recipient may be a major superior with hardly any training in psychology and so the report needs to be

¹⁸⁶ T.N. MCCARTHY, "The Content and Use of the Psychological Report in Religious Candidate Assessment," in W.J. COVILLE et al., *Assessment of Candidates for the Religious Life: Basic Psychological Issues and Procedures*, Washington, DC, Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 1968, p. 93. See also BATSIS, "The Psychological Report," p. 14; GENDRON, "Psychological Testing," p. 170; BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 16; MARTEAU, "Assessment," p. 33; SAFFIOTTI, "Psychological Assessment," p. 9.

¹⁸⁷ SAFFIOTTI, "Psychological Assessment," p. 9. See also MCCARTHY, "The Psychological Report," p. 94; GENDRON, "Psychological Testing," p. 170.

¹⁸⁸ MARTEAU, "Assessment," p. 33. See also GENDRON, "Psychological Testing," p. 171; BLANCHETTE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 16; SAFFIOTTI, "Psychological Assessment," p. 9.

written in ordinary, clear everyday language.¹⁸⁹ Instead of being merely descriptive, a useful report needs to be interpretive, showing the relationship between the psychological characteristics and the behaviour. Whatever issue is raised needs to be illustrated, pointing out why it is a concern, the degree of the concern and its consequences for religious life.¹⁹⁰

There is need for balance in the amount of information given in the report, while some assessors will include the rating scales and the raw test scores, Coville thinks that only the interpretation is enough.¹⁹¹ The psychologist normally concludes the report with a recommendation about the candidate's psychological suitability for admission to religious life. However, the final judgement and decision concerning the candidate's suitability is the major superior's responsibility according to c. 641. The major superior and her council take into consideration several other reports of which the assessment report is, no doubt, an important one.¹⁹²

CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to discuss assessment of maturity for admission to religious life in terms of the rationale behind it, and the techniques and tools currently in use. Evidently, there are many difficulties likely to be encountered in the exercise. These stem from the complexity of the nature of maturity, namely, that it is developmental and hard to quantify and qualify without being too subjective about it. Religious vocation has a divine element in it necessitating caution in anyone who might mistakenly thwart

¹⁸⁹ MCCARTHY, "The Psychological Report," pp. 72-73. See also MARTEAU, "Assessment," p. 33.

¹⁹⁰ BATSIS, "The Psychological Report," pp. 3-4. See also MCCARTHY, "The Psychological Report," pp. 79-80.

¹⁹¹ COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 35. See also BATSIS, "The Psychological Report," p. 3.

¹⁹² COVILLE, "Psychological Assessment," p. 36. See also FRISON, *Selection and Incorporation of Candidates*, p. 98; COSTELLO, "Psychological Evaluation," p. 38.

a genuine vocation for lack of the required level of maturity. Nevertheless, the importance of maturity in religious life as illustrated in chapter two and the importance of its effective role in the Church necessitates the exercise.

For a number of reasons, both the candidates and the institutes need to know the candidate's level of maturity as well as their expectations before committing themselves. As illustrated in chapter two, religious life is very challenging in terms of maturity. The legal status of the novitiate also demands a certain amount of readiness before one is admitted into it. When assessment is conducted before admission, then appropriate individual and group formation programmes can be drawn up. There is a wide range of possible psychological disorders which may be lying dormant in individuals at admission but which may erupt later in life. Members seriously affected by such disorders may disrupt not only community life but may incur enormous medical or legal expenses for their communities. They may also end up very unhappy and ineffective or even harmful in their ministries.

It became clear that the main method for assessing maturity is psychological. While all assessment of maturity is, in a broad sense, behavioural, strictly speaking, it is in two parts, traditional and behavioural. Traditional assessment is based on the theory that people behave the way they do due to recognizable deeply-rooted personality traits. Behavioural assessment, on the other hand, is based on the belief that people are what they often do under certain similar circumstances, conditions and environments. While traditional assessment usually employs objective and projective psychological tests, behavioural assessment mainly relies on interviews, observation and sampling of behaviour. Both methods have strengths and weaknesses and in reality probably complement each other.

A chronological survey of papal and curial documents on psychological assessment revealed an initial cautious tolerance of the practice which has developed into an open acknowledgement and acceptance of its use. The main concern all along, however, has been the need to ensure protection of individual privacy and reputation during the process. The 1983 Code seems to have made the basic provision for the

balance between the need for the institute to know and the protection of individual privacy.

A long term technique in assessing maturity of candidates to religious life begins with members' effort to live the life as maturely as possible so as to attract mature candidates. Then there is the need to draw up an assessment programme defining clearly the goals of an institute in terms of its identity, spirituality, community life and mission. These are reflected in the institute's brochures, its recruitment talks and literature. The assessment programme spells out the role of the vocation director and the kind of pre-admission preparation for its candidates. Included in the programme would be the immediate psychological testing, if any, the kind of psychologist to be employed, the areas to be focussed on in the assessment, the report and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality. The areas on which most institutes focus in the assessment of their candidates coincide with the several aspects of personal maturity described in the second half of chapter one.

A recent survey on methods and tools currently used in assessing candidates has shown that institutes employ both the traditional and behavioural tools for assessing candidates with more of the traditional tools used. It seems many clinicians feel more secure using well-established tools which have passed the test of time. While all use the interview at one time or another especially for the psychosexual history, currently popular psychological tests, at least in some institutes in America are the objective personality tests, the MMPI, the PRF, the FIRO-B, the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, the S-IPI, the SS, the ROS, the NEO-PI-R, the MAT, the EPPS, the SCII. Currently popular projective tests are the Rorschach Inkblots, the TAT, Sentence Completion, Draw a Person and Hutt Adaptation of the Bender Gestalt. Some instruments used to assess spiritual maturity are the GII, the SEI, the SAI, etc. It is very important that the assessor gives feedback to the candidate and, if need be, also conduct follow-up counselling or refer candidates elsewhere for help.

Since the psychological tests listed above are obviously used for many different things, in the case of assessment of candidates for religious life, the success of the tests

depends on the assessor and what it is he/she is looking for. It is also likely that such tests are really only effective in the culture in which they were standardized and not universally. At times, it also seems hard to use them to target qualities directly linked with religious life. Nevertheless, the brief analysis of these tests in this work has not been futile. It is important for leadership personnel to have an idea of what they are and what they are supposed to do in their proper context. With that understanding, they may then choose whatever they find effective. Some people may even adapt and standardize them for different cultures. Behavioural assessment, however, can be used universally.

In the next chapter, we will try to apply most of the issues explored in these three chapters to religious life in Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER FOUR

APPLICATION OF MATURITY AND ITS ASSESSMENT IN ZIMBABWE

INTRODUCTION

It seems clear from our discussion in chapter three that assessment of maturity is basically a psychological exercise based on behaviour. Assessment of maturity involves identifying the relevant criteria to be investigated. Although, in this case, the general psychological development of the human personality expected by a certain age will be almost universal, there are marked differences due to a number of factors.

Culture (which includes a people's world view, values, customs, language, religion, dress, diet etc.) sets the general standard of behaviour acceptable at the different psychological developmental stages of its people. The criteria for assessing candidates for religious life will also be based on the spiritual patrimony of each institute (cc. 578, 586-587): who the members say they are, the origin of their institute, what their goals are and how they go about achieving them determines what they look for in their prospective members. Effective assessment also involves proper administration, good planning with long and short term goals, recruitment, pre-novitiate programmes, etc. It involves getting the personnel best equipped to carry it out effectively.

Having explored these issues in the context of the Western society, we will now try to examine the applicability of these principles to Zimbabwe. Therefore, this chapter will answer the following questions. Who is a mature person in the Zimbabwean culture in the light of its world view? What is the notion of religious life in the Zimbabwean culture? Since religious life means following Christ closely, what is the spiritual and Christian maturity of Zimbabweans? What cultural practices support/challenge mature religious life in Zimbabwe? How is maturity for admission to religious life assessed in Zimbabwe?

Before we begin to talk about maturity and its assessment in candidates for admission to religious life in Zimbabwe, it seems appropriate to locate Zimbabwe on

the map and to provide some basic background information about the Church there.

4.1 - A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe is situated in central Southern Africa, just to the north of South Africa. It shares borders with Zambia to its north, Malawi and Mozambique to the east, South Africa and Botswana to the south. Zimbabwe currently has about eleven and half million people.¹

The first converts to Christianity date back to 1561, when Fr. Goncalo da Silveira, a Jesuit, converted king Munhumutapa and his mother. The missionary, however, was soon murdered "at the instigation of jealous Arab traders."² One of the Munhumutapa's sons was the first Zimbabwean priest to be ordained. He was, however, ordained as a Dominican priest in India, worked there and never returned home.³ For the next few centuries, both the Jesuits and the Dominicans tried in vain to revive missionary work in present day Zimbabwe and part of Mozambique. Reasonable success came towards the end of the 19th century with the establishment of the Empandeni Mission in 1887 near Plumtree, in the western part of the country.

The occupation of the country by Cecil John Rhodes and the British settlers in 1890, who brought along with them Jesuit priests and Dominican sisters, marked the beginning of continuous missionary work in Zimbabwe. Many other institutes later joined the Jesuits and the Dominicans.⁴ While most of the institutes were of expatriate

¹ ZIMBABWE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE (=ZCBC), *Catholic Directory of Zimbabwe 1998/1999*, Harare, Kolbe Press, 1998, pp. 15, 27, 37, 45, 65, 85 and 95.

² ZCBC, *A Historical Background*, Harare, Social Communications Department of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference, 1995, p. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴ For a list of the several missionary orders, in chronological order of their arrival to evangelize in Zimbabwe and some of the major events in the Church up to 1988, see *ibid.*, pp. 11-15. For detailed information on missionary work in Zimbabwe during the same period, see also A.J. DACHS, W.F. REA, *The Catholic Church and Zimbabwe 1879-1979*, Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1979,

origin, there were also a few indigenous institutes founded during the course of the 20th century.

In 1923, Bishop Fleischer of Mariannhill of South Africa approved the foundation in Zimbabwe of the Trinity Sisters, composed of widows who did not wish to enter a second marriage. This was not, however, a canonical congregation as members took private vows annually. Archbishop Aston Ignatius Chichester founded the first Zimbabwean diocesan congregation of sisters, the Little Children of Our Blessed Lady. The first group of novices was received in 1932. Then the Sisters of the Infant Jesus were founded in Gweru diocese by Bishop Aloysius Haene, in 1950; in 1956, the Sisters of Mary the Queen by Bishop Adolph Schmitt in Bulawayo; in 1959 the Handmaids of Mount Carmel by Bishop Donald Lamont for Mutare diocese. A diocesan institute of brothers, St. Paul's Brothers, was also founded in Gweru by Bishop Chiginya. Many expatriate institutes, notably the Precious Blood and the Dominican Sisters have, for quite a long time now, also been admitting indigenous young people into their institutes.⁵ There are now about 40 male and female religious institutes in Zimbabwe.⁶

In 1955, the Ecclesiastical Province of Southern Rhodesia was established. It consisted of the whole country. In 1969, the Rhodesia Catholic Bishops' Conference was established.⁷ Of the total population of Zimbabwe, 11 % is Catholic. The Church now has two ecclesiastical provinces, the province of Harare, with Harare Archdiocese and its three suffragan sees, namely Mutare, Chinhoyi and Gokwe. The second province

pp. 1-260; ZCBC, *100 Years 1879-1979: Centenary of the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe Rhodesia*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 1979, pp. 1-62.

⁵ DACHS and REA, *The Catholic Church and Zimbabwe*, pp. 139-140, 146 and 163. See also ZCBC, *A Historical Background*, pp. 7-8; ZCBC, "Pastoral Letter for the New Millennium, 2000 A.D.: Jesus Christ the Same Yesterday, Today and Forever. (Heb. 13:8)," in *Crossroads*, 169 (1999), pp. 11-13.

⁶ ZCBC, *Catholic Directory of Zimbabwe*, pp. 105-107.

⁷ ZCBC, *A Historical Background*, p. 5.

is made up of the Archdiocese of Bulawayo and its suffragan sees, Gweru, Hwange and Masvingo.⁸

Now that we have situated ourselves in Zimbabwe, geographically, demographically and ecclesially, we will go on to explore the notion of personal maturity in the light of the Zimbabwean culture.

4.2 - PERSONAL MATURITY IN THE ZIMBABWEAN CULTURE

Before going on to describe the mature person in the Zimbabwean culture, it is important to specify to whom exactly we are referring. There are two main distinct tribes in Zimbabwe, namely the Shona and the Ndebele. The Shona comprise about 80% of the indigenous Zimbabweans and occupy most of the country. Although the Shona people are composed of several groups: the Zezuru, Karanga, Manyika, Tonga, Korekore, Ndau, Kalanga etc., all with different dialects, they all speak the Shona language and can understand one another. The Ndebele who are really of Zulu origin and who came to Zimbabwe in the 19th century, having broken away from Tshaka, make up the other 20 % of the indigenous people. Their language is quite different from Shona.⁹ Consequently most of the issues that will be discussed in this chapter will be based on the Shona culture. However, it is also evident in many cases that, apart from a few differences in practices, there is much more in common between the Shona and the Ndebele people, and even among indigenous Africans as a whole, in terms of major beliefs and world view.¹⁰ Therefore in some cases the term African will be used to

⁸ For detailed information about the the ZCBC composition, its officials, its secretariate, commissions, councils, committees, societies and inter-diocesan organizations on the national and diocesan levels, see *ibid.* See also ZCBC, *Catholic Directory*, pp. 6-11; ZCBC, *A Historical Background*, pp. 16-22.

⁹ ZCBC, *A Historical Background*, p. 8. See also M. GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona: Survival Values of an African Culture*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 1982, introduction p. 7.

¹⁰ See W. BOZONGWANA, *Ndebele Religion and Customs*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 1983. According to R. Kaggwa, some common cultural similarities among African peoples are: the existence of only one religion with no dogmas or doctrine or missionary activity outside the ethnic groups, dependence on continuity for survival, stress on authority, hierarchy and the role of the

replace Zimbabwean or Shona and Ndebele.

4.2.1 - The Indigenous Zimbabwean World View/Values

A peoples' world view is foundational in determining its criteria of acceptable behavioural norms. Therefore, a brief examination of the traditional Zimbabwean world view will enlighten us on why certain things are more important to them than others. What C. Nyamiti describes as the African world view equally applies to the Shona people.¹¹ Like the rest of the Africans they are first and foremost preoccupied with begetting, preserving and perpetuating life. This is part of their religion.

4.2.1.1 - Religion

Life is believed to emanate from *Mwari*, the Shona word for God described by M. Daneel as a Tanzanian term which refers to God as the 'sower' - the God of fertility, primarily that of crops and women.¹² This God is also *Musiki*, *Muvumbapasi*, the Creator of the whole universe, *Musikavanhu*, Creator of people, *Mutangakugara*, *Muwanikwa*, one who existed long before anyone or anything.¹³ This life is viewed in a very broad

ancestors. There is moreover no sharp distinction between what is sacred and what is secular. See R. KAGGWA, "Looking at Power in Africa," in *Priests and People*, 11(1997), p. 349. C. Nyamiti also gives a comprehensive summary of the general African conception of ancestorship. See C. NYAMITI, *Christ as our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 1984, pp. 15-16.

¹¹ C. NYAMITI, *African Tradition and the Christian God*, Kenya, Gaba Publications, 1977, p. 44.

¹² M.L. DANEEL, *The God of the Matopo Hills: An Essay on the Mwari Cult in Rhodesia*, The Hague, Mouton, 1970, p. 17. See also NYAMITI, *African Tradition*, p. 53.

¹³ DANEEL, *The God of the Matopo Hills*, p. 17. For similar and many more attributes of God as the origin and sustainer of life, see also J.S. MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, New York, Praeger, 1975, pp. 40-53. According to Dachs and Rea, quoting the opinion of Fr. J. Apel one of the first Jesuits priests in Zimbabwe, "The Natives all over the country speak of Mwari as the Creator all powerful and the Ruler of the universe. To them he is 'Dominus qui fecit coelum et terram'." See DACHS and REA, *The Catholic Church and Zimbabwe*, p. 9. All this evidence seems to dispel the doubt that the traditional Zimbabwean people ever believed in God. See M. GELFAND, *Shona Religion, with Special Reference to the Makorekore*, Cape Town, Juta, 1962, pp. 142-143.

sense. It is something "which transcends mere biological generation... [it] embraces the whole of human existence ... [it] is understood as the totality of the dimensions which constitute the human as a person."¹⁴ The *vadzimu* (ancestors) play an important part in the transmission of this life as, apart from passing on to their children and grandchildren all the traditional heritage, they also give them their character and good behaviour.¹⁵ In fact, although all creation shares the same life, it is hierarchically ordered with God at the top, followed by clan spirits, then the ancestral spirits, the human person and lastly animals, birds and vegetation.¹⁶

There is also the belief that this life can increase or decrease. This explains the absence of any dichotomy between the secular and the sacred. M. Daneel testifies to "the Shona's intuitive awareness of God's presence rather than with a rationalized projection of His being."¹⁷ With reference to African religion in general, L. Magesa

¹⁴ B. BUJO, *African Theology in its Social Context*, translated from the German by J. O'DONOHUE, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1992, p. 21. C. Nyamiti appropriately refers to it as 'dynamism and vitality'. See NYAMITI, *African Tradition*, p. 44. According to M. Gelfand, "The end of Shona culture is survival. The means towards that end hinge on the complexus of beliefs, practices, taboos, social conventions and so on ..." See GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, p. 101. B. Bujo is probably right when he says that all these beliefs and practices are very sacred to the Africans and "are indeed sacramentals to them." See BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 127.

¹⁵ M. GELFAND, *The Spiritual Beliefs of the Shona: A Study based on Field Work Among the East-Central Shona*, Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1977, pp. 78; 80; 91-93. For more information on the role of ancestors among Africans, see also A. AKRONG, "Christology from an African Perspective," in J.S. POBEE (ed.), *Exploring Afro-Christology*, Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1992, pp. 121; MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, p. 73; NYAMITI, *African Tradition*, p. 45. For a comprehensive description and explanation of possession by ancestral spirits based on extensive research, see M.F. BOURDILLON, *Religion and Society: A Text for Africa*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 1991, pp. 328-333.

¹⁶ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, p. 114. See also ASCHWANDEN, H., *Symbols of Life: An Analysis of the Consciousness of the Karanga*. English translation by U. COOPER, Gweru, Mambo Press, 1982, p. 22; D.K. MUSONDA, "African Religious Symbols in Relation to Consecrated Life," in *African Ecclesial Review*, 39 (1997), pp. 161.

¹⁷ DANEEL, *The God of the Matopo Hills*, p. 17. See also J.M. ALT, "Re-rooting Religious Life in South Africa," in *RfR*, 51 (1992), p. 521. K.C. ANYAWU, "The African World View and Theory of Knowledge," in E.A. R. OMI and K.C. ANYAWU (eds.), *African Philosophy*, Rome, Catholic Book Agency, 1954, pp. 93-94; C.H. KRAFT, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-cultural Perspective*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 53-63; P. GALVIN, "Fundamental Societal Issues Affecting the Church's Evangelising Mission in Zimbabwe

reiterates:

Since it involves the whole of life, whatever one thinks, says, or does is religious or, at least, can have religious implications. In no way is anything understood apart from the context of God, the ancestors, and the spirits; in no way is any thought, word or act understood except in terms of good and bad, in the sense that such an attitude or behaviour either enhances or diminishes life.¹⁸

The way the traditional Shona life is permeated by religion is evident in the extent to which symbolism operates in the people's daily events.¹⁹ "Even if it (African Religion) has no sacred books, it is written everywhere in the life of the people. To be an African in the traditional setting is to be truly religious."²⁰ The religion is found in the rituals, ceremonies and festivals of the people, shrines, sacred places and religious objects, art, music and dance, proverbs, riddles and wise sayings, names of people and places, myths and legends.²¹ Almost all important events in Shona life are introduced by a prayer informing the ancestors and invoking their blessing.²² Although God occupies the highest place in Shona religion, he is not to be bothered with trifles. God is approached through the mediation of the ancestors. This is the normal way one approaches a

Today: la Inculturation," in T. RUSSELL (Director), *The Africa Synod: Zimbabwe Prepares*, Harare, Pastoral Centre, 1991, p. 9.

¹⁸ L. MAGESA, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1997, p. 58.

¹⁹ For a definition of symbolism, see L.J. LUZBETAK, *The Church and Cultures*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1988, p. 223. Elsewhere, Luzbetak says that symbolism answers basic questions such as: "Who and what am I? Why am I in the world? What is reality? How do humans differ from nonhumans (animals, objects, the invisible beings)? Who belongs to the invisible world and what are the invisible forces in the world? ... What about life after death? What in life or in the world is desirable or undesirable, and to what degree? See *ibid.*, p. 252. For similar definitions of the word 'symbol', see also BOURDILLON, *Religion and Society*, p. 352; MUSONDA, "African Religious Symbols," pp. 146-147 and 158; KRAFT, *Christianity in Culture*, p. 53. For quite a thorough treatment of symbolism in operation in the Shona traditional society, see ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, 332 pages.

²⁰ MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, p. 27. See also BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 23.

²¹ MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, pp. 21-26.

²² ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, pp. 181, 203, 263.

superior in the social structure.²³

4.2.1.2 - Community-mindedness

Solidarity, totality and participation are vital elements in the generation, promotion and preservation of this life. Hence family and community life are at the heart of the traditional Zimbabwean social structure. According to M. Gelfand, "The imperatives of Shona culture might perhaps, be reduced to the three basic guide lines: 'live together', 'keep the peace' and 'multiply'." ²⁴ The whole Shona social structure, traditional customs or social teachings are aimed at promoting harmonious community life.

The extended family system creates a deep and wide network of intimate relationships including a large number of people. Through the system, all one's fathers' brothers are one's potential fathers in the absence of the fathers; the sisters too occupy that position. Their children are brothers and sisters. All the uncle's wives are *vanamaiguru* / *vanamainini* (big or little mothers) depending on whether the uncles are older or younger than one's father. The same applies to all the siblings of one's mother and their children.²⁵ Totemism²⁶ also has a similar effect as it widens the web of

²³ Ibid., pp. 56-57. See also M. GELFAND, *Shona Religion, with Special Reference to the Makorekore*, Cape Town, Juta, 1962, p. 143; ID, *The Genuine Shona*, p. 111. M.L. Daneel however, reveals an evolution in Zimbabwean modern traditional prayer patterns. At *mafukidzanyika* (tree planting) ceremonies, "God is addressed directly as an insider, one who is present at the ceremony." See M.L. DANEEL, "Mwari the Liberator: Oracular Intervention in Zimbabwe's Quest for the 'Lost Lands'," in J.L. COX (ed.), *Rites of Passage in Contemporary Africa: Interaction between Christian and African Traditional Religions*, Cardiff, Cardiff Academic Press, 1998, p. 117.

²⁴ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, p. 101.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 108.

²⁶ This is a practice by which people who have the same ancestral spirit are referred to by the same title, e.g. *Moyo* (heart), *Soko* (monkey), *Ndhlovu* (elephant) etc. People of the same totem are related and so cannot marry one another. For an expanded definition, see ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, pp. 120-133.

relationships.²⁷ This creates a healthy and much needed sense of belonging that leaves no one out. As M.Gelfand puts it:

When the Shona child steps out of his sling cradle, the breaking of his two-year long close association with the mother who gave him birth, this is compensated for by the nature of his kinship system. He has more mothers than just the one who bore him; he has more brothers and sisters than just those born of his own mother.²⁸

While such a close relationship is normally difficult to maintain without too much tension, this was possible among the traditional Zimbabwean people because all were taught the importance of good relations and were also equipped with the necessary skills. According to Gelfand,

... every person in a village knows his proper place and is unlikely to assume the position of another without very careful thought. As a general rule, for practical purposes, he knows the duties and responsibilities incumbent upon him; these are clearly defined and taken seriously. This appreciation of the status of every member of the group leads to a well disciplined unit and ensures that friction is avoided. Peace is maintained between different members of the group.²⁹

It is not surprising that the qualities that Gelfand lists as the “cardinal virtues” of life among the Shona are very much conducive to harmonious community living. They are sympathy, expressed by providing special care for the sick, enquiring after her/his health and visiting them and comforting the bereaved.³⁰ The other cardinal virtues are sharing material, social and spiritual goods; self-discipline – not acting too rashly, denying oneself some pleasure for the sake of others; mercy which is expressed with several words in Shona, *tsitsi*, *ngoni*, *nyasha*, *tsiye nyoro*, *mwoyo munyoro*; rectitude, sufficiency – to have enough for one’s family without having to beg;

²⁷ Ibid., p. 162.

²⁸ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, 108.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 29 and 53. See also ALT, “Re-rooting Religious Life,” pp. 524-525.

³⁰ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, p. 68. W. Nyatsanza observes that this general attitude of caring for the other is found in the daily greeting of the Zimbabwean people. See W. NYATSANZA, “The Shona Traditional Greeting: A Value for Inculturation,” in *African Ecclesial Review*, 40 (1998), pp. 194-202.

happiness – cheerfulness, repentance, trust and trustworthiness; strength and patience, courage - standing up for the right thing, hard working, generosity and unselfishness.³¹

In addition to the above-mentioned values of the traditional Zimbabweans is also *tsika* (a detailed code of behaviour or etiquette) which every Shona person should know and practice. Everybody knows how to address and behave towards one another so as to maintain good relationships.³² Such knowledge was and is still to some extent imparted orally and by example. From an early age, children are told stories, myths and legends reinforcing values and expected behaviour. This is also done through proverbs and riddles. For example, to encourage love in the extended family there is this proverb, “*Chawawana idya nehama mutorwa ane hanganwa*” (Share your food with a relative because a stranger forgets you). But, to encourage hospitality to strangers, there is also this proverb: “*Mweni haapedzi dura*” (A visitor does not finish up the food in your barn). “*Munhu wose ihama yangu*” (Everybody is a relative). “*Kugara kunzwana*” (Life is harmonious living). Taboos³³ also taught children to obey and to avoid dangerous situations.³⁴

As with most African world views, the Zimbabwean sense of human participation and solidarity is not only limited to God, ancestors, and other human beings, but also includes all other elements of creation.³⁵ Therefore, “Created order

³¹ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, pp. 73-78. See also ID, *Growing Up in Shona Society: from Birth to Marriage*, Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1979, p. 39. Referring to Africans in general, see also MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, p. 11. For bad qualities that would destroy harmonious relations, see ID, *The Genuine Shona*, pp. 87-89.

³² This includes knowing when and how to clap hands, courtesy, postures for different occasions etc. See GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, pp. 20-23. See also GELFAND, *Growing Up*, pp. 9-15.

³³ These are forbidden actions or behaviours lest some harm befalls the actor. These are mainly used by elders towards children. They may not necessarily be literally true.

³⁴ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, pp. 30-33. See also ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, pp. 106-133 and 272ff.

³⁵ MAGESA, *African Tradition*, p. 52. See also C. NYAMITI, *The Scope of African Theology*, Kampala, Gaba Publications, 1973, pp. 20-21.

other than humanity must be approached with care and awe as well, not only because of its communion with God, but also because of its own vital forces and mystical connection with the ancestors and other spirits.”³⁶ It is obvious that the Western culture has affected the indigenous culture in various significant ways; the content and methods of education, dressing, politics, economy, religion etc. However, the results of six surveys carried out by Gelfand in 1970, 1973 and 1977 strongly confirm that even the Shona townspeople who have adapted very largely to the material way of the West still cling closely to their moral and spiritual culture.³⁷

4.2.2 - Definition of Personal Maturity in Zimbabwe

Just as it is hard to define personal maturity in general, so it is to define it in the Shona cultural context. Perhaps more so because among the Shona people, the human person is viewed and described as a unit. Moreover, that one word can mean a variety of concepts and behaviours depending on the context. With regard to personal maturity among the Shona and even the Ndebele, the word *munhu* is one that is truly pregnant with meaning. When said in the normal tone, it simply means ‘the human person’ with soul and body,³⁸ but when said with a raised tone ‘*munhu chaiye*’, ‘*pane zvemunhu ipapo*’, ‘*ane hunhu zvokuti*’, ‘*ungumuntu*’, (literally, it means: it’s a real, true human being), it encompasses a variety of qualities and behaviours that constitute the mature

³⁶ MAGESA, *African Tradition*, p. 53. On a similar note, V. Mulago also says: “... the earth is our home, and the prolongation of human kind is ultimately bound to the earth’s fecundity. The sky, the earth, and all the living and breathing things that give life and balance to the cosmos are essential to the quest for ... humanity, [for life in its fullness].” See V. MULAGO, “Vital Participation,” in K.A., DICKSON and P. ELLINGWORTH, *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1969, p. 144.

³⁷ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, pp. 189-195. See also ID, *Ukama: Reflections on Shona and Western Cultures in Zimbabwe*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 1981, pp. 57 and 67-68; ID, *Growing Up*, pp. 34-83.

³⁸ ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, 1982, pp. 312-316. Aschwenden gives a very informative and interesting analysis of the Shona concept of the substance of the human person. See *ibid.*, pp. 301-318.

person among Zimbabweans; it implies a high level of maturity.³⁹ According to S. Samkange and T.M. Samkange: "The concept of '*Hunhuism*' is more than just humanness. The attention of one human being to another; the kindness, courtesy, consideration and friendliness in the relationship between people; a code of behaviour, an attitude to other people and to life, is embodied in '*hunhu*' or '*ubuntu*'."⁴⁰

Gelfand also has this to say in defining personal maturity among Zimbabweans:

The word *unhu* is an abstract noun expressing the good and moral ideal and the '*munhu*' refers to the person who displays this quality. The *munhu* thinks rationally and in a responsible way. He can control his passions, instincts and desires. If his desires overcome him, it is said that he has no *unhu* (*haana unhu*). The man with *unhu* is above the animal but a greedy person lacks *unhu* because he is enslaved to an animal instinct.⁴¹

As in any other society, and much more so among the Shona where people formerly lived closely to one another and practised a similar style of life for generations, it is the society that determines what personal maturity is. Hence Gelfand defines *unhu* as "the correct way of living according to the teachings of the Shona elders. [...] This state of being approved of, or that quality which causes a person's presence to be appreciated and to give a feeling of pleasure to others is called *unhu*."⁴²

³⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁰ S. SAMKANGE, T.M. SAMKANGE, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism: Zimbabwe Indigenous Political Philosophy*, Salisbury (Harare), Graham Publishing Co., 1980, p. 39.

⁴¹ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, p. 140. Gelfand also says that '*munhu chaiye*' is one who has "all the attributes usually associated with a British 'gentleman'." See ID, *Growing Up in Shona Society: From Birth to Marriage*, Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1979, preface.

⁴² GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, pp. 57 and 139. See also ID, *Ukama*, 1981, p. 7. T. Muteme's definition of a mature Zimbabwean person also tallies well with the already given definitions. She says: "A mature person has great love and respect for parents and other elders, is obliging and obeys elders. Clapping and kneeling is very much in our culture etc." T. MUTEME, *Personal Letter*, 10 August 1999. Teresiana Muteme is a senior member of the Little Children of our Blessed Lady, the first indigenous religious institute in Zimbabwe. She has a long experience as a postulant and novice mistress. Defining '*muntu*' in general among the Bantu of Africa, P. Tempels also says: "The word '*muntu*' inherently includes an idea of excellence or plenitude. And thus the Baluba will speak of '*ke muntu po*,' ('this is not a *muntu*'), of a man who behaves unworthily." See P. TEMPELS, *Bantu Philosophy*, translated by C. KING, Paris, Présence africaine, 1969, p. 101.

Although the development and training begins in the early stages of life, to some extent, personal maturity among Zimbabweans is also expected to correspond to age. For example if someone enquires about someone's age, and the response is '*wava munhu*' (he/she is now a human person) it implies a certain age and some expected corresponding degree of maturity.⁴³ As for the ultimate character and personality of an individual, both inheritance and acquired character are believed to play an important part. There is the proverb "*Mhembwe rudzi inozvara mwana anoruzhumu*" (Like father like son). Parents are urged to be in harmony when they beget the child and need to continue in this way throughout the woman's pregnancy, otherwise the child will be badly affected. The woman is also to be gently treated and provided with her favourite foods during pregnancy, in order to keep the baby happy.

4.2.3 - The Culturally Mature Zimbabwean Young Person

It seems important at this juncture to point out our awareness of the volatile nature of culture. It is by no means static as it evolves through its interaction with other cultures.⁴⁴ Therefore, modern Zimbabwean culture is certainly a mixture of the traditional and Western values. Western education, cash economy, dressing, urbanisation, politics, religion etc. have to a great extent become part and parcel of the Zimbabwean culture. Nevertheless, some traditional values have survived all the change. In addition to the above-mentioned acceptable attitudes and behaviour, there are also certain physical requirements in order for the Shona young person to be regarded as mature. Traditionally and even now to a great extent, the ultimate goal and sign of maturity was marriage, as the surest way of participating, preserving and perpetuating life. Long before puberty a girl is educated to become a good mother and wife. A girl who cannot endure pain is often asked, "How will you be able to give birth?" One who is lazy is asked, "How will you manage a husband and a family? You

⁴³ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, p.139.

⁴⁴ S.B. BEVANS, *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Cultures*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1992, p. 20.

will be sent back home." It is true that a girl who is not up to standard in these areas can be sent back home for further instruction. This is cause for shame for the whole family.

In some cases, there was (not so much now) tatooing on the face and other parts of the body for ornamental reasons. After the first menstruation,⁴⁵ which is important with regards to normalcy and fertility, the girl receives intensive practical education on sexual intercourse from the aunt, the father's sister or the elder sister. She also undergoes periodic physical examinations by an elderly woman to ensure that she remains a virgin until marriage. She is also taught how to relate with her in-laws.⁴⁶ One who is found to be a virgin at marriage enjoys deep respect and trust from her husband and in-laws. Her mother receives *mombe kana mbudzi yechimanda* (a cow or goat given to the mother for bringing up the daughter well).

The first emission in a boy is very important as a sign of fertility and in some cases there are rituals to mark the occasion. This introduces a boy to adult life as he can now sit with men *padare* (the mens' meeting place). He too receives practical sex education from his uncle or elder brother and his wife. Neither is to engage in pre-marital sex. While the girl learns to cook and to carry out most of the household chores, the young man learns to be strong, to fend for himself and his family. Traditionally, he learned hunting, dancing, manufacturing weapons and implements and house-building.⁴⁷ Nowadays both young men and women also have to have some formal western education and preferably a profession. Depending on the parents' religion, some are introduced into the world of the ancestral spirits early in life and some of them may have been ritually given an ancestor's name to whom they are to render special respect.⁴⁸ Others are introduced into both traditional religion and Christianity. They, however,

⁴⁵ At the first menstruation of a girl, the mother (even now) informs all the girl's aunts of the good news.

⁴⁶ ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, p. 82 and 164. See p. 82 for the ritual accompanying first menstruation and its interpretation. See also GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, pp. 167-179.

⁴⁷ ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, pp. 69-76. See also GELFAND, *Growing Up*, pp. 217-223.

⁴⁸ ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, pp. 59-60.

have to demonstrate their mastery of *tsika* (good behaviour) before they earn the compliment “*pane zvemunhu*” (he /she is really mature).

An important question is whether or not the Zimbabwean person is really free in such a society. Certainly, within the social structure one does enjoy some freedom in as far as the individual finds fulfilment only as member of the community. On certain occasions, such as during arbitration, there are no taboos. Litigants can freely express the truth and expect justice.⁴⁹ H. Sindima seems to express well the paradox of African individuality within community. He says: “We cannot understand persons, indeed we cannot have personal identity without reference to other persons... The notion of being together is intended to emphasize that life is the actuality of living in the present together with people, other creatures, and the earth.”⁵⁰

4.2.4 - Christian Maturity in Zimbabwe

Since religious life is a close following of Jesus Christ, it is important, at this juncture, to examine briefly the Christian climate as the basis of religious life in Zimbabwe. A discussion of this issue will necessitate examining the extent of the inculturation of Christianity into the Shona vision and way of life.

4.2.4.1 - Inculturation of Christianity in Zimbabwe

Inculturation is a term that has been in use quite a while, but we will explore its meaning again before examining the situation in Zimbabwe. Paul VI has described “inculturation” as “... bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.”⁵¹ John Paul II has called it “... the process by which ‘catechesis takes flesh’ in the various

⁴⁹ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, p. 33.

⁵⁰ H. SINDIMA, “Community of Life: Ecological Theology in African Perspective,” in C. BIRCH et al., (eds), *Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1990, pp.144 and 146.

⁵¹ EN, 18, p. 718.

cultures.”⁵² M. Azevedo also speaks about the part to be played by the receptor culture. He compares it to the soil in which a seed is sown and how it helps to determine the future of a plant. He argues, “The Gospel becomes that culture’s inspiration, norm, and unifying force for transformation, recreating it and thrusting it forth.”⁵³ According to A. Wasike, incarnation is the best model for inculturation. Jesus was able to integrate his divinity and humanity in such a way that each of these aspects benefited from the other. Just as Christ needed to become human in order to share with humanity part of his divinity, similarly, Christianity and religious life need to be incarnated into the Zimbabwean culture.⁵⁴

There are many tangible fruits of effective evangelization in the country. There is increased local leadership and a certain degree of self-sufficiency. The deliberations and activities during the first national catechetical conference, held in Harare from August 29 – September 4, 1993, are evidence of considerable Christian maturity among

⁵² JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi tradendae*, 16 October 1979, 53, in AAS, 71 (1979), pp. 1319-1320. English translation in JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Exhortation, Catechesi tradendae of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Episcopate, the Clergy and the Faithful of the Entire Catholic Church on Catechesis in our Time*, Ottawa, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1979, p. 794. Elsewhere he describes inculturation as “...the ultimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and ... the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures.” See ID, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris missio*, 7 December 1990, 52, in AAS, 83 (1991), p. 299. English translation in JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical, *The Mission of Christ the Redeemer: Encyclical Letter, Redemptoris missio* of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate, Sherbrooke, Editions Paulines, 1991, p. 77.

⁵³ M. AZEVEDO, *The Consecrated Life: Crossroads and Directions*, translated by Guillermo COOK, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1995, p. 37. According to J.B. Olwenya, Inculturation is “...a healthy blending of the past and present, in a manner that does not make the group feel suffocated, ruthlessly floating, threatened.” OLWENYA, J. B., “Inculturating the Vow of Celibacy/Chastity in Africa,” *Paper Given to Formators at Dimesse Sisters - Karen*, 21 October 1999, p. 5.

⁵⁴ A.N. WASIKE, “Witnesses to Jesus Christ in the African Context,” *Paper Given at the International Franciscan Conference in Assisi, Italy*, May 1997, pp. 3-4. See also H.T. MAMINIMINI, *Ndangariro Neminamato: Zvamazuva Akasisya-siyana*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 1997, p. 132. T. OKURE, “Inculturation: Biblical/Theological Bases,” in OKURE, T., P.VAN THIEL (eds), *32 Articles Evaluating Inculturation of Christianity in Africa*, Eldoret, Kenya, AMECEA, Gaba Publications, 1990, pp. 57-61.

Catholics in Zimbabwe.⁵⁵ However, it seems more could still be done to improve on what has already been achieved. While the aim of inculturation is for Africans to become wholly African and also authentically Christian, a number of authors see a dilemma instead. Speaking about Christianity and traditional religion in Africa as a whole, B. Bujo refers to "... an uneasy co-existence between the two faiths."⁵⁶ J.S. Mbiti also notes that many professed and registered Christians or Muslims have not completely abandoned their traditional religious ideas.⁵⁷ According to D. Musonda, "the deepest level of culture does not change easily because, if it does, there is disequilibrium in the society. [As a result] in times of crisis many people, even the educated ones, turn to traditional practices such as consulting traditional doctors."⁵⁸

Compounded with this reality is also a political side. Zimbabwe, for example, like most of the African countries, received Christianity hand in hand with colonialism which to them was subjugating and humiliating. This was very clear in the suppression of the Shona and the Ndebele uprisings, the forced acquisition of their land, the subsequent condemnation and banning of most of what they had believed in and held sacred in their lives.⁵⁹ This obviously has created an identity crisis to which A. Wasike

⁵⁵ ZCBC, *"As the Rain Comes Down...": Sharing on Evangelization in Zimbabwe Today*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 1993, pp. 1-76.

⁵⁶ BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 53.

⁵⁷ MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, p. 30. S. Muchemwa speaks of African Christians "living at two levels - half traditionalists and half Christians - but never belonging properly to either." See S.B. MUCHEMWA, "Christ and the Ancestors," in *Crossroads*, 167 (1999), p. 21. See also S. MUSIIWA, "Zinatha Claims Victory as Christians Increasingly Consult N'angas in Secret," in *Catholic Church News*, 45 (1999), p. 10; BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 31; A.M. KAYONGA, "Situation de la vie religieuse en Afrique aujourd'hui," in *Union Internationale Des Supérieures Générales*, no. 111 (1999), p. 30.

⁵⁸ MUSONDA, "African Religious Symbols," pp. 159 and 160. See also KRAFT, "Christianity in Culture," pp. 54-57; DACHS and REA, *The Catholic Church and Zimbabwe*, pp. 223-224.

⁵⁹ DACHS and REA, *The Catholic Church and Zimbabwe*, p. ix. On a similar note, T. Okure advises: "...we would need to clear the ground, first of all: by ridding ourselves of our negative self-images, particularly of our colonized and consumer-oriented mentality, which tend to lead us to look down upon things African, as being from the 'bush' or 'third rate'; and to attach undue importance

refers as a “Christian identity crisis” – a dual personality.⁶⁰ In this kind of situation, there was the fear of servants which must have imprinted a very distorted image of Christ in them.⁶¹ The revival of cultural practices and the open rejection of Christianity by some Zimbabweans that came with liberation movements and the war of independence were a cry for a recognition of a thwarted identity and dignity. This also partly explains the mushrooming of the many independent Churches in Africa.⁶²

4.2.4.2 - Can Ancestor–veneration and *Kurova Guva* be Christianized?

The most current controversial issue, at least in the Zimbabwean Catholic Church, seems to revolve around veneration of ancestors and the *kurova guva* ceremony which has always co-existed with the Christian practices despite its having been banned at the beginning.⁶³ In 1973, however, the Theological Commission set up by the Rhodesian Catholic Bishops Conference, having decided that the custom involved not the worship of ancestors but respect for them, recommended the lifting of the ban for

to things European and Western ... unless we see ourselves, our values, our customs and way of living as good in themselves, we would never want to give these to God, or to place them in service of Christian worship.” See OKURE, “Inculturation,” p. 73.

⁶⁰ WASIKE, “Witnesses to Jesus,” pp. 17-18. See also DANEEL, *The God of the Matopo Hills*, p. 11.

⁶¹ According to M.Daneel, “Christianity gave sharper relief to the traditional perceptions of *Mwari* (God) as creator the one in heaven, the Father of humanity, and the liberator from oppression. [Whereas] In some communities, Jesus Christ was fitted into the traditional belief system as the *mhondoro* (senior tribal spirit) of the Whites.” See DANEEL, *Mwari the Liberator*, p. 101.

⁶² DANEEL, *The God of the Matopo Hills*, pp. 66ff.

⁶³ According to P. Gundani, “Although many Catholic converts promised not to perform the death rituals on the mission complex, they were able to keep up the practice by taking the soil from the grave and taking it to the Tribal Trust Lands where the ceremony could be performed freely, away from the eyes of the Mission fathers.” See P. GUNDANI, “Fundamental Societal Issues Affecting the Church’s Evangelising Mission in Zimbabwe Today: Ib The Inculturation of Funeral Rites,” in T. RUSSELL (Director), *The Africa Synod: Zimbabwe Prepares*, Harare, Pastoral Centre, 1991, pp. 11.

pastoral reasons.⁶⁴ In 1977, a new *kurova guva* rite was approved on experimental basis. Since December 1997, the rite is, however under revision and many are speaking out both for and against it.⁶⁵

From our deliberations so far there is no doubt that traditional Zimbabweans are highly religious and spiritual. However, since no culture has the full revelation without Christ, there appear to be a number of traditional beliefs and attitudes that Christ might challenge, shed light on and liberate.⁶⁶ While it is only natural and reasonable to want to respect and venerate one's ancestors, there appears to be some confusion between the veneration bestowed on them and the worship due only to God as the Creator. Acknowledging the importance but also the delicacy of the issue, Church leadership rightly advises caution and more research.⁶⁷ It seems that, while the traditional Zimbabwean person is almost always in a conscious relationship with the ancestors, God is considered remote and unconcerned about one's personal daily affairs. Christianity on the other hand actually asserts and encourages awareness of God's constant presence and deep interest in the individual. God is not only close to human persons but has shared his divinity with them.⁶⁸

In some cases, this veneration of ancestors also seems to be motivated more by

⁶⁴ DACHS and REA, *The Catholic Church and Zimbabwe*, p. 9. The controversy is also recorded in one of the local newspapers around this time. See Readers Letters, "Why not Christianize this Shona Feast?" and "This Can't be Christianized," in *The Southern Cross*, 19th September and 10th October 1976.

⁶⁵ For a chronological development of events on this rite, see E.J. MAVUDZI, "Kurova Guva, Kugadzira, Kuchenura Munhu: A Second Look at the Rites," in *Crossroads*, 164 (1998), pp. 15-16.

⁶⁶ BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 88.

⁶⁷ JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa of the Holy Father John Paul II*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 1995, no. 64, p. 49.

⁶⁸ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, p. 181. See also ID, *Shona Religion*, p. 143; BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 82; NYAMITI, *African Tradition and the Christian God*, p. 69; MAMINIMINI, *Ndangariro*, p. 132; M.M. MKANDHLA, "High God and Ancestors, A critical Analysis of the Relationship Between Ancestral Spirits (*Amadlozi*) and the Supreme Being in Ndebele Religion," in *Crossroads*, 164 (1998), p. 18; W. PANNENBERG, *Jesus - God and Man*, translated by Lewis L. WILKINS and Duane A. PRIEBE, London, SCM Press, 1968, pp. 195-225.

fear than by respect. The fear seems justified when it is believed that the ancestor, when upset, seems able to possess the person causing sickness and even killing until appeased.⁶⁹ Based on wide research, M. Bourdillon asserts that "... possession is primarily a learned procedure," the purpose of which is healing and reinforcement of the traditional conventional moral values.⁷⁰ While there is need to promote African medicine which often addresses physical, psychological and spiritual ailments, the role of the diviner does not always seem to be constructive, for it is the diviner who interprets illnesses as being caused by the ancestors and recommends expensive ways of appeasement.⁷¹ Most religions have their myths or explanation regarding death and what happens after it. The traditional Zimbabweans have theirs too which appear to be similar to those of some other African tribes.⁷² Most indigenous Africans including Zimbabweans are convinced that death is not the end but a continuation of life on another level. When someone dies, he or she is described as *atisiya, aenda* (he/she has gone), *aoneka* (he said goodbye) etc. Hence the meticulous rituals and funeral rites and ceremonies for the dead.⁷³ There is also a kind of recognition and acceptance of the inevitability of death as some people are named *Harurambwi* or *Kufahakurambwi* (It [death] cannot be denied) or *Pasipanodya*, or *Pasihariguti* (the ground is never satisfied). The death of an old sickly person is often regarded as a relief from pain.⁷⁴

Generally, however, and especially among the Shona, death is dreadful as it

⁶⁹ GELFAND, *The Spiritual Beliefs of the Shona*, p. 85. See also ID, *The Genuine Shona*, pp. 133-137.

⁷⁰ BOURDILLON, *Religion and Society*, p. 332.

⁷¹ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, pp. 119-120.

⁷² MAMINIMINI, *Ndangariro*, p. 25. See also MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, pp. 110-111.

⁷³ MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, pp. 113 ff. See also GELFAND, *The Spiritual Beliefs of the Shona*, p. 93; ID, *Shona Religion*, p. 109.

⁷⁴ MAMINIMINI, *Ndangariro*, pp. 43-44 and 150. See also P. GUNDANI, "Death Among the Shona Peoples," in *Crossroads*, 150 (1996), p. 14.

disrupts the smooth flow of relationships in their structure. This is evident in some other names associated with death such as *Madzonyongodze* (disrupter). All kinds of precautions are taken to prevent it. However, for some strange reason, when someone dies even from a clearly natural cause, e.g., being struck by lightning, or in an accident, there has to be some hidden mystical cause. It is from the diviner that relatives of the deceased will find out whether the cause is witchcraft or sorcery and why the ancestors allowed that to happen.⁷⁵

An acceptance of Jesus the Christ would go a long way to bring about some understanding and acceptance of sickness and physical death as part of the paschal mystery. Christianity preaches the cross as God's power manifesting itself in weakness – humility, patience, forgiveness and service. It would alleviate some of the African fear of death and handling of suffering and misfortune. It is, however, a matter of faith and is never easy for anyone.⁷⁶

4.2.3.4 - Toward a Christology and Ecclesiology for Christian Maturity in Zimbabwe

Considering the traditional Zimbabwean spirituality and the way Christianity was first introduced to the people, Zimbabwean people still need to continue to work out their own answer to the basic Christological question, "Who do you say I am?" They need to continue to have Christ re-incarnated in their culture so that their Christology will be meaningful and rooted in their own experiences.⁷⁷ In working out their

⁷⁵ GUNDANI, "Death Among the Shona Peoples," p. 14. See also GELFAND, *The Spiritual Beliefs of the Shona*, pp. 95 and 101; MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, pp. 73 and 112.

⁷⁶ BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 91. See also MAMINIMINI, *Ndangariro*, pp. 3-4; 43-46 and 151-154; NYAMITI, *African Tradition*, p. 57.

⁷⁷ J.S. POBEE, "Confessing Christ a la African Instituted Churches," in J.S. POBEE (ed.), *Exploring Afro-Christology*, Frankfurt am Main, P. Lang, 1992, p. 151. For a definition and explanation of 'Christology', see J.S. POBEE, "In Search of Christology in Africa: Some Considerations for Today," in J.S. POBEE, *Exploring Afro-Christology*, pp. 9-11. See also J.S. MBITI, "Is Jesus Christ in African Religion?" in POBEE *Exploring Afro-Christology*, p. 22.

Christology, they will necessarily be influenced by other Christologies, the deposited faith, the creeds, the gospels, and the liturgical traditions.⁷⁸

A Christology that seems popular among African theologians is one that A. Akrong calls 'Ancestor Christology'. He thus explains its suitability:

Ancestor Christology becomes the primary model which influences our perception of reality because the ancestral symbol is deeply rooted in the social world of the African. It is supported by social values, worship, life, ritual and the definition of ultimate goals in life. The ancestral symbol is the surface structure that mediates the deep structures of African culture and religion. [...] The ancestor model helps to place the salvation concerns of the African within a religious model which sees salvation as harmony with all the essential relationships that support the good life.⁷⁹

According to this line of thought, Christ, being human like all humanity but being "the first born of all creation" (Col. 1:15), "the first Adam" (Rom. 5:12), "before Abraham was, I Am" (Jn. 8:57), qualifies to be the proto-ancestor of all people of all races and nationalities. "Proto" means existing before, prehistoric, at the beginning.⁸⁰ Christ's dual nature of being both God and man, however, makes him greater than any human ancestor no matter how great. Being in both camps, Christ combines the function of God, the creator of ancestors, and all the functions of human ancestors. He is the ideal ancestor who accomplished all that any African would have liked done by his/her ancestor.⁸¹

⁷⁸ POBEE, "In Search of Christology in Africa, p. 11.

⁷⁹ A. AKRONG, "Christology from an African Perspective," in POBEE, *Exploring Afro-Christology*, pp. 127 and 129. Several other theologians subscribe to ancestor Christology. See MBITI, "Is Jesus Christ in African Religion?", pp. 21-29; J.S. POBEE, *Toward an African Theology*, Nashville, Abingdon, 1979; BUJO, *African Theology*; ID, "On the Road Towards an African Ecclesiology: Reflections on the Synod," in *The African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 1996. pp. 139-151; C. NYAMITI, *African Tradition and the Christian God*, Kenya, Gaba Publications, 1977; ID, *Christ as our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 1984.

⁸⁰ BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 80. See also MBITI, "Is Jesus Christ in African Religion?" p. 23; NYAMITI, *African Tradition*, p. 70.

⁸¹ BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 80. See also POBEE, "In Search of Christology in Africa," pp. 17-20. While it seems proper to refer to Jesus as humankind's big brother, Akrong's reference to God

Since African-Zimbabwean tradition regards the ancestors as the source of wisdom (most wise sayings, proverbs etc. are introduced by the words '*vakuru vanoti*' [the elders say]), Christ, as the word of God that became human is, therefore, God's wisdom itself.⁸² For the African, the words of a dying person are sacred. Therefore, for the Zimbabweans who accept Jesus, his last will, which was an appeal for love (washed the feet of his apostles) should be the highest norm of life.⁸³

Christ can be identified as the proto-ancestor acceptable to Africans because, like them, he is preoccupied with life-generating and preserving life in this world and ever after. "I have come so that you may have life ..." (Jn. 10:10); Jesus is the bread of life (Jn. 6:32-58); he is the vine and we are the branches (Jn. 15:1-6); Jesus gives his life for his sheep (Jn. 10:15); he is the head of the body the Church (Col. 1:18); he is the fulness of God who has chosen him to reconcile all things (Col. 1:19-20); he is the first fruits of all those who have fallen asleep (1Cor. 15:20); those who live in him will never die (Jn. 11:25-26).⁸⁴ In line with the traditional Zimbabwean view of participation and unity as engendering and enhancing life, "God is Vital Force par excellence," because of the communion and unity of the Trinity.⁸⁵

In Shona, the elders say, *Ukama igasva, hunozadzikiswa nokudya* (a relationship is sealed by sharing a meal). A good catechesis on the Last Supper (the Proto-Ancestral

as ancestor seems to fall short of God's real nature which is far above that of the ancestors. See AKRONG, "Christology," p. 122.

⁸² BUJO, "On the Road Towards an African Ecclesiology," p. 143. For a well-illustrated presentation of Christ's ancestorship as human, mediative, redemptive, prophetic, pastoral, royal and sacerdotal, see NYAMITI, *Christ as our Ancestor*, pp. 26-30.

⁸³ MAMINIMINI, *Ndangariro*, p. 87. See also BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 79.

⁸⁴ BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 93. See also NYAMITI, *African Tradition*, p. 54. For ways by which Christ offers Africa the fullness of life today, see BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 94.

⁸⁵ NYAMITI, *African Tradition*, pp. 54-55. See also ID, *Christ as our Ancestor*, p. 21; POBEE, "In Search of Christology in Africa," p. 17. In African traditional religion, the Spirit plays a vital role. Therefore "African Christianity will be concerned with Pneumatic Christ and that Christology will be impossible without pneumatology." See *ibid.*, p. 16.

Meal) and its effect on the relationship of Jesus and his apostles then and afterwards would be very meaningful to Africans regarding the celebration of the Eucharist both as communion and a sharing in the life of God.⁸⁶ J.S. Mbiti seems very accurate in recognizing that African religion with all its spiritual aspirations and moral consciousness is already incorporated into Jesus Christ who is the First and the Last. (Rev. 1:17).⁸⁷

The ancestor Christology needs a corresponding ecclesiology, outlining the different ministries of all the faithful in the Proto-Ancestral Body, the Church.⁸⁸ The title Christian could also be very unitive when regarded as binding together all the baptised in a special relationship. This fits in well with the concept of Christ as the proto-ancestor and the ancestor par excellence.⁸⁹

At this juncture, it seems important to point out that the Church need not repeat its past mistakes, that is, condemning traditional practices especially those about which people feel strongly about. What seems to work is for the Church (all the members) to continue to research, speak out and live the truth about their faith as they see it. Others are educated as they see the usefulness or absurdity of certain practices and consequently adopt or discard them. As soon as the Church officially condemns, people go underground. No one can resist love for a long time. Teaching and living out the Christian value of love especially for the poor will enhance growth towards Christian maturity in Zimbabwe.

⁸⁶ BUJO, *African Theology*, pp. 95 - 101.

⁸⁷ MBITI, "Is Jesus Christ in African Religion?" pp. 27 and 29. See also BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 88.

⁸⁸ For a description of the roles of the different ministries of members in the Proto-Ancestral Body, and the challenges they have to face up to, see BUJO, *African Theology*, pp. 95-113. See also ID, "On the Road Toward an African Ecclesiology," pp. 139-151.

⁸⁹ MUSONDA, "African Religious Symbols," p. 167.

4.3 - CULTURAL PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT/CHALLENGE MATURITY IN RELIGIOUS LIFE IN ZIMBABWE

Vita consecrata approaches inculturation of religious life in a very positive way as it challenges members to recognize that

... in many ancient cultures, religious expression is so deeply ingrained that religion often represents the transcendent dimension of the culture itself. In this case true inculturation necessarily entails a serious and open interreligious dialogue, which is not in opposition to the mission *ad gentes* and does not dispense from evangelization.⁹⁰

Moreover, Nwagwu has this warning regarding failure to inculturate religious life in Africa:

When Institutes of Consecrated Life fail to inculturate the main values of religious life, the indigenous vocations that are admitted remain superficial. They are torn between the allegiance to cultural demands and total self-dedication to following Christ, even after years of formation. Their divided loyalty, sooner or later, crumbles exposing duplicity. When this happens, it is the peripheral aspect found on the surface which gives way to the other that possesses the person's depths.⁹¹

Before going on to discuss practices that support or challenge religious life from the point of view of the traditional Zimbabwean culture, we will first explore the general impact of the notion of religious life.

4.3.1 - The Notion of Religious Life in the Zimbabwean Tradition

While religious life, as described in the first chapter of this work, did not exist in traditional Zimbabwean religion, there was, however, a similar practice that existed

⁹⁰ VC, 79, p. 145. See also KAYONGA, "Situation de la vie religieuse en Afrique," p. 36; G.M. NWAGWU, "Religious Life in Africa Today," in *African Ecclesial Review*, 35 (1993), p. 236.

⁹¹ M.G. NWAGWU, "Inculturation of Consecrated Life in Africa," in *African Ecclesial Review*, 39 (1997), p. 134. J.M. Alt also adds: "It is exceedingly important for people entering religious life to realize the continuity between the values they were given in their families and the values outlined in their religious rule." See ALT, "Rerooting Religious Life," p. 520. A. Lott poses some quite insightful questions to help religious evaluate themselves and their impression on society. She also cites what she sees as obstacles to inculturation of religious life in Africa. See A. LOTT, "Inculturation of Religious Community Life in Africa," in *African Ecclesial Review*, 37 (1995), pp. 238-255. See also BUJO, *African Theology*, pp. 107-108.

before the introduction of Christianity. We will describe this briefly so as to be able to bring out its difference from Christian religious life.

4.3.1.1 - *Mbonga* (Traditional Vestal Virgins)

Mbonga were women who, at the inspiration of their parents by *Mwari* himself, were dedicated to *Mwari* especially at the Matopos and Zimbabwe (shrines) where God spoke directly to his people. The highest rank a *mbonga* could attain was that of the voice of God itself. While Daneel speaks of both male and female *mbonga*, the male being called *hossanahs*, Aschwanden speaks only of women.⁹² The female vestal virgins were of two types, the *mbonga yashe* (virgins of the king) and the *mbonga yamabwe* (the virgins of the rocks) the Matopo region. The virgin of the king was the daughter of a chief or king who gave her land and made her a chief as well. She could marry but remained chief over her land. The virgins of the rocks remained virgins for life.⁹³ Some of their duties were to sweep the entrance of the shrines and tend to the patch of land allotted to them; they also had to learn to dance in honour of *Mwari*.

The main difference between the traditional vestal virgins and Christian religious life is that, traditionally, it was more of the parents' sacrificing their best and greatest gift to God, their 'still unsullied blood' in the form of a virgin.⁹⁴ It was not a matter of individual choice as is the case in religious life.⁹⁵

4.3.1.2 - Cultural Challenges/Supports to the Notion of Religious Life

In comparison to the traditional vestal virgins, the main challenge for religious

⁹² DANEEL, *The God of the Matopo Hills*, pp. 49 and 50. (At the publication of this book, there were still some vestal virgins at Matonjeni), p. 52. For reference to *mbonga*, see also ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, p. 93.

⁹³ ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, p. 93.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 93. See also DANEEL, *The God of the Matopo Hills*, p. 50.

⁹⁵ O. MATUNGULU, *Celibacy and the African Value of Fecundity*, Eldoret, Kenya, Gaba Publications, 1981, p. 7.

life is for both parents and candidates to understand that while the right kind of support from parents is required, the choice to join religious life remains with the individual. This is important as a response to the general concern over the authenticity of vocations in Africa as a whole where strong vocations are needed to meet its several challenges in its economy, politics and sicknesses. A. M. Kayonga cites the example of the Rwandan genocide which, she argues, revealed some religious who succumbed to the fatal tribal divisions among the people.⁹⁶ Consequently, she recommends very careful assessment of candidates before admission.

According to J.M. Alt's experiences in South Africa, "Young people and their parents see religious houses as places where people will be educated, fed, and housed; as places where the chaos of grinding poverty and ignorance will be kept at bay."⁹⁷

The editor of *Crossroads* also warns:

It would be a mistake if young people wanted to join religious life looking primarily for a comfortable life and a position of honour and privilege within the Church. Religious life is not just a career in teaching, nursing or pastoral work either. It is a spiritual combat. Religious are spiritual fighters. They must be radicals.⁹⁸

The other challenge is to develop a distinction between the traditional and the Christian sense of the sacred. While in the traditional sense, sacred and holy means "separate, set aside for cultic purposes, awe-inspiring and fascinating on account of its radical otherness, sublimity and power," the Christian understanding of holiness goes

⁹⁶ KAYONGA, "Situation de la vie religieuse en Afrique," pp. 27-28. See also D.M. AGUILAR, *The Rwanda Genocide and the Call to Deepen Christianity in Africa*, Eldoret, Kenya, AMECEA, Gaba Publications, 1998. A crisis of that magnitude, however, may very easily shake and test even the faith of the well - formed.

⁹⁷ ALT, "Rerooting Religious Life," p. 522. According to her, most join to be protected from the storms of life like rape, gang life and street violence, economic disasters etc. and those joining for such wrong motives will surely not survive crises. See *ibid*. It is sincerely hoped that at least there are some who have an authentic vocation. Not so long ago, however, the main problem with vocations in Zimbabwe was parental opposition to their children joining religious life. Some young women and men went ahead anyway against the wishes of their parents.

⁹⁸ O. WERMTER, "Walking with Christ Poor, Chaste and Obedient," in *Crossroads*, 160 (1998), p. 16.

deeper. It includes "moral sanctity which implies righteousness in thoughts and actions, and opposition to evil and sin."⁹⁹ Therefore members of religious institutes are not necessarily holy because of the way of life they have chosen; as with everyone else, it is personal righteousness that counts.

However, the fact that there existed in traditional religion a practice by which some people were dedicated to God's service for their whole lives reduces the strangeness of religious life among the Zimbabwean people. In general everywhere in Africa, due to the belief in the hierarchy of life, any call to the spiritual is greatly respected and revered. According to Alt, "It also comes from the ancestors of the family, and therefore no one should interfere with it."¹⁰⁰

4.3.1.3 - Cultural Practices Supporting the Vow of Chastity in Zimbabwe

It is true that there is no culture in which chastity is the norm of life as it is a negation of life on the natural level.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, even among the Shona people, chastity was practised on many occasions for a higher cause, namely, preservation of life. As a result, there are several cultural practices which are fertile ground for the vow of chastity. The Shona obsession with virginity until marriage ensured by periodic physical examinations of girls by elderly women was done so that women would bear children who truly and biologically belonged to that particular family. This is important for the whole social structure regarding passing on of life, totems and veneration of ancestors. Virginity until marriage also ensured giving birth to many children. The penalty for depriving a girl of her virginity was and is still very severe. Even a future husband has to pay "damage" if he impregnates his fiancée before the formal traditional

⁹⁹ NYAMITL, *African Tradition*, pp. 67-68.

¹⁰⁰ ALT, "Rerooting Religious Life," p. 521.

¹⁰¹ According to J.B. Olwenya, "it is madness made sensible only by faith." See J.B. OLWENYA, "Inculturating the Vow of Celibacy/Chastity in Africa," *Paper Given to Formators at Dimesse Sisters - Karen, Kenya*, 21 October 1999, p. 3.

marriage rituals.¹⁰²

There also still are several taboos against illicit sexual intercourse on certain occasions for fear of endangering life in one form or another. A girl who becomes pregnant before marriage has to leave home, otherwise her parents suffer from backache (*kutyora musana wamai*). Even for one properly married, certain rituals have to be performed (*masungiro*) to prevent this backache.¹⁰³ After five months of the wife's pregnancy, the man is to abstain from sexual intercourse with his wife or with other women as this would harm the baby at birth. Hence the practice of *kureva* (confessing) if there are complications during a woman's delivery. Both man and wife have no sexual relations until the child is no longer being breast-fed as this would make the child sick (*kuyamwira*).¹⁰⁴

What Christianity, however, needs to add to this already very fertile ground for the vow of chastity is, of course, the awareness that, apart from biological fertility, there is also spiritual fertility to which the vow of chastity belongs. A limited view of life and fruitfulness leads to ostracism of people who cannot bear children and are made to feel incomplete.¹⁰⁵ Of course the greatest challenge for the inculturated religious is to realize that chastity is indeed for life while barrenness is indeed a curse. They will, therefore, "spare no efforts in making sure that they bear abundant spiritual fruits for

¹⁰² GELFAND, *Growing Up*, p. 19. See also ID, *The Genuine Shona*, pp. 58, 76 and 168; ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, pp. 92-93; NWAGWU, "Inculturation," p. 137.

¹⁰³ ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, pp. 238-241.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 246-247. Chastity was also observed during times of droughts and national disasters so that they would disappear. The same applied in times of war or competition to ensure victory. See MUSUNDA, "African Religious Symbols," pp. 173-174. When a child fell ill at night, the village headman would get up first and shout into the sleeping village, "Men and women, a child is ill here, tie up your dogs (dogs refers to the penis)." The rationale was that since a sick child feels hot and weak, the heat and weakness produced during sexual intercourse would be transferred to the sick child and aggravate its sickness. See ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, p. 222.

¹⁰⁵ BUJO, *African Theology*, pp. 35 and 90. See also MATUNGULU, *Celibacy*, p. 19; NWAGWU, "Inculturation," p. 137.

God's kingdom here and now to nullify the cultural curse of barrenness."¹⁰⁶ One who opts for religious life but does not live it fruitfully certainly risks death. The death is evident in purposelessness, lack of joy or strength or enthusiasm.

O. Matungulu rightly argues that, whether acknowledged or not, a vibrant living of the vow of chastity awakens people to the life of God.¹⁰⁷ In fact, despite that opting for the vow of chastity runs counter to cultural beliefs and expectations about a normal human being, there is deep interest and respect for anyone choosing the vow of chastity especially when lived effectively. Some Africans also feel proud that their own children can live up to the demands of the vow like some of the many missionaries who have dedicated their lives for service of others. It is a sign that God is working in their midst.¹⁰⁸ The editor of *Crossroads* gives a good summary of some of the practical implications of the mature living of the vow of chastity in Zimbabwe:

He will never "have" a woman. He will not have children of his own. He will show that love is not the same as sex. There is love even without sex, there is life, and even a full life, even without sex, there is life even beyond sex. He will have the Church as his family, and serve the people of God as his brothers and sisters, sons and daughters. He will refuse to worship the idol "sex". His life will be a blow in the battle against the corruption of God's gift to men and women, their power to love and give life.¹⁰⁹

4.3.1.4 - Cultural Practices Challenging the Vow of Chastity in Zimbabwe

The greatest and most difficult challenge to the vow of chastity lies in the

¹⁰⁶ OLWENYA, "Inculturating the Vow of Celibacy/Chastity," p. 4. For ways by which religious in Zimbabwe can be currently life-giving, see O. WERMTER, "Life Giving Chastity," in *Crossroads*, 154 (1997), pp. 17-18.

¹⁰⁷ MATUNGULU, *Celibacy*, pp. 2, 22-23. Elsewhere Matungulu also argues that religious life is a way of choosing Christ who is life at its fullest. See ID, *To be with Christ, Chaste, Poor and Obedient: An Essay in a Bantu Spirituality of the Vows*, translated by M.L. FAY, Nairobi, St Paul Publications, 1986, p. 29.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 8-9. B.Olwenya goes on to show how, although normally an unmarried person has no voice in an African society, religious are well respected and regarded as leaders. See OLWENYA, "Inculturating the Vow of Celibacy/Chastity," pp. 11-12.

¹⁰⁹ O. WERMTER, "Walking with Christ Poor, Chaste and Obedient," in *Crossroads*, 160 (1998), p. 16.

importance that is attached to marriage in the Zimbabwean society. According to M.Gelfand:

To marry, (*kuroora*) is one of the urges towards which every normal Shona [person] aims, something that is taken as the greatest event in his/her life – that great day when he/she becomes a full member of the group, a full participant of society.¹¹⁰

Those who die without being married do not have the *Kurova guva* ceremony performed for them. The importance of the ceremony among the Zimbabweans has already been highlighted. Automatically, religious are excluded and it is quite a challenge for a Zimbabwean not to belong and participate.¹¹¹ So important is marriage that since it is the responsibility of the family, anyone who dies without being married is buried with a dead rat of the opposite sex tied to his/her waist representing marriage.¹¹² Marriage among the Shona is multipurpose: it fulfils the obligation to bear children, it is a uniting link in the rhythm of life, it builds a family and extends the web of kinship. It also enables remembrance of parents after death and is a way of regaining immortality (lost through death). Marriage provides status in society, giving a person completeness and distinguishing the mature from the immature. It enhances the creation and growth of good personal qualities, e.g., love, good character, hard work, beauty, companionship, caring and responsibility; hence the multiple marriages like polygamy, and *kugara nhaka* (inheriting one's deceased brother's wife).¹¹³

The most important reason for marriage among the indigenous Zimbabwean people, however, is the begetting of children. It is true that at the founding of the congregation of the Little Children of Our Blessed Lady, most people were sceptical about its success because, "All African conviction and customs were against it, because

¹¹⁰ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, p. 167. Consequently, children at puberty are taught that, "there is something wrong with a person who does not marry." See ID, *Growing Up*, p. 24.

¹¹¹ See Footnote 64.

¹¹² GUNDANI, "Death Among the Shona Peoples," p. 15.

¹¹³ MBITI, *Introduction to African Religion*, pp. 104-109. See also GELFAND, *Growing Up*, p. 1.

for the African, marriage and the begetting of children was all important."¹¹⁴ To die childless was and still is, to some extent, as bad as death itself because it means the extinction of one's lineage leaving no offspring to honour one as an ancestor. Sterility is regarded as the worst humiliation, a misfortune, a real curse, "for which neither material wealth nor moral qualities can compensate."¹¹⁵ Among the Shona, "A child ... is your real name, the name by which the world will know you – without a child you remain unknown."¹¹⁶ For a man who is unable to bear children, sometimes relatives arrange for *kupindira* (begetting children for one's brother who is not able to do so). The choosing of the vow of chastity by a person within that kind of culture is indeed very challenging, so much so that sometimes there arises in a man the temptation to want to prove his virility.

While masturbation was regarded as normal and transitory, homosexuality and lesbianism were rare in traditional Shona society.¹¹⁷ Probably this was because it defeated the purpose or was contrary to the most important goal for sex, namely bearing children.

Another traditional view, which is very challenging in a positive way towards living the vow of chastity, especially for women religious, is the role of the woman as

¹¹⁴ DACHS and REA, *The Catholic Church and Zimbabwe*, p. 141.

¹¹⁵ MATUNGULU, *Celibacy*, p. 7. See also, ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, p. 213. See also GUNDANI, "Death Among the Shona Peoples," p. 15; BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 47; J.M. ELA, *My Faith as an African*, translated from the French by J. BROWN and S. PERRY, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1988, p. 16. It is significant that among the Shona, the word for an unmarried man is *tsvimborume* (a branch without offshoots). See ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, p. 161.

¹¹⁶ ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, pp. 65 and 24-26. See also J.S. MBITI, *Love and Marriage in Africa*, Essex, Longman Group, 1973, p. 43; D.K. MUSUNDA, "African Religious Symbols in Relation to Consecrated Life," in *African Ecclesial Review*, 39 (1997), p. 173. The common practice among the Shona is to call parents by their children's names as soon as they have them. A man would be referred to as "*Baba va Tendayi*" (Tendayi's father) and a woman would be addressed as *Mai va Hereni* (Helen's mother). That is one of the greatest sources of joy and satisfaction for a Shona person. Sometimes children may not even know the first names of their parents until they go to school and are asked for such information.

¹¹⁷ ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, p. 75. See also GELFAND, *Growing Up*, p. 18.

mother in the society. It is regarded mainly as giving, enhancing, protecting and nurturing life in all people. Becoming a mother is indeed "the first and important step on the way to 'immortality'."¹¹⁸ Tacitly, in an apparently patriarchal society, the Shona woman has a very vital and influential natural role. This is evident in the Shona saying, "the mother gives twice, the father only once." The mother gives the natural birth but also plays a very influential formative role in anyone's upbringing.¹¹⁹ The evolution of the word *mai* (mother) highlights her importance. According to H. Aschwanden's research, three words have contributed towards the formation of the expression *mai*. He explains:

Mai is the same as *zai* which means egg. But *mai* is also *hari*, the jar which symbolizes the uterus. The uterus gives to the Karanga (a big sector of the Shona people) what is most precious, something that comes from the Creator himself, and God is called *muhari*, (contracted into *mwari*, cf p. 245). To express the all-embracing concept of the mother in its fullest significance, the Karanga have taken the *m-* from *mwari*, the *a-* from *hari* and the *i-* from *zai*, to form the 'word' *mai*.¹²⁰

Does the fact that one does not get married and have children, to some extent, militate against growth in maturity? It seems so, as one is deprived of the natural challenges to growth arising from coping with a husband and relating to in-laws in such a way as to sustain one's marriage, giving birth and nursing and caring for babies, etc. However, it need not be so for a religious whose motivation is clear and high enough; one can still live the vow of chastity as passionately as any woman zealous about her married life.

Another general attitude inherent in the traditional Zimbabwean culture which also needs redeeming is the rather negative view of sex. The sexual drive is regarded as

¹¹⁸ ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, p. 297. WASIKE, *Witness to Jesus*, p. 5. See also C. MCGARRY, "The Gift of Womanhood in Consecrated Life," in *African Ecclesial Review*, 36 (1994), p. 169. The fact that the Shona woman is wife and mother of the whole tribe is revealed by the way she serves food. The utensils she uses and the way she does it are pregnant with subtle sexual and marital symbolism. See ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, pp. 199-201.

¹¹⁹ ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, p. 292.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

potentially evil, symbolically connected with the snake, “the animal which kills but does not devour its prey.” It is regarded negatively because “it dominates a man to such an extent that he will do anything to obtain his enjoyment, even if it means endangering his own or someone else’s life.”¹²¹ Menstruation and sexual intercourse are to some extent regarded as *svina* (dirt). There should be no physical contact, let alone sexual intercourse between husband and wife during the wife’s menstruation. Only virgins and women after menopause are considered clean enough to perform certain special tasks. Only an old woman may inspect a girl’s virginity, suckle grandchildren or brew beer for religious ceremonies, administer certain medicines or be a midwife. “Only clean women (*mbonga*) and old women may enter the place of burial of chiefs; they must keep it clean and make sacrifices there.”¹²² Such an attitude tends to encourage a superiority complex on the part of religious.

Since traditionally all women and men were expected to be married at a certain age, religious, both men and women, need to work hard to develop appropriate skills for living the vow of chastity. They need to know how to relate to one another within the cultural and psychological bounds.¹²³

4.3.1.5 - Cultural Practices Supporting/Challenging the Vow of Poverty in Zimbabwe

Much of what has already been described as important social values in the Zimbabwean traditional culture resonates well with the religious virtue and vow of

¹²¹ Ibid., pp. 212 and 222.

¹²² Ibid., p. 225. For more examples of a negative attitude towards sex, see pp. 226-229. S. O’Kane, a Franciscan Brother, speaking from his experiences as novice-master in Zimbabwe is quoted supporting this argument saying: “According to Shona culture, sex is not a subject for public discussion. Celibacy and sexuality ...should not be seen as aspects of sordidness and sinfulness ...” See S.B. MUCHEMWA, “Young Priests Reflect on Life and Work,” in *Crossroads*, 168 (1999), p. 31.

¹²³ Both M. Gelfand and H. Aschwanden comment on the absence of expressions of affection in the Shona society. See GELFAND, *Growing Up*, p. 21. See also ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, pp. 62-63.

poverty. Traditionally, although individuals and their families could acquire private property, it was very limited. Those who did obtain more than others regarded it as a blessing from God and would share it with those members of the community who were in need. Stewardship and service and hospitality were very strong among the Africans.¹²⁴ Hard work and self-reliance were very much encouraged so much so that *hurudza* (successful farmers) were highly honoured and respected. Stealing was, on the contrary, severely punished. This is very much in line with the vow of poverty which reminds and encourages people to work hard like the poor and to share with the needy.¹²⁵

Just as it is difficult to define and quantify the vow of poverty in general, it is equally hard if not harder to do so with regard to religious in a third world country like Zimbabwe. Religious life, with the educational and several other opportunities that it brings about gives the appearance of anything but material poverty. The discrepancy between the real poverty of the masses of the people and that of the religious who have taken the vow of poverty is hard to explain. This will never be easy.¹²⁶ Each institute will need to find its own way.

The old understanding of religious as separate and set apart from society and the way it has become institutionalized makes it very hard to inculturate the vow of poverty. There seems to be the mentality that religious do not have and need to be looked after which makes it hard for them to behave culturally and to practise hospitality the traditional way. Traditionally, visitors are always welcome and are given special treatment. Therefore religious need to be exemplary due to the radicalness of their call. While there can be no prescriptions, individual communities need to discern seriously how they, in their particular circumstances, can authentically live this vow.

¹²⁴ BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 36. See also WASIKE, *Witness to Jesus*, pp. 10-11.

¹²⁵ NWAGWU, "Inculturation," p. 229.

¹²⁶ B. N. Ndlovu's testimony about the difficulty of living this vow through his ministry experiences is very realistic. See B.N. NDLOVU, "Reflection on Ministry to the Poor," in M. MATANHIRE (ed.), *Oasis*, Bulawayo, (Zimbabwe), Annual Mariannhill Student Publication, 1999, pp. 22-26.

Various people make different suggestions. Cardinal Jozef Tomko is quoted speaking to seminarians and religious thus: "Do not live above the living standard of your people. Do not want to be a class above your people. Don't want to be a bourgeois (prosperous middle class person). Stick to the people and they will stick to you."¹²⁷ Kayonga suggests that religious identify themselves with the oppressed youth and women who are victims of anthropological poverty, a kind of hanging in the air because of lost identity.¹²⁸ Perhaps religious institutes in Zimbabwe and Africa need to carry out serious discernment similar to that which took place in Latin America and then decide how best to live the vow. That is, however, for the Zimbabweans to decide. Much is already being done.

Another problem arises from the fact that religious cannot use their salaries to help parents and members of their families. Traditionally, parents spend everything on their children leaving nothing for their old age and social security in the hope that their children will care for them. Coupled with this is the special responsibility of the eldest son over his younger siblings.¹²⁹ It can be quite frustrating when the individual cannot help materially. Sometimes this failure to help is a cause for constant inner tension and, as a result, some religious spend most of their time earning extra money to help their natural family.¹³⁰ Arrangements can be made on community basis. The ability to balance this need to help and the need to be loyal to one's vow also calls for personal spiritual maturity. However, one needs to feel that one is spending one's life for something worthwhile.

¹²⁷ O. WERMTER, "Cardinal Speaks to Seminarians and Religious," in *Crossroads*, 160 (1998), p. 14.

¹²⁸ "Le peuple africain a perdu son histoire, ses traditions, sa spiritualité, sa vitalité, son identité." See KAYONGA, "Situation de la vie religieuse en Afrique," pp. 30-31. See also MUSONDA, "African Religious Symbols," p. 170; NWAGWU, "Inculturation," p. 229.

¹²⁹ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, p. 155.

¹³⁰ Ibid. See also LOTT, "Inculturation of Religious," p. 246; J. MARIE, "Vocational Assessment," in *Human Development*, 20, no. 2 (1999), p. 35.

4.3.1.6 - Cultural Practices Supporting/Challenging the Vow of Obedience in Zimbabwe

There is much in the traditional Zimbabwean cultural practices that resonates well with a mature practice of the vow of obedience. Obedience to and respect for elders and those in authority was and still is a strong value in the culture. Elders and those in authority were and are highly esteemed for their wisdom and good advice based on their experience and authority.¹³¹ This comes out clearly in the many proverbs, sayings and avoidance rules which teach good character, common sense, and general truths about life. These are almost always introduced thus: “*Vakuru vanoti*” (The elders say).¹³²

Among Africans in general, words carry much weight and hold the community together. Therefore the challenge for religious leadership in Africa is to utter edifying words (*mazwi anovaka*). As D.Musonda puts it: “The word is believed to convey a speaker’s life-force [...] Tactful words gather people around the leader while thoughtless ones disperse them.”¹³³ In reality this calls for sensitivity, tact, avoidance of gossip or acting on it, openness, constructive confronting and challenging when necessary.

The Africans’ deep respect for authority, i.e. parents, elders, chiefs or heads of villages, also hinges on the belief in the continuation of life from the ancestors to future generations. Since status, rank and authority are bestowed on individuals through natural growth and rituals and since everything done is meant to enhance life, an authority figure is regarded as an embodiment of wisdom and life passed on to her/him by the ancestors. Authority, in its turn, is obliged to enhance, sustain and “prolong life in the full sense, according to the moral order inherited from the ancestors.”¹³⁴ This seems to

¹³¹ NWAGWU, “Inculturation,” p. 139.

¹³² GELFAND, *Growing Up*, pp. 138-156.

¹³³ MUSONDA, “African Religious Symbols,” p. 173. See also BUJO, “On the Road,” p. 142.

¹³⁴ B. BUJO, “African Morality and Christian Faith,” in *African Christian Morality at the Age of Inculturation*, Nairobi, St Paul Publications, 1990, p. 72. See also MUSONDA, “African Religious Symbols,” p. 171; KAYONGA, “Situation de la vie religieuse en Afrique,” pp. 33-34. On a similar note, P. Tempels also says: “The *mntu*’s obligations increase in accordance with his vital rank. The

resonate well with cc. 618 and 619 which speak about God as the source of authority in religious life and the responsibility of the office holder in exercising it in a life-giving manner.

It is also notable that in the Shona traditional setting the leader continued the same lifestyle and lived on the same level with the people he governed. Even the chief's children remained on the same level as the rest of the village children. Apart from the occasional offer by the people to work in his fields, the chief had no extra privileges.¹³⁵ In the same way, a religious leader remains one of the members by living the same lifestyle as the members.

In the Shona traditional setting, a leader always worked together with his councillors and consulted them on important matters. If he became a dictator, he was deposed.¹³⁶ This is very much in line with religious life especially as practised now; the superior needs to open up dialogue with individuals allowing them to speak their mind. Authentic leadership also recognizes its limitations and lets other members' talents complement its own.¹³⁷ The negative points regarding leadership in Africa today are in fact uncultural for Zimbabwe - the tendency towards personality cults in which leadership is almost worshipped, dictatorship - when the leader no more consults or listens to the people and becomes far removed from them and their needs.¹³⁸ The challenge for the spiritual leader lies in that, traditionally, it was actually the diviners and spiritual figures who were most powerful in the society. Christian leaders, however,

elder, the chief, the king know very well that their doings do not involve their own personal vital force only. They and their subjects fully realise that their deeds will have repercussions upon the whole community subject to them." See TEMPELS, *Bantu Philosophy*, p. 136.

¹³⁵ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, pp. 153-154.

¹³⁶ MUSONDA, "African Religious Symbols," p. 171. See also NWAGWU, "Inculturation," p. 138.

¹³⁷ MUSONDA, "African Religious Symbols," p. 172.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

need to remember that they follow Jesus who came to serve and not to be served.¹³⁹

A question that arises is the freedom afforded the individual to exist as separate from the community. Although it appears as if the Zimbabwean social system encouraged too much conformity to the detriment of mature responsible behaviour, in reality there were channels by which an individual could air one's opinions and grievances against a senior person. It had, however, to be done politely and respectfully through the correct channels and the senior person was obliged to listen. It is therefore uncultural to act blindly and irresponsibly in the name of obedience. Since one always had the common good in mind, one would also not make selfish individualistic demands.¹⁴⁰ Inevitably, with the impact of other cultures, there has been an upset of the equilibrium causing what Aschwanden describes as, in some cases, an "individualism that is often exaggerated and ridiculous."¹⁴¹ When that is done by one who has taken the vow of obedience, it becomes even more ridiculous.

What seems to have caused some confusion especially among the older sisters is the old spirituality of religious life that did not emphasize responsible behaviour. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that the first formators of religious life in Zimbabwe were of the pre-Second Vatican Council generation, from a different culture and did not always speak the local language well enough to understand and communicate with the persons being formed. The colonial environment also affected relationships and it seems there was much fear involved and not enough dialogue.

4.3.1.7 - Cultural Practices Supporting/Challenging Common Life in Zimbabwe

The already discussed social set up of the traditional Zimbabwean people reveals

¹³⁹ R. Kaggwa actually points out how some African bishops are notorious for their authoritarianism and also how the model of Church as family of God can encourage paternalism and parasitism due to dependence on external financial aid. See KAGGWA, "Looking at Power in Africa," pp. 350-351.

¹⁴⁰ GELFAND, *The Genuine Shona*, p. 108. See also BUJO, *African Theology*, p. 35; NWAGWU, "Inculturation," p. 138.

¹⁴¹ ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, p. 25.

it as very fertile ground for mature religious common life. Members from a communitarian cultural setting have no difficulty relating affectionately to one another.¹⁴² Influenced by the social structures, it is very common to find community members addressing very old sisters as *ambuya* (grandmother) and sisters older than themselves as *vakoma* (sister). Sisters younger than themselves are often addressed by their first names or as *munin'ina* (younger sister). The sister in charge or superior is often addressed as *Sister Amai* (Sister Mother). This facilitates and enhances warm and affectionate relationships arising from the sense of family kinship. This is only natural because in real life, after a certain age, everybody acquires a title. Normally people are addressed by their children's names (the mother/father of so and so). This is why even students studying in Western and American countries find it terribly hard to address anyone older than they by their first names. As A. Lott points out, the word "sister" by itself does not have much meaning culturally. Nieces and nephews refer to their aunts and uncles as *amaiguru*, *amainini*, *babamukuru*, *babamunini*, (big/little mother, big/little father).¹⁴³ Following the clan system, sometimes members of an institute refer to the title of their institute as their totem. This has a very unitive effect on members.

The traditional family, according to M.G. Nwagwu, "generated a strong sense of belonging, caring and sharing, extended to all the family members irrespective of what they were doing or what position they were holding. As a result, they experienced genuine and sincere inter-personal relationships that became a security against uncertainties of life."¹⁴⁴ Therefore feeling and expressing inferiority or superiority in community depending on one's position or profession is both uncultural and against the spirit of religious life.

Religious common life has also much to learn from the Zimbabwean traditional life in terms of hospitality, sharing and solidarity on occasions of death or festive

¹⁴² NWAGWU, "Inculturation," p. 140.

¹⁴³ LOTT, "Inculturation of Religious," pp. 245-246.

¹⁴⁴ NWAGWU, "Inculturation," p. 140.

celebrations. While social and economic conditions have changed, religious communities still need to discern how they can still reach out especially to the poor in and outside their communities instead of being closed in and too self-protective.¹⁴⁵

The traditional culture has something to offer regarding conflict resolution skills. As Lott points out, "In many cultures, however, conflict among women is openly expressed although this is not so in religious life where the affected parties may react in immature ways like sulking, lateness for community exercises, uncooperation, not greeting, and or withdrawing from ceremonies or communal activities."¹⁴⁶ Taking petty issues to the generalate instead of resolving them at local level could also say something about leadership values, decision-making and resolving conflicts.

In traditional society, generally, the young serve the elders, and in religious communities, there is need to guard against expecting the younger members to assume more domestic responsibilities in the community. These could be cleaning, cooking, leading liturgy, etc.¹⁴⁷ As followers of Christ, religious remain servants until death – according to the known adage: "Religious never retire from work, they get 'recycled'!"

4.3.1.8 - Cultural Practices Supporting/Challenging Prayer Life in Zimbabwe

The greatest treasure that religious life can inherit from traditional life is the contemplative stance which has been pointed out as absolutely vital for a persevering, effective and fruitful religious life. Daneel speaks of "the Shona's intuitive awareness of (God's) presence rather than with a rationalized projection of His being."¹⁴⁸ Nwagwu also echoes this thus:

Experiencing a profound interior life that communes with the Divine is typical of the unadulterated local cultures which are now fast disappearing through the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 140-141. See also MUSONDA, "African Religious Symbols," p. 167.

¹⁴⁶ LOTT, "Inculturation of Religious," p. 245. See ALT, "Rerooting Religious Life," pp. 524-525.

¹⁴⁷ LOTT, "Inculturation of Religious," p. 248.

¹⁴⁸ DANEEL, *The God of the Matopo Hills*, p. 17.

eroding of modernization. [He advises on the need to]...salvage the traditional awareness and the attention to the sacred in the daily life of the people.¹⁴⁹

With regard to actual vocal prayer, religious will benefit from borrowing “a leaf or two from the simplicity, the directness and the spontaneity of worshippers of a Deity at the local shrines.”¹⁵⁰ This spontaneity in prayer is also quite evident in traditional Shona daily life. For example, when a young man wants to begin conjugal life with his newly married wife, the ancestors are informed thus:

Your son says he has grown up and that he is dying with cold. [...] Today he will enter his wife's house: she is the woman of whom we have told you already. See to it that there is a fire in your house. ('House' means woman's uterus in this context, 'fire' refers to love and children).¹⁵¹

Since the traditional Zimbabwean culture is full of rituals, liturgy in religious communities can also be enriched with expressive rituals and use of traditional musical instruments, dances and symbolic gestures.¹⁵² A.E. Kupalo gives good examples of rituals with African traditional symbols that could be used in community reconciliation liturgies.¹⁵³

Just as African tradition has several symbols associated with prayer, e.g; big trees (especially the *muhacha* tree among the Shona), river banks, waterfalls, big rocks, grooves etc., religious communities can also highlight the sacredness of some of the traditional as well as the Christian symbols such as the Bible, the crucifix, statues, holy

¹⁴⁹ NWAGWU, “Inculturation,” p. 135.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁵¹ ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, p. 181. Apart from requests, A. Shorter also mentions three other forms of African prayer, namely the litanic form, the praise poem and the ejaculatory prayer. See A. SHORTER, “Prayer in African Cultural Tradition,” in T. OKURE, P. VAN THIEL (eds), *32 Articles Evaluating Inculturation*, p. 254.

¹⁵² NWAGWU, “Inculturation,” p. 136.

¹⁵³ A.E. KUPALO, “The Call for Reconciliation in Religious Communities,” in *African Ecclesial Review*, 39 (1997), pp. 149-155.

pictures, flowers, cloths, music candles etc.¹⁵⁴ A translation of the prayer of the Church into the vernacular would also facilitate a better understanding of it.

On the whole, there is evidence of growth in inculturating religious life in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa. Replacing the traditional religious habit and veil with an African dress, when rooted in a sound spirituality,¹⁵⁵ is a positive move. Much of the inculturation of the spirituality of religious life, however, is evident in the symbolism used at celebrations of religious first or final professions or jubilees. There is the participation of parents and the local community of all the faithful in the rituals showing their moral support and acceptance of the religious to work with them. In order to express their total dedication, some religious prostrate themselves before the congregation, others carry clay pots which they then drop and destroy representing the radical nature of their self-dedication through the vows. Others bring forward their pots full of water and offer them to the presider representing their whole life and all their fruitfulness which they offer to God for service in the Church.¹⁵⁶ Sometimes bishops can be obstacles to inculturation in religious life and in general. There is sometimes the fear of going wrong and things getting out of control. At times it is feared that people are not yet ready for changes.¹⁵⁷

G.M. Nwagwu has this to say about the general impact of religious life on the

¹⁵⁴ MUSONDA, *African Religious Symbols*, p. 165.

¹⁵⁵ This need for the spiritual source of the symbolism seems to be the concern and message of one subscriber of *Crossroads*. See "Changing Fashion," in *Crossroads*, 149 (1995), pp. 17-18. See also E.W. GACHIRI, "Ode to the Vanishing Veil," in *African Ecclesial Review*, 36 (1994), pp. 127-130.

¹⁵⁶ For Shona women the clay jar is a very significant symbol of womanhood, one's whole sexuality. As H. Aschwanden puts it: "Jars are symbols of the woman, especially her reproductive organs ... The jars are among the most important symbols illustrating the relationship between man and wife. They are the means, the old Karanga say, by which a wife can make increasingly sure of her husband's affection for her ..." See ASCHWANDEN, *Symbols of Life*, pp. 199-200. D.K. Musonda also comments on the relevance of adopting marriage symbols at professions and ordinations since both marriage and the vow of chastity generate life. See also MUSONDA, *African Religious Symbols*, p. 174. For some illustrations of this inculturation, see appendix IV.

¹⁵⁷ OKURE, "Inculturation," pp. 74-75.

faithful:

[...] we can observe that in Africa, the high regard and esteem with which a man or woman religious is held among our people, creates an atmosphere of *expectation and demands*. The people look up to the religious for an authentic and effective witness of the faith in vindication of their catholic beliefs. The lay faithful understand that a religious has to live the life of poverty, chastity and obedience. Consequently they raise their eyebrows and criticize whenever this is not the case. The criticisms may not be done directly but the disenchantment is shown, somehow, even if they themselves are partly or wholly instrumental to those religious concerned not living up to their promises. On the other hand, the *respect and honour* heaped on a religious who lives with sincerity the religious commitment, borders on hero-worship characteristic of the credence given to the priests and priestesses of Oracles of our African Traditional Religions.¹⁵⁸

4.4 - ASSESSMENT OF MATURITY OF CANDIDATES¹⁵⁹ FOR RELIGIOUS LIFE IN ZIMBABWE

This part of the chapter seeks to highlight the concern over assessment of maturity for candidates in the context of Zimbabwe. It will also go on to present an overview of the recruitment for vocations in Zimbabwe, the pre-novitiate programmes, the criteria and methods used for assessment of maturity of candidates for the religious life and some of the problems encountered.

4.4.1 - The Need for Assessment of Maturity for Admission into Religious Life in Zimbabwe

On the need for proper discernment of vocations in Africa as a whole, Pope John Paul II urges:

In the present-day circumstances of the mission in Africa, it is necessary to foster religious vocations to the contemplative and the active life, above all

¹⁵⁸ G.M. NWAGWU, "Religious Life in Africa Today," in *African Ecclesial Review*, 35 (1993), p. 229.

¹⁵⁹ The use of this term requires some clarification. Whereas in c. 642, the term refers to those ready to be admitted into the novitiate, in most institutes in Zimbabwe, the term applies to a person's first stage in an institute, followed by postulancy and then by admission into the novitiate. The context will clarify the meaning.

choosing them with great discernment, and then seeing that they receive an integral human formation, as well as one which is solid in its spiritual and doctrinal, apostolic and missionary, biblical and theological dimensions.¹⁶⁰

Pope John Paul II, reiterating the same message in his address to Zimbabwean bishops during their *ad limina* visit on 4 September 1998, says:

The increasing number of priestly and religious vocations is a great responsibility. I can only encourage you to select with care the candidates whom you ordain to the priesthood, to watch over the doctrinal soundness of the programme of studies, and to ensure the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation of your seminarians. The Charter on *Priestly Formation* recently published by your conference should prove to be a most useful instrument in this regard and can also serve as a precious guide to Religious Superiors as you invite them to exercise the same vigilance and care over the members of their institutes."¹⁶¹

As was evident in the subsection entitled "The Need to Know Before Admission" in chapter three of this work, both the institutes and the candidates for religious life also need to know the level of maturity in their aspirants before admitting them. As elsewhere, this helps institutes to receive only those as ready as possible for the novitiate training and facilitates effective planning of formation programmes. To some extent, it prevents accepting future problematic and ineffective members due to immaturity or some personality disorders. Regarding cases of sexual abuse by clerics and religious in South Africa, "as a preventive measure, the Church is trying to weed out potential abuses by meticulous selection, training and supervision of candidates for consecrated life."¹⁶² Aware of the several sexual-abuse allegations and court cases in some countries, the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference produced a document outlining procedures to be followed in the event of such allegations against

¹⁶⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 94, p. 72 and no. 50, p. 38.

¹⁶¹ JOHN PAUL II, Allocution to the Zimbabwean bishops during their *ad limina* visit, 4 September 1998, 4, in *AAS*, 91 (1999), p. 154; also in *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, no. 36, 9 September 1998, p. 3.

¹⁶² G. SIMMERMARCHER, "Bishops Get Tough on Sex Abuse," in *Crossroads*, 162 (1992), p. 8.

Church personnel.¹⁶³

This concern in the leadership personnel in religious institutes in Zimbabwe came out clearly in their responses to a survey on assessment of candidates for admission to religious life carried out among them between 1998 and 1999.

In answer to the question, "Do you sometimes encounter problems in the assessment of your candidates? If 'Yes', explain": the root problem was cited as insufficient knowledge of candidates, which later on revealed the following deficiencies in the order of frequency:

- inadequate motivation
- joining for financial benefits, or relating to prestige
- pretence / lying deliberately or unconsciously
- saying what they know you want to hear
- unreal expectations about religious life
- parents trying to impose the vocation on their children
- ineffective methods of assessment; too much ambition
- poor family background
- lack of commitment
- inability to assess accurately
- people joining out of fear of marriage and AIDS virus
- looking for education; disagreement among assessors¹⁶⁴

There is therefore a real need to know on both sides. Although the word maturity does not appear in the above list, a closer look at it reveals that some of the negative elements discovered in some of the candidates who are admitted into the institutes seem to be rooted in inadequate development of one or the other of the several aspects of personal maturity as defined in the first chapter of this work. While unreal expectations about religious life are due to error, poor judgement possibly linked to inadequate intellectual maturity, the rest are connected to moral, spiritual and Christian immaturity. They have something to do with one's sense of personal identity and the ability to decide for

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ These responses are from 50% of the religious institutes in Zimbabwe. The cited problems seem to be a fair representation of the general problems encountered. For an expression of similar concerns, see also NWAGWU, "Religious Life in Africa Today," p. 226; DOMINICANS, "Admission Reserved for Minority?" in *Crossroads*, 168 (1999), p. 18.

oneself.

Since assessment of maturity for admission to religious life is a process made up of several programmes with long and short term goals, before examining the immediate assessment of candidates at admission, we will have an overview of some of the ground work preceding it.

4.4.2 - Recruitment of Vocations to Religious Life

The Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference has a commission for Clergy, Religious and Vocations.¹⁶⁵ There is a sub-committee for vocations composed of chairpersons of the diocesan committees. In line with current ZCBC policy, most of the organisation of programmes is left to diocesan vocation teams. While the national office currently only sends out to the diocesan offices the "Vocation Message for Vocations Sunday" each year, plans are underway to co-ordinate both diocesan and religious vocation committees into one vocations' group. This will first need ratification by the bishops.¹⁶⁶

In reality much can be done only on the diocesan level. For example, Chinhoyi diocese has two vocation teams made up of representatives of the eight religious institutes in the diocese, two lay representatives from each deanery and a diocesan priest who is the vocation director for the diocese. Most of the dioceses in the country have similar teams. They have sent information flyers to all priests and youth organizers asking to be invited to youth meetings or congresses and even parents' meetings to address them on the vocation to religious life. They also hold a "Vocation Day Presentation" in a school in each deanery as well as in two parishes in each of the deaneries.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ ZCBC, *Catholic Directory*, p. 8.

¹⁶⁶ Rev. K. MURPHY, <kmurphy@mango.zw> "Seeking Help," 26 February 2000, personal E-Mail (27 February 2000).

¹⁶⁷ Rev. M. HEYSER, <mheyser@internet.co.zw> "Vocations," 3 March, 2000, personal E-Mail (4 March, 2000). See also ID, *Vocation Promoters' Meeting – Diocese of Chinhoyi: Minutes*,

It is significant that lay persons are also involved in these teams; this must certainly help to conscientize and educate the faithful on what religious life is and the necessity of maturity in those who choose it.

J.W. Mapanzure and J. Chipatiso's booklet, *Come Follow Me*, seems to be quite an informative tool to both parents and aspirants to religious life. This booklet provides self-portraits of the various religious institutes in the country, compiled by members of these institutes. Most of the self-portraits give the name, foundation and character, the vocation, nature, life, spirituality, apostolate, motto and in some cases the insignia or badges of the institute (c. 578). It does indeed give the reader a taste of how religious institutes add to the richness of the Church's life (c. 574 § 1). The booklet also provides statistics, postal addresses and telephone numbers for the institutes.¹⁶⁸ An updated copy of this booklet could be a useful tool for recruitment.

It seems that at the moment more is being done by the different institutes towards obtaining vocations to their own institutes, but efforts are also being made to organise workshops on a national level so as to be of assistance to any person seeking religious life in any community or for the diocesan priesthood.

Usually, each institute has a vocation director¹⁶⁹ and each community has a member in charge of vocation promotion. The vocation director coordinates all the work of the vocation promoters, and workshops for aspirants are organised both on deanery and institutional levels.

Although not as detailed, regarding information, several institutes also advertise themselves in the widely read Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference magazines *Crossroads* and *Church News*.

15 January 2000. For other ways of vocation promotion, see S. MUSIWA, "Nun Says Vocation Clubs will Encourage Youths to Join Religious Life," in *Catholic Church News*, 45 (1999), p. 7.

¹⁶⁸ J.W. MAPANZURE, J. CHIPATISO, *Come Follow Me: The Men and Women in the Missionary Apostolate of the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe*, Gweru, Mambo Press, 1992, pp. 1-59.

¹⁶⁹ For a comprehensive profile of the vocation director's qualities and tasks, see L. MUSEKIWA, *Formation Handbook: Little Children of our Blessed Lady*, Unpublished Draft, Harare, 1996, pp. 10-11.

4.4.3 - Pre-novitiate Programmes in Zimbabwe

The 1983 Code no longer prescribes the postulancy as did the 1917 Code, but calls for adequate preparation (c. 597 §2). Most institutes in Zimbabwe, however, have kept both the candidacy and the postulancy. Depending on proper law and formation directories, the candidacy usually lasts from one to three years, and the postulancy between six months and one year. Again, the pre-novitiate programmes depend on the institute. In one case, candidates normally continue with their academic education usually in schools where there are members of the institute they are affiliated to. There is normally a sister who is in charge of them and gives them instructions periodically. Sometimes, during school holidays, the candidates live in one community and again receive intensive instructions from a candidate mistress.

In this particular case, there is also residential postulancy normally lasting for a year after which one is assessed and either admitted into the novitiate, delayed or asked to leave. Instructions to candidates and postulants focus on human and Christian formation. The human dimension includes human development, cultural moral values, intellectual development, community life, practical skills, e.g., cookery, handiwork, gardening, music, sacristy work, growing and arranging of flowers, hobbies, etc. The Christian dimension includes Catholic doctrine, prayer, liturgy, vocation and scripture. The postulants have a chance for some pastoral work and three times a year meet with postulants of other institutes.¹⁷⁰ In some cases candidates have had the opportunity to attend theology courses.

4.4.4 - Criteria for Assessment of Candidates

On the afore-mentioned questionnaire, in answer to the question: What specific qualities do you look for in the candidates you admit to your institutes? The following were the answers:

¹⁷⁰ MUTEME, *Personal Letter*, 31 October, 1998. See also MUSEKIWA, *Formation Handbook*, pp. 17-18; PRESENTATION SISTERS ZIMBABWE VICE PROVINCE, *Draft Work on the Formation Directory*, Unpublished, Harare, March 1998.

- good Catholics
- right motivation
- good moral standards
- physical and mental health
- certain psychological and mental maturity
- good educational standards
- capacity to love
- capacity to live in community
- spiritual maturity
- emotional maturity
- ability to make decisions
- zeal for religious and moral values
- prayerfulness
- generosity
- readiness to learn and stretch
- commitment; honesty
- stability of character
- intelligence
- being African, with all the qualities of a true African.

The criteria listed by one Zimbabwean religious with long experience as both novice and postulant mistress in a women's religious institute seems to summarise the qualities well. She says:

My report before the novitiate stands like this:

1. Commitment: Does God come first in her life?
2. Prayer: Is prayer a duty or a necessity in her life?
3. Community living: How does she live with others?
4. Work: Does she like working, knowing that we ought to earn our living?
5. Initiative: How does she go about this? Dead or alive?
6. Health: Good or bad?¹⁷¹

Once again, the above-mentioned answers tally a great deal with the qualities that constitute personal maturity as described in the second part of the first chapter of this work. There is also a similarity between the above-mentioned qualities and those that came from some American institutes which responded to the same questionnaire. The qualities also fit into R. Carey's "Functional Index" listing and describe areas needing exploration in assessing a candidate.¹⁷² An area that is glaringly absent from the

¹⁷¹ MUTEME, *Personal Letter*, 31 October, 1998.

¹⁷² See pp. 142-143.

Zimbabwean list is an explicitly stated concern for evidence for psychosexual health. While the issue could be said to be incorporated in the other stated concerns, is it also possible that the absence is due to the general taboo against public discussion of sex in the Zimbabwean culture or are sex-related problems not yet an issue in the country?¹⁷³

It is true that the nine areas in Carey's "Functional Index" can be applied universally. What will differ, however, is the actual data and the way they are interpreted. This will depend on the cultural expectations regarding maturity. For example, exploring the first item of the index, which is "family background, parents' values and parental modelling and its effect on the candidate, relations with siblings, disciplines and skills learned, difficulties experienced and gratitude held," would have to be evaluated in the light of the Zimbabwean culture. The strong sense of community, respect and care for individuals and authority, older children's responsibility over the younger siblings, etc., would all have to be considered. Even the candidate's handling of the tension arising from the impact of the Western ideas on the traditional ones and its effect on the dynamics of family-members' relationships would also need to be considered by the assessor. In general, one would look for qualities and behaviour revealing the *unhu* of the individual in question. The same cultural sensitivity would have to be applied to all the other items of the index. Even though the Catholic Church is universal, being a good Catholic in Zimbabwe will be coloured by many local factors one of which will be how the individual harmonizes the traditional religious beliefs with Christianity.

4.4.5 - Methods of Assessing Maturity of Candidates

Two main approaches to psychological assessment of maturity have been discussed in chapter three of this work, namely, traditional psychological testing and behavioural assessment. This section is going to examine the extent to which these

¹⁷³ This concern is, however, clearly expressed in the criteria of individual institutes like that of the Marist Brothers. See extract of their formation directory attached to their questionnaire response.

methods are applied to the Zimbabwean situation and how effective they are. The results of the questionnaire seem to indicate that both approaches are used in Zimbabwe. In response to the question: "How do you assess your candidates for admission into your institute?" all said that they used questionnaires, letters and references, school and college reports, and academic certificates in their original forms. About 25% of the responses said that in addition to the other tools, they also use psychological testing.

4.4.5.1 - Psychological Testing

It is notable that the 25% of the responses which stated that they use psychological testing were made up of only international institutes; however, most of them indicated that they would use it later for first or final profession but not for admission. An attempt to find out exactly which psychological tests have been used and how effective they have been was unsuccessful. This is not surprising because it is probably only the assessor who would know the different methods of psychological assessment of candidates and the different kinds. For most superiors it seems that the mere engaging of a psychologist is what they would refer to as psychological testing. This, to some extent, reveals the need for basic knowledge among religious superiors regarding knowledge about psychological assessment in general and some of the methods involved. Thus equipped, then they can communicate effectively with their candidates' assessors and understand their assessment reports.

One member of a religious institute who is involved in formation rightly commented that psychological tests are too foreign in terms of language and that since the tests are often confidential to the person who administers them, they are not very helpful. In any case, the whole range of objective and projective psychological tests examined in chapter three¹⁷⁴ of this work would need to be standardized in and for Zimbabwe if they are to be effectively administered there. Psychological tests also need specially trained personnel and equipment to administer them and there would not be

¹⁷⁴ See, pp. 144-148.

many available nor would local religious institutes have the money to hire them.

4.4.5.2 - Behavioural Assessment

Judging from the rate at which the assessment tools like reference letters, interviews, observation and reports are used in assessment for admission to religious life in Zimbabwe, it would seem that behavioural assessment is more popular there than traditional assessment. This seems to fit in well with the general local culture's way of evaluating an individual's personal maturity. While each psychological test is designed to identify one or two particular qualities in an individual, for example, the Weschsler Adult Intelligence Scale for testing intellectual maturity, the Edward's Personal Preference Schedule for helping to discern motivation, the Religious Orientation Scale or the God Image Inventory for evaluating spiritual maturity etc., the behavioural assessment assessor may have all these aspects in mind, but will approach the candidate's life as a unit. Zimbabweans view the individual as a unit whose *unhu* would incorporate all these aspects. F. Weinzierl's description of the vocation workshops their institute hosts for girls who wish to join their institute in Zimbabwe provides a glimpse of some of the tools of this method at work. She says:

We organise short workshops, usually one weekend at certain places where our Sisters are active, or in parishes where we are invited to meet the girls. On Vocation Sunday, the young Sisters 'preach' during Mass and introduce Religious Life to the young people as well as to their parents present. Once a year we have a 'long Vocation Workshop' lasting two weeks in one of our own places, where young people who have shown interest for some time, are invited. They have lessons on prayer, vocation in general – e.g. vocation to marriage and to the single life as well as to Religious Life. There is a little introduction to the Dominican life. Lessons are quite interspersed with recreation and some work, e.g. cleaning the rooms they occupy and a little gardening. We find this quite important, since we can observe the girls' willingness to do ordinary housework. We also observe how they communicate with one another, how they get on and the girls are free to ask any questions. During this period, the girls also write their life-story and have a personal interview with a team, consisting of the Directress of Candidates, Vocation Promoter and a lay couple. After the interview, the team sits together and discusses the various applicants re: their suitability for religious life. After the fortnight's workshop the girls go home. They can then apply properly and they will receive a letter of invitation to join as an aspirant. Girls found not

suitable, will not be invited.¹⁷⁵

The involvement of a lay couple, according to Weinzierl, helps aspirants to recognize marriage as another equally noble state of life which one can choose. It also seems quite enriching in assessing the aspirants' maturity to get the opinion of lay persons who are more in touch and used to real life-situations where the candidates are coming from. With a few differences, it seems that most religious institutes in Zimbabwe hold similar workshops for their prospective candidates.

Another tool that is used for candidate/institute's growth in mutual knowledge is the 'come and see' experience. This is when the aspirant spends a few days with the candidates to become acquainted with the life they lead and also to be known a little by the sisters of the particular community.

However, as has already been pointed out in chapter three, one of the weaknesses of behavioural assessment is that, without standardized data, it can be very subjective. A remedy against this is sharpening the assessors' skills in applying the tools of this method so as to remain as objective and effective as possible. The assessor needs to be very skilled in conducting the interview which is the most important tool of the method. In this case, the interviewer needs to be very much acquainted with the Zimbabwean culture, the world view, the language (verbal and body), the Christology and ecclesiology, etc. Thus equipped, the assessor will be able to tap out information about the candidates' level of maturity for admission to religious life.

Not only will the interviewer need to know about the Zimbabwean culture, but also about the institute which the candidates wish to join. For example, it is important to know that the Spiritans have as their purpose, "evangelization of the 'poor'" and "willingness to accept tasks for which the Church has difficulty in finding workers"; that community life and team work in preaching and retreat-giving is important for the Redemptorists; that the Little Children of our Blessed Lady serve in "cheerful simplicity

¹⁷⁵ F. WEINZIERL, *Personal Letter*, 26 February, 1999. Ferrera is a Dominican sister with long experience of religious life in Zimbabwe both in leadership and formation.

and humble charity,” etc.¹⁷⁶

4.4.5.3 - Assessment of Intellectual Maturity in Zimbabwe

There seems to be a general consensus among institutes regarding the requirement of a reasonable degree of intellectual maturity indicated by academic results. Of the institutes who responded to the questionnaire, 95% (19 out of 20) indicated that they require those whom they admit to have passed at least five O level subjects including the English language. A few required a minimum of six O level or A level subjects.¹⁷⁷ Most professional training schools or colleges have similar entry requirements. In some cases, however, some aspirants feel frustrated when they cannot meet those academic requirements. The issue is currently quite controversial.¹⁷⁸

Although not always a guarantee for intellectual maturity, academic performance is to a certain extent an indication of some level of maturity. Eighteen years of age too seems to be the minimum age of admission into religious life in Zimbabwe. This seems appropriate as this is also the age at which young people can vote or marry.

4.4 - PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE ASSESSMENT OF CANDIDATES

At the moment, confidentiality and privacy in the assessment of candidates' maturity does not seem to be much of an issue among religious institutes in Zimbabwe. Although many of the institutes reveal evidence of the awareness to take precautions to preserve privacy and confidentiality in assessing the maturity of their candidates, none of those who responded to the questionnaire have written policies as yet.

¹⁷⁶ See MAPANZURE and CHIPATISO, *Come Follow Me*, pp. 10, 11 and 34.

¹⁷⁷ O level is an international exam set by Zimbabwe in collaboration with Cambridge Syndicate in Britain. This is written after four years of secondary education. The A level exam is written after six years of secondary school.

¹⁷⁸ See DOMINICANS, “Admission Reserved,” p. 18. See also, O. WERMTER, “God Calling only the ‘Bright and Beautiful’,” in *Catholic Church News*, 25 (March /April 1996), pp. 8-9.

CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to apply the issues discussed in the three previous chapters to Zimbabwe. The issues were the notion of religious life in the Zimbabwean traditional culture and the notion of maturity, with some emphasis on spiritual and Christian maturity as it is the basis of religious life. The chapter went on to discuss cultural practices that support/challenge mature living of religious life and the assessment of maturity for admission of candidates to the life. While Zimbabwean traditional religion did have a practice similar to religious life (*mbonga*), thus rendering religious life not totally strange, there are marked differences between the two in terms of motivation, aims and style of life. The Zimbabwean notion of maturity, in so far as the cultural values are concerned, tallies with the general universal definition of psychological maturity. However, as can be expected, the way the same values are expressed differs according to culture.

With regards to spiritual maturity, it is clear that the Zimbabwean traditional culture has a rich legacy which is fertile ground as basis for Christianity. While Zimbabweans believed in God, the idea of Christianity was, however, new. While much has been achieved in terms of inculturating Christianity, much more still needs to be done by correcting the damage inflicted through colonialism and primitive methods of evangelisation. There is also the need to work out and implement an appropriate Christology incorporating the Zimbabwean culture's preoccupation with promotion of life and a veneration of ancestors which is compatible with Christianity.

Again, with regard to the vows, while a few practices are really counter-cultural, especially the idea of one not marrying and bearing children, most of the Zimbabwean cultural values are good soil for the vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, community and prayer life. The greatest challenge is reclaiming self-esteem and the many values and cultural treasures which Africans in general were taught to despise and consequently which became lost and in some cases completely forgotten over the many years of colonial and neo-colonial rule. Many pre-novitiate programmes include learning about cultural values and there has been much done to inculturate liturgy. What is

encouraging is the genuine interest and effort by both Christians in general and members of religious institutes in particular to grow in maturity by affirming and challenging themselves on certain issues.

There is a general need to know on the part of both the institutes and the aspirants for reasons similar to those described before in chapter three. On the whole, much is being done by way of assessing the maturity of candidates for religious life in the areas of vocation promotion, recruitment, the pre-novitiate programmes and the immediate assessment before admission into the novitiate. While the criteria for assessing candidates' maturity may be the same, the actual content and data is very much culturally determined.

From the replies to the afore-mentioned questionnaire regarding the methods of assessment used in Zimbabwe, it is evident that it is behavioural assessment rather than psychological testing which is more popular. Most institutes use interviews, observation of aspirants at home or as candidates and postulants, reference letters, and in some cases biographies. This is not surprising since among the Zimbabwean people, it is the behaviour, the deeds, which reveal a person's character and level of personal maturity. Nevertheless, the replies to the questionnaire express a need for improvement in the methods used. In the light of this study, a few challenges and recommendations will therefore be suggested in the general conclusion of this work.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Due to the serious nature and consequences of the juridic act of religious profession, the issue of the need for sufficient capacity required for it has been a perennial concern since the beginning of religious life. While the capacity covers a whole range of qualities, some of which are mentioned in c. 642, the one quality that seems to incorporate most of the other qualities is maturity. Although the 1917 Code had no canon similar to the above-mentioned canon, the requirement of certain degree of maturity in candidates for religious life or the priesthood had often been implied in papal and curial documents on the subject.

Although c. 642 and a few other canons do mention this need for maturity for admission to both religious life and the priesthood, nowhere in the Code is this maturity clearly described or has its degree of sufficiency prescribed. Therefore, the main aim of this study has been to examine what it is that constitutes maturity and how one can assess its sufficiency effectively for admission of candidates to religious life. Canonically maturity has often been seen in terms of age and academic qualifications. However, since religious life, especially in terms of the 'sufficient maturity' required for it has implications for canon law, spirituality, theology and psychology, an inter-dialogue of these disciplines has been conducted in the analysis of this question and this attempt has yielded several important conclusions.

First, this study has confirmed that religious life has spiritual roots and is a result of a religious experience during which one feels called by God to follow Christ in a specific way. Since religious life operates within the Church, it is Church authority that approves it and regulates its lifestyle by prescribing its essential elements as well as the rights and obligations of the members.

Second, the study has also confirmed the difficulty of defining maturity and, as a consequence, decided to narrow it down to personal maturity. It became clear that, like maturity, personal maturity is also very hard to define because of its dynamic and progressive nature. It is composed of several internal faculties often operating at the same time and producing certain behaviour which gradually develops into a systematic

pattern within a particular individual. To facilitate the assessment process, it became necessary to examine personal maturity in its several aspects, namely, the psychosexual, affective, intellectual, moral, social and spiritual. These are key focal points of adjustment in the development of any individual's personality.

The study has revealed that development in all these areas is usually relative to age and culture, and therefore the definitions are based on criteria generally agreed upon as normal at a given age within a particular culture.. Basic psychosexual maturity is that stage when one has attained a certain amount of self-identity enabling her/him to act freely and independently. An affectively mature person is one able to engage in healthy intimate relationships. An intellectually mature person has a certain degree of mental ability while moral maturity involves one's sense of right and wrong and the responsibility over one's behaviour.

Spiritual maturity deals with the degree and quality of an individual's awareness, experience and relationship with the transcendent Being and how that affects one's life and his/her relationship with other people and creation at large. In the case of religious life, Christian maturity, that is, belief in the divinity and messiahship of Jesus and living according to the values of his teaching, is absolutely essential. Social maturity is one's outward expression of all these other aspects of maturity. Over and above this psychological personal maturity is also the level of maturity required canonically and for a particular institute depending on its charism, spirituality and apostolate.

Third, the careful analysis of the dynamics of religious life, existentially, has sufficiently demonstrated that the efficacy of religious life, to a great extent, depends on the level of maturity of its members. All aspects of personal maturity are essential for one to become aware of God's call and to respond to it with faithful commitment. Maturity is vital for coping with the natural stages of human development within the framework of the religious vow of chastity.

It became clear that spiritual, Christian and moral maturity play an important role in the attainment of the individual and collective spiritual poverty, i.e., an attitude of complete trust and dependence on God, which is then manifested externally in the life

of vowed poverty. Although individuals and institutes will live it differently, generally it is characterised by a life of deep love and respect for all creation and a keen sense of justice compelling one to want to share with those in any kind of need.

We also saw that maturity is required for a life-giving vowed obedience which is far from sheer conformity. In order to be able to engage in individual and co-discernment through listening and dialogue, for a proper understanding and application of law and a spirit of sacrifice, spiritual, intellectual and moral aspects of maturity all interact.

It became clear that healthy religious common life necessarily involves the awareness of the sacredness of individual members and the community. It requires self-knowledge and self-acceptance, transparency, deep love and acceptance of others with all their strengths and weaknesses, forgiveness and compassion, challenge, confrontation, and balance between community involvement and respect of individual private needs. Without a certain amount of spiritual, Christian, psychosexual, intellectual, affective and social maturity, this is hardly possible.

There are several different forms of prayer. In addition to communal prayer, we found out that the contemplative and affective forms are particularly life-sustaining for religious. We also discovered that the affective, spiritual and intellectual aspects of maturity play a vital role in these kinds of prayer.

Fourth, in terms of assessment of personal maturity, for admission of candidates to religious life, we saw that it is a very difficult exercise. Apart from the complexity of the elusive nature of maturity, the divine element in the call to religious life also calls for sensitive caution for fear of mistakenly barring a genuine vocation. Nevertheless, some kind of assessment is inevitable since both the institutes and the individuals involved need a certain amount of mutual knowledge before committing themselves to something as serious as religious life. Awareness may, on the one hand, lead to acknowledgement, appreciation and maximum utilization of skills or on the other hand lead to improvement through acquisition of the needed skills. A certain amount of identified readiness also facilitates the implementation of the novitiate programme.

Admission of members with serious psychological disorders which may surface later on can have adverse effects for themselves, their institutes and the Church at large.

With regards to assessment of maturity, this study has concluded that the main method is psychological, based on behaviour. This study has revealed that psychological assessment is mainly in two categories, traditional and behavioural. Traditional assessment is based on the theory that people behave the way they do due to recognizable, deeply-rooted personality traits. Behavioural assessment, on the other hand, is based on the belief that people are what they often do under certain similar circumstances, conditions and environments. While traditional assessment usually employs objective and projective psychological tests, behavioural assessment mainly relies on interviews, observation and sampling of behaviour. Both methods have strengths and weaknesses and in reality probably complement each other.

A chronological survey of papal and curial documents on psychological assessment revealed an initial cautious tolerance of the practice which, however, has now developed into an open acknowledgement and acceptance of its use. The main concern all along has been the need to ensure protection of individual privacy and reputation during the process. The 1983 Code seems to have made the basic provision for the balance between the need for the institute to know and the protection of individual privacy.

This study has also reached the conclusion that effective assessment of candidates' maturity for a particular institute begins with good witness from the life of the members. Then there is need for an assessment programme mapping out the procedures an institute follows up to the time of admission. The programme will include defining clearly what an institute's goals are and marketing them by means of brochures, recruitment talks etc. This will involve employing and training vocation directors whose role is clearly spelt out.

The results of a survey on criteria adopted during assessment of candidates tallies, to a great extent, with the several aspects of personal maturity described in the first chapter of this work. Among other things, most institutes are interested in

candidates who have a basic understanding of religious life and join for the right motivation. They like candidates who are capable of committing themselves to generous service and can live in community peacefully. Therefore, during assessment, information on candidates' family background in terms of values upheld, relationships with parents and siblings point to their moral, affective and social maturity. Their educational-occupational background, social effectiveness, discipline decision-making skills correspond to their intellectual and moral maturity. Their psychosexual history and information on their social relationships are linked to their psychosexual maturity. Their faith history, prayer life and involvement in the Church are an indication of their spiritual and Christian maturity.

According to the results of the same survey, we can conclude that while institutes in the first world countries employ both traditional and behavioural tools for assessing their candidates, they use more of the traditional than the behavioural tools. Currently popularly used psychological tests are the objective and projective personality tests.

However, since these psychological tests were standardized at a particular time in a particular culture, they cannot have universal applicability unless they are standardized to reflect a particular culture. Knowing about them, however, may inspire someone to standardize them for a particular culture. Behavioural assessment, on the other hand, can be used cross-culturally focussing on definite skills relevant to the environment at that point in time. If the candidates are to be sufficiently mature for a particular institute, then there needs to be good cooperation between the assessor and the institute's administration which needs to spell out clearly the criteria for assessment of candidates for its institute. Cooperation also helps institutes to utilize the assessor's report fully.

Fifth, with regards to the notion of religious life in the Zimbabwean culture, we saw that the traditional practice of *mbonga*, although different in certain aspects, provided a suitable foundation for the general reception of the idea of religious life. We also saw that the Zimbabwean term *unhu* best defines personal maturity and that the

cultural values it embodies agree with the general universal definition of psychological personal maturity. However, in some cases, the behaviour which corresponds with a certain level of affective, spiritual, moral, intellectual and psychosexual maturity in Zimbabwe will differ from that of other cultures.

This study has depicted the Zimbabwean traditional culture as possessing a high degree of spiritual maturity in terms of a strong sense of the sacred and awareness of God's presence. This is fertile ground for inculturation of Christianity. However, this same study has also revealed the need for working out and even suggested adopting a Christology which embraces some of the strong traditional religious beliefs of Zimbabweans.

Regarding the living of the vows in Zimbabwe, while a few practices are indeed counter-cultural, especially the idea of not marrying and bringing forth children, most of the Zimbabwean cultural values, especially the preoccupation with generating and preservation of life, and community-mindedness, are good soil for the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience.

Sixth, from the survey conducted among institutes in Zimbabwe, it is clear that most of the problems encountered after admission of candidates arise from inadequate knowledge about them before admission, hence also the need to know. There is well organized vocation promotion and recruitment. Most of the pre-novitiate programmes among institutes in Zimbabwe are very long covering aspirancy, candidacy and postulancy the last two being mostly residential. The criteria for assessing their candidates is similar to that of others elsewhere except that the actual content and data is different according to the culture.

In the light of the findings of this work a few recommendations seem appropriate at this point.

1) Since maturity is a continuous process for everybody, it seems helpful to continue to challenge oneself as an individual Christian, as a religious, as an institute and as a people by asking and discerning: "Who do people say we are?" "What would we like to be?" as religious. "Why do we sometimes attract people who are looking for,

among other things, status, prestige, education etc.?"

2) Replace the candidacy stage with well-organized intensive individual accompaniment of aspirants in their ordinary life situations by well-trained members.

There appears to be too much time, energy and probably finances used during the candidacy period with little difference between the candidacy and postulancy programmes. There seems to be much teaching with the expectation that the candidates reflect in their behaviour what they have been taught. As P. Molinari and C. Fallon rightly state, there are no real life situations to challenge them in order that they can freely choose to behave maturely.¹⁷⁹ In some cases, an aspirant is admitted as a candidate after spending four or six years of secondary education in a boarding school which is to a great extent as institutional as the residential candidacy. This can have damaging effects on the proper development into mature and responsible people.¹⁸⁰ Of course, there is likely to be the fear that if aspirants are not received at once, they would be lost to other institutes or other walks of life, but, in the long run, as far as maturity is concerned, one who survives that period would really be worth receiving. In this case, intensive accompaniment of aspirants by some members of the institute would be interspersed by 'come and see' experiences, followed by the long workshop and the residential postulancy.

Regarding the two main methods of assessing maturity described in chapter three of this work, it appears that institutes in Zimbabwe use behavioural assessment more than the traditional assessment. There is, however, room for improvement in the use of the tools in this method of assessment in the light of recent research and findings in this science as described in chapter three of this work. There is room for improvement in terms of the quality of the interviews, the criteria covered, the interpretation of the

¹⁷⁹ See P. MOLINARI, *The Guiding Principles of the New Document on Formation and Talks on their Practical Application*, Ottawa, Canadian Religious Conference, 1979, p. 64, and C. FALLON, "Accompanying People Growing in Awareness of a Call," in *Canadian Religious Conference Document*, 401-48 (1983), pp. 1-12.

¹⁸⁰ According to A. Lott, some religious communities require that aspirants to their institutes spend time in their home-setting before they accept them. See LOTT, "Inculturation," p. 245.

material and the way it can be effectively used. Since, as has already been pointed out, the traditional Zimbabwean culture is full of symbolism and certain practices whose meaning may not be apparent to a foreigner, this exercise is best carried out by one well-versed in the culture.

3) Since maturity is developmental and continues even after one has joined religious life, on the whole issue of assessment of maturity, perhaps the Code for the future could also point out the need for ongoing assessment of the maturity of members at different stages of their religious life to enhance commitment and efficacy.

With regards to maturity and its assessment for admission to religious life in Zimbabwe, the topic could be further explored in terms of finding ways of continuing to inculturate and renew religious life so that it truly represents the culture's deepest spiritual aspirations. Psychologists and experienced personnel already involved in assessment of candidates for religious life could also design localized methods of assessing candidates for admission into religious life in Zimbabwe.

APPENDIX ONE
VOWS FOR NONVIOLENCE¹⁸¹

VIOLENCE	AMBIVALENCE	NONVIOLENCE
<i>Poverty</i>	<i>"Cluttered"</i>	<i>Mutual Sustainability</i>
Detachment	Confused expectations of self and others	Stewardship
Deprivation of soul	Burdensome and unclear	Nonpossessive ownership
Irresponsible caring	Who now is responsible for what?	Coresponsibility
Managing with what we can quantify	Ideological shift from heroism to trust	Goods entrusted to us by God
Dualistic divisions, e.g., spiritual vs. material	Difficult integration	Befriending the material creation
Destitute, yet very secure	Difficult to let go of old securities	Living simply so that others may simply live
Perfectionism by "stripping away"	Shift in spirituality	Holiness via wholesome sharing
<i>Celibacy</i>	<i>Reclaiming Sexuality</i>	<i>Relatedness</i>
Disembodiment	My body / My body!	Embodiment
Asexual	Shame - promiscuity	Pan-sexual
Mechanistic conditioning	Facts of life vs. Values for living	Archetypal contextualization
Suppression of feeling	"How far can I go?"	Engage with your feelings
Denial	"Afraid to tell you who I am"	Acknowledgement

¹⁸¹ *Poverty, Celibacy, and Obedience: A Radical Option for Life* by Diarmuid O'Murchu. Copyright © 1999. All rights reserved. Used with permission of The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York.

VIOLENCE	AMBIVALENCE	NONVIOLENCE
Repressing the shadow	"Opening a can of worms"	Befriending the shadow
Avoid temptation	How much risk...?	Take the risk of relating
Keep the vow	"Even if I am unfaithful?"	Live your liminality
"Stay in the closet"	"Coming out is best"	"Be true to your whole self"
<i>Obedience</i>	<i>Ineffectual Democracy</i>	<i>Mutual Collaboration</i>
Power	Requires new skills	Service of mutuality
Hierarchy	"Fine in theory, but..."	Community
Shirk responsibility	Much ambivalence	Shared responsibility
Superior/inferior	Seeking an illusive balance	Mutual partnership
Divine/ patriarchal	"How do we do it?"	Search through discernment
Structured institutions	Fear of disintegration	Networks
Teaching	Conflicting sense of allegiance	Listening
In the name of the church	Paradigm shift	In the name of <i>Basileia</i>

APPENDIX TWO**Psychological Evaluation Release Form¹⁸²**

I, (name), willingly agree to be interviewed by the consultant assigned to me as part of the admissions process into the institute of (name of the institute). I also willingly release the contents of the psychological evaluation prepared by the same consultant to the major superior and to those designated by her/him.

I also give the above-mentioned persons the right to review the contents of all the materials submitted to the Vocation Director for the applications process.

I also waive my rights to review the psychological evaluation and the letters of recommendation which will be included as part of my application to enter the novitiate of the same institute.

Date:-----

Signature:-----

Address:-----

¹⁸² Borrowed with permission of Fr. David Hynous from his private manuscript entitled "Admission of Candidates Canons 641-645." It has been modified in parts.

APPENDIX THREE

TYPES OF RECORDS	INTERIM LOCATION	COMPUTER	RETENTION YEARS	WHO HAS ACCESS?	FOR WHAT PURPOSE?	FINAL LOCATION	DISPOSITION
INCORPORATION PRE-ENTRANCE:							
Application	Initial Formation Office Designated Councilor	No	To first Vows	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	Reference/legalities	Shred	Shred at Final Vows
Autobiography	Initial Formation Office Designated Councilor	No	To first Vows To final vows	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	Reference/legalities	Shred	Shred at Final Vows
Acceptance	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	No	To first Vows To final vows	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	Reference/legalities	Shred	Shred at Final Vows
Correspondence	Initial Formation Office	No	To first Vows	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	Reference/legalities		
Letters of Recommendation	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	No	To first Vows To final vows	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	Reference/legalities	Accession to Archives	
AFFILIATION							
Application	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	No	To first Vows To final vows	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior Executive Councilors	Reference/legalities	Accession to Archives	

TYPES OF RECORDS	INTERIM LOCATION	COMPUTER	RETENTION YEARS	WHO HAS ACCESS?	FOR WHAT PURPOSE?	FINAL LOCATION	DISPOSITION
Acceptance	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	Yes		Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior Executive Councilors	Reference/legalities	Accession to Archives	
Baptism/ Confirmation	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	Yes	To first Vows Departure/ Death	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	Reference/legalities	Accession to Archives	
Initial Formation (continued) AFFILIATION:							
Marriage Certificate	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	No	To first Vows To final vows Departure/ Permanent	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior Executive Council	Reference/legalities	Accession to Archives	
Confirmation of annulment or widowhood	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	No	To first Vows To final vows Departure/ Permanent	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	Reference/legalities	Accession to Archives	
Naturalization Papers	Initial Formation Office Major Superior	Yes	To first Vows Departure/ Permanent	Initial Formation Director Major Superior Secretary Treasurer Designated Councilor	Reference/legalities	Accession to Archives	
O/Level, High School, College/ University Transcripts	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	Yes	To first Vows To final vows	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	Reference/legalities	Accession to Archives at Final Vows	

TYPES OF RECORDS	INTERIM LOCATION	COMPUTER	RETENTION YEARS	WHO HAS ACCESS?	FOR WHAT PURPOSE?	FINAL LOCATION	DISPOSITION
Health Records	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	No	To first Vows To final vows Departure/ Permanent	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior Executive Council	Reference/legalities	Major Superior	Shred at Death
Psycho-social Assessment - Full	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor	No	To final Vows	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	Reference/legalities	Major Superior	Shred at first Vows
Other: - Letters of recommendation - Novitiate Application - Self Evaluation - Recommendation for Novitiate - Acceptance to Novitiate - Psycho-social summary report	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	No	To first Vows To final vows Departure/ Permanent	Initial Formation Director Major Superior Executive Councilor	Reference/legalities	Accession to Archives (except summary report)	Shred summary report at final Vows
Waiver of Claim	Archives	No	Permanent	Initial Formation Director Major Superior Executive Councilor	Reference/legalities	Accession to Archives at the time of Approval	
NOVITIATE Request for first Vows	Initial Formation Director Designated Councilor Major Superior	No	To first Vows	Initial Formation Office Major Superior Executive Councilor	Legalities	Accession to Archives at the time of Approval	

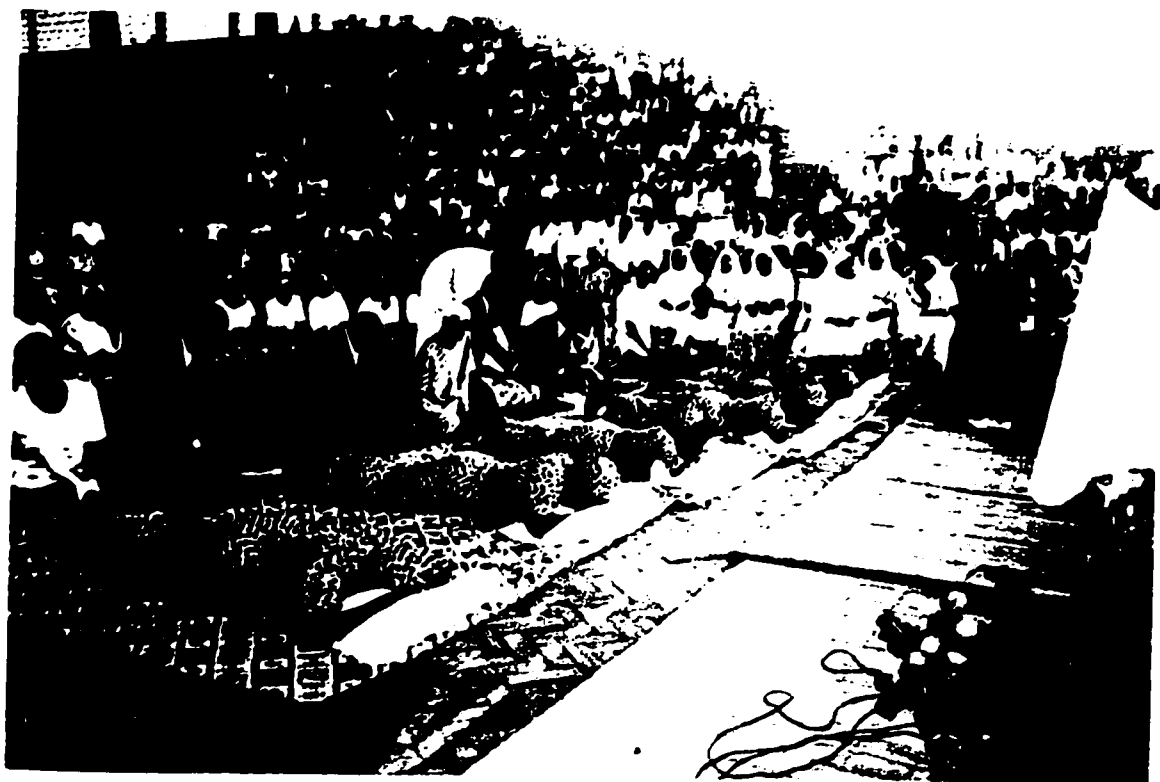
TYPES OF RECORDS	INTERIM LOCATION	COMPUTER	RETENTION YEARS	WHO HAS ACCESS?	FOR WHAT PURPOSE?	FINAL LOCATION	DISPOSITION
Last Will (Original)	Archives File	No	Departure/ Death	Treasurer Major Superior	Legalities	Accession to Archives at the time of Approval	
Cession of Administration	Archives File	No	Departure/ Death	Treasurer Major Superior	Legalities	Accession to Archives at the time of Approval	
Waiver of Claim	Archives File	No	Permanently	Treasurer Major Superior	Legalities	Accession to Archives at the time of Approval	
Profession of First Vows	Major Superior Archives	Yes	Departure/ Death Permanently	Major Superior Designated Councillor	Legalities	Accession to Archives at the time of Approval	

APPENDIX FOUR¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Novices of the Little Children of Our Blessed Lady sing and dance the Magnificat during liturgy.

APPENDIX FOUR¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Sisters of Maria of the Annunciation of Beira in Mozambique, in African dress.

APPENDIX FOUR¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Sisters of the Annunciation at final profession, lie down to express total commitment while their parents burn incense in support of their offering of their children to God.

APPENDIX FOUR¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ A member of the Little Children of Our Blessed Lady institute, celebrating the silver jubilee of her first religious vows. She is also renewing her dedication of her whole self represented by the jar full of water which she hands over to the presider before renewing her vows.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Helen Tendayi Maminimini was born in Wedza district in Zimbabwe on 2 September 1950. After receiving her secondary school education at Makumbi and Monte Cassino High Schools and St Ignatius College, she took her first religious vows in the institute of The Little Children of Our Blessed Lady in 1974. She then obtained a Bachelor's Degree in English and History from the University of Zimbabwe in 1976 and a Graduate Certificate in Education from the same university in 1978.

From 1978-1982, Helen taught in several mission secondary schools, namely Assisi, Makumbi, Musami and Mt St Mary's in Wedza. The high rate of mobility was due to the war of liberation that was going on. From 1983-1995, she was headmistress at St. Michael's and Holy Rosary Secondary Schools also in Zimbabwe.

In 1997, she obtained a Certificate in Theology at Saint Paul University in Ottawa. In the following year, 1998, she also received a Masters in Canon Law from the University of Ottawa and a Licentiate in Canon Law from Saint Paul University.