

READING IN THE APOSTOLIC FORMATION OF SISTERS

by

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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Sister Mary St. Elizabeth (nee Victoria Stella Seibel) was born February 16, 1916, on the family homestead near Regina, Saskatchewan.

Except for a period of two years during which she attended a rural school, she received her elementary education at St. Mary's School in Regina, and her secondary education at Sacred Heart Academy and Central Collegiate in Regina. She obtained the Associate in Arts certificate from Regina College in 1935 and then enrolled in the Regina Normal School from which she received a teaching certificate in 1936. Later she resumed her university studies and received the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1947 from the University of Ottawa.

Sister Mary St. Elizabeth entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions in 1937 and made profession in 1939. She then taught at Sacred Heart Academy and Marian High Schools in Regina, and at Lebreton Public School. At present Sister Mary St. Elizabeth is principal at Marian High School.

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INTRODUCTION

During the past two decades the need for a more profound formation for priests and religious has been pointed out repeatedly by the supreme Pontiffs.

In September 1952 Pius XII urged major superiors to provide for the formation of their subjects. Among other things he stressed the need for sisters to be abreast of their times in knowledge and techniques in their professional fields. He said:

Here there shall be no pettiness; but rather be broad-minded in your outlook. Whether it be a question of education, pedagogy, care of the sick, artistic or other activities, the sister should have this sentiment: Mother Superior is giving me the opportunity of a formation which will put me on an equal footing with my colleagues in the world. Give them also the possibility and the means of keeping their professional knowledge up to date.

An intensive formation extending beyond the training given during the postulate and novitiate is necessary if religious are to live up to their commitment of being apostles for Christ. First and foremost this training must be spiritual but the training of the christian woman and the intellectual training of the apostle may not be neglected.

"Allocution to Superiors General of Female Institutes and Congregations", The States of Perfection, compiled by Gaston Courtois, trans. John A. O'Flynn, Westminster, Maryland, Newman Press, 1961, pp. 213-214.

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In 1950 Pius XII expressed the need for a happy balance of the religious and professional aspects of the life of the sister. He said in part:

This is what the Church insistently demands of you: that your exterior activity be in harmony with your interior life and that the two constantly balance one another.²

In order to be effective as an apostle the woman religious must be formed in the different aspects of her being which are so interdependent that one cannot exist without the other; hence this formation must consider the human aspect, the supernatural or christian one, and in the case of the sister, the religious and apostolic dimension. Professional or technical training will be linked to the apostolic aspect.³

It is this total formation which Pius XII had in mind when on May 31, 1956 he issued the Apostolic Constitution Sedes Sapientiae to which he later appended the General Statutes. Although the document was written for clerics the norms contained therein may well be applied to

²"Allocution 'Annus Sacer' to the International Congress of Religious," December 8, 1950, The States of Perfection, p. 181.

³Elio Gambari, "The Juniorate in the Mind of the Holy See," The Juniorate in Sister Formation, Sister Ritamary, ed., New York, Fordham University Press, 1958, p. 10.

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the training of women religious. Paragraph 33 reads as follows:

All, professors and students alike, ought to keep in mind that the ecclesiastical studies are not merely for intellectual training. They are also intended for a full and solid formation, religious, sacerdotal and apostolic; [. . .]

In the following paragraph the pope indicates the need for an intellectual training which will make the priest conversant with recent discoveries and current thought - a training adapted to the fruitful carrying out of the apostolate. He continues:

All that we have spoken of so far concerning the spiritual and intellectual training of the students is of great importance and is certainly requisite for the molding of truly apostolic men; so that if due sanctity and learning are lacking in a priest, he is undoubtedly lacking everything.⁴

Article 23 of the General Statutes specifies the requisites for centres of training.

The centres, especially those which are destined for the pursuit of studies, must be furnished with libraries and all the other aids and tools which, depending upon the nature and grade of studies, are necessary for the investigation of the sciences and the proper cultivation of the arts according to the legitimate methods and demands of our age.⁵

⁴The Sacred Congregation of Religious, Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 1957, pp. 11-12.

⁵Ibid., p. 34.

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Elio Gambari, a member of the Sacred Congregation for Religious, referring to Article 16 of the General Statutes, declares that all the legislation of the Church concerning the formation of religious clerics, from the standpoint of religious perfection and of the apostolate applies implicitly to women religious as well as to members of lay institutes.⁶

Article 23 makes it clear that the religious must be able to have access to well-stocked libraries.

Lest there be any misunderstanding, the Pope reiterates the warning that spiritual formation must have primacy in the formation programme. He declares emphatically that they would err who rely excessively or exclusively on natural means in the training of the students, minimizing or neglecting the instruments and resources of the supernatural order. Apostolic fruits will abound only if supernatural means are utilized. Although the human and natural training are to be prized there can be no doubt that the supernatural sanctification of the soul holds first place in the whole programme of formation. For if

⁶Op. cit. p. 4. Article 16, Number 3-2 reads: "The norms, however, which in a more general way regard religious and apostolic training must be applied to lay Institutes and to lay members of clerical Religious Institutes." p. 29.

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the words of St. Paul "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4,3,)⁷ hold true for every Christian, how much more so for one who has publicly professed his intention to strive after evangelical perfection.⁸

Professional and spiritual formation must then go hand in hand; otherwise

The professor can smother the life of the religious, and the scientist may well strangle the priest. But the reverse of the picture is also true. Unless the spiritual life of the religious be grounded in the intellectual grasp of truth, such a one may live more by sentiment than by conviction, and misguided piety may well render a profession sterile.⁹

The same author further emphasizes the necessity for an integrated spiritual and intellectual formation if it is not to produce "only an expert in the professional field who will meet the approval of the accrediting agencies, but hardly an apostle consumed with zeal for God's glory."¹⁰

⁷All biblical quotations are taken from the Confraternity edition of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.

⁸Sedes Sapientiae, pp. 7-8.

⁹Bruno Hagspiel, Live in the Holy Spirit, Milwaukee, Bruce Publishing Co., 1957, p. 70.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 79.

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The training envisaged in Sedes Sapientiae will involve in one harmonious process the religious, intellectual and professional aspects of the person who is consecrating her life to God through the vows of religion. This training is "intended to produce an apostolic person capable, with God's grace, of effecting changes in today's world."

It aims

to help the sister intensify her goal of seeking God so that it is not a matter of words, or feelings, or pretty pieties, but an impetus that really directs her life, a strong force that puts the shape and color into everything she does.¹¹

This insistence on integrated formation is necessary, for there is a tendency to compartmentalize the lives of sisters. They are thought of, at one time simply as women or as human beings, at another as Christians, again as religious, and finally as apostles, as if anyone could possibly be an apostle in God's Church without being christian or human, or as if anyone could rightly be consecrated to God by the vows of religion without being also human, christian and apostolic. The sister consecrates her whole humanity, matter and spirit, to Christ. She dedicates her whole self to continuing the work for which Christ assumed humanity, and which He commissioned his apostles,

¹¹Sister Ritamary, The Juniorate in Sister Formation, New York, Fordham University Press, 1958, p. xvii.

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that is, all Christians to continue by virtue of their baptism. To be a religious is, for the woman who takes her consecration seriously, synonymous with being an apostle.

Just as the lives of sisters are compartmentalized, so also is their reading. There is "spiritual" reading, "professional" reading, "recreational" reading and even "profane" reading. These latter readings sometimes seem merely to be tolerated rather than encouraged within reason as a positive aid to apostolic formation. But really none of these categories need be considered profane, and all must be used to further the cause of God's kingdom. In all her reading the sister must look for "signs" of the kingdom. Some readings are more immediately signs of the kingdom than others; but this must not be an excuse to neglect the more indirect signs which speak more clearly to some than do the direct. "Spiritual" reading may be less effective in apostolic formation than readings traditionally classed as non-spiritual or secular or profane. Certain signs are a more eloquent means of communication for some than for others. The sister is attempting to reach all; therefore she must be familiar with those signs. The Christian Pavillion at Expo 67 in Montreal was a striking example of the different effects of a sign as a means of communication: the untraditional portrayal of christianity made sense to

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the young for it spoke their language, but the message was lost to many of the older generation who were unfamiliar with modern expressions of thought.

But compartmentalization is losing ground and so it should. Sister Mary Corita points this out when she writes:

Our time is a time of erasing the lines that divide things neatly. Today we find all the superlatives and the infinite fulfillment man hungers for portrayed not only in fairy stories or poems but also in billboards and magazine ads and T.V. commercials. We are doing an age old thing in new media. But when we learn (or teach) how to take fairy stories and myths and parables we must also learn (or teach) how to take billboards and magazine ads and T.V. commercials. In a sense this is simply to take signs as signs.¹²

There are many forms of the printed word through which thought is conveyed. The following are common forms: newspapers, magazines, books, radio and television, textbooks, songwriting, greeting cards, pamphlets, motion pictures, government reports, political speeches.¹³ What is said of reading the printed word in books is equally applicable to the other forms.

¹²"Art and Beauty in the Life of the Sister", The Changing Sister, Sister M. Charles Borromeo, ed., Notre Dame, Indiana, Fides Publishers, 1965, p. 219.

¹³The Christophers, How you Can Conduct a Small Leadership Group, New York, The Christophers Inc., 1961, p. 128.

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Although reading has always been advocated as a necessity for spiritual progress, it is spiritual reading that was being referred to. Alphonsus Rodriguez considered reading spiritual if its purpose is one's own spiritual advancement. He wrote:

Mere knowledge is a dry thing if it does not reach the will, feeding the affections and nourishing devotion; [.] there is a great difference between reading for knowledge and reading for spiritual advancement, between reading for others and reading for oneself; the former is study; the latter is spiritual reading. If in reading you set your eyes on knowing things or on gathering matter for subsequent preaching or talking to others, that will be studying for others, and not spiritual reading for your own advancement.¹⁴

Augustine Klass agrees that spiritual reading has as its aim one's own spiritual betterment, for spiritual reading is directed to the will rather than to the intellect. Its purpose is principally to stir up the affections, move the will and produce virtuous actions.¹⁵

¹⁴Practice of Perfection and Christian Virtues, trans. Joseph Rickaby, Chicago, Loyola University Press, 1929.

¹⁵"Attend to Reading", Review for Religious, July 1950, p. 186; cf. Alvarez de Paz, La Journée du Prêtre et du Religieux, trans. P. Lejeunes, Paris, P. Lethiellieux, 1899, p. 167.

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Hubert Van Zeller lays down as a condition for spiritual reading that it "dispose to prayer".¹⁶ James Leclercq calls that reading spiritual which leads to God; hence certain novels and plays are real spiritual reading.¹⁷

Pius X urged the clergy to cultivate the practice of reading sacred books of which one effect would be that they would be enabled to preach Christ wisely and impel the minds and hearts of their listeners to better things and direct them to heavenly desires.¹⁸ This sacred reading would be of benefit to others; it would nevertheless be spiritual reading.

Francis Wendell considers spiritual reading any form of serious reading which tends to bring the soul closer to God either directly as do the Bible and other standard spiritual works or indirectly as do philosophical or

¹⁶The Holy Rule, London, Sheed & Ward, 1959, p. 305.

¹⁷The Interior Life, trans. Fergus Murphy, New York, P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1961, p. 133.

¹⁸Haerent Animo in The Popes and the Priesthood, St. Meinrad, Indiana, Grail Publication. 1953, p. 20. Contrast John Hedley: "There is only one really essential and adequate rule as to spiritual reading, and that is, that we seek God in it. If we seek amusement or mere information, or matter for sermons, or vague edification, or satisfaction of literary taste - we have no right to call it spiritual reading." A Retreat, London, Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1894, p. 38.

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theological writings.¹⁹

It seems clear from the foregoing that the term "spiritual reading" refers to the reading which is done with one's own spiritual advancement in view. A book may be considered "spiritual" because of the topics discussed and may therefore be used for spiritual reading as indicated above. However, the same spiritual book may be read with a different goal in mind, such as to obtain information for a sermon or a class. The reading then becomes study.

It is in the broader sense as used by Leclercq and Wendell that the term spiritual reading is being used in this dissertation.

In view of the subject of this dissertation it may be well to consider briefly what is understood by the terms 'apostle' and 'apostolate'.

The word 'apostle' implies 'mission', and mission implies a mandate from the Church. Both terms signify a sending. The apostle, that is, the missionary, is one who is sent. He is sent primarily, not to be a social reformer or a builder, but to announce and proclaim the good news of salvation. In this regard, James Smith writes:

It would seem that it is not the geographical location that is to determine the missionary character

¹⁹The Formation of the Lay Apostle, New York, The Third Order of St. Dominic, 1954, pp. 49-50.

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of the Church's activity, but the persons involved; if the people are not christianized or are dechristianized all efforts, direct or indirect, to bring the Church to them is missionary in character. All these efforts are a carrying out of Christ's command to make disciples of all peoples; they are an exercise of the apostolate purely and simply.²⁰

Gambari makes it clear that each religious order has a special mandate from Christ through his visible body, the church.²¹ The missionary or apostle is sent by the Church to do the work of Christ. Christ went about teaching, healing, preaching social justice, comforting the afflicted, and the apostle must do likewise. This is the mandate received from the church; it is the apostolate of the sister.

Louis Locket expresses in the following excerpt this concern which the apostle must have for suffering humanity. He writes:

As there is no form of human misery on which God, through His Church, does not look, so there is no form of suffering whose weight, by His Church, he has not assumed. [. . .] There is a congregation, a Church precisely for that reason: so that there may be many to love and to manifest that love to the world.²²

²⁰"Training in the Missionary Spirit", Religious Formation: Papers Given to the Council of Major Superiors, London, Aquin Press, 1962, pp. 27-28.

²¹Religious - Apostolic Formation for Sisters, New York, Fordham University Press, 1964, p. 9.

²²"The Apostle in the Mystery of the Church", Cross and Crown, March 1953, p. 96.

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Yves de Montcheuil writes that the apostolate signifies opening the christian way of life to men, aiding men to enter into the christian life more completely, to begin to give themselves to God or to give themselves more deeply. He adds:

The spiritual apostolate (let us call it apostolate for if it is not spiritual it is a mockery) is ever mindful that nothing is accomplished so long as there is no personal giving of the individual to God. While it is possible to be apostolic in many ways - even through activities which seem to have only a distant connection to the result sought - it is so only on condition that the true aim always be in view.²³

Apostolate is defined by another writer as a commitment to positive action to put the people around us in contact and communication with God,²⁴ and the sister apostle is committed to be a witness to love, love which brought Christ to earth so that He might give to the world the life of God. "I came that they may have life, and

²³For Men of Action, trans. C.E. Parnell, Chicago, Fides Publishers, n.d., p. 8.

²⁴Joseph D. Munier, "The Relationship between Liturgy and Apostolate", Thy Kingdom Come: Christian Hope in the Modern World, Washington, The Liturgical Conference, 1963, p. 178.

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have it more abundantly" (Jn. 10, 10). This commitment requires a total surrender to God, for only those who have given themselves wholeheartedly and irrevocably to God are sufficiently filled with the knowledge and love of God to permit that interior life to shine through in their daily actions.²⁵ The sister has, by her vows, made this surrender of herself to God's service, that is, to the apostolate; hence there is no practical distinction between the terms "sister", "religious" and "apostle". The sister or woman religious is committed to the apostolate by the fact of her consecration.

The term "formation" as used in this dissertation means the development or growth of the whole person. It is the harmonious development of the human person in all its dimensions - physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, professional - and the transformation into an integrated human, christian and religious personality.²⁶ The apostolic formation of a sister is then this integrated

²⁵Ronald Roloff, "The Formation of the Sister for her Apostolic Mission," Sponsa Regis, Vol. 34, Dec. 1962, p. 114

²⁶Robert J. Henle, "Locating the Problems in the Sister Formation Conference Theme", Spiritual and Intellectual Elements in the Formation of Sisters, Sister Ritamary, ed., New York, Fordham University Press, 1957, p. xxiii.

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development of all the facets of the sister's being, but a development which is geared toward the special mandate or mission entrusted by the Church to her religious Congregation.

CHAPTER I

NECESSITY FOR "SPIRITUAL" AND PROFESSIONAL READING

In this era of revolutionary change when mankind is surrounded on every side by the propaganda of "liberal" or "conservative" promoters of an idea or movement, it is impossible to escape their influence. Even the illiterate can "read", correctly or incorrectly, pictorial messages on billboards or in magazines. Newspapers, radio, television make it clear that the most time-honored and accepted values are being questioned. Each man is faced with the task of sifting out the evidence and taking a stand with the "liberal" or the "conservative", or somewhere between the two.

Ideas are made known through some form of communication. Communications media progressed from the spoken word to pictorial and written communication. With technical progress ideas are rapidly communicated to the most distant points. Since man is subjected to a barrage of ideas - often conflicting ideas - via communications media, he must read. It is not a case of encouraging indiscriminate reading but of encouraging intelligent reading. Neither is it a case of confining reading material to an area which might be termed "good" reading, but of encouraging a wide area of reading which gives the reader various view points

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so that he is in a position to detect fallacy and to make his own intelligent judgments about what he reads.

Reading Encouraged by Scripture

Reading has always been considered of great importance even though in days past few could read. The Old Testament is replete with references to the power of God's word. The psalmist extols the word of God, which gives both instruction and guidance. He writes, "The declaration of thy words giveth light, and giveth understanding to little ones. [.] Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 118, 30, 105).

The Machabees, too, pay tribute to the word of God from which they drew comfort in their affliction. They wrote to the Macedonians when negotiating a continuance of a previous alliance: "For ourselves, we have little need of such friendship; seek we comfort, it is in the sacred books committed to our charge" (I Mach. 12, 9).

Many years later Paul writes: "Whatever things have been written have been written for our instruction that through the patience and the consolation afforded by the Scripture we may have hope" (Rom. 15, 4). Paul, too, recognizes Scripture as a potent means of instruction, a source of patience and consolation which inspires the reader with hope. He values it also for its power to bring about

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growth in maturity: "The deep knowledge of the Son of God will help us to attain to perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 14, 13). This statement has a familiar ring in the light of present day search for identity, for fulfillment as a unique person, and for a share in responsibility as is suited to sisters "come of age". Paul is insistent on the need to study Scripture. He writes to Timothy: "Till I come attend unto reading"¹ (I Tim. 4, 13). Referring to this text, Alphonsus de Liguori commented:

Mark the word attend which signifies that although Timothy as being a bishop, was greatly occupied with the care of his flock, still the apostle wished him to apply himself to the reading of books, not in a passing way or for a short time, but regularly and for a considerable time.²

In a second letter Paul indicates the assistance Timothy can expect from Scripture. He writes:

Thou hast known the Sacred Writings which are able to instruct thee unto salvation by the faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproving, for correcting, for instructing in justice that the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3, 15-17).

¹Douay Version

²The True Spouse of Jesus Christ, Book II, The Ascetical Works of St. Alphonsus, Vol. II, New York, Benziger Brothers, 1888, p. 10.

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The people of God had been encouraged to familiarize themselves with the word of God. Christ's example in this regard is strikingly evident throughout the New Testament. Christ frequently quotes Scripture to bring home a point. In answer to Satan's suggestion that He change stones into bread after his rigorous forty day fast, Christ quotes a text from Deuteronomy (8,3), "It is written, man does not live by bread alone but in every word from the mouth of God." Likewise, when He is invited by Satan to cast Himself fearlessly from the pinnacle of the temple for no harm will come to Him as the angels have Him in their care, Christ's reply again comes from Deuteronomy (6, 16): "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Satan's third attempt to test Christ, this time by offering Him the kingdoms of the world if He will fall in adoration before him evoked the order "Begone Satan!" the reason being the one cited in Deuteronomy (6,13), "The Lord thy God shalt thou worship and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4, 1-11).

In his home town, Nazareth, Jesus enters the synagogue on the sabbath day and stands up to read a passage from the sixty-first chapter of Isaias: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me; to bring good news to the poor he has sent me, to proclaim to the captives release and sight to the blind." Then, closing the book, He announces that He is the fulfillment of the prophecy. The

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claim He makes causes many to turn against their fellow townsman and He further shows his familiarity with the Old Testament as He proceeds to point out that no man is a prophet in his own country: witness Elias who was sent, not to a widow of Israel, but to one in Sarepta of Sidon, and Eliseus who cured, not the lepers of Israel, but the leper Naaman of Syria (Lk. 4, 16-27).

As Jesus hangs on the cross at the close of his earthly life He calls upon his Father with the words of Psalm 21; "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me."

On the day of his resurrection, unrecognized by two of his sorrowing disciples with whom He walks to Emmaus, Jesus tries to dispel their gloom by "going back to Moses and the whole line of prophets "and interpreting the "words used of himself by all the scriptures" (Lk. 24, 25).

The scribes and pharisees were poor examples for the people as Christ pointed out in Matthew 23.3; they did, however, know the text of the Scriptures even though they frequently distorted its meaning.³

Examples can be multiplied, but the foregoing will illustrate sufficiently the important place given to the Old Testament in the New.

³John (5, 39; 6, 31; 7, 42; 8, 5; 12, 14).

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Reading Endorsed throughout the Ages.

From the early years of the Church to the present day Christians have been urged to read the Scriptures. Jerome wrote interestingly to Eustochium; "Read much and learn as much as possible. Let sleep creep upon you with a book in your hand, and let the sacred page catch your head as you nod."⁴

In a subsequent letter to Eustochium he again returned to the importance of reading. In fact, he suggested a plan for programmed reading:

When you eat your meals reflect that you must immediately afterwards pray and read. Have a fixed number of lines of holy scripture, and render it as your task to the Lord. On no account resign yourself to sleep until you have filled the basket of your breast with a woof of this weaving. After the holy scriptures you should read the writings of learned men.⁵

Jerome does not stand alone as an advocate of reading. John Chrysostom claimed that God will never neglect anyone who applies himself to Scripture with great fervour and

⁴The Letters of St. Jerome, Vol. 1, trans. C.C. Mierow, in Ancient Christian Writers, Vol. 33, London, Longmans, Green, & Co., 1963, p. 119.

⁵The Principal Works of St. Jerome, trans. W. H. Fremantle et al., in A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. 6, Oxford, James Parker & Co., 1893, p. 106.

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ardent desire.⁶ Gregory the Great recommended that reading be followed by an active response to the inspirations received during reading.⁷ Basil advocated perusal of the lives of the saints and imitation of their virtues.⁸

In medieval times there is, among others, the witness of Bernard. In a commentary on Psalm 118, Bernard indicated that reading points out both the goal to strive for and the pitfalls to avoid in reaching it. Reading and prayer are the two arms which triumph over Satan; they destroy vice and nourish virtue.⁹

Thomas à Kempis made use of a series of comparisons to emphasize the need for reading. He likened a monastery without books to a soldier without arms, a ship without oars, a bird without wings, a horse without a bridle, a labourer without tools, a blind man without a guide, a kitchen without utensils, a table without food, a dry well,

⁶Homilia 35 in Gen., Migne, P.G., Vol. 53, col. 321.

⁷"Multum cordi suo seminat, sed parum infert, qui de mandatis coelistibus vel legendo, vel etiam audiendo multa cognoscit, sed neglegenter operando pauca fructificavit." Homiliarum in Ezechielem, I, Migne, P.L., Vo. 76, col. 888.

⁸De Virtute et Vitio, Migne, P.G., Vol. 32, col. 1126.

⁹Liber de Modo Bene Vivendi, Migne, P.L., Vol. 184, col. 1272.

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a barren vineyard.¹⁰

In this day it is unlikely that there is a dearth of reading material in convents. It is possible, however, that in some convents there is less than a well-balanced diet of old and new books on Scripture, theology, and the religious life. With the great advance in biblical studies and the changed emphasis in many aspects of theological studies and consequently of religious life as well, it is of prime importance that sisters have access to recent publications including periodical literature as well as classics in various fields.

Alphonsus de Liguori devoted an entire chapter of The True Spouse of Jesus Christ to the topic of reading. He wrote as follows:

The reading of pious works fills the soul with holy thoughts and good desires. This enables her to be recollected and live conscious of the divine presence. The mill grinds the corn that it receives; if the wheat be bad how can the mill make good flour? [. . .] The nun that keeps the mind filled with devout thoughts, such as spiritual maxims, examples of the various actions of the saints, will not only during prayer, but also at other times, be accompanied by these thoughts, and by them she will be kept almost always united with God.¹¹

¹⁰Opera Omnia, Michael Pohl, ed., Fribourg, Briggavorum, Herder, 1918, Vol. 4, P. 421.

¹¹Op. cit., P. 13.

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This advice was given to sisters who had little or no contact with the secular world. This fact makes it doubtful that the "pious works" mentioned in the above quotation will be as potent for today's religious as they may have been in the past. Today writings other than "pious works" may be far more effective in bringing to the apostle the realization of God's presence in the world about her, or in pointing out the need to make God's presence felt in areas where He and his teachings are manifestly absent. Reading, for example, about the sufferings of the underprivileged or the brutality resultant on race prejudice should fire the sister with the desire and the resolution to bring to all people Christ's message of the brotherhood of men. The above quotation brings to mind what Evelyn terms the "Jesus and I" piety¹² which, hopefully is on its way out. God is present to us in many ways: in the Eucharist, in his Word in Scripture, in all creation which has also been redeemed, and in each and every person. Evelyn states that we are no nearer to God than we are to our neighbour. This, he says, is the meaning of the

¹²"We like to shut everyone out securely and play Jesus and I alone in the world." That Man is You, trans. Edmond Bonin, Westminster, Maryland, Newman Press, 1965, p. 178.

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incarnation - God was made man and He always remains so.¹³

Among the sermons of the 19th century orators there are several devoted to the topic of reading. Among others there is Benedict Vincent's lengthy sermon based on the text of the gospel for Sexagesima Sunday: "A sower went out to sow his seed [. . .]" (Lk. 8, 4-15).¹⁴ During the same period Alleq included a sermon on reading in a series on christian life.¹⁵

Louis Bourdaloue, one of the foremost orators of this period, added to the growing volume of literature on reading.¹⁶ Much of the material for these sermons was culled from patristic writings and stressed the need and the value of "spiritual" reading.

In more recent times Pius X enumerated for the clergy the many benefits that would accrue from fidelity to

¹³We Are All Brothers, trans. Sister Mary Agnes, New York, Herder and Herder, 1967, pp. 67-68.

¹⁴"Conference Monastique", Collection Intégrale et Universelle des Orateurs Sacrés, Vol. 58, J. P. Migne, ed., Petit-Montrouge, 1854, col. 1130-1163.

¹⁵"Bonnes Lectures", Les Orateurs Sacrés Contemporains, Vol. 10, Mgr. Ricard, ed., Marseille, Mingardon, 1870, pp. 403-412.

¹⁶"Sur La Lecture", Oeuvres Complètes de Bourdaloue, Vol. 6, Paris, P. Lethiellieux, 1965, pp. 518-523.

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reading spiritual books, especially Scripture, - benefits both for themselves and for their parishioners.¹⁷

Writers and directors of the present day are no less insistent on the importance of spiritual reading. Some of the contemporary writers on this topic are the Cistercian Eugene Boylan,¹⁸ the Oratorian Louis Bouyer,¹⁹ the Franciscan Adolf Kestens²⁰ and the Benedictine Hubert Van Zeller.²¹

Vatican Council II issued the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation in which it urges upon clergy, deacons and catechists the necessity for reading Scripture lest they become empty preachers of the word of God. But Scripture reading is important for all; hence the document

¹⁷Haerent Animo, in The Popes and the Priesthood, St. Meinrod, Indiana, Grail Publication, 1953, pp. 308-318.

¹⁸The Spiritual Life of the Priest, Westminster, Maryland, Newman Press, 1956, pp. 15-21.

¹⁹Introduction to Spirituality, trans. Mary Perkins Ryan, New York, Desclee Co., 1961, chap. II.

²⁰Spiritual Guidance: Fundamentals of Ascetical Theology based on the Franciscan Ideal, Vol. 1, Paterson, New Jersey, St. Anthony Guild Press, 1962, pp. 260-270.

²¹The Holy Rule, London, Sheed and Ward, 1959, chap. XXXVIII.

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continues:

This sacred Synod earnestly and specifically urges all the Christian faithful, too, especially religious to learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the 'excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ' (Phil. 3:8). 'For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.' Therefore, they should gladly put themselves in touch with the sacred text itself, whether it be through the liturgy rich in the divine word, or through devotional reading.²²

In the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy²³ and in the Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life,²⁴ Vatican II again emphasizes the importance of reading Scripture.

Sisters themselves realize the need for spiritual reading. In a recent survey in which approximately three hundred sisters of twenty eight religious orders were asked: "Which three of the spiritual exercises you now perform do you consider most important?", the great majority placed mental prayer and spiritual reading in second and third place after the Mass. Those who recite the Divine Office

²²Article 25. The quotation contained therein is from St. Jerome, Commentary on Isaiah, Prol., P.L. 24, 17. All references to the documents are taken from The Documents of Vatican II, Walter M. Abbott, ed., New York, Guild Press, 1966.

²³Articles 51, 90.

²⁴Article 6.

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placed it second followed by mental prayer and spiritual reading.²⁵

There is a need also for types of reading other than Scripture and "spiritual" reading. This need, too, has been recognized. In 1951, Pope Pius XII addressed a group of superiors of teaching communities. He indicated that continued study is imperative to produce teachers who are masters of their subjects. He added:

See to it, therefore, that they are well trained and that their education corresponds in quality and academic degrees to that demanded by the State. Be generous in giving them all they need, especially where books are concerned, so that they may continue their studies and thus offer young people a rich and solid harvest of knowledge. This is in keeping with the Catholic idea which gratefully welcomes all that is naturally good, beautiful and true, because it is an image of the Divine goodness and beauty and truth.²⁶

Louis Putz makes a strong case for a wide variety of reading materials for teachers. He points out that teachers must be well informed and well read if they are to be effective. Indiscriminate reading has its dangers but the teacher who reads newspapers, periodicals and best sellers, in order to understand her students and learn with

²⁵Sister Rosemarie Hudon, Nuns, Community Prayer and Change, Staten Island, N.Y., Alba House, 1967, p. 108.

²⁶Counsel to Teaching Sisters, Washington, N.C.W.C. Publications, 1951, p. 7.

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them will be able to avoid the dangers. He writes:

In this day and age walls do not exclude the world. The world is all round us and if we do not meet the world apostolically, head on, in the spirit of Christ, of redeeming the world and injecting a spirit of charity and evangelical simplicity in it, the world will meet us on its own terms.²⁷

Trafford Maher strongly emphasizes the need for cultivating professional attitudes. He considers this the only way that many religious communities will be able to "develop and maintain within their ranks a high level of both spiritual, religious living, and outstanding professional and intellectual achievements."²⁸ He suggests that religious ought to have recourse to the "wide range of reputable literature in books as well as in periodicals which admirably set forth the professional point of view, its meanings, purpose and role."²⁹

Charles Corcoran admits that the constant application to updating knowledge is not without difficulty but teachers must make the sacrifice demanded in order to do the will of

²⁷"The Theology of the Apostolate", Proceedings of the 1957 Sisters' Institute of Spirituality, Joseph E. Haley, ed., Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1958, p. 59.

²⁸Lest We Build on Sand, St. Louis, Missouri, The Catholic Hospital Association, 1962, p. 266

²⁹Ibid., p. 268.

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God fully; they must find time for research and reading.³⁰

As is evident from the above there is a real need for continuous self-education through reading. Attention will now be given to the benefits that may be derived from reading.

³⁰"The Apostolate as a Means of Sanctification"
Proceedings of the 1957 Sisters' Institute of Spirituality,
Joseph E. Haley, ed., Notre Dame, Indiana, University of
Notre Dame Press, 1958, p. 181.

CHAPTER II

THE BENEFITS OF READING

Thus far attention has been concentrated on the need for reading. Satisfaction of a real need should produce good results. This chapter will be devoted to the benefits that may be derived from well-chosen reading.

A. THE VALUE OF "SPIRITUAL" READING FOR THE RELIGIOUS AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE.

1. Need for Growth in Mental Prayer

In the small Baltimore Catechism there is the question: "Why did God make you?" followed by the answer: "God made me to know, love and serve Him in this life, and to be forever happy with Him in the next." The implications of this reply are deep. Knowledge and love are mutually dependent on each other, for one does not love what one does not know, and the deeper the love the greater the desire to know more about the object of one's love. Also, the greater the esteem and love, the more devoted and whole hearted service of the loved one will be. This is evident in human friendship and is an element of friendship with God also. It is this loving service which constitutes the apostolate.

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Man has been created for union with God. Already in this life he is invited to share in the life of God, for Christ has said, "I came that they may have life and have it more abundantly" (Jn. 10, 10), and "Now this is everlasting life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou has sent, Jesus Christ" (Jn. 17, 3). God created man for eternal union with Him. He sent his Son to wrest man from eternal destruction and to win for him life - a share in the Father's love for his Son who declared that He made known and would continue to make known to man God's name so that God's love may be in them (Jn. 17, 26).

Love depends on knowledge, and love of God depends on knowledge of God. Eternal life is eternal love, an eternal sharing in divine life. The first step, then, towards a more intimate union with God is deeper knowledge of Him. This knowledge comes from reading and meditating upon God's word. This, in turn, leads to intimate conversation with God, that is, to mental prayer, and mental prayer nurtures love. Bonaventure Balsam writes:

The normal way of growth in God's love, in being more united to Him, is mental prayer. For a generous soul to love God he needs but to know him, and with God's grace that knowledge will beget love.¹

¹"The Value of Mental Prayer", Cross and Crown, Vol. 5, May 1953, p. 171.

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Joseph O'Leary regards spiritual reading as necessary for a constant and fruitful life of prayer. He writes:

If the life of prayer is to be constant, and steadfast and progressive, it must be steeped in the mysteries of faith: spiritual reading must nourish and inspire communion with God in prayer. One of the earliest formative principles of Christian living is the insistence on sacred reading as leading the soul to meditation and prayer. In this we have only the natural workings of our faculties: reading, thought and action in natural sequence. Spiritual reading instinctively elevates the soul to the thought of the divine presence; alerts it to the living God speaking in the heart.²

Spiritual reading is essential for beginners in religious life if they are to make mental prayer which is productive of good results. T. W. Dean does not hesitate to call spiritual reading a sine qua non for young people who are trying to pray mentally.³

Teresa of Avila, drawing on her own experience in prayer, advises those who have difficulty in meditating by using imagination and understanding, to occupy themselves in reading in order to obtain instruction. She states that reading is necessary for them, however little it may be, as a substitute for the mental prayer which they are unable

²"Come and See", Cross and Crown, Vol. 12, Dec. 1960, p. 449-450.

³"The Training of Adolescents to Prayer," Lumen Vitae, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1963, p. 257.

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to practice. Teresa warns that without the aid furnished by reading it will be impossible for them to persevere in their attempts for very long. A book was for Teresa a companion and a shield with which she was able to ward off the blows of her many distractions.⁴

Boylan ranks spiritual reading equally with mental prayer because of the very close connection between the two. He considers it impossible to advance in the life of the spirit without spiritual reading whose primary purpose is union with Christ.⁵ Elsewhere he indicates that this union grows with reflection on God's word. On it depends a fruitful apostolate.⁶

It follows, then, that the first and most important benefit of spiritual reading is union with God, which is the essence of prayer, and the desire for a deeper union with Him.

In a survey already mentioned the sisters showed their appreciation of this fact. One sister pointed out

⁴The Complete works of St. Teresa of Jesus, trans. E. Allison Peers, ed., New York, Sheed and Ward, 1944, p. 23.

⁵This Tremendous Lover, Westminster, Maryland, Newman Press, 1962, pp. 113, 155.

⁶The Spiritual Life of the Priest, Westminster, Maryland, Newman Press, 1956, p. 15.

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this connection between reading and the Mass: spiritual reading is food for mental prayer, which, in turn, prepares one to offer Mass. Another sister wrote of spiritual reading: it is "an irreplaceable way for me to get in truly close contact with Christ; to get to know him and myself, and my relations with him and my neighbor. This is the way to personal holiness."⁷

The efficacy of the apostolate depends in the first place on union with Christ, who said, "He who abides in me, and I in him, the same will bear much fruit, for without me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15, 5); hence the depth of apostolic zeal depends on the apostle's love for God, his union with Him, and his love for souls.⁸

The apostolic spirit is a natural result of the love for God above all things overflowing in love for one's neighbor. Of this apostolic spirit Buckler writes:

How naturally [. . .] if we love God and work in union with our Lord God, shall we be moved, loving him above all things to wish that others may love him in the same way. And this is the beginning of the apostolic spirit - love for souls - and the desire to help them, directly or indirectly, toward the knowledge, love and service of God, thus loving others as we love

⁷Sister Rosemarie Hudon, Nuns, Community Prayer and Change, Staten Island, N.Y., Alba House, 1967, p. 108.

⁸F. X. Legrand, Introduction to "Zeal for the Salvation of Souls according to St. Therese of the Child Jesus", Christ to the World, Vol. 6, p. 256.

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ourselves; and as we love ourselves in the highest way by loving God and giving ourselves to his knowledge, love and service more and more, so we love our neighbor as we love ourselves when we desire that he also should know, love and serve God in this manner and when we do what we are able to help him to this end.⁹

Union with Christ, as he has indicated, comes from knowledge of Him through reading and meditation and through conversation with Him in prayer. These give rise to the apostolic spirit which must constantly be nourished by reading and by prayer.

2. Reading for Personal Direction and Motivation

Pius X says that books are faithful friends who correct, encourage, and recall from error. They indicate one's duties, and give rules of legitimate discipline. They point out faults and warn of dangers. They are always at hand, imparting advice impartially, and are never timid or deceitful.¹⁰ Alphonsus Rodriguez expands on this: Books say fearlessly what a friend or adviser would not dare

⁹An Introduction to the Spiritual Life, London, Blackfriars Publications, 1956, p. 69.

¹⁰Haerent Animo, in The Popes and the Priesthood, St. Meinrad, Indiana, Grail Publication, 1953, p. 20. cf. Alleq, "Bonnes Lectures" Les Orateurs Sacrés Contemporains, Vol. 10, Mgr. Ricard, ed., Marseille, Mingardon, p. 404.

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to say; they warn, they scold, they exhort.¹¹

A more recent author points out the two-fold task of a director, which is also the task of books, namely: to give advice that will help to overcome difficulties or to avoid them, and to spur on to greater perfection. He explains:

[. . .] Spiritual reading can be used, not only as a battery charging agent, but as a generator, and, sometimes as a mechanic. Spiritual reading can be used to supply an incentive to higher things and to fix up a 'stalled' religious so that he can go on.¹²

Although the sound of the living voice with its intonations is absent when the author speaks from the written page, nevertheless, there is the advantage of permanence, and the message may be reread as often as there is need or desire.¹³

Books, especially the Scriptures, are letters which are sent from heaven with timely advice. In Augustine's words:

From this city from which we are exiled letters have reached us; these are holy scriptures which

¹¹Practice of Perfection and Christian Virtues, Vol. 1. trans. Joseph Rickaby, Chicago, Loyola University Press, 1929, p. 394.

¹²J. H. Dunn, "Books as Spiritual Directors", Review for Religious, Sept. 1949, p. 265.

¹³Alphonsus Rodriguez, op. cit., p. 374.

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exhort us to live well. [. . .] The king himself has come down; He has become for us our way in our pilgrimage, that walking in this way we may not stray, nor faint, nor fall into the hands of robbers, nor into snares which border the roads.¹⁴

Alleq adds that these letters are a source of encouragement for they point out the goal and the joys which lie in store for those who reach the goal.¹⁵

Evely sounds a note of urgency in his observation that in Scripture God has sent Catholics a letter, a testament, which many put into their pockets without even reading it, so sure are they that He has not left them anything. He adds that this will cause them considerable embarrassment when they reach their home in heaven and are confronted with their ignorance of the message contained in their Father's letter.¹⁶

Through books the reader becomes aware of his faults as if he were viewing himself in a mirror. Evely suggests that this mirror be used as intended, that is, to produce one's own image, not that of another. This is the purpose of some of the parables, notably that of the sower. The

¹⁴Exposition on the Book of Psalms in A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. 8, Philip Schaff, ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Co., 1956, p. 450.

¹⁵Op. cit., p. 404.

¹⁶We Are All Brothers, New York, Herder and Herder.

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reader who is honest will find himself described in one or other type of soil, and it is the reader who recognizes his deficiencies who will bear fruit.¹⁷

There is no remedy for those who do not admit their ailments and, therefore, neglect assistance. Scripture provides remedies, for "He sent his word to heal them and to snatch them from their destruction" (Ps. 106, 20).

Basil eloquently proclaims this healing function of Scripture. He writes:

All scripture is inspired and useful (2 Timothy 3, 16), composed by the Spirit for this reason, namely that we men, each and all of us, as in a general hospital for souls, may select the remedy for his own condition. For, it says 'care will make the greatest sin to cease' (2 Eccles. 10,4). [. . .] The old wounds of the soul it [the book of Psalms] cures completely, and to the recently wounded it brings speedy improvement; the diseased it treats and the unharmed it preserves. On the whole it effaces as far as possible, the passions which subtly exercise dominion over our soul during the life time of man, and it does this with a certain orderly persuasion and sweetness which produces sound thoughts.¹⁸

However, books are a remedy not only for spiritual illness but also for mental sufferings, for he who suffers

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 24-28; cf. Benedict Vincent, "Conference Monastique," Collection Integrale et Universelle des Orateurs Sacres, Vol. 58, J.P. Migne, ed., Petit-Montrouge, 1854, col. 1130.

¹⁸Exegetic Homilies, trans. Sister Agnes Clare, in The Fathers of the Church Series, vol. 46, Washington, The Catholic University Press, 1963, pp. 151-152.

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the heaviness and hopelessness of mental depression will find solace in the pharmacy of good books.¹⁹ A seventy year old retired religious lauds the tranquilizing effect of spiritual books. She writes: "Since we are living in an atmosphere of 'push-and-pull' our mind must be tranquilized at times; and spiritual reading does this."²⁰

In a good book the reader frequently finds the motivation which causes the will to pass from speculation to action and whets the desire for perfection.²¹ It acts as a lever which raises one from sin or tepidity.²²

This change of heart brought about by reading has produced men of outstanding holiness of life and zeal for souls. So powerful was the impact of Christ's words "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor and come follow me" (Matt. 10, 21), that both

¹⁹Alleg, op. cit., p. 406.

²⁰Sister Rosemarie Hudon, op. cit., p. 131.

²¹Alvarez de Paz, La Journee du Pretre et du Religieux, trans. P. Lejeune, Paris, P. Lethiellieux, 1899, p. 168.

²²Alleg, op. cit., p. 406.

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Anthony²³ and Francis of Assisi²⁴ gave away their possessions, the first to become a solitary and the second to live a monastic life. Augustine²⁵ attributes his conversion to the force of Paul's message in Romans 13, 13. Ignatius of Loyola²⁶ owes his to the influence of the life of Christ and a treatise on the saints.

The lives of the saints as portrayed in Scripture and biography are models of the zeal and virtue which the apostle seeks to emulate. Basil recommends a study of the models of the Old Testament. From Joseph is learnt chastity, fortitude from Job, meekness from Moses and David.²⁷

Biographical lives of the saints will serve as an inspiration only if they are written honestly, and portray the struggles and failures as well as the victories of their subject. If the writer recounts only the "pious"

²³St. Athanasius, The Life of St. Anthony, trans. E. A. Wallis Budge, in The Paradise of the Fathers, Vol. 1, London, Chalco and Windus, 1907, p. 6.

²⁴Cuthbert, Life of Francis of Assisi, London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1917, p. 64.

²⁵Confessions of St. Augustine, trans. F. J. Sheed, London, Sheed and Ward, 1945, p. 141.

²⁶Francis Thompson, St. Ignatius of Loyola, New York, Benziger Brothers, 1909, p. 22.

²⁷Epistolarum, Migne, P.G. Vol. 321, Col. 227.

or "edifying" incidents, he fails in his purpose of providing models. Of such biographies Boylan was speaking when he declared that some Lives of the Saints ought to be burned as obstacles to holiness.²⁸ The saints were men and women who allowed God's grace to triumph in them. God's love became the principal motivating force in their lives. The apostle undergoes a similar struggle and looks to them for courage to carry on.

The lives of great contemporary men and women offer the same inspiration. Who is not moved by the example of men like Pope John XXIII, George Vanier, Tom Dooley, John F. Kennedy, who spent themselves in serving their fellow men despite handicaps of age, infirmity, environment and prejudice?

John La Farge, one-time editor of America, spent a good bit of time reviewing spiritual books and, as he says, developed quite an appetite for spiritual classics. He gives two reasons for this: first, we are human; second, God's grace wants to grow in us. He explains:

The spiritual part of our being feeds upon the great truth which spiritual books convey. The spiritual books give us substance. [. . .] God's grace - the light and strength that He imparts to our lives - wants to grow in us the living image of Christ our

²⁸This Tremendous Lover, p. 122.

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Lord, and its reflection in the immaculate mirror of His blessed Mother. [. . .] It is God's grace that works with us and for us so as to build that image. But how can I find the meaning of it all? A few great documents do not afford the whole key. I need a dialog, a continual dialog with someone like myself, some other explorer of life's strange wilderness, who will interpret all this business for me. That is the work of spiritual writers.²⁹

In a recent publication, Sister Jane Marie Richardson attests to a noteworthy effect of Sacred Scripture in the present day. Scripture has brought a new awareness of mission to the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, and to the members of that Body. Sister writes:

Penetration into the divinely inspired pages of Scripture, those sacred books written by men of, in and for the believing community, has brought the Church today, more than anything else, a new understanding of her own nature and mission, a heightened sense of just what it means to be the people of God."³⁰

Sister explains that this awareness did not come about by accident but as a result of a profound theological study based on biblical doctrine.³¹ She reminds religious

²⁹"Why Read Spiritual Books", America, Feb. 22, 1958, p. 604; cf. "By reading we enter into conversation with those who have written the book; at one time I can go and have a period of conversation with St. Gregory, at another with St. Basil, [. . .] hear them and listen to what they have to say, as if I were their disciple." Alphonsus Rodriguez, op. cit., p. 394

³⁰"The influence of Scripture and Liturgy", The Changing Sister, Notre Dame, Indiana, Fides Publishers 1965, p. 176.

³¹Ibid., p. 181.

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that their vocation to life in a religious society is a call from God to a community of "fraternal love and apostolic service founded through a gift of the Spirit and sustained in dynamic existence by this same Spirit".³²

Sisters have a position in the forefront of the Church's renewal. This is demanded in virtue of their vocation to be human, christian and religious, and it requires wholehearted cooperation in the Church's mission. Just as an exploding theology of Scripture and liturgy underlies renewal in the Church so it must form the foundation for the renewal of everyone within the Church.³³

Thus far the emphasis has been on reading, particularly Scripture reading, as an aid to fostering personal holiness. Personal holiness is an indispensable quality of the apostle, who must be a manifestation of God to men. Personal holiness cannot be turned in upon itself but must radiate out to others. It is this aspect - fitting the apostle to fulfill the needs of society - that will now be studied.

³²Ibid., p. 190

³³Ibid., p. 206.

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B. SOCIAL VALUE OF READING

The apostle does not function in a vacuum, nor does she work with things. The apostle works with people - people in a certain cultural milieu. She does not communicate a message of love to mankind but to individual members of the human race. If she wishes to communicate a message she must respect that particular cultural group and each of its members as very important people, and she must be accepted by them. Reading helps to prepare the apostle for her mission.

1. Awareness of the Position of the "Least of the Brethren",

How important is each individual? Scripture has the answer. Man was created in God's image. God chose a certain ethnic group which He formed as his people. To them He revealed Himself, and they, in turn, were to make his name known to their neighbors. To this people He sent his Son to show them the way to the Father, and to lay down his life for them and for the other sheep not yet in the fold.

Christ used the individual touch in his contacts. He displayed a deep personal interest. Frequently He cured the afflicted with the touch of his hand as in the case of the leper (Matt. 8, 2-4) and Peter's mother-in-law

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(Matt. 8, 14-15). He took Jairus' daughter by the hand when He restored life to her and then He suggested she be given food (Mk. 5, 41-43). Witness his treatment of the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4, 5-42), of the woman taken in adultery (Jn. 8, 1-10), of Mary Magdalen (Jn. 12, 1-8).

So important is man that Christ has found a way to remain among men. Christ's Mystical Body into which man is baptized is the answer, and it is this incarnation which will form the basis for the judgment, "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it for one of these the least of my brethren you did it for me" (Matt. 25, 40).

To follow Christ's example it is necessary to study Christ. It is evident that there is no stereotyped approach in Christ's dealings with men. He knew what was in man (Jn 3, 25) and He treated each as a unique individual. Nor should there be a stereotyped approach in the sister's apostolic contacts. Her readings in psychology will acquaint her with the dynamics of human behaviour. Very often this knowledge will suggest the most effective approach for specific contacts.

2. Deepens Understanding of Societal Values.

The missionaries who are most successful are those who understand the culture of the people they wish to evangelize; hence orientation classes have been organized

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in order to provide missionaries with the necessary knowledge about foreign missions. This understanding is necessary for "home" missionaries as well. How many educators, for example, who are out of touch, have felt that they stepped into a foreign land when they crossed the threshold of their classroom to be met with a volley of jargon unintelligible to them, or were asked a question about a moral issue and were not quite certain what it meant?

St. Paul recognized the necessity for intelligible communication. These are his words:

[. . .]unless with the tongue you utter intelligible speech - how shall it be known what is said? For you will be speaking to the empty air. There are, for example, so many kinds of languages in this world and none without a meaning. If, then, I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be to the one to whom I speak, a foreigner; and he who speaks, a foreigner to me (1 Cor. 14, 9-14).

There is no communication unless there is a common language whereby ideas can be exchanged. In this age of rapid change the vocabulary with which man clothes his thoughts is constantly changing. Unless the sister is acquainted with the modern idiom she will find herself on a different wave length which makes communication well-nigh impossible. The daily paper, current magazines, news commentaries - written or spoken, television programmes (and these last named form the bulk of "reading" material

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for a vast number of people) will give her much information. These are also channels through which she can become aware of the problems of the present era.

The "generation gap" so frequently mentioned could be bridged at least partially, if sisters were to launch out on a more extensive reading programme.

CHAPTER III

A PLAN FOR SYSTEMATIC READING

In any undertaking, great or small, success is generally directly proportional to preliminary organization and preparation. This is true also of reading. Good method eliminates much waste of time and energy and produces more abundant and more favorable results. In this chapter consideration will be given to suggested methods which have been found helpful.

A. GENERAL CONSIDERATION

1. Balanced Choice of Only the Best.

The large quantity of literature which is available makes it imperative to choose one's reading material with an eye to what is useful. First consideration must be given to the needs of the individual. Each sister is different; hence her needs differ. Also her needs differ over a period of time. Therefore, careful, wise choice is an important factor in selecting books.

Book reviews can be a reliable guide in evaluating a book, provided the journal is known to publish unfavorable reviews as well as those that are favorable. There are sometimes, however, conflicting reviews of the same

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book. In that case the reviewers credentials could serve as a criterion of his reliability. For example, a biblical scholar will be the best judge of a book on biblical studies. By the same token, women religious are in the best position to review books on religious life for sisters. Another guide to the quality of a book is acquaintance with other writings of the author, or with the author's reputation as a writer.

Wise, careful choice implies mature choice. This means the mature adult will read at that level. It sometimes happens that in matters pertaining to religion, the otherwise mature adult reads on the elementary school level. Books which are too simple, which are below the intellectual level of the reader, may engender dislike. Nothing will be gained, however, from reading a book which is incomprehensible to the reader. It may be that the reader is unfamiliar with the technical terms the author uses; in that case she will require introductory books before advancing to those which are more technical.

Pertinent to the question of choice is the need for a balanced selection. Balance demands inclusion of both old and new publications. The date of publication is no criterion of the value of a book. A book is not necessarily good because it was written recently, nor is an old

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book necessarily out of date. The reverse is also true. Books are to be judged from their content, not from their label-"pre-Vatican II" or "post-Vatican II". Perrin warns against simply following trends in choice of spiritual books. He says:

It would be tragic if fashion or curiosity crept in where our object is to come closer to God and be in tune with his thought so as to enter into intimacy and to fulfill his purposes better.¹

In line with the above is the following suggestion:

In the matter of spiritual reading, it is generally safer and more beneficial to select those books which are less spectacular and more solid and doctrinal.²

Sister Ritamary sounds a warning. The sister's prayer will depend in great part on her idea of God which will be formed largely by her reading; hence it is vitally important to have books which are theologically sound.³

Varying the type of book from time to time is a psychological aid to sustain interest. One tires of the same fare day after day. Merely selecting a book on

¹Living with God, St. Louis, Missouri, B. Herder Book Company, 1958, p. 154.

²Antonio Royo and Jordan Aumann, The Theology of Christian Perfection, Dubuque, Iowa, Priory Press, 1962, p. 590.

³"Teaching the Art of Spiritual Reading", mimeographed copy of a paper read at the Institute of Instructional Programs in Spirituality, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, August, 1962, p. 11.

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the same topic, but by a different author, and thus having a different approach, helps to revive flagging interest. Furthermore, a change of viewpoint gives the reader a more balanced view of the situation. For this reason it is good practice to subscribe to several newspapers and periodicals, to balance the "liberal" against the "conservative." This is particularly applicable to religious and political publications.

2. Critical Approach to Books

A balanced viewpoint is the result of exposure to several viewpoints. This requires a critical approach in order to escape merely being swayed by clever phrases rather than being influenced by the logic of the arguments. News reporters and other writers have their prejudices and, inadvertently or otherwise, they colour their writings with their biased views. Half-truths are dangerous, and it is important to detect these and to recognize bias.

A prominent American clergyman frequently repeated this warning: "Don't let them push your mind around." With these words he urged youth to weigh facts and arguments before making a judgment.⁴ This is a valid

⁴Daniel A. Lord, speaking to socialists at the Summer School of Catholic Action, Chicago, 1952.

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warning for readers. They should not agree unless they have been convinced of the truth. Sometimes this requires reserving judgment until they have further information.

I. A. Richards offers helpful advice for the reader, particularly the reader of controversial material. He suggest reading aloud, for the eye alone does not always give a clear picture, but he adds a note of warning: the eye is a more neutral agent than the voice; the voice can, by intonation, misinterpret the sense of the passage. The advantage of reading aloud is that the reader can provide dialogue. In addition to reading the printed work and adding an analytic commentary, it is useful to interject ejaculations "delighted or derisive". With argumentative matter the reader should talk back as much as is possible unless he is merely fighting.⁵ Richards points out some literary devices which sometimes cause misinterpretation or misrepresentation for the unwary. Certain usages of quotation marks belong to this class.⁶ Reading material requires careful study, critical study to put its message into proper focus.

⁵How to read a Page, Boston, Beacon Press, 1959.

⁶Ibid., pp. 66-70.

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3. Careful Concentration for Comprehension.

Perrin writes:

Reading enriches us with other people's ideas, but can make parrots of us, not in the sense that we repeat the ideas of others [. . .] but because we repeat things that we do not understand, that we do not ourselves know, and that do not bring new life to the spirit. Our ideas remain things we have instead of things that make us live better and grow closer to the truth.⁷

He continues:

[. . .] it is not a question of reading with the eyes only, or retaining in the memory, but of understanding, of taking each thought and assimilating it by interpreting it, trying to see its meaning and significance [. . .].⁸

Perrin's instructions were given with regard to spiritual reading but obviously apply to all reading. They tie in well with Richard's directions for comprehension. Richard's first piece of advice is to read the passage as though it makes sense and it probably will. Then use different ways of saying the same thing. Two different versions of a passage, even though one is clearly inferior, "open up the task of exploration immensely".⁹ In rephrasing, care must be taken to preserve the fundamental conditions of interest. Words change their meanings from

⁷Op. cit., p. 154.

⁸Ibid., p. 155.

⁹Richards, op. cit., p. 43.

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place to place. Ignoring these changes, taking the words out of context, will result in misreading.¹⁰

Learning to read [.] is becoming able to grasp some of the ways in which parts of a complex system are dependent upon one another. [.] What counts most is not familiarity with the senses of words taken separately but knowledge of their inter-dependencies.¹¹

Reading for comprehension generally requires reading slowly and re-reading difficult passages. Reading slowly and pausing frequently is necessary for spiritual reading, especially for lectio divina about which more will be said later. Alphonsus de liguori compares such reading with taking bodily nourishment which must be well masticated to be of benefit to the body.¹² He draws another parallel from nature: "Imitate the bees that pass not from one flower to another until they have gathered all the honey from the first."¹³ Boylan offers a practical suggestion: read "somewhat in the same way as one would read an insurance policy, or a contract or a catalog or a specification for

¹⁰Ibid., p. 52.

¹¹Ibid., p. 107.

¹²The True Spouse of Jesus Christ, Book II, The Ascetical Works of St. Alphonsus, Vol. II, New York, Benziger Brothers, 1888, p. 19.

¹³Ibid., p. 20.

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a new car, that is, with careful consideration."¹⁴

The method of reading must be determined to a great extent by the type of writing and the purpose for which it is being read. Daily newspapers and weekly periodicals would not be studied in depth; a cursory reading is sufficient for most articles. As Richards points out:

Different modes of reading are suited to different types of writing. It is absurd to read everything - poetry, prose, pulp - alike, especially to read it all as fast as possible. Anything that is worth studying should be read as slowly as it will let you, and read again and again till you have it by heart.¹⁵

B. READING OF SCRIPTURE

1. Background Reading

Holy Scripture, the Word of God expressed in human language, occupies a privileged place in the life of every sister. It must be treated with the greatest reverence.

In order to derive the greatest benefit from Scripture reading and to understand its message, it is necessary to study the setting. Introductory readings which explain the literary genre of the writings in question are indispensable, especially with regard to the Old Testament.

¹⁴The Spiritual Life of the Priest, Westminster, Maryland, Newman Press, 1956, p. 18.

¹⁵Op. cit., p. 42.

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The culture of the Hebrew people and milieu in which the human author wrote the books have a bearing on the interpretation. An understanding of the pagan practices of their neighbours throw light on certain passages in the Bible.

The use of a dictionary of the Bible and commentaries is essential for understanding Scripture. Bouyer stresses the importance of such readings in the following passage:

Studious reading is most important in order to deepen basic readings and to prepare for their assimilation in prayer through the ultimate kind of reading which leads directly to prayer or is already prayer. Anything which sheds light on the word of God, anything which places His deeds in their true perspective is of priceless benefit to the most truly spiritual understanding of His word.¹⁶

2. Reverence for God's Word

Prayer is essential for reading the word of God profitably. No one can understand the word of God by himself for

the spirit who inspired the writer must also inspire the reader. Every word of Scripture, if it is not to remain a dead letter, should be revitalized by that breath of the Spirit of God who reanimated the dried bones.¹⁷

¹⁶Introduction to Spirituality, New York, Desclee Co., 1961, pp. 49-50.

¹⁷Louis Evelyn, We Are All Brothers, New York, Herder and Herder, 1967, p. 19.

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Thils lists a profound supernatural intention as the first of the dispositions required if reading is to produce abundant fruit.¹⁸

But Scripture is not merely to be read; it is to be listened to with a spirit of faith, for it is God who speaks. God speaks, the reader listens, ponders the message, and responds.¹⁹

Parsch offers a few "tips" for reading the Bible. Before setting about reading the Bible, he suggests familiarizing oneself with the format, the names of the books and the order in which they occur.

Parsch advocates the use of marginal notes to indicate difficult passages to which the reader should return later on, and passages which should be memorized.

He recommends identifying oneself with someone in the scene or parable and considering the words of Jesus as addressed to oneself, thus making them more meaningful.²⁰

¹⁸Christian Holiness, trans. John L. Farrand, Tielt, Belgium, Lannoo Publishers, 1961, p. 642.

¹⁹Boylan, op. cit., p. 19; cf. Pius Parsch, Learning to Read the Bible, Collegeville, Minnesota, Liturgical Press, 1963, p. 17, no. 3.

²⁰Op. cit., passim.

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In contrast, Sister Ritamary warns the reader to remain "outside" the story and not become identified with the characters and their emotions. She considers this a safeguard which will help the reader avoid becoming a spiritual poser taking on the semblance of the virtues or the way of life which has been portrayed.²¹

The following quotation underlines the importance of this personal encounter with Christ in Scripture:

[. . .] in all our reading we must seek to learn from Christ, tracing his thoughts in those of the author. [. . .] We must know ourselves 'taught of God' (John 6, 45) and if an idea is not to become an empty formula we must first seek its value in relation to Christ, then pray it, speak to him of it, learn its application, its demands, and potentialities, so that, believing more truly and having better surrendered our minds to truth, our ties with him become more personal and more living.²²

The Benedictine, Father Demetrius, has some helpful advice. He gives the following as necessary dispositions for the encounter with Christ in the Bible. One must be prepared to meet God in the Bible and must read the Bible as God's Word. For this there must be an attitude of humility, spiritual alertness, and prayer. He further suggests that Bible study must never be divorced from the Bible itself. The Bible is a kind of sacrament and its

²¹Op. cit., p. 9.

²²Perrin, op. cit., pp. 155-156.

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meaning can be discovered only through actual contact with it. The sister must study the Bible, not just about the Bible. An attitude of curiosity ought to be encouraged. Sisters should be taught that they cannot always wait for someone to tell them what a passage means. They should themselves be alert to its message and allow it to raise questions in their minds.²³

²³"The Art of Teaching the Use of Sacred Scripture as Spiritual Food", mimeographed copy of a lecture given at the Institute of Instructional Programs in Spirituality, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, August, 1962.

CHAPTER IV

PROGRAMMED READING FOR THE APOSTOLIC FORMATION OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS

A. THE PERSONAL AND HUMAN FORMATION

In 1945 Pius XII forcefully reminded the Italian women that their contribution to human society had to be made precisely through their womanhood. These are his words:

Be she married or single, woman's function is seen clearly defined in the lineaments of her sex, in its propensities and special powers. She works side by side with man, but she works in her own way and according to her natural bent. Now a woman's function, a woman's way, a woman's natural bent, is motherhood. Every woman is called to be a mother, mother in the physical sense, or mother in a sense more spiritual and more exalted, yet real, nonetheless.

To this end the Creator has fashioned the whole of woman's nature: not only her organism, but also and still more her spirit, and most of all her exquisite sensibility.¹

Referring to the above address, Columban Browning singles out love as the characteristic virtue of woman, - a love which must be given away. It is in the bestowal of this love that woman finds her highest fulfillment. In her

¹"Allocution to Italian Women" The Woman in the Modern World., Papal Teachings selected by Monks of Solesmes. Boston, Mass., St. Paul Editions, 1959, pp. 131-132.

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all other virtues are the servants of love. This nature is possessed by every normal woman and it is this nature that determines her thinking, her instincts, her manner of acting. The woman who enters religious life remains a woman - physically, psychologically, emotionally.²

The sister may not relinquish her womanly characteristics. She "utilizes the same personal qualities which would have made her an excellent wife and mother, to become a wonderful sister." She must develop these qualities and use them within the framework of her "love-relationship with Christ in consecrated virginity of religious life."³

Trafford Maher appeals eloquently to formation personnel to provide women religious with an integrated formation, - a formation which will take into consideration all the facets of the unit human being so that the training may be proportionate to her nature and consonant with the apostolic needs of our century.⁴

²Woman's Highest Fulfillment, Milwaukee, Bruce Publishing Company, 1965, p. 12-13.

³Sister Maureen O'Keefe, Christian Love in Religious Life, Chicago, Henry Regnery Co., 1965, p. 21.

⁴Lest We Build on Sand, St. Louis, Missouri, The Catholic Hospital Association, 1962, p. 67.

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He urges sisters to avail themselves of the power of science, particularly those sciences which directly affect human conduct, that is, psychological and sociological science. These make available skills and techniques which show how to enable groups and individuals to reach a more reasonable understanding of themselves and others, and so to gain control over their emotions and instincts so that, in their daily actions, and their social and community responsibilities they may conduct themselves according to sound principles without being unduly swayed by a strong personal and mass emotion. To accomplish this the sister must be aided to know and understand her own personality and even the personalities of others.⁵

Maher reminds sisters that man is motivated not only by ideas but also by "what he feels in the dark and deep recesses of his emotional and instinctive being."⁶ He continues with a warning against treating the religious only as an intellect and overlooking the "sometimes compelling contrary force of his emotional, physical and animal nature."⁷

⁵Ibid., p. 16

⁶Ibid.,

⁷Ibid., p. 17

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Self-knowledge, he points out, is essential for anyone who wishes to aid others to realize their own potential in religious life or in any other walk of life.

Also,

"soundness and stability in religious life is a function of knowledge, emotional and intellectual development. Similarly, effectiveness in the apostolic works of any community is a function of knowledge, intellectual development, and supernatural motivation and activity."⁸

It is important that the sister understand herself, but she must also understand group behaviour. Andrew Greeley underscores the importance of the "sociological approach" which, as Greeley sees it, is an "orientation of the intellect which is concerned with the study of human relationships, of group-based patterns of behavior, of functional interconnections among social and cultural phenomena".⁹ This habit of mind is constantly aware that in almost all human activity man is functioning as a member of a group. Greeley explains:

It is my contention that a study of how society conditions (but not necessarily determines) human attitudes, values, and behavior, will lead to both greater self-knowledge and more tolerance for the

⁸ Ibid., pp. 85-86.

⁹ "Sociology and Sister Formation", Program for Progress, Sister Mary Hester Valentine, ed., New York, Fordham University Press, 1966, p. 168.

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variety of human phenomenon. An understanding of the socialization process, of racial and ethnic differences, cultural variations and similarities [. . .] ought to produce a student with more intellectual patience, warmer human sympathy, deeper insights into human suffering, greater flexibility of opinion, more moderate reforming instincts and more perceptive critical acumen.¹⁰

The qualities mentioned by Greeley are qualities which are necessary for the apostle. He pursues this point further, pointing out that sociology helps the sister to understand those of other backgrounds and cultures. She will learn to recognize and respect the good in other cultures, she will learn that problems arising from cultural differences cannot be handled by denying them or refusing to discuss them. Finally, she will learn to realize that "reality is so variegated that there are no simple answers or even simple problems."¹¹

Cardinal Suenens reminds the religious that she is a woman of her times, a woman among women whose status has changed in a rapidly changing world, a woman for whom the question of woman's status is vital.¹² The sister who is "in touch" with the world of today will realize the need

¹⁰Ibid., p. 170.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 170-173.

¹²The Nun in the World, Westminster, Maryland, Newman Press, 1963, p. 81.

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for constant adaptation but will realize that all suggestions for change are not of equal value.¹³

The power of christianity to provide the sister with a real sense of significance and mission must not be overlooked. Both are important for self-esteem. Christ assures her of her great worth when He declares that nothing concerning her is too insignificant for the Father's attention: "Yes, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore do not be afraid, you are of more value than many sparrows" (Lk. 12, 17). He has chosen her for a specific work:

"You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you." (Jn. 15, 16).

This acceptance by the Father should engender in the sister acceptance of herself. This wholesome attitude is necessary to preserve mental health, for, as Andrew Greeley says: "Faith can prevent problems from arising which would later be incurable without therapy."¹⁴ Self-acceptance and self-esteem are necessary for human development and for acceptance by others.

¹³Andrew M. Greeley, op. cit., p. 174.

¹⁴Strangers in the House, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1961, pp. 171-172.

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The deeper the understanding a sister has of herself, the better are her chances of understanding her fellow men and of working with and for them. The Decree on Priestly Formation indicates the value of philosophical studies as a means of acquiring a solid and coherent understanding of man, of the world, and of God. It urges seminarians to become conversant with contemporary philosophical investigations especially those closely associated with their own country and with recent scientific progress. These studies will help them to reach a correct understanding of the character of modern times and will prepare them for dialogue with men of their own day.¹⁵ This injunction may, with equal validity, be applied to the formation of sisters.

Good literature is an aid to personal growth. Maher makes this clear in the following quotation:

This education, intellectual and ascetical, should prepare the priest and religious to know good literature and good art, and to appreciate and enjoy them as a partial means of providing that intellectual richness and full, effective personality that fulfills the demands of the apostolate.¹⁶

¹⁵Article 15.

¹⁶Op. cit., p. 45.

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Charles Corcoran likewise considers the classics a noteworthy factor in personal development. These should be made available for the sisters. "Why", he asks, "should they be denied the broadening effects of these works?" Corcoran states the belief that the broadening effect that good literature brings with it is not only highly desirable, but almost necessary.¹⁷

Another facet of personal formation is the development of the power to concentrate, to think clearly and logically and to grasp the thought content of one's reading. Sister Ritamary indicates studies which will further this development: Humanistic studies serve primarily to make sisters good readers and reflectors on scriptural and liturgical works; philosophic studies make them good thinkers and readers in theological works and enable them to work with the social scientists in finding plans to prepare society in a human way for the message of the Gospel; they must be good readers of poetry before they

¹⁷ "The Apostolate as a Means of Sanctification", Proceedings of the 1957 Sisters' Institute of Spirituality, Joseph E. Haley, ed., Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1958, pp. 215-216.

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can be good readers of the Psalms.¹⁸

Examination of conscience, both particular and general can be a powerful means of growing in self-knowledge hence readings which suggest means for making the examen more fruitful will be helpful. Sister Maureen O'Keefe sees the examen as an opportunity for a sister to take a positive inventory of her life, adoring, praising, and thanking God and asking for the light to see things as they are and for the courage to act upon them. The self-knowledge which results from the examen will form springboards to a more fruitful apostolic love.¹⁹

B. FORMATION OF THE WOMAN RELIGIOUS

1. Scripture

Vatican II extolled the work of those called by God to practise the evangelical counsels, whom the love of the spirit has impelled to spend themselves for Christ and His body the Church. The more ardent their union with Christ through their self-surrender to Him, "the more vigorous

¹⁸"Teaching the Art of Spiritual Reading", mimeographed copy of a paper read at the Institute of Instructional programs in Spirituality, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, August, 1962, pp. 6-9.

¹⁹Op. cit., pp. 105-106.

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becomes the life of the Church and the more abundantly her apostolate bears fruit."²⁰ This union with Christ will depend on their love, which in turn depends on their knowledge of Christ. Knowledge will come from their familiarity with Scripture. The Decree emphasizes the need for prayerful reading of Scripture as is evident from the following:

Therefore, drawing on the authentic sources of Christian spirituality, let the members of communities energetically cultivate the spirit of prayer and the practice of it. In the first place they should take the sacred Scriptures in hand each day by way of attaining 'the excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ' (Phil. 3:8) through reading these divine writings and meditating on them.²¹

Sister Maureen O'Keefe writes forcefully of the need the sister has to know Christ as a person if she is to love Him as she ought. She explains:

This is the crucial factor for each sister and gives meaning to her life as a Religious. Christ must be the pivot of her life, and, through Him, the Father and the Holy Spirit must accomplish their work in her. Her concept of Him must be concrete and specific - a woman cannot love in abstraction. Through meditative study of the New Testament and in prayer a sister must come to know the reality of Christ.

²⁰Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life, Documents of Vatican II, Article 1.

²¹Ibid., Article 6.

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Sister Maureen emphasizes that, although knowing Christ personally is the chief work of formation in the postulate, novitiate and juniorate, it must be continued throughout the life of the sister through daily meditation and spiritual reading. If a sister has not had the opportunity in her early formation to know Christ personally she must make up for it through her own efforts.²²

There are several approaches to reading Scripture. The following are suggested by Bouyer:

The first method lectio continua is the one exemplified in the oldest liturgical tradition. It might be called the foundation on which all the rest is to be built up. Lectio continua is the reading of the whole Bible, book by book. This method would not be practical for a beginner. A variation is, from time to time to take one book of the Bible and read it as a whole. These readings could follow the theme of the liturgical seasons. Bouyer suggests, for example, that the reading of the Epistles and Gospels be a continuation of the Sunday or ferial readings.²³ It is interesting to note that the Church is encouraging this lectio continua in the liturgy of the Word.

²²Op. cit., pp. 33-34.

²³Introduction to Spirituality, New York, Desclee Co., 1961, pp. 47-49.

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Commentaries on the Bible together with explanations of the literary forms used in the Bible, are an essential aid to Scripture reading so that the reader may get the correct meaning from the Word of God and may be preserved from reading his own fancies into it. This type of reading may be called studious reading. Because it sheds light on the Word of God, studious reading is of "priceless benefit to the most truly spiritual understanding of His Word."²⁴

Another method of reading the Bible may be called thematic reading. It can be a rewarding and helpful method for understanding God's plan for his people. A few examples follow:

The theme "vocation" is of particular interest to the sister. God's call and man's response runs like a thread through the story of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Josue, the prophets, - particularly Jeremias and Isaias, Mary, Joseph, John the Baptist, the Apostles.

God's love and mercy, his patient endurance in face of the frequent lapses of the Chosen People from fidelity to the Covenant are a theme of Exodus and the Prophets. It is present also in the New Testament which testifies to God's readiness to forgive. This theme serves to instil in

²⁴Ibid., p. 50.

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the reader love for his merciful Father and confidence in his mercy.

The "God of the Impossible" is a theme suggested by a retreat master. To Sara the Lord said, "Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?" and Sara who was barren bore a child (Gen. 18; 21). In a similar manner Rebecca (Gen. 30) and Anna, the wife of Elcana (1 Kgs. 1) witnessed God's omnipotence. Exodus recounts many miraculous interventions in favor of God's people as they wander through the desert from Egypt to the Promised Land. Josue and Judges continue the tale. The climax is reached in the New Testament when the Virgin Mary conceives the Son of God because nothing is impossible with God (Lk. 1, 23-38).²⁵

Thematic reading has great potential for encouraging the sister apostle in difficult times and for providing her with a means of encouraging God's people of the New Covenant. A good concordance is invaluable in giving the texts pertaining to a particular theme.²⁶

Scripture reading is a potent factor in developing and maintaining apostolic zeal as James Smith ably

²⁵Raymond Currie, a retreat conference given in Regina, Saskatchewan, 1965.

²⁶e.g., Thomas D. Williams, A Textual Concordance of the Holy Scriptures, New York, Benziger Brothers, 1908.

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illustrates:

The principal means of developing and keeping alive the missionary spirit is prayerful meditation on those truths which have a bearing on the apostolic ideal and missionary activity. These truths enlighten the mind and keep aflame the spirit of dedication. This may imply a certain selection or simply an orientation. There is no need to be exclusive in being selective, no need to force orientating. We have only to think of those subjects which are at the very heart of Christianity. A simple instance is the Lord's Prayer, the first three petitions of which can hardly be meditated on without turning the mind and heart to the praise of God, the coming of this kingdom, the doing of his will in pagan lands. The same can be said of the incarnation, the redemption, our Lady, the mystical body; all can be approached in a missionary spirit.²⁷.

Bouyer points out that the reader must become familiar with the Bible; only then is he prepared for the final, capital form of reading holy Scripture, that is, lectio divina, which leads to prayer or is already prayer. Lectio divina is fruitful in proportion to the spiritual culture of the reader. The other methods of reading Scripture should contribute to this culture. Bouyer compares this culture to a tree of which lectio divina is the fruit. The tree must reach full growth if it is to produce healthy, tasty fruit. He is quick to point out that the spiritual culture without lectio divina is like

²⁷ "Training in the Missionary Spirit" Religious Formation, London, Aquin Press, 1962, p. 32.

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the barren fig tree which was luxuriant but bore no fruit.

Lectio divina has the divine Word as its object.

The text may be a liturgical text or any other great spiritual text which proceeds from the Scriptures and leads back to it. The text should be brief in comparison with the time spent on it. Bouyer explains:

The idea is not to launch into a swift passage of discovery, but to trace and retrace our path, to explore thoroughly, to make truly our own some part of the country hitherto known but superficially and assimilated imperfectly.²⁸

This will require faith in the divine presence behind the text. It will require as well "self-donation in this faith to what we hear and to Him Whom we hear behind the words".²⁹

2. Formation through Participation in the life of the Church.

Religious life is a service of the Church; hence a chapter on the religious life has been included in the document on the Church.³⁰ In the Decree on adaptation Vatican II says of religious:

²⁸Op. cit., p. 52.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 53-54.

³⁰Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, chap. VI.

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Impelled by a love which the Holy Spirit has poured into their hearts (cf. Romans 5:5) these Christians spend themselves ever increasingly for Christ, and for His Body the Church (cf. Col. 1:24). Hence the more ardently they unite themselves to Christ through a self-surrender involving their entire lives, the more vigorous becomes the life of the Church and the more abundantly her apostolate bears fruit.³¹

Knowledge of the mind of the Church will facilitate service of the Church. For this reason the documents of the Church form an important part of the reading programme of sisters.

Membership in the Mystical Body carries with it responsibilities. Studies on baptism and confirmation which point out the priestly role of all Christians, and on the Eucharist, the sacrament of Christian unity, merit special attention, for religious life is a "specific flowering of the christian life, of the grace of baptism as brought to maturity through confirmation in the Holy Eucharist."³² Therefore the doctrine of the Mystical Body should be particularly meaningful to the sister.

³¹Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life, n. 1.

³²Elio Gambari, Religious-Apostolic Formation for Sisters, New York, Fordham University Press, 1964, p. 3.

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Louis Putz enumerates some consequences of membership in the Mystical Body:

The first is union with Christ which is reached through faith, hope and love but especially through the sacraments and the sacrifice of the Mass. He insists that all sacraments must be viewed in relation to the Mystical Body since they are channels of grace precisely in the measure in which the recipient is united with Christ.

A second consequence of membership in the mystical Body is the development of a sense of mission. Catholic means universal. Christ came to save all men but it is through the members of his body that He intends to do this. Each member must contribute, not necessarily by preaching in the priestly manner but by demonstrating Christianity. The emphasis must be on manifesting the charity of Christ in all his associations. Thus every work can be viewed as an apostolate: the doctor and nurse must love their patients as Christ loved the sick; the teacher loves as Christ loved those He instructed; the social worker loves the afflicted, the underprivileged, the wayward as Christ loved them.³³ The love of Christ needs other hearts now, through which to

³³ The Modern Apostle, Chicago, Fides Publishers, 1957, p. 21.

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give itself, and the Mystical Body is the fulfillment of this need. Through it is achieved the mission of his love, and through it his redeeming mercy is manifested and extended to all the ends of the earth.³⁴

Fraternal charity will be the criterion for a favorable or unfavorable judgment, for at the final judgment

[. . .] the king will say to those on his right hand 'Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me to eat', [. . .] Then he will say to those on his left hand, 'Depart from me, [. . .] for I was hungry and you did not give me to eat [. . .]' (Matthew 25, 34-46).

This, Evelyn points out, is the Incarnation, for "the great truth, the great commandment, the great novelty of the Gospel is that fraternal charity has become theological. It is that our neighbor has become God at our doorstep."³⁵

A direct consequence of the Incarnation is the truth that all men are equal. Since all are one in Christ, all deserve equal respect and love. This attitude is essential for a fruitful apostolate. It can be strengthened by a

³⁴Louis Locket, "The Apostle in the Mystery of the Church", Cross and Crown, Vol. 5, 1953, p. 95.

³⁵We are All Brothers, New York, Herder and Herder, 1967, pp. 66-70.

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prayerful study of the encyclical, Mystici Corporis, which so forcefully underlines the oneness of the people of God in Christ.³⁶

Union with Christ and with one another is most effectively achieved in the Sacraments and in the sacrifice of the Mass.³⁷ The liturgy affords the opportunity for the most effective contact and communication with God. Liturgy and apostolate must be complementary, as the following quotation indicates:

The liturgy with its magnificent doctrinal background of Mystical Body, redemptive sacrifice and the sacraments should provide the inspiration, motivation and guidance for the apostolate. The 'Ite' at the end of Mass is certainly an invitation to the apostolate. The basic relationship between liturgy and apostolate will always be in the Mass, the most effective possible contact and communication with God. The liturgy must so instil a sense of the identification with the Mystical Body of Christ, of interdependence among all members of that body, of true Christian charity that the Catholic cannot but love others and regard the needs, sufferings and joys of others as his own.³⁸

³⁶ Pius XII, Pope, Washington, National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1943, Part II.

³⁷ Ibid., par. 81-84.

³⁸ Joseph D. Munier, "The Relationship between Liturgy and Apostolate", Thy Kingdom Come: Christian Hope to the Modern World, Washington, The Liturgical Conference, 1963, p. 178.

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Liturgical readings will help the sister to enter more fully into liturgical celebrations. Personal sanctification through liturgical living is one of the best methods of producing an apostle aflame with zeal. It results from an understanding of the daily life of the Church as it unfolds each year, reliving the earthly life of Christ, for "one cannot live with Christ each incident of His life as the Church relives it [. . .] and remain barren of the holiness such experience is destined to conceive."³⁹

The encyclical Mediator Dei of Pius XII and the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of Vatican II are highly recommended reading material. Excellent background reading in connection with the liturgy is The Mass of the Roman Rite by the eminent Austrian Jesuit, Joseph A. Jungmann.⁴⁰

Putz gives a third consequence of membership in the Mystical Body of Christ. It is the development of a sense of the Church, that is, one is attuned to the concerns of the Church. The Church is concerned with mankind whom she must bring to Christ. A sense of the church causes the apostle to be sensitive to the needs of all, because the

³⁹ Bruno Hagspiel, Live in the Holy Spirit, Milwaukee, Bruce Publishing Co., 1957, p. 79.

⁴⁰ trans. Francis A. Brunner, New York, Benziger Brothers, 1951, p. 567.

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Church is sensitive to those needs and reaches out to help.⁴¹ Through her pronouncements the Church brings those needs to the attention of her members and offers suggestions for meeting them.⁴²

3. Formation through the Religious Life

Religious congregations receive their mandate from the Church who assigns to them a special work of charity which must be discharged in her name.⁴³ The religious apostolic vocation possesses an official and public character because the sister makes public vows.⁴⁴ Through community life and through the vows, in their negative and positive aspect, she participates in the death and

⁴¹Op. cit., p. 22. cf. Gambari, Religious-Apostolic Formation for Sisters, p. 144.

⁴²e.g. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World; The Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity; The Declaration on Christian Education; The Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life in Documents of Vatican II.

⁴³Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life, Article 8.

Elio Gambari "The Juniorate in the Mind and Directives of the Holy See", The Juniorate in Sister Formation, New York, Fordham University Press, 1960, p. 24.

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resurrection of Christ and also in the mission of the risen Christ.⁴⁵

Gambari insists on the importance of maintaining the apostolic perspective throughout the Sisters' training.⁴⁶ The vows may be studied with this perspective in mind.

Evely offers a new approach to the necessity for poverty. Only a poor man, he says, can be an apostle, for only the poor man has need of God. The rich man, - rich in prejudice, set habits, laziness, torpidity - has provided for himself. God cannot make Himself heard. The poor man trusts in God with whom nothing is impossible. He recognizes his poverty and accepts it before God; he can, therefore, go to the poor and invite them to accept their own poverty. Wealth isolates. The apostle must have every appearance of real poverty. This will encourage his fellow-men to remove their masks and acknowledge their own poverty.⁴⁷

Chastity, as Vatican II says, liberates the human heart in a unique way and causes it to burn with greater

⁴⁵Religious-Apostolic Formation for Sisters, p. 3.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 134-135.

⁴⁷Op. cit., pp. 36-45.

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love for God and for all mankind. It is therefore an outstanding way for religious to spend themselves readily in God's service and in works of the apostolate.⁴⁸

Through obedience the religious unites her will to the saving will of God; she assumes a "firmer commitment to the ministry of the Church" and labors to "achieve the mature measure of the fullness of Christ".⁴⁹

These thoughts will help to provide an apostolic orientation to the sister's readings on the vows, which, in the words of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, "uniquely foster the perfection of love for God and for neighbor."⁵⁰

Sister Gertrude Joseph Donnelly, author of The Sister Apostle, makes a significant statement about the apostolic value of the vows. She writes:

[. . .] When we remember the clear parallelisms between the three vows and the threefold bases of human society, we see that the adoption of a life based on such vows is never outdated. Earthly society is based on: property, family and power.

⁴⁸Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life, n. 12.

⁴⁹Ibid., n. 14

⁵⁰n. 45.

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Over these three go all the waves of ideas, systems, laws of nations, and it seems they will not be changing for some time. What, then, does religious life offer us through the three vows? A drastic solution to these three problems, for the Gospel is fundamentally radical. Far from being some isolated group of fanatics [. . .] the religious community strives with its whole being to respond to the cries of the world in travail, a world wounded through the abuse of these very factors: poverty, love, power.⁵¹

The ascetical dimension of religious life may well be considered at this point. The practice of the evangelical counsels and the living in community necessitates self-denial. Without self-denial one cannot surrender oneself entirely to Christ and his service.⁵²

Christian asceticism is apostolic because it contributes to the vitality of the Church. Specific works of the apostolate make strenuous demands on the cultivation and practice of virtue and self-denial; hence they are a constant help in striving for holiness.⁵³

⁵¹The Sister Apostle, Notre Dame, Indiana, Fides Publishers, 1964, p. 121.

⁵²James Smith, op. cit., p. 331.

⁵³Religious-Apostolic Formation for Sisters, p. 137.

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Certain virtues may be called apostolic virtues, for they are prerequisites for apostolic effectiveness. Charity heads the list. Among the lesser virtues are found generosity, courage, meekness, prudence, humility, the habit of taking mortification and self-sacrifice for granted as necessary conditions for an apostolic life.⁵⁴ In addition, the apostle requires patience, kindness, sympathy, the art of listening.⁵⁵

These virtues will be found exemplified in the lives of the saints. First among the saints is Mary, the Mother of God, who most faithfully responded to God's call. Of her apostolic role Evelyn writes:

Mary is the one who first listened to the word, who was so filled with it that the Word of God became flesh and she gave Him to the world. Each of us has the same office, the same destiny as Mary. In each one of us the word of God should become a living thing. Each of us, in the midst of our family, in our home, in our neighborhood, should make God something vital, should give God to the world.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 144.

⁵⁵Victorino Osende, The Pathways of Love, St. Louis, Missouri, B. Herder, 1958, p. 266.

⁵⁶Op. cit., p. 34.

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Vatican II underlined Mary's exalted position in relation to Christ and his Mystical Body by incorporating into the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church a chapter devoted to her role in the mystery of Christ and the Church.⁵⁷

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy speaks of an inseparable bond by which Mary is joined to the saving work of her Son. In her the Church holds up for admiration the "most excellent fruit of the redemption, and joyfully contemplates, as in a faultless model, that which she herself wholly desires and hopes to be."⁵⁸

In 1947, Pius XII had written that in the sanctoral cycle the saints are held up for imitation, because in their virtues there shines forth under different aspects the splendor of Jesus Christ be it zeal, courage even to martyrdom, virginal purity, humility, charity towards God and neighbor. In the liturgy these gems of sanctity

⁵⁷Chapter VIII.

⁵⁸Article 103.

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"are offered as an example and as intercessors."⁵⁹ Vatican II declares that by celebrating the passage of the saints from earth to heaven the "Church proclaims the paschal mystery as achieved in the saints who have suffered and been glorified with Christ." She proposes the saints as examples who "draw all to the Father through Christ, and through their merits she pleads for God's favors."⁶⁰

These men and women, aflame with God's love and zeal for his cause, eager to continue his mission of redemption, yet plagued by their weaknesses and failures, act as a goad and an encouragement to the Church militant whose members experience and succumb to the same weaknesses. Besides the saints of the New Testament there are the great apostles of a later era: St. Ignatius of Loyola,

⁵⁹ Mediator Dei, Washington, National Catholic Welfare Conference, par. 167-168; cf. Bruno Hagspiel, op. cit., p. 79.

⁶⁰ Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Article 104.

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St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic to name but a few. Women religious will find incentive in the examples of the female members of the Church triumphant. St. Catherine of Sienna is a powerful example of apostolic zeal; St. Teresa of Avila is noted for her love of the Church and for that practical common sense so necessary for an apostle; St. Therese of Lisieux has, because of her apostolic spirit, been named patron of the missions. St. Frances Cabrini, like other foundresses of religious institutes, overcame what seemed insurmountable obstacles, in order to establish God's kingdom. The sister-teacher has as models, saints prominent in the education of youth, for example, John Bosco, Julie Billiart, Madeleine Sophie Barat, Joseph Calasanctius. The sister-nurse and sister-social worker have as models Camillus de Lellis, Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac among others. Trafford Maher points out that the saints, e.g. saint-educators, have images that fit the vocational ideal of the particular religious activity in which the individual is involved. He advises religious to fasten on to the great saints and study them, to familiarize themselves with them so that some of the saints' characteristics may

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become their own.⁶¹

As with other books, so with the lives of the saints, care is needed in making a selection. Sentimental biographies neither inspire nor encourage the reader. Cardinal Leger's injunction to strip sisters' libraries ruthlessly of all insipid, outmoded, or affected writing may well be applied here.⁶²

The saints, like their counterparts on earth, were faced with enormous amounts of work which required their attention. Nevertheless in the midst of their activity they maintained their union with God, for they understood that their active life need not be divorced from their spiritual life,⁶³ and that there is no opposition between these two which cannot be properly reconciled.⁶⁴ The saints were men and women of prayer; the sister too must

⁶¹Op. cit., pp. 193-194.

⁶²The Teaching Sister Today, trans. Sister Saint Aurelius and Shaun Govenlock, Montreal, Fides, 1963, p. 29.

⁶³The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Article 43.

⁶⁴Mater et Magistra, par. 255.

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be a woman of prayer. Christian prayer is apostolic because prayer offered by a Christian is the prayer of Christ in his Mystical Body, and is, therefore, universal in scope. Furthermore, apostolic work becomes prayer in so far as it is a turning of oneself attentively to God in doing his will.⁶⁵ Christ commissioned his disciples to pray at all times and not to lose heart (Lk. 18, 1), hence readings which help the Sister to become more prayerful will also help to make her become more apostolically effective, and they should therefore have a place of priority in her reading programme.

4. Role of Women Religious in the Total Missionary Life of the Church

In a series of conferences at Notre Dame, Indiana, Bishop McGrath appealed to sisters to become involved in the Church's missionary activity. The social problems of the world were very much on his mind as he urged the sisters to dedicate themselves to better educational methods, better scientific methods. The Church has need of great thinkers who will command respect on higher intellectual and scientific levels. The Church's interest in all that

⁶⁵Religious-Apostolic Formation for Sisters, p. 137.

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is of the world of men involves three phases: recognizing and promoting the basic natural values of life; secondly, purifying them by applying Christian revelation; thirdly elevating the whole to a supernatural purpose. In other words, the Church's role is to accept, purify and redeem the world. Religious must show their interest in and concern for all that is human. In this way they will give evidence of the Church's interest in the construction of a better world that man requires on earth as a path leading him to heaven. Bishop McGrath states emphatically that the religious must herself be very catholic because in a very real sense she is a symbol, the sign of the Church before the world.⁶⁶ He advocates studies on the situation of the Church in the world.⁶⁷ He also advocates studies on instilling the missionary spirit in students.⁶⁸ Bishop McGrath closes his conferences with the injunction that

⁶⁶"The Apostolic-Ecclesial Character of Modern Day Religious Life," Proceedings of the Institute for Local Superiors 1962, Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1963, pp. 20-24.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 39.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 42.

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sisters give time to thought, reading and meditation on their future in the Church. He says that all must be practical theologians, and to be such it is necessary to reserve time to be quiet, to think and to read.⁶⁹

Sister Mary Eucharist calls to mind two challenges of Vatican II which Sisters must take up if they are to become relevant to a world of dynamic social, technological and scientific change. The first challenge is to liturgical, scriptural and catechetical renewal. The second is to "intensify the apostolic character of the sisters' assigned work" and to channel its expression into new areas of the social apostolate. This requires of the sisters accurate knowledge of the conditions of contemporary society, and a clear understanding of the social doctrine of the Church.⁷⁰

C. CONTINUED PROFESSIONAL AND RELIGIOUS GROWTH AS
A MEMBER OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

In 1951 Pius XII had demonstrated convincingly to teaching sisters the need for adequate preparation for their

⁶⁹Ibid. pp. 102-103.

⁷⁰"Sociological Training of the Young Religious", Program for Progress, Sister Mary Hester Valentine, ed., New York, Fordham University Press, 1966, p. 181.

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apostolate. He expressed the conviction that knowledge of subject matter and good methods of teaching win respect and consideration for the teacher who is then in a position to exercise a greater influence on the character and life of her pupils.⁷¹

This statement implies the need for a continuing formation for their apostolic work. Religious teachers, nurses, social workers, catechists or whatever their profession may be, will have to refurbish their knowledge and skills. Also they must increase and deepen their knowledge, and make their skills more adequate and efficient. The sisters therefore need to have easy access to the most recent books and the best periodicals related to their profession.⁷² Their knowledge and methods must be constantly updated if they wish to achieve maximum effectiveness. Fulton Sheen passed on to the sisters at the Sister Formation Conference in New York the advice he had received from Cardinal Mercier. The Cardinal advised him to tear up his notes at the end of each year in order to avoid the

⁷¹Counsel to Teaching Sisters, Washington, National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1951, pp. 7-8.

⁷²Paul-Emile Leger, op. cit., p. 31.

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temptation of using the same notes year after year. Sheen offered additional advice, suggesting that the sisters create an environment for each subject, "a tremendous intellectual environment." In order to create this environment they must surround themselves with many books on the subject they teach, for a single textbook is "the death knell of knowledge." They must read everything they can on the subject so that the student is getting something that is not in the textbook.⁷³

Besides knowledge of subject matter for her own classes the Sister needs to be aware of projected changes in the approach to the subject. She must, however, also have some knowledge of the related areas of her apostolate so that she is familiar with the overall picture instead of narrowing her view to her own immediate area of work.

So called secular subjects make a positive contribution toward religious growth. George Flahiff warns that one must not create an "artificial opposition between the perfection of one's own being and one's personal active

⁷³The Mind of the Church in the Formation of Sisters, Sister Ritamary, ed., New York, Fordham University Press, 1956, p. 5.

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presence in the world, as if one could perfect himself only by putting aside all temporal activity". He explains by recalling a thought from Mater et Magistra:

When one carries on one's proper activity, even if it be of a temporal nature, in union with Jesus the Divine Redeemer, every work becomes a continuation of His work and is penetrated with redemptive powers. It thus becomes a work which contributes to one's personal supernatural perfection and helps to extend to others the fruits of the Redemption and leavens with the ferment of the Gospel the civilization in which one lives and works.⁷⁴

Study, by its very nature, helps to develop the human person and is therefore related to the sisters' spiritual development. This is interestingly and ably demonstrated by Sister Alice Mary in connection with the study of mathematics. Sister declares that "whatever contributes to the development of the human person can foster growth in holiness." By development of the human person is meant "the integration that must continue to take place among the human faculties considered both naturally and supernaturally." An essential point in human personal development is the "strengthening of the ability to direct ones activities to a desired end." This requires

⁷⁴"Salvation of the Nations", Thy Kingdom Come: Christian Hope in the Modern World, Washington, The Liturgical Conference, 1963, pp. 67-68; cf. John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, par. 259.

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the concentration of one's powers on the desired goal. Because mathematics requires this total involvement of one's faculties, the self-discipline necessary to attain the desired end can be fostered through such study.⁷⁵

2. Ethics of One's Profession

Sister Maureen O'Keefe reminds teaching sisters that not only are they expected to keep abreast of curricular developments but they must adhere to administrative policies and regulations.⁷⁶

This injunction applies equally to sisters in other apostolates. Sisters must be familiar with the ethics of their profession. If they belong to a professional organization, e.g. a teachers' federation, they should know the constitution of the organization.

Trafford Maher predicts that sisters imbued with a spirit of real professional living will, when they get into

⁷⁵"Professional Commitment and Spiritual Development-Mathematics" Program for Progress, pp. 200-201.

⁷⁶Op. cit., p. 128.

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the apostolic works of the Church, be able to exercise leadership in the professional organizations and associations to which they belong.⁷⁷

3. Proper and Balanced Involvement in the Milieu According to One's State.

The sister exercises her apostolate in the midst of a society which has easy access to local, national and international news. The Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication specifically states that "there exists within human society a right to information about affairs which affect men individually or collectively, and according to the circumstances of each".⁷⁸

The press is a powerful force in moulding the opinions of the society in which the sister exercises her apostolate; hence she must be cognizant of what is transpiring in the world about her. The sister is in no position

⁷⁷Op. cit., p. 267.

⁷⁸Article 5.

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to give an opinion about world affairs unless she is informed. World news and local news must form part of her reading. Besides reading the daily newspapers and periodicals she should have access to reliable commentaries which give the significance of current happenings.

The sister is expected to take an active interest in the affairs of her country. She has the right to elect candidates to office. Not only has she the right to vote but she has the duty to vote intelligently; however the sister cannot vote intelligently unless she knows what the candidates stand for. News media are at her service here; she has but to use them.

The Decree on Communications reminds readers that with the right to information there devolves on them a corresponding duty to foster what favors virtue, knowledge or art, and to reject what could be harmful. It implicitly urges them, especially the young, to be discerning in their reading.⁷⁹ The popular appeal of motion pictures is measured by box office returns; best sellers are classified as such by the numbers of copies sold. It is true that

⁷⁹Articles 9-10

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sisters should know what young people are reading, but one way of exercising one's apostolate is to make publishers aware of one's disapproval of certain books by discouraging sales of those books.

The sister will be more effective in her apostolate if those with whom she works see that she understands or is trying to understand their problems. Pius XII warned teaching sisters that coercion should be avoided when one is trying to reform young people. Results are better when one tries to understand the students and help them to understand themselves. Understanding them consists fundamentally in finding out their good points and "in discovering the origin of their deviations and errors" which are often nothing but a futile attempt to solve real and difficult problems, and in following closely the problems and conditions of the present day.⁸⁰

Often their problems arise from or are reflected in their reading; hence it is helpful to know the type of literature young people read.

If the sister has read some of the best sellers she is better able to guide young people to recognize fallacies

⁸⁰Counsel to Teaching Sisters, pp. 4-5.

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in reasoning contained therein and to form sound judgments. This, too, is her apostolate, for as Father Gambari clearly states:

There is nothing in the life of a religious which may be considered strictly secular or profane. Inasmuch as it belongs to her life, which is a life of consecration to sanctity and apostolic work, every element of her life is religious.⁸¹

Daily newspapers and periodical magazines with their accounts of student rebellion and demand for power, frequently offer a clue to problems. The sister needs to read but she must remember that she cannot and need not try to read everything. Time is too precious; common sense is required. Very often each article by a certain writer reflects the same thinking; hence limited reading of that author is all that is required.

In Mater et Magistra Pope John XXIII expressed the earnest wish that attention be given to the social teachings of the Church.⁸² The basis for these teachings is the dignity of man who has been created by God as a unique person and has been adopted as his Son.⁸³

⁸¹Religious-Apostolic Formation for Sisters, p. 136.

⁸²Par. 224.

⁸³Ibid., par. 215.

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Sisters may not be indifferent to the plight of the poor, the oppressed, the underprivileged. Newspapers, television and radio bring these to their very door. Cardinal Suenens declares it a duty for sisters to be aware of the social realities which condition the world. They must know not only the various kinds of social ills but also their cause. They will then be able to introduce others to the problems and enlist help in seeking a solution.⁸⁴

The social education referred to by Suenens is necessary for all sisters no matter what their field of work may be. Knowledge of current trends which influence the lives of the persons whom they serve will help them guide their own actions and aid them in christianizing the world about them.⁸⁵

It is evident from the above that the sister must be informed if she is to exercise leadership in society. She must, therefore, have access to libraries which are up to date, and to periodicals and current books. Sisters who

⁸⁴Op. cit., pp. 146-147.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 148.

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are capable should be trained to make their voices heard in social matters. In this matter, says Cardinal Suenens, one must not be afraid of being too ambitious, for

If woman today has such a place in social life, then the nun with the qualification of her professional training has a reserved seat in the same row. Wherever public opinion is formed, wherever educational laws are drafted or laws concerning the home or health, the nun has her part to play.⁸⁶

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 146.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation has been to demonstrate the role of reading in fulfilling the express wish of the Church that sisters be properly prepared for their apostolic labours.

In chapter I the necessity for reading is established. By drawing on the Old and New Testaments it is shown that reading of the Scriptures has always been highly regarded and encouraged even in the days of few manuscripts. It has further been shown that in all ages of human history spiritual directors encouraged their counselees and penitents to devote themselves to reading. In our own day stress is still placed on the need for reading, as is evident from the documents of Vatican II and other contemporary writings.

Chapter II enumerates the tremendous advantages that may be derived from reading. Briefly these are: a growth in love for God and in mental prayer, and in fruitfulness in the apostolate because of this union with God; a growth in self-knowledge, in the knowledge of one's duties and in personal direction and motivation. Besides these benefits the sister derives knowledge of particular value in her apostolic work-knowledge of the cultural milieu in which she labours, knowledge of the dynamics of the people for and with whom she labours. These are essential for an

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effective apostolate.

Chapter III points out the need for choosing books wisely according to one's needs. It suggests too, that there be a balanced selection of reading material both as regards subject matter and view point. The latter point is particularly important with regard to periodicals in order to forestall a completely "left wing" or "right wing" presentation of ideas and interpretations of current views. A critical approach and an open mind must be maintained in reading.

Two directives given specifically for Scripture reading are: 1. To make use of background books and commentaries in order to understand the message of the author. 2. To read God's word with great reverence.

In chapter IV attention is focused on the formation of the apostle through programmed reading. This formation must be geared to the development of an apostle who is a woman, but a woman consecrated to God by vows made in a particular congregation which is dedicated to a particular missionary work in the Church. The formation of the sister must extend to each of these phases of her life; hence there is need for readings in psychology, sociology, philosophy, as well as for scriptural and theological studies. Studies on the liturgy, the Mystical Body, the missionary life of the Church and the vows are relevant to

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apostolic formation. Finally, it is of the utmost importance that the sister be professionally prepared for her particular work. However, such preparation is never complete, for society is dynamic, and knowledge must be constantly updated; thus formation is a continuing process in which reading plays a major role.

Evident throughout the dissertation is the truth that unless the Lord build the house, in vain do the builders labour (Ps. 126); hence there is a frequent return to the need for union with Christ if the apostolate of the sister is to be fruitful. Only if the branch shares the life stream of the vine will it bear fruit, for in the words of Christ "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it remain on the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches, He who abides in me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15, 4-5).

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Gambari, Elio, Religious-Apostolic Formation for Sisters, New York, Fordham University Press, 1964, xii + 188 p.

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An excellent article on the need for sociological studies for sisters.

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The active and the interior life must be closely linked. Exterior activity must be in harmony with the interior life and the two must constantly balance one another.

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The author examines the problems which face nuns in the Church today. He suggests new approaches which will make their apostolate more effective.

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APPENDIX I

ABSTRACT OF

Reading in the Apostolic Formation of Sisters

In compliance with the wishes of Pope Pius XII and his successors, women religious have erected juniorates and have implemented formation programmes to prepare the sisters for their apostolic labours. Pius XII made it clear that spiritual formation must have primacy but that the human, spiritual, intellectual, professional and apostolic formation must go hand in hand. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the role of reading in the apostolic formation of sisters, that is, in the formation of women who are being prepared to proclaim the good news of salvation to all men.

Reading, particularly reading of the Scriptures, has always been highly recommended. The human authors of the Bible as well as spiritual writers throughout the ages witness to this fact. The documents of Vatican II and other contemporary writings attest to the importance of spiritual reading but they encourage a wide range of secular reading as well to equip the apostle for her mission.

The tremendous benefits of well-chosen reading may be summarized as follows: 1) Growth in knowledge and love of God and in mental prayer, which are so necessary for a

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fruitful apostolate. 2) Growth in self-knowledge, in knowledge of one's duties, and in motivation and self-direction. 3) Growth in knowledge of human nature, of group dynamics, and of the cultural values of those among whom the apostolate is exercised. 4) Appreciation of the dignity of each person created in God's image.

Selection of books should be based on the needs of the individual. This implies careful, mature choice, with attention given both to content and to the position taken by the author on controversial topics. The mature reader will judge the contents for truth and validity of argument.

Scripture should be read in conjunction with commentaries for better understanding of the message contained therein and with the reverence befitting the Word of God.

In setting up a reading programme all the needs of the sister must be considered. Formation must extend to all the dimensions of her being; therefore her reading should be selected with this in mind. Readings which are not specifically related to the apostolate can, nevertheless, be apostolically oriented. Psychology and sociology will promote human development and good interpersonal relationships. For her spiritual and apostolic growth the consecrated christian woman will require readings on Scripture, liturgy, the

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Mystical Body, missiology, religious life, and theology. She will require literature to keep her abreast of developments in her professional work, and magazines and newspapers to keep her informed of current trends and of local, national and international affairs, for the apostle must be cognizant of the problems of the people of God.

A well-planned reading programme will supplement formal instructions in the novitiate and juniorate. It will help to supply for the deficiency if sisters did not have the benefit of juniorate formation, and will provide a means of renewing spiritual resources and updating knowledge in the years following the formal training of the novitiate and juniorate.