RESEARCH ON HUMAN VALUES IN RELIGIOUS LIFE AS PRACTICED IN
THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH CONGREGATION OF MARIANNHILL
MISSIONARIES IN THE DIOCESE OF MARIANNHILL IN SOUTH AFRICA
BETWEEN 1996-2007

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Theology, School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg

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DECLARATION

I Innocent Mabeka, candidate for the Master of Theology Degree at the School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and have acknowledged all the sources I have used in this work.

Student: Innocent Mabeka   Date: 15 January 2008

Signed *[signature]*

University of Kwazulu-Natal
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2007

I acknowledge that this research paper is edited and is ready for examination.

Supervisor: Dr Edwina Ward   Date: 15 January 2008

Signed *[signature]*

This research paper is fully edited.

Signed *[signature]*   Date: 15 January 2008

DEDICATION

I gladly dedicate this dissertation to *The Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus* of the South African province. Their human and spiritual support, have resulted into the writing of this thesis.

I also dedicate this dissertation to all my religious formators who helped me to recognize the human values which I strive to live by as a religious priest.

To my departed dear friend Paul Ntwe and all my role models thank you for your wisdom and support in my religious ministry. Most of all I dedicate this work to my late grandmother Cecilia Chikambiro who raised me in the Catholic faith.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Chara chimwe hachitswanye inda is the Shona proverb which means that a human person cannot succeed in life without the help of others. The success of this work affirms this proverb and that is to say thank to my provincial Fr. Peter Surdel who agreed and motivated me to go for further studies. Krzysztof Grzelak, thank you for all the effort you put in finding out more information about what I intended to study.

I am grateful to my formation team members Frs. Zolile Mpambani and Alessandro Capofelli. Thank you for understanding me in all the times I had to excuse myself from the community duties in order to accomplish this work. My gratitude goes also to all the students of the Priests of the Scared Heart of Jesus in the International Formation House in Pietermaritzburg. Thank you for understanding me especially in those moments I failed to be available when you needed me most.

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1) INDEX OF COMMONLY USED VOCABULARY

Laity: A community of all those who are incorporated in the Church by baptism.

Religious life: A life lived by religious members who publicly profess the vows of poverty, obedience and celibacy to give a public witness to Christ.

Vow: A free promise which one makes to God

The vow of poverty: A commitment which one makes to Christ to be poor.

Vow of obedience: A commitment which one makes to Christ to follow a rule approved by the Church

The vow of celibacy: Being unmarried for the sake of devoting one's life entirely to God

Values: Principles or beliefs which one considers important in his or her life.

2) NAMES, BIBLICAL AND CANONICAL QUOTATIONS

All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

All biblical quotations will be taken from *The New Jerusalem Bible* published by Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group in 1994 in New York.

All the canonical quotations will be taken from *The Code of Canon Law: A Text And Commentary* by Coriden, Green and Heintschel. Published by Theological Publication in 1996.

APPENDIX OF THE INTERVIEWEES

Names of the interviewees	Place of interview	Date of interview
Joshua	Mariathael Mission	01-06-07
Themba	Richmond Parish	12-06-07
Wonga	St Michael's Mission	20-06-07
Bongani	Mariannhill Monastery	30-06-07
Ntsikelelo	Abbot Francis House	03-07-07
Vusi	Abbot Francis House	10-07-07
Ncube	Queensburgh Parish	15-07-07
Chileshe	Margate Parish	21-07-07
Dhlamini	Izingolweni Parish	25-07-07
James	Emaus Mission	28-07-07
Bernard	Mariannhill Monastery	31-07-07
Thokozani	St Michael's Mission	09-08-07
Dominic	Abbot Francis House	17-08-07
Kabelo	Richmond Parish	21-08-07
Zolile	Margate Parish	25-08-07
Dube	Izingolweni	31-08-07
Basilio	Mariathael Mission	18-08-07
Matsotso	Margate Parish	23-08-07
Joseph	Izingolweni	28-08-07

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Question 1

What are the human values which you live by as a Mariannhill missionary and how do these values help you to work effectively in your ministry?

Question 2

In your religious ministry what are the challenges you experience in responding to your call?

Question 3

In your religious ministry how do you experience the vows of poverty, obedience and celibacy as values which help you to respond effectively to your missionary call?

Question 4

In which way did you experience the vows of poverty, obedience and celibacy as a challenge in your religious ministry?

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   The background of Mariannhill Missionaries in the Mariannhill Diocese

In this section I begin by looking at the following two questions:

What is the origin and background of the Missionaries of Mariannill in the Diocese of Mariannhill and what are the human values they live by today as religious missionaries?

Mariannhill Missionaries belong to a male religious Catholic Congregation known as 'The Congregation of Mariannhill Missionaries.' The Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries sprung from the Trappist Monastery of Mariannhill founded by Abbot Francis Pfanner in South Africa in 1882. *Ora et Labora*/Work and Pray, is the motto of the abovementioned Congregation. This motto is not only well-suited to life in the monastery, but is instrumental in bringing Christianity and development to the African people, all because Abbot Francis recognized the need to evangelize and educate the people.

Abbot Francis Pfanner was a person who loved adventure. He was a Trappist born in Austria. He came to South Africa in response to a call from Bishop Riccards of Port Elizabeth who wished to have monks in his region. Fr. Pfanner's response to the call of Bishop Riccards was, "If no one will go, I will go". He then established a mission centre near Durban in 1882. The mission soon became the centre of evangelization and mission work in Southern Africa bringing Christianity, education and development to the African people. Since then, the heritage and mission of Abbot Francis Pfanner has continued to spread to a number of countries in the world.

The expansion of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannhill in different parts of the world resulted in a division of provinces throughout the world in order to facilitate efficient ministry. It is in this context that the province of Mariannhill Missionaries was created in the Diocese of Mariannhill with its general government today being based in Rome.

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Mariannhill Missionaries can be found today in different parts of Africa, namely: Botswana, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. These missionaries have also spread to Europe in the following countries: Austria, Germany, Holland, Italy, Poland, Spain and Switzerland.

Today the Missionaries of the Mariannhill in the Durban Diocese, faithful to the example of Abbot Francis, try to do their best to live their religious-missionary vocation, guided by the especially to the poor and the needy.

The Mariannhill Missionaries are also inspired by the following theme of one of their heroes Fr. Bernard Huss: 'Better Fields, Better Houses, and Better Hearts'. It is in that spirit that for many years the Mariannhill Missionaries in the Mariannhill Diocese tried to be of service to the local Church in pastoral and social works. These include founding and sustaining mission stations, parish work, being chaplains, building churches, schools and hostels, teaching in schools and seminaries, offering bursaries and loans, social work, special ministry to the dying, producing Catholic newspapers such as *UMAFRICA,* bookbinding and running a repository. They also try to help the local Church of Mariannhill Diocese in many other ways, such as skills development and employment opportunities in the monastery workshops, the establishment of fine arts and crafts such as a bakery, a blacksmith, the carpentry, farming, garden and herbs, poultry, shoe making, a tailor's shop, the motor mechanic workshop. They also provide a place for retreats, gatherings, workshops and conferences; further, they provide a retirement home for priests and religious; accommodating and renting out houses for families and people living and working around Mariannhill; housing different projects such as social works, inculturation, a secretarial college, hosting big religious and socio-cultural functions and activities such as ecumenical vespers, weddings, and music concerts in the monastery church.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

There are two reasons which have motivated me to do research on the Congregation of Mariannhill Missionaries:

i) The Mariannhill Missionaries have the same missionary call as the *Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus* to which I belong as a religious priest. The missionary call of the Mariannhill Missionaries is to respond to God's call, following the example of Jesus Christ, to proclaim Good News to all nations especially to the poor; making their contribution towards the ministry of justice, peace and liberation.

ii) Following their missionary call which is also a spirit of the gift of God, the Mariannhill Missionaries remain available to serve the Church where there are needs. The above missionary call of the Mariannhill Missionaries has motivated me to do research on them in the Mariannhill Diocese. Fr. Vincent Mdabe, the provincial of the Mariannhill Missionaries, has expressed his willingness to help me in all possible ways, such as providing me with the information which makes this research possible.

Considering the background of the Mariannhill Missionaries which I have overviewed above, I wonder what the values are which they choose to prioritize and live by in their religious ministry. Today's changing society, whereby the spirit of *individualism, rationalism* and *materialism* is greatly influencing people's perception of life, calls me to probe what the values are which keep the Mariannhill Missionaries focused and cause them to hold on to their missionary work. Many people have noted how materialism in our present day world affects people. Pope John II, for example, commented on materialism as follows:

> The lure of the so called 'consumer society' is so strong among young people that they become totally dominated and imprisoned by an individualistic and materialistic interpretation of human existence. Material 'well-being,' which is so intensely sought after, becomes one ideal to be striven for in life, a well being which is to be attained in any way and at any price (1992: 18).

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I do not see the society of Mariannhill Diocese being immune to the changing values of today's world which Pope John II comments on above. I see the lure of materialism, in one way or the other, being a real situation in the diocese where the Mariannhill Missionaries are working. The Mariannhill Missionaries are human beings, and therefore it is likely that they are attracted to the material world, and to rationalism and individualism for they are not superhuman beings by virtue of being religious people. They are not living on an isolated planet, they are part of the society which is influenced by the spirit of individualism, materialism and rationalism as Pope John Paul II noted.

On the other hand however, the work done by these missionaries is visible and distinct in the Mariannhill Diocese. The researcher is then led to think that there must be a driving force or values which urge the Mariannhill Missionaries to respond to their mission call effectively, irrespective of the fact that they are exposed to a society which may be influenced by the spirit of materialism, rationalism and individualism. The interest of the researcher is to explore the motivational values which encourage these religious men to respond positively to their religious and mission call.

I have studied with some Mariannhill Missionaries whom I see working hard and successfully in their religious ministries. Some of them, for example, are now lecturing at St Joseph's Theological Institute and some are in the Mariannhill General Council which is based in Italy. Looking at the visibility and success of the Mariannhill Missionaries' work, makes me think that surely there must be some driving force or fundamental values behind their work in the Mariannhill Diocese. My interest in this research is to find out the values which make some of these missionaries work with great zeal and so successfully.

I am aware of the fact that even though some Mariannhill Missionaries work with great enthusiasm, they also face some challenges. I have known them struggling in their religious life to such an extent that eventually some left the religious life. Some of those who left were my classmates. It then becomes vitally important for me to explore the human values which motivate some Mariannhill Missionaries to remain religious and to keep on doing missionary work effectively.

In my interest of exploring the values which are the driving force of the missionary work done by the Mariannhill Diocese, I certainly cannot overlook the social reality of the Mariannhill Diocese in which HIV/AIDS is a reality which affects almost every family member of the society being served by Mariannhill Missionaries. I just cannot help observing the reality of young people growing up in suburbs, villages, townships and the overcrowded slums of those towns in the Mariannhill Diocese. Many of these young people have inadequate education. Some of them come from poor families and they cannot find work to enable them to fend for themselves. When I see Mariannhill Missionaries working in such an environment, I am then motivated to seek to understand the human values which give them the strength and zeal to serve a society which has families who are grieving for their beloved ones who are dying almost everyday and being buried almost every week.

After having looked at the motivation for the study, I should now like to look into the principle theories upon which the research project will be constructed.

1.3 Principal theories upon which the research project will be constructed.
Theoretical framework

The profound human values explored by the research, appropriately requires it to use three theoretical frameworks. The first is *A Pastoral Hermeneutics of Care and Encounter* (1999) by Daniel J. Louw. The chosen framework is a pastoral one which matches the missionary call of the Congregation of Mariannhill Missionaries. The framework has vitally important sections which are appropriate to the research. Some of these sections are: *Maturity and the interplay of values and virtues. The objective goal of a pastoral encounter; Identity and growth.*

In the first theoretical framework, sections such as *Maturity and the interplay of values and virtues*, will help the researcher to have a broader way of understanding the values which make the Mariannhill Missionaries do their missionary work in an integral way. The framework has sections such as *The objective goal of a pastoral encounter* and this will also help the researcher to find out the values which help the Mariannhill Missionaries to achieve their ministerial goal.

The framework, A Pastoral Hermeneutics of Care and Encounter has also some clear definitions of values which clearly articulate the phrase _human values_ according to this research. Some of these definitions are as follows:

.Values are selective and decisional. They are subject to preference behaviour. This selective nature of values means that personal decision plays an important role in the formation of values.

.Values are action-oriented. Values often play a role in decision-making and offer a frame work within which actions take place.

. Values are international structures. Values guide one and can be formulated as concepts which promote purposeful behaviour. Furthermore, values are concepts and ideas and can, therefore, be verbalized and rationalized (1999:214).

The second framework is _Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes_ (1998). _Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes_ is a Roman Catholic Religious document composed by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. The document has been enriched by numerous religious formation experiences since the II Vatican Council. The document gives a fitting framework for the research because it gives guidelines to all Religious Institutes including those of South Africa, and, at the same time, allows these Institutes to elaborate their own programs of formation. The document takes into consideration the religious formation questions often asked by major religious superiors and treats them seriously. The document is in fact written to give guidelines to the religious institutes as can be seen below:

> The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life deem it useful, and even necessary, to address this present document to major superiors of religious institutes and to their brothers and sisters charged with formation, including monks and nuns, all the more so since many of them have requested it. It does so in virtue of its mission of giving guidelines to institutes. This can help them to elaborate their own programs of formation (_ratio_) as they are obliged to do by the general law of the Church. On the other hand, men and women religious have the right to know the position of the Holy See on the present problems of formation and the solutions

which it suggests for resolving them. The document has been enriched by numerous experiences of the Second Vatican Council, and it treats questions frequently raised by major superiors. It reminds all of certain requirements of the law with respect to present circumstances and needs. It hopes, finally, to be of special help to institute which are coming into existence and to those which at this time have few means of formation and information at their disposal (1998:7).

The framework also leaves an open door for religious institutes to use the directives on religious formation according to their context and culture. In this way, the above framework permits the Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries in Mariannhill Diocese to enhance its local religious formation which is rooted in Christ and in the local culture. The nature of this framework also helps young religious of the Mariannhill Missionaries in the Mariannhill Diocese to discover their cultural human values and not only to assimilate these values but deepen them in their religious life as well.

The assimilation and deepening of cultural human values helps young religious men to dedicate themselves fully to God; it helps them to become involved in the world in a more significant and effective way and to be faithful witnesses not only to their local Church but to the universal Church at large. In other words, by being in touch with their own cultural human values, the young religious men can live religious life in a more solid way.

The third framework is *Selling All*. In this work, Sandra Schneiders gives a sound theological aspect of religious life. She also touches on the importance of religious community which is the bedrock of religious life for any Catholic Religious Congregation. Commenting on the importance of community life in this framework Schneiders writes:

> The effort of Religious to live the mystery of celibate community, the life of evangelical friendship, with all its implications of equality, mutuality, ecological commitment, non imperialistic mission, ministry to the most abandoned, and inclusive love is not some human ideal invented by utopian visionaries. It is the Christian life itself, undertaken in the Spirit

of Jesus and embodied in a particular life form within the Church (2001:305).

The third framework will help the researcher to understand how community life is a value which help the Mariannhill Missionaries to work effectively in their religious ministry. Martin Oreilly echoes Schneiders on the importance of community life in religious life as he writes: "A religious community is comprised of people whose relationships embrace those within the immediate group, as well as those outside of it. The purpose of their existence is rooted in Christ and His call. Each of the members answered that call which led her to where other people already were" (2001:120).

1.4 Research design and research methodology.

1.4.1 Location

The research will be confined to the Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries in the Roman Catholic Church of Mariannhill Diocese in South Africa. At the present moment there are seventy-six religious priests and fifteen brothers from the Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries working in the Mariannhill Diocese. These religious men are engaged in different religious ministries such as administration and ministerial work. The focus of the research will be on the religious men who studied at St Joseph's Theological Institute in the period 1996 - 2007.

1.4.2 The purpose of the study

Exploring the fundamental human values which motivate Mariannhill Missionaries to respond actively to their mission call is the purpose of this research. In order to achieve this purpose, twenty religious men who are fully engaged in various ministries such as pastoral ministry, teaching ministry and formation ministry will be interviewed individually and in depth. One of

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the twenty interviewees to be interviewed will be the *provincial superior.*[1] of the Mariannhill Missionaries.

1.4.3 Research methodology

The researcher will use the descriptive method of which Blanche, Durrheim and Painter write: "descriptive studies seek accurate observations, and the research design should focus on the validity and reliability of the observations and the representatives of sampling" (2006 44-45). The descriptive method is the method in which interviewees will be able to provide useful data through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured questions will be developed during the interview in a way which helps the interviewees to share in depth about the values they live by as religious men in the Mariannhill Diocese.

1.5 Structure of the chapter

This work is divided into six chapters which includes an introduction and a conclusion. Chapter 1 contains an introduction to the study whereby I will specify my motives in choosing to do research on the Mariannhill Missionaries of the Mariannhill Diocese in particular.

Chapter 2 is divided into two parts. The first part will clarify the terms which will be used frequently in the research. The second part consists of the interview results, which are responses common to all the interviewees. Four semi-structured questions will be stated in chapter 2 and each question will be followed by those responses common to all.

Chapter 3 will discuss the interviewees' responses common to the majority, specifically on values, commitment and community life. Community life as a value will be discussed in three phases, namely: family of origin, religious community and community of the laity.

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[1] A provincial superior is a religious man who is the head of a Roman Catholic Church religious congregation in a particular province.

Chapter 4 will look at the responses common to all the interviewees, paying a special attention to the essential values which help these interviewees to improve the quality of their religious communities. The values of transparency, patience, reconciliation, reflection and *Ora et Labora*/Pray and Work are the values which will be focused on in this chapter.

Chapter 5 will discuss the vows of poverty, obedience, and celibacy as values which are experienced by the Mariannhill Missionaries.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion of the research. In this conclusion chapter the researcher will show how the interviewees' common responses have made him come to the realization of the importance of knowing and understanding one's life history as a religious person.

CHAPER 2

CLARIFICATION OF THE TERMS AND RESPONSES FROM THE INTERVIEWEES

2.1 The clarification of terms

Before discussing the research results I would like first to clarify the terms which I will use frequently during the discussion of the common responses which I obtained from the interviewees. The terms to be clarified are *human values, religious life, religious profession, obedience, poverty, celibacy and native family*

2.1.1 Human values

Many people have looked seriously into the question of values. In the book *"Choose Life" A value-based response to HIV and AIDS,* Andre de la Porte writes: "A value is a personal belief that certain behavioral patterns are the ones that we prefer. Values direct our thoughts, decisions, and actions and set our standards of behavior for others and ourselves. We use our values for condemning, justifying or legitimizing our behavior for others and ourselves." (1998:66).

The understanding of the term *human values* according to this research is best articulated by Augsburger who perceives values as the core factor in motivating people. According to him, 'Humans are evaluating beings. To exist is to choose' (1986:184). This statement links up with a theological anthropology of Louw which accepts *respondeo ergo sum* as a core presupposition as can be seen below.

> Three aspects are generally included in an understanding of values: values are steering principles for directing human behaviour meaningfully; values imply cultural customs and habits; and thirdly, values imply internalized norms (awareness of the ought) (1999:212).

The researcher is seeking the core factors which motivate the Mariannhill Missionaries in their religious ministry, the values which are the steering principles for directing these missionaries in their missionary work.

2.1.2 Religious life

The term religious life in this research should not be confused with a generalized spirituality or a personal synthesis of elements from various religious traditions. From the theological point of view, the term religious life in this research can be understood as articulated by Sandra Schneiders that " Religious life is a state of life in the Church based on specific and distinctive characteristics, namely, the exclusive God-quest centered in Jesus and expressed in lifelong consecrated celibacy" (2000:150). This research is based on the above theological understanding of religious life; the religious life which the Mariannhill Missionaries have been living in a communitarian way from 1882 up to the present time in the Mariannhill Diocese.

The long religious history lived by the Mariannhill Missionaries since 1882 up to the present time clearly affirms the reality of Religious life as noted by Sandra Schneiders in her book *Finding the Treasure* that " Religious life is a is a movement in the Church that has taken on a wide variety of forms throughout its nearly two thousand year history, and the diverse forms are integral to the life in such a way that describing religious life in the singular is virtually impossible, as is coping descriptively with its enormous variety" (126).

In the same book *Finding the Treasure*, Schneiders gives a definition of religious life as she writes: "Religious life is a state of life in the Church, entered into by *perpetual profession*, and constituted *lifelong consecrated celibacy"* (127). This research focuses on this connotation of religious life, the religious life in which the young Mariannhill Missionaries fully entered by taking perpetual profession. Perpetual profession, in other words, means the final religious stage in which one finally commits oneself to the vows of obedience, poverty and celibacy.

2.1.3 Religious vow

A religious vow is a solemn religious commitment in which one commits oneself to God in Jesus Christ. There are three vows in which religious solemnly commit themselves to God and these vows are obedience, poverty and celibacy. In the book *Selling All*, Sandra Schneiders writes: "Profession, the solemn, formal, public self-gift to God in Jesus Christ by which a person definitively undertakes to live as a religious within a particular congregation, is expressed by the making of vows." (2001:106). In other words a religious profession is an act through which one openly professes the abovementioned three vows.

A religious profession means an act of committing oneself to the church by means of taking the three vows. The *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes*, gives at theological understanding of religious profession in the life of the church as can be seen in the following quotation:

> By religious profession members assume by public vow the observance of the three evangelical counsels, are consecrated to God through the ministry of the Church and are incorporated into the institute with rights and duties defined by law. In the act of the Church, through the authority of the one who receives the vows, the action of God and the response of the person are brought together (1998:12).

A religious profession is made by the one who has clearly discerned a call to Religious Life and conceived a deep desire to offer oneself completely to God in life-long consecrated celibacy, poverty and obedience which is lived in a communitarian way. The life-long consecrated celibacy in a communitarian way of life is the kind of life in which the Mariannhill Missionaries respond to their mission call.

2.1.4 Theological meaning of the vows of obedience, poverty and celibacy

Commenting on the theology of the vows of obedience, poverty and celibacy, Elizabeth McDonough writes: " The fundamental theological motivation and the minimal canonical content for the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience as applicable to any

institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life are contained, respectively, in canons 599, 600 and 601" (1998:203). These three canons are quoted below under the explanation of each vow.

2.1.5 The vow of obedience

In the context of this research, the obedience of Jesus to the mission of human salvation is the bed-rock by which one can understand the term obedience in a rich way. The term obedience derives its meaning from Jesus who obeyed the mission given to Him by the Father. Jesus was obedient to the mission given to Him by His Father, even up to death. From the scriptural point of view, one can see that after His death and resurrection, Jesus gave a clear universal mandate to mission as follows: "*Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always, yes to the end of the time.*" (Mt 28:19-20).

Following the understanding of the term obedience as seen above David Fleming writes:

> Obedience is openness and attentiveness to God's designs
> and plans for the world. We do not have a blue print of his
> will and therefore, obedience can not simply be freedom to
> confirm to what is already decided. It is not a passive
> acceptance of the way things are, but an enthusiastic search
> to discover the direction of the Spirit at work in hearts, in
> relationships and institutional structures (1986:155).

Religious obedience is the religious person's openness and attentiveness to the Word of God being spoken in the community. Religious members are to listen and consult one another with the aim of seeking God's will.

Martin Oreilly, in his book, *The Challenge of Being a Religious In Africa Today,* affirms David Fleming as follows:

> The word obedience, is derived from the Latin words *ob-
> audire*, meaning to listen attentively. The beginning of true
> religious obedience, therefore, is when religious , in a spirit
> of faith, accept that God is known in and through the
> community, i.e., when a brother or a sister speaks and is
> listened to, religious then believe that God's will is

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revealed. The vow of obedience understood in this sense, is not submitting oneself to the will of another, but it is making a commitment to the fundamental Christian principle that, at the end of the day all truth is communal (2001:177).

Canonically and theologically, the meaning of the vow of obedience is expressed as follows in canon 601 *"The evangelical counsel of obedience, undertaken in a spirit of faith and love in the following of Christ who was obedient even unto death requires a submission of the will to legitimate superiors, who stand in the place of God when they command according to the proper constitutions"*.

Schneiders looks at the theology of obedience from the contemporary point of view as follows:

> In modern times obedience has been the vow whose theology and practice has had the greatest impact on the daily life of religious. Although it represented a sincere and at times heroic effort to discern and fulfill God's will in imitation of Christ who was obedient unto to death, the traditional practice of obedience, which responded to the superior's will as the will of God, tended to diminish the responsibility of the "subject." The contemporary renewal of the theology and practice of religious obedience has been fostered by many factors, among the most important of which are the following: the realization of the psychological underdevelopment that often results from the lifelong surrender of personal decision making and responsibility; the insight into the moral immunity which often results from the possibility of regarding another as ultimately responsible for one's choice and actions; the sociological data on the superiority of shared leadership over hierarchical authority in voluntary societies; the positive political experience of many societies with democratic government; the relativizing in many institutes of an excessive task-orientation which led to an over dependence on the efficiency of command-obedience relations and the subordination of persons to work. Most important perhaps, has been the theological realization that the spirit speaks through all the members of the community and that to assign the role of " speaking for God" to a single member is to impoverish the community's efforts to discern the will of God. In the last analysis, the theological viability of the principle of hierarchy is being brought into question. This probably accounts for the extreme strain that developments in the area of obedience are causing (1986:92-93).

The vow of obedience will be discussed later. The discussion will be based on the responses of the interviewees; trying to understand how the vow of obedience is a value to those interviewed.

2.1.6 The vow of poverty

In clarifying the vow poverty Ford writes: "This term (from the Latin pauper, meaning "poor") refers to one of the vows professed by men and women in religious communities as part of their public commitment to Christ" (2006:147). The term poverty in this context does not refer to the lack of material goods by religious people. It refers to the fact that religious people have material goods in common which they use as a community. Cars, houses and money are some of the material goods which religious people do not posses as individuals but share together as a community.

The following summary of the vow of poverty by Martin Oreilly also articulates the understanding of the vow of poverty according to the context of this research:

i)   Giving oneself, without reservation, to the cause of the reign of God, even it means leaving one's family and renouncing the opportunity to marry and have family.

ii)   Opting, freely, for a life style that does not depend on status or power, but one that will allow others, whatever their condition, to see one as their brother or a sister.

iii)   Embracing freedom that allows the development of a faith stance that makes a person to believe that God will care for them (2001:68).

I have found the above three points on the vow of poverty to be quite appropriate according to how the term poverty is to be understood in the context of this research as will be seen during the course of the research. In short, the vow of poverty in this work is a way of life which frees one from material detachment so that one can serve God freely. As Timothy Radcliffe writes: "The vow of poverty offers us freedom to give ourselves without reservation to the preaching of the gospel but it is not just a means in a narrow and utilitarian sense"(1999:44).

According to canon law no. 600 *"The evangelical counsel of poverty in imitation of Christ who, although He was rich became poor for us, entaisl, besides a life which is poor in fact and in spirit, a life of labor lived in moderation and foreign to earthly riches, a dependence and limitation in the use and disposition of goods according to the norm of the proper law of each institute."*

Schneiders also theologically comments on the vow of poverty as follows: " The theology of evangelical poverty, the object of the religious vow, is rooted in the Gospel values of joyous dependence on God and open-hearted sharing of God's gift within the human community (1986:90).

2.1.7 The vow of celibacy

A vowed celibacy, according to this research is to be understood as articulated by David Fleming that "The heart of vowed celibacy is rather a special, unique and total consecration to Christ. The true celibate is effectively head over heels in love with God. Vowed celibacy is a commitment to love God" (1986:107)

The vow of celibacy is the choice which one chooses freely and sees as a fundamental commitment to God. One is not celibate out of misfortune, coercion or inertia, one rather makes an intentional commitment to a particular way of life that involves being single.

The vow of celibacy allows one to be mobile and be able to serve God's people in different places. Commenting on the vow of celibacy Radcliff writes: "It is of course true that this vow is, like the others, a means. It gives us the freedom to preach, the mobility to respond to needs. But with this vow it is perhaps especially important that it is not merely endured as a grim necessity. Unless we can learn, perhaps through much time and suffering, to embrace it positively, then it can poison our lives" (2001:44).

From the canonical and theological point of view, canon 599 states that " *The evangelical counsel of chastity assumed for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, as a sign of the future world and a source of more abundant fruitfulness in an undivided heart, entails the obligation of perfect continence in celibacy.* " In regard to the interviewees, they expressed themselves in different ways as to how the vow of celibacy is both a value and a challenge in their religious life as I shall discuss later.

Schneiders comments theologically on the vow of celibacy as follows:

> Chastity or celibacy freely chosen for evangelical reasons has been explained theologically in many ways in the course of history. Most of these explanations are considered unsatisfactory today because they involve, explicitly or implicitly, a negative attitude toward sexuality and denigration of marriage as a Christian vocation. The practice flowing from such theologies, though admirable in many respects, is often seen today overly characterized by fear, guilt and repression as leading to serious affective underdevelopment in many religious. The contemporary realization of the importance of sexuality in human life and of the irreplaceable role in affective growth of friendship with members of one's own and the other sex has led to a serious revision of both the theology and the practice of religious celibacy (1986:91-92).

The three vows of obedience, celibacy and poverty, are means which help religious people to serve God's people as stated in an unpublished booklet *Integrity in Ministry* by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference that:

> A fundamental concern of Jesus is living for others, and a person is a disciple of Jesus through service of other fellow human beings. In the Gospels, service is a personal act; its origin and goal is love. Service occurs out of love for others, as the account of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. This is the service to which religious and clergy are called (2002:16).

2.2 Responses common to all the interviewees/Results

Learning does not end. Even though I have been a religious priest for eleven years, I must acknowledge that I have had many new religious insights from the interviews I have conducted. The interviewees responded to the questions enthusiastically, expressing themselves freely. As they were sharing their ministry experience, during the course of the interview, I sometimes identified myself with the ups and downs which some of them experience in their ministerial work. Some of their ministerial stories evoked both joyful and painful feelings in me, as I could also recall some of my religious experience.

The joyful feelings came from the parishioners who positively supported me in the ministerial work I was doing as a parish priest. The painful feelings came from the frustration caused by a few individual people or a handful of parishioners who constantly tried to impede me in the ministerial and pastoral work I was doing.

Initially I intended to interview twenty Mariannhill Missionaries but I ended up interviewing nineteen of them. The nineteen interviewees were generous not only with their time, but with their responses as well. I found their responses to be spontaneous and fruitful. Four main semi-structured questions were asked. Apart from these questions, some questions which followed up the interviewees' responses were asked. I summed up the responses which I received from the interviewees and these are the responses which I refer to as responses common all.

The format in which I am going to show the results is according to the four main structured questions and the common responses to these questions will be given as well. In the next section are the main semi- structured questions which the interviewees were asked.

2.3 Question 1

What are the human values which you live by as a Mariannhill missionary and how do these values help you to work effectively in your ministry?

2.3.1 Responses common to all the interviewees

Community life is the overall term which the interviewees used in response to the questions I asked. The interviewees looked at community life in three phases namely: i) family of origin community, ii) religious community and iii) lay community.

The researcher will show the three tables which contain the values common to all the interviewees in these three phases. Some more tables which contain the challenges which are experienced by the interviewees in their religious ministry will be shown. The writer will also give an overview of the values contained in each table. Most of the values given by the interviewees as common responses will be discussed during the course of the research.

2.3.2 Phase 1: Family of origin community

Table 1: The common human values assimilated by the interviewees in their family of origin community	
i) Self -respect	ii) Respect of family members
iii) Hard work/Working hard	iv) Listening to elderly people
v) Generosity	vi) Cooperating with other family members
vii) Patience	viii) Sensitivity

2.3.3 An overview of the values contained in table 1

From the common responses of the interviewees it became clear to me that some of the human values which are helping them now to live effectively religious life, are the above values which they assimilated in their families.

The phrase human dignity sums up the above values. A respect for one's family members is a respect for human dignity in which one becomes sensitive and conscious to the needs of other family members. This in turn helps the interviewees to be more sensitive towards and conscious of the needs of other human beings.

Commenting on human dignity Brian Hall writes: "Human dignity is the consciousness of the basic right of every human being to have respect and to have his/her basic needs that will allow him/her the opportunity to develop his/her potential" (1986:265). I agree with Hall that the respect for oneself and for other human beings helps one to develop one's potential. This was expressed by some of the interviewees.

In an unpublished booklet *Integrity in Ministry* by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference), The spirit of human dignity is also expressed as follows: " Religious and clergy should respect the inherent dignity of the person. Respect for others begins with respect for oneself" (2002:9). I agree that respect for others begins with self-respect and this can also be seen in the first two values in table 1 (Self-respect and Respecting of other family members) in table 1. Self respect is a value which helps one to respect not only oneself but other people as well.

2.3.4 Phase 2: The Religious Community

Phase 2 contains the values which the interviewees experience now in their respective religious communities as tools which help them to respond effectively to their missionary call. These values can be seen in table 2 below.

Table 2:	Common values which the interviewees experience and lived by in their respective religious communities:
i) Self respect	ii) Respecting other community members
iii) Being sensitive to other community members	iv) Community prayer
v) Co-operation with other community members	vi) Faith in God
vii) Patience with other community members	viii) Self-understanding
ix) Understanding of other community members	x) Being optimistic
xi) Self-giving	xii) Availability to other community members
xiii) Focus on the goal of mission	xiv) Transparency
xvi) Loyalty	

2.3.5 An overview of the values contained in table 2

The above values where highlighted by the interviewees as the values which help them to live a better religious community life and to work effectively in their religious ministry. As the interviewees enumerated these values during the interview, it became clear to the researcher that they are clearly motivational. Louw has also noted that values are motivational as he writes: "Values are motivational. They channel psychic energy and direct behaviour" (1999:214).

Values are also motivational according to Oliana and for her the most motivational value is Jesus. Oliana writes:

> Who is successful in society? It is the one with convictions and
> follows them. A person with convictions spends time finding

ways to reach people in order to reach whatever his targets are. The great people of history were those who acted in accordance with their convictions. It is the same with religion. To be good, one has to fall in love with Jesus, be fascinated by him and be touched by him. Christ has to be the conviction for those who bear his name, especially those who want to follow him as religious, priests and missionaries (2002 :161).

2.3.6 Phase 3: The Lay Community

Table 3:   The common values which the interviewees live by in the lay community as the means which help them to respond effectively to their missionary call.

i) Affirming the lay community   ii) Appreciating the lay community

iii) Respecting the lay community   iv) Self-respect

v) Love of the lay community   vii) Availability to the lay community

viii) Being transparent to the lay community   ix) Understanding the lay community

x) Listening to the laity   xi) Empowering the laity

xii) Being optimistic to the lay community   xiii) Thinking positively about the lay community

xiv) Being patient with the lay community   xv) Challenging the lay community positively

xvi) Encouraging the lay community   xvii) Setting a goal with the lay community

xviii) Accepting advice from the lay community   xix) Dialoging with the laity

xx) Being open to be challenged by the lay community

2.3.7 An overview of the values contained in table 3

In short, the common responses of the interviewees highlighted that those interviewed by the researcher have love for their lay communities; they motivate the lay community and dialogue with them. The interviewees' care for laity is affirmed by John Finney who writes: "The leadership works for people and not vice versa. If people feel that their own contribution is neglected and played down then they will drift away and cease to play an active part. Common sense tells us that everyone should be honoured and valued both for themselves and for the future of the local organizations"(1989:12). I agree with Finney that the laity need to be respected in various ways such as being involved in pastoral dialogue.

From the canon law point of view, canon 212.2 states that *"The Christian faithful are free to make known their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires to the pastors of the Church."* the dignity of the laity is also highlighted. From the above canon law it becomes clay that the laity have right to be heard, and therefore the church has an obligation to listen and to have suitable structures for the lay community.

2.4 Question 2

In your religious ministry what are the challenges you experience in responding to your call?

2.4.1 Response common to all the interviewees

Community life was also cited as the over-all term in which challenges are experienced in three phases, namely: i) native family community, ii) religious community and iii) laity community.

Table 4: The challenges experienced by the interviewees in their native family communities

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i)   Being expected by some family members to help financially.

ii)   Not being able to help financially a family member in need.

iii) Being expected to be a saintly person

iv) Being expected to be peace-maker in the family when there is a misunderstanding between some family members.

v)   Being excluded from some cultural matters which concern the family, for example   ancestral matters.

vi) Being taken as the guru of the family, for example being considered as someone who can provide solutions in family matters.

2.4.2 An overview of the challenges contained in table 4

The above challenges were highlighted by the interviewees. Some of the interviewees shared with the researcher that there is a great challenge of bridging their native families with their community lives. Both their native families and their religious communities are important to them. The religious life way of life is different to one's family way of life. For example, according to the religious way of life, one does not marry. According to the interviewees' native families, one is expected to marry. In short, the interviewees feel the challenge of bridging the religious culture they live by with their native cultural background which they have assimilated since their childhood. They feel a close connectedness with their native families especially in difficulties situations when, for example, a family member is sick or has passed away. Hall has also noted the importance of family connectedness. He defines family/belonging as follows: "Family/belonging: the people to whom one feels primary bonds of relationship and acceptance and the place of dwelling of one's parents" (1986:259).

2.4.3   Phase 2: The Religious Community

Table 5:   The challenges which are experienced by the interviewees in their religious communities
i)   The difficulties of challenging one another as community members.
ii)   Lack of co-operation by other community members.
iii)   Being sometimes misunderstood by other community members and superiors.
iv)   The tendency to live an individual/self-centered life by some other community members .
v)   Lack of communication within the   community.
vi)   Lack of sensitivity by some other community members.
vii)   Lack of care of the common goods such as cars.
viii) Being misjudged by other community members.
ix)   Lack of affirmation.
x)   Lack of dialogue

2.4.4 An overview of the challenges contained in table 5

The above are the common challenges which are experienced by the interviewees in their religious communities. Some of them said they get a lot of affirmation from the laity and very little from their community members, in spite of community life being the central element of religious life. Sandra Schneiders affirms the interviewees on the difficulties of community life as she writes:

> One of the most noticeable changes in religious life since Vatican II is the evolution of community life. This may well be partly due to the extreme rigidity and uniformity of religious community life in the post- Tridentine period in contrast to which flexibility or diversity was bound to appear at least striking if not radical. But it is also due to the suddenness, and speed of the change, after centuries of sameness and to the variety of developments which have occurred not so much because of conscious decisions about community but as accompaniments of other changes in religious life such as the diversification of ministry, a sharp decline in numbers, and the breaking down of barriers between religious congregations. In any case, there is developing a felt need among many religious to reflect

seriously on the community dimension of religious life and to make
deliberate choices in the future (1986:236).

I also agree with Schneiders that community life is a great challenge in religious life. This will be discussed later.

2.4.5 Phase 3: The Lay Community

Table 6: The challenges which are experienced by the interviewees in their lay communities
i)   Maintaining religious identity without confusing it with that of the laity.
ii)   Being expected to be an exemplary leader in the community.
iii)   Being expected to help financially the poor in the community.
iv)   Being expected to serve fairly and love the lay community members.
v)   The temptation to be close to the rich people and ignore the poor.
vi)   Lack of wisdom in some crucial matters which arise in the ministry
vii)   Framed guilty by some lay people.
viii) Not being able to help financially in poor families.
ix)   Facing the painful reality of seeing people who are dying of AIDS and burying them almost every week.
x)   Being misunderstood and judged by the laity in some ministerial activities such as working with the youth.

2.4.6 An overview of the challenges contained in table 6

In common the interviewees expressed the challenge of deepening a religious identity in which the lay community cannot understand the church's social help given by religious people as social relief in the society. Seeing the work done by religious people as social relief may not help the lay community to get rooted into spiritual matters, but instead to be more concerned about potential financial assistance for themselves. Oreilly has also noticed such confusion as he writes:

> The increasing involvement of the Catholic Church in relief work has also had the unfortunate spin-off of making missionaries and local religious look and behave like relief workers. "Don't bother me with Jesus, give me some rice like the Catholics", was what I once overhead a passer-by say in answer to a street evangelist who had asked him if he was born again (2001:170).

The above quotation affirms the concern of the interviewees on some of the lay community members who may see the church as a social relief department.

2.5 Question 3

In your religious ministry how do you experience the vows of poverty, obedience and celibacy as values which help you to respond effectively to your missionary call?

Answers to this question will be divided in three parts according to each vow. The researcher will give an overview of the common responses given by interviewees on all the three vows namely: the vow of poverty, the vow of obedience and the vow of celibacy. According to those who were interviewed, vows are the values which enable them to fulfill their mission call and this is what is also noted by Radcliffe who writes: "Vows should not be a heavy burden to weigh us down, but grant us a freedom to walk lightly as we go to new places to do new things" (2000:53). I agree with both the interviewees and Radcliff that these vows are to free religious people to respond freely to God's call. The responses common to the interviewees, as seen in the following tables, will be discussed in chapter 5.

2.5.1 The Vow of Poverty

Table 7: The ways in which the interviewees experience the vow of poverty as a value that helps them in their missionary call
i) Responding freely to their missionary call without being influenced by the spirit of materialism.

ii)	Being available to be sent wherever they may be needed, without being concerned about leaving material goods behind them.
iii)	Knowing that their congregation reaches out to the poor.
iv)	Being able to be poor in such a way that they give up marriage and thus do not have their own families, in order to be available to love and serve freely God's people.
v)	Becoming poor to the extent of not owning personal goods but rather using common goods to create jobs for the people of the Mariannhill Diocese.

2.5.2 The vow of Obedience

Table 8:	**The ways in which the interviewees experience the vow of obedience as a value which helps them in their missionary call**
i)	It makes the interviewees listen to the Word of God and be free to respond to it even in the situations they would rather avoid as indicated by Jesus in the following biblical text: *In all truth I tell you, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you would rather not go.*
ii)	(Jn 21:18)
iii)	It makes the interviewees grow into the full commitment to do God's will in their responding to God's call.
iv)	It brings order in the ministry of the Mariannhill Missionaries by means of not doing their own will but rather accepting in obedience the established orders of the church and the constitutions of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannhill.

2.5.3 The vow of Celibacy

Table 9: The interviewees experience the vow of celibacy as a value in their ministry in the following ways:
i)   It is a value by which they freely respond to their call, making a choice not to build themselves into the future of the race.
ii)   A value of a self-offering gift in which they offer themselves to God so freeing themselves from any human relational attachment so that they can freely respond to God's call.
iii)   A value in which the Mariannhill Missionaries redirect their sexual energy to enhance the human potential for other forms of growth, as can be seen for example in the works of building churches, schools, and doing pastoral work.

2.6 Question 4

In which way did you experience the vows of poverty, obedience and celibacy as a challenge in your religious ministry?

2.6.1 The vow of Poverty

Table 10:   How is the vow of poverty experienced as a challenge by the Mariannhill Missionaries?
i)   Experiencing the challenge of bridging the notable gap of material goods between one's native family and one's religious family.

ii) Experiencing the challenge that some members come from more affluent backgrounds than others, and this some community members have a stronger economic background than others.
iii) Experiencing the temptation of being influenced by a spirit of materialism and gradually responding to God's call in a non-active way.
iv) Experiencing the challenge of having three meals a day in a society where some families having difficulties in making ends meet and have one meal a day.
iv) Experiencing the challenge of seeing the financial need of one's native family and yet being not able to help because as a religious, one does not own personal goods or have personal financial income.

2.6.2 The vow of Celibacy

Table 11: How is the vow of celibacy expressed as a challenge by the interviewees?
i) The challenge of being an African and of being expected by the local community to have a wife and children.
ii) The challenge of being available to go wherever one is sent by the superior to serve God's people.
iii) The challenge of being away from one's native family and missing some important family matters such as funerals and weddings.
iv) The challenge of being misjudged when having a female friend.

v)	The danger of being in any form of possessive relationship which does not allow one to be freely available for the service of God' people.
vi)	The challenge of maintaining one's religious identity without confusing it with the identity of the laity.
vii)	The challenge of creating clear boundaries with lady friends.

2.6.3 The vow of Obedience

Table 12:	**How the vow of obedience is experienced as challenges by the interviewees?**
i)	The challenge of abandoning one's personal will and doing God's will, which may come through the voice of the community members or the superior.
ii)	The challenge of discerning God's will together as a community and following it to fulfill effectively the missionary call of the Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries.
iii)	The challenge of not having personal goods but communal ones, where one may have to ask permission from one's house superior before using these communal goods.
iv)	The challenge of accepting a transfer from one religious community to another when the superior finds it necessary.
iv)	The temptation of living an individual/self-centered life and failing to listen to the challenges of other community members.
v)	The temptation to rationalize about the necessity of doing what one is requested to do by the superior.
vi)	The temptation to be arrogant and undermine community members in thinking that one's ideas are the best.

vii)   The challenge of not being allowed to have or do what one sees and feels necessary to do.

The responses common to all the interviewees as seen in the above twelve tables, have left the researcher with an understanding that human values build human relationships in one's native family members, religious family members and in the human society at large. The assimilation of these human values by the interviewees seems to be one of the major factors which help them to do well in their religious ministry. During the course of the research, the researcher will carefully examine these human values and try to find out in what way they motivate the interviewees in their work as missionaries.

CHAPTER 3

DISCUSSION OF THE VALUES OF COMMITMENT AND COMMUNITY LIFE

3.1 Structure of the chapter

In this chapter, I should like to begin by giving a short overview of the common responses which I received from those whom I interviewed. The overview of the common responses will sum up the values which the interviewees emphasized as the most frequent values which help them to be successful missionaries.

This chapter will discuss in depth the values of commitment and community life. These values are some of those which the interviewees highlighted as the values which they live by as religious people and which enable them to do well in their missionary work.

The names which I will be using as names of the interviewees are not their real names.

3.2 Overview of the common values

In my quest to find out the values which motivate Mariannhill Missionaries in their missionary work, numerous interconnected values were provided by those whom I managed to interview. I had an overview of the common values which I observed from the interviewees, and came to the realization that they are interwoven in such a way that one may not necessarily separate them from one another. An overall look at these values which, placed side by side, help one to see their inter-relatedness. Placing some of the values side by side shows they complement each other in motivating the religious men of Mariannhill Missionaries.

i) Respecting other family members   Cooperating with other family members

ii) Respecting other religious members   Being available to other community members

iii) Self respecting   Respect for the lay community

iv) Empowering the laity   Dialoguing with the laity

v) Focusing on the goal mission   Love of Mariannhill Missionaries

vi) Commitment   Hard work

vii) Respect of community life   Sensitivity to other community members

viii) Responsibility   Positively challenging other
                                               community members

The above values complement each other in various ways. As the interviewees were sharing about how these values help them in their ministry, I began to see how complementary these values were in the ministry of the Mariannhill Missionaries. Almost every interviewee mentioned the importance of self-respect in his ministry. Self respect as a value was then easily connected to other values as can be seen, for example, in the sharing of Joshua who said that:

> In my ministry I have learnt that self-respect is an essential value which helps me to relate well with my community members, the lay community and all people whom I interact with in my religious ministry. In fact the value of self-respect has helped me to respect the laity and positively challenge them when I see a need to do so. Self-respect has brought about mutual respect between the laity and myself in such a way that there is a healthy dialogue between us. It is through the dialogue I have with the laity that we are able to work together in a committed way which bears fruitful results in the missionary work I do as a parish priest. The success in the ministry I do is not only my own effort, but is a communal effort where there is cooperation between my religious community members, the community members of my family and the members of those whom I serve. I also try to be sensitive to the needs of the laity and to be available to them when they need me. (Interviewed on 01-06-07)

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From the above statement of Joshua, one can see that the values of the interviewees are very much interconnected. The way in which the values are interconnected gives me an image of different kinds of yarn which are interwoven together to make one whole jersey. In other words the values which help the Mariannhill Missionaries can be looked at not as separate entities but rather as a whole because each value is connected to the other. For this reason I have chosen the values of commitment and community life which make a thread that runs through the pattern of values given by the interviewees as tools which help them to work in a remarkable way as religious people.

According to Joshua, the success in his ministry is not only his personal effort or commitment, but a communal effort where there is a co-operation between him and his religious community. This for me shows that Joshua is not self-centered in his ministry. Such a commitment in Joshua is echoed by Schneiders who writes as follows: Ministry, if it is real, is addressed to real needs and in this sense calls for a generosity, an unself-centered attention to the needs of others, that does not seek reward or demand reciprocity.(1986:259). In the book, *What is Religious Life?* O' Connor also sees the importance of community in religious life as he writes: "A religious community is one in which the members strive to make real the offering of self" (1977:117). I agree with O'Connor that religious community members strive to make real the offering of self as seen in Joshua who strives to be committed in his ministry by the help of other religious community members.

Joshua has also expressed a sense of sensitivity
I now should like to discuss in depth the values of commitment and community life and show various ways in which they are connected to each other in the way they help Mariannhill Missionaries to respond successfully to their religious ministry.

3.3 Commitment

In the context of religious life in general, I have heard the word commitment so often. I now analyse the word 'commitment' by paying more attention to how the interviewees look at it as a value in their religious ministry.

By commitment in this research, the writer refers specifically to the way in which the Mariannhill Missionaries dedicate themselves in responding to their missionary call. Commitment as a value in one's religious ministry could be well understood as cooperation which Hall understands as " the capacity to enable persons in a corporation or institution to work cooperatively with one another such that the unique skills and qualities of one individual supplement, support and enhance the skills and qualities of the others in the group" (1986:267). The responses common to the interviewees have brought me to the understanding that commitment is a dedication to one's work, to the extent that even when discouraged, one perseveres.

I found out that most of the interviewees are committed in the way they respond to their missionary call. These interviewees gave me the impression that they assimilated values which urged them to fulfill their missionary goal. Values are indeed goal oriented as shown in Daniel Louw who quotes Meissner as follows: "Values are goal-oriented. This telic dimension of the value-system has a channeling effect in so far as it organizes or tends to organize the various drive-derivative aspects of personality and directs them towards specific goals" (1999:214).

The interviewees expressed commitment as a value in their ministry from different perspectives depending on the work allocated to them. Themba, for example, has been involved in different religious ministries such as working with the youth and teaching. According to him, commitment is one of the key values which helped him to work effectively in most of the tasks which were assigned to him.

I believed Themba when he said that he works effectively. In fact it was not easy for me to get hold of him for the interview because of his commitments. When I eventually visited Themba at

his place to interview him, I must admit that I was challenged and inspired by the visibility of his work.

When I asked Themba what really urges him to get fully involved in his religious ministry, he responded that the love of people and God motivate him to be committed in doing whatever work is assigned to him. He said:

> I love people, and their positive feedback always gives me energy to work zealously. I also love my congregation and I do my missionary work knowing that I am committed to Christ for Christ is the one who called me to the service of people. One day I asked one of the youth in the parish in which I work, "How come sometimes I am so angry with you as youth and yet you don't get discouraged?" The youth answered that as youth they see the way I am committed to them so in turn they do not want to discourage me. (Interviewed on 12-06-07)

From the way Themba expressed himself, I learnt that commitment for him means to be in his ministerial work. Commitment for Themba is to be focused. He gave me the impression that commitment demands his full concentration and engagement in the task at hand. As I listened to how Themba sees commitment as a value in his life, I came to the understanding that commitment is a value which positively contributes to the life-shaping of a religious person in the ministry.

Oreilly sees the importance of values in the life of a religious person. He, in fact, encourages that in religious formation one must be encouraged to be aware of one's values. Oreilly writes: "If religious life is a life based on certain key values that a person deems worthy enough to devote all his/her energies to, then it follows that those in religious formation must be encouraged to asses the strength of their feelings on issues with which they themselves identify" (1998:67). Cenicini, as well, does see responsibility as a value which religious people should be taught in their religious training. Cencini writes; "The religious environment can be considered educational only if it manages to form adult and responsible people, particularly if it elicits in them a sense of responsibility towards the community itself" (2004:56).

Considering the interviewees' common response on commitment, I sum up commitment in their life as *a life long self giving to the Church*. Commitment, viewed in this way, is a dedication in which one constantly strives to fulfill zealously the religious call. The interviewees' sharing about the importance of commitment in their lives brought me to the understanding that commitment is a fundamental response to the religious call. It is a value which urges one to participate fully in religious ministerial work.

Wonga, one of the interviewees, told me that what makes him committed is the love of being a Mariannhill Missionary. The love for his Mariannhill Congregation motivates him to be committed to his missionary work. In his own words Wonga said:

> I was motivated to join the Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries by my parish priest who baptized me. He motivated me not by way of talking but buy the way he was working with people, he had such a charism , he had a magnetic personality which especially drew young people, and he was also able to work with people of different ages. The fact that the priest who baptized me was a Mariannhill Missionary and he always spoke of his love of the congregation in connection with his work, motivated me to love my congregation in the work I do as a religious missionary. In fact, as a catholic priest, my principle is that as long as I am a Mariannhill Missionary I will try by all means to cooperate with other Mariannhill members to do whatever duties are given to me. For me, if I am given work to do and I say 'yes' my 'yes' is 'yes' and this I do for the love of people, love of God and love of my congregation. (Interviewed on (20-06-07)

The above quotation shows that Wonga is committed to the service of God's people. Wonga's approach to his ministry is confirmed by Schillebeeckx who writes: " Ministry in the church is not a status or a state but a service, a function within the community of God and therefore a gift of the Holy Spirit" (1981:37). In the book *The Gift of Religious Life,* under the heading *Our Life:A Journey with Christ, the Way,, the Truth and the Life*, Oliana writes: "All must be geared towards our becoming followers of Jesus Christ. This means experiencing God as the source of

our life" (2002:34). In my opinion, Wonga makes God the source of his life by the way he commits himself to the service of God's people in his ministry.

At this stage I see commitment to religious life in two dimensions, the dimensions in which one gradually grows into commitment. The first one is a higher dimension in which one is more committed to Christ than to one's religious congregation; the second dimension is a commitment to the apostolate of one's religious congregation;

3.3.1 First dimension of commitment: Commitment as a value in which one commits oneself to Christ totally.

The value of commitment on the first dimension is a commitment to Christ. This is a deeper relational commitment to Christ. This commitment is a total self-giving of one's life to Christ. It is expressed in the form of lifelong consecrated vows. In other words, one chooses to live as a celibate for the rest of one's life, so as to love Christ totally. A celibate life is a self-giving commitment in which one does not only commit oneself to the work one does as a Mariannhill Missionary. It is the commitment in which one commits one's very self as a person to Christ. The commitment to Christ is an absolute one, for it is not limited only to the work one does as a missionary, it is rather the commitment in which one gives one's total self to Christ through one's commitment to one's congregation. In short the commitment to one's congregation leads one to total commitment to Christ. I see this first dimension of commitment as the highest form of committing oneself to Christ.

According to the common response which I received from the interviewees, I have come to the realization that commitment as a value in religious life has two dimensions as I have shown above. Ultimately, I should think that these two levels of commitment are vitally important not only in the life of the Missionaries of Mariannhill as religious, but also in the life of anyone who is a religious in any other religious congregation.

I find the second dimension below to be very real and human, it is the dimension in which one commits oneself to the ordinary work which one does in one's religious congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries. Commitment as a value is not idealized. One is committed to the work, being motivated by the positive attitude of other members. In the case of Wonga for example, he explicitly responded that the love for his congregation flows from the Mariannhill Missionary priest who baptized him. According to Wonga, the priest who baptized him in childhood, had a magnetic personality which attracted people, especially the youth.

Today, as a religious priest of the Mariannhill Missionaries, Wonga is still motivated by the working spirit of his parish priest who is now dead. Even though Wonga's parish priest is dead, the positive attitude of the late priest is helping Wonga today to be rooted and committed to his Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries. One may then realize that Wonga's love for the congregation started in a simple human and magnetic loving way. Looking further as to how Wonga got motivated by his parish priest, I can say that the good works which members of the congregation do in a human loving way, bear ever-lasting good fruits which help other members to grow in love for the congregation.

The spirit of work inspiration which one gets from other members of the congregation, is not enough. It is the value which points only to the absolute inspiration who is Jesus Christ. The love of Christ, as was pointed out by the other interviewees, is for me the highest form of motivation to religious life since it motivates one to be fully committed to one's work.

I call the value of commitment to Christ an "ideal" commitment. Ideal not in the sense that it is not a realistic one, but in the sense that it calls for the total commitment which Jesus Christ Himself demonstrated on the cross for the love of every human person. Commitment to Christ is the love and the value by which one totally gives oneself to Christ and the love of others. Commitment in the second dimension is the maximum form of a loving human relationship upon which one can lose one's life for the other. In the highest form of commitment to Christ, one does not compromise commitment to Christ, one's yes is yes, there is not a better yes or a half yes. One's yes is yes as shown by Mary who is the model of acceptance of God's will. Commenting on Mary's great faith Pardilla writes: "The Exhortation summarizes Mary's special

consecration and mission in these words: "*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word.* Lk 1:38" (no. 28) Mary should be imitated also as the prayerful Virgin and Mother. (2005:51).

The commitment to Christ which is indicated by Wonga, the second dimension of commitment, can also be seen in Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes where it is stated that: "The call of Christ, which is the expression of a redemptive love embraces the whole person, soul and body, whether man or woman" (1998:11). Implications of such commitment can be seen in Wonga who strives to commit himself totally to Christ in his missionary work.

In my opinion, the dimension of commitment which I have recognized from the common response of the interviewees, is a commitment by which one gradually grows in relationship with Jesus Christ, the one who calls one to the lifelong consecrated celibacy. Commitment in the second dimension is the self-expression of an unending love. It is an undying commitment which is rooted in Jesus Christ. Commitment on the first dimension is a perfect example of a true loving human relationship shown by Jesus in His ministry of human salvation. It is a commitment which calls for a fundamental response from a religious person, the response which does not compromise one's yes to it. Commitment at this level is like a spiritual well from which always one always draws water when experiencing dryness in religious ministry. The fulfillment of this commitment is found nowhere else apart from Jesus Christ who calls one to religious life.

I would like to conclude this section on commitment by pointing out that religious life is not an illusion; it is a reality through which one gradually strives and grows in the ministry. Growth in the religious ministry comes in different levels, namely commitment, to one's congregation and commitment to Christ. One grows on both commitment levels by the help of God's grace who sent God the Son to redeem the world. Religious commitment at its highest level calls for one's total response to God's call, the call which gives purpose to whatever one is called to do in one's life.

3.3.2 2nd dimension of commitment: Commitment to the Congregation of Mariannhill.

The commitment to one's congregation motivates one to work effectively in one's religious ministry. It is the love of one's congregation in which a religious person is motivated by other congregational members who are seriously committed to their work. The commitment to one's congregation is a limited one in a sense that in itself it does not have any meaning in itself. It only has meaning when it is linked to Christ. Christ is the centre of every Catholic religious congregation. One may leave the congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries and remain committed in another religious congregation. One may not however leave Christ and remain committed to any religious congregation.

A person's commitment to the constitution of his religious congregation is a partial one because he does not finally give his life to the congregation but to Christ. In other words he gives his total self to Christ through his congregation. The commitment to one's congregation is a process which grows gradually according to each individual community member. For example, the level on which Wonga is committed to the Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries may not be the same level with the way on which Themba is committed to the same Mariannhill Congregation. The commitment to one's congregation is not absolute in a sense that it is not all that one needs to be a religious or to be committed to religious life. This is clearly expressed by Themba when he says " I love my congregation and I do my missionary work knowing that I am committed to Christ for Christ is the one who called me to the service of people." I find Themba's understanding of commitment to be holistic and integral. It takes into consideration the love of people, the love of the congregation and the love of Christ which is absolute. In other words, Themba's commitment is a transcendental one in which he transcends the love of congregation and the love of people to the highest love of Christ which is absolute.

3.4 Community life

I am not ashamed to acknowledge that before I started writing this thesis, I was of the opinion that religious vows were the essence of religious life. A Catholic religious sister who read the

proposal plan for this dissertation brought me to the awareness that the essence of religious life is not vows, but community life.

From the biblical point of view, Jesus has shown the importance of community life in His approach to the missionary work as Angel Pardilla writes:

> During his public ministry, Jesus "appointed twelve to be with him" (Mk 3:14), "he chose from the twelve, whom he named apostles" (Lk 6:13). The "twelve disciples" (Mt 10:1) were not only called, but they were also "convoked", that is, called to live together, forming a community or a new family with Jesus. The identity and strength of their apostolate would come from the new identity and strength of their " being with Jesus". Jesus wanted the apostles to share his way of life and to live together as brothers in a special and close following (2005:70).

The responses common to those I interviewed have shown that community life is one of the major values experienced by the Mariannhill Missionaries. The interviewees stressed both the support and challenges they get from their communities. Before a further discussion on community life, I should like to clarify the kind of community life which I am talking about. I am focusing on community life which is theologically intrinsic and essential to religious life. Specifically, I am referring to a life which a religious person lives in his religious community of the Congregation of Mariannhill Missionaries. Community life is indeed the heart of religious life hence I should like to look into this matter in depth.

One of the interviewees by the name of Bongani, gave a classic qualification of community life. In short, he qualified community life in three interlinked perspectives which are as follows:

i)   Religious community   (A religious community in which one lives.)

ii)   Lay or working community (A community in which one renders one's missionary service)

iii)   Family community   (A community of blood ties.)

Even though the other fourteen interviewees did not qualify the value *community life* as Bongani did, their common response, in one way or another , reflected Bongani's qualification as I shall show later. When I asked Bongani how he experienced community life as a value which motives him to work effectively in religious life, he responded:

> I experience community life in three perspectives which complement each other. I experience community life in my family where I was born. My family gives me strong spiritual and moral support. When I experience difficulties in my religious ministry, my family always encourages me to persevere and to keep on working hard. I also experience spiritual and moral support from both my religious and working communities. For example, when I was making some new building projects in the parish I found my working community to be quite supportive. I planned together with the parish council how we could get funds for the building project. Each of the parish council members worked tremendously in motivating other parish members to raise funds for the parish project. Some of my overseas confreres also helped me with funds in support of the project which eventually was successful. On the other hand I also experience challenges in my religious community, working community and family community. For example, the consideration of financial needs at home where I see someone at home who seriously needs financial help and I am not in a position to help, being expected to be the guru of my family, a tendency of the laity community to possess me and some misunderstanding which I experience in my religious community. (Interviewed on 30-06-07)

I have found Bongani's way of viewing community life to be rich and fundamental. The three perspectives of community life given by Bongani are, for me, some of the key issues which I have found to be the values which motive the Mariannhill Missionaries to work effectively in their religious ministry. A clear discussion of each one of these three perspectives will show how each one of them is important in contributing to a better quality of community life in one' s family, religious and working communities.

Before I discuss these three perspectives I should however, like to highlight the financial challenges which Bongani expressed. Some of the religious people have lost their beloved

relatives whose lives were claimed by HIV and AIDS and they have been left orphans. This seems to be a great challenge for religious people today because they may feel obliged to help these orphans financially but they may not have the means to do so. I also should think however, that it is the task of religious people to read the signs of the times and see how they can respond to them effectively as noted by the union of superior generals that " Our task today is to look at the world, and reading the signs of the times, discern the challenges that face us religious, and ask ourselves how we are meeting them and how we can respond to them more effectively in the future" (1994:127). Tavard has also pointed out that " Several contemporary events have brought to the forefront of Christian concerns the question of the nature of ministry and of its possible reorganization to meet the needs of modern times better" (1983:7).

I should now like to discuss the three perspectives paying a special attention to the common response of the interviewees on community life as a value. In my discussion I should like to start with community life from the religious community perspective.

3.4.1 Religious community

The common thread in the response of the interviewees was that religious community life is a great value in which they find support and strength to work effectively in their religious ministry. The interviewees expressed different ways in which they experience their religious communities as a value which motivates them to do their work seriously. Ntsikelelo for example, is working in a place where he experiences the painful reality of people who are living in poverty. On the other hand, in the same area there are a few individuals who are rich, and the gap between them and the poor is beyond description. In the same area where Ntsikelelo is working, the HIV pandemic is also a reality where people are dying of AIDS almost every day. Working in such an environment Ntsikelelo finds himself emotionally and psychologically weakened. When I asked him what motivates him to keep on working in such a situation, Ntsikelelo said,

> I am grateful to my community members for the support
> they give me. I share with them the difficulties I
> experience in ministerial work and they constantly listen

to me relating my painful experiences such as seeing someone dying of AIDS. After work when I go back to my community, I experience their support by the way they listen to me. This strengthens and energizes me to keep on working hard for the people I serve. It is in this way I see my religious community as a value in my ministry. (Interviewed on 03-07-07)

Ntsikelelo is grateful to the support which he gets from his community members. His community is a gift to him which helps him in his ministry. In her book *Selling All*, Schneiders points out the importance of supporting each other in a religious community as she writes: "Community is the relational context in which the life of total, serving gift is lived" (2003:277).

The support which Ntsikelelo gets from his religious community has led me to the understanding of how a religious community can be a value which helps one to do well in one's ministry. I have also found out that if religious members have a clear understanding of what religious community is, they do indeed enhance each other's work, and that shows the nature of a religious community. According to Martin Oreilly, "A religious community is comprised of people whose relationships embrace those within the immediate group, as well as those outside of it. The purpose of their existence is rooted in Christ and His call. Each of the members answers that call which led him to where other people already were"(2001:121).

This nature of religious community stated by Oreilly is relevant to Ntsikelelo's religious community. I recognize a loving and supportive relationship between Ntsikelelo and his community members; a relationship in which Ntsikelelo feels supported and loved by his community members in his working ministry. I should also think that both Ntsikelelo and his community members are aware that the purpose of their existence as religious people is rooted in Jesus Christ, who called them to religious life in the Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries.

I have learnt from the Mariannhill Missionaries I interviewed that there are also some challenges which they experience in their respective religious communities. Some of the

challenges which they highlighted are *lack of co-operation* from some of their religious community members, *individual/self-centered life style*; *arrogance, challenging one another* and *rationalization.* The interviewees expressed their common views on these four above stated challenges in various ways which are interlinked. Vusi, for example, expressed himself as follows:

> Look, I do not want to criticize a number of my community members whom I really see to be dedicated in their work. There is however, a small number of my confreres who disappoint me. For example you find that one seems to be very much into materialism. You give him money and a car then the guy is happy. For me this is an individual/self-centered-life style which does not seem to correspond to our motto '*Ora et labora*/Pray and Work.' Sometimes I have tried to challenge a few confreres of this nature but they rationalize a lot and start blaming other community members. Some of them even become arrogant in such a way that they think that their way of doing things is the only way and they cannot be challenged. It is in this way that I sometimes experience the challenges of religious community. (Interviewed on 10-07-07)

I do agree with Vusi's opinion that sometimes it is difficult for one to challenge one's community members because of the problems of rationalizing. In fact, I have noticed that sometimes rationalization seems to play a great part in impeding community growth. I should think that, if a community member does not give himself wholeheartedly to his missionary call, he may indeed rationalize as a way out. Rationalization in itself is not a bad thing, since a human person by nature is a rational being. In this context however, I am looking at rationalization in the sense whereby one abuses it to defend oneself for not having been responsible in one's religious ministry. This may cause tension in one's religious community. Tension in the community may however, not be avoided as O'Connor writes:

> We should strive to make community life tensionless, and then the problems comes how? Or we can leave community and look elsewhere, and the then problem comes where? Both reflection and experience say that no answer can be given to either of these questions, and this suggests a third possibility, namely, that tension is an inescapable element of the human condition, and must be turned to profit. This I

believe is not only the sole realistic attitude, but the only
Christian one (1977:64-65).

I agree with O'Connor that tension in religious life is inescapable. However, I personally believe that what keeps religious members to persevere the tension they experience is the love of God which brought them to work together to serve God in a community, as Schneiders writes: " The members of Religious community are drawn together by the love of Christ and commitment to the Reign of God" (2003:288).

I now should like to look at rationalization in two forms; namely *the blaming of the situation and the blame of others.*

3.4.2 Two forms of rationalization (self defense mechanism) in community life: The blaming of situations and the blame of other people.

A) The blame of situations

I should like to clarify the two forms of rationalization by following up Vusi's experience of religious community members who blame others or who blame situations when they are challenged. Without judging anybody, Vusi's experience reminds me of the proverb which clearly portrays the form of rationalization I call *the blaming of situations.* The proverb goes as follows: *One who does not dance says that the yard is stony.* Putting this proverb in a religious context, I would say that the one who does not dance or live according to the religious requirements in the community always finds problem in situations or other community members instead of looking into his inner self. This is what I call the *blaming of situations.* It is a rationalization which shows itself in the form of blaming the situations instead of doing what is required or not fulfilling the religious demands

Rationalization in this form can be heard for example in statements like, "I would work effectively if I were in Mozambique or in Zimbabwe, if only I could go to another place I could work well because the situation here is not conducive to my doing well in my ministry." One could be a missionary and rationalize by saying statements like "I would indeed work better if I

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go back to my country." The *blaming of situation* is the kind of rationalization in which one gets blocked from a self-critical introspection which helps to see what it is that can be changed in oneself and not in the other situation. This realization can help one to grow as a person, and work in a more effective way in one's ministerial work. If one changes something in oneself, one can work effectively in any situation. On the other hand, if one fails to change a particular negative characteristic in oneself, one may find it difficult to work effectively in some situations and start to blame those situations for the rest of one's life.

B) The blaming of others

The other form of rationalization which I call *the blaming of others* can be heard in statements like, "Surely I would be a better missionary if the superior of my religious community were changed because he is such a power hungry-person." "I would be quite effective if I were working with Fr. John instead of Fr Andrew, who is so scrupulous and conservative." One could make a statement like "I can only be co-operative if my current religious provincial council changes." The blaming of other people is the situation in which one always sees problems in other religious community members and cites these as a reason for not participating fully in one's religious ministry.

One's attitude towards religious ministry should be a flexible and adaptable one which allows one to work in any situation. In other words one should have an attitude whereby one is able to push one's working boundaries further, whether the surrounding situations are good or bad and whether one's community members are good or bad. In short, a religious person should be able to change himself in any working situation instead of changing the working situation to suit himself. Responding to God's call is a responsibility to become pro-active and creative in any working situation.

In the *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes* the responsibility of one's missionary call is highlighted as follows: "It is the individual religious who holds the first responsibility for saying yes to the call which has been received, and for accepting all consequences of this response; this is not primarily in the order of the intellect, but of the whole life" (1998:31).

The above quotation affirms one's responsibility in response to Christ's call. Hence rationalization does not really help one to grow in the ministerial work. In the Post- Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, *I Will Give You Shepherds*, the vulnerability of rationalization in religious ministry is also cited as follows: "Rationalism is still very widespread and, in the name of the reductive concept of 'science,' it renders human reason insensitive to encounter with revelation and with divine transcendence. We should take note also of desperate defense of personal subjectivity which turns to close it off in individualism, rendering it incapable of true human relationships"(1992:15).

The way in which Pope John Paul II comments on rationalization clearly shows that rationalization can be self-destructive in one's own life. Consequently, rationalization by one or few members of a religious community may lead to the destruction of the whole community as well.

In the context of the Mariannhill Missionaries, Vusi has explicitly cited some elements of rationalization in his religious life experience. Apart from Vusi, other interviewees, too, have implicitly shown the spirit of rationalization when they referred to some of their community experiences which involve issues like lack of co-operation of other members and the difficulty of challenging other community members.

Looking closely at the interviewees' common view on rationalization and also considering the comments of Martin Oreilly and Pope John Paul II on the same issue of rationalization, I have realized how rationalization can be a dangerous tool which can destroy religious community members and block them from working effectively in their ministerial work. It is in this regard that I have articulated two forms of rationalization, namely the *blaming of the situations* and *the blaming of others*.

I have found that religious community is a value from which religious people of the Congregation of Mariannhill Missionaries experience strength and support of one another so as to respond effectively to their mission call. I have also found that rationalization is a dangerous

weapon which can destroy community life especially when some of its members do not co-operate. This can be seen in the case highlighted by Vusi in which some members refuse to take brotherly advice from other community members and begin to rationalize. This can lead to poor ministerial service.

3.4.3 Personal Comment

When I look at the interviewees' common responses on the challenges they experience in their religious communities, I must admit that I also recall my community experience in different religious communities of the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I would like to cite one particular way in which I experienced religious community as a value which enhanced my missionary call. I should also like to refer to a particular situation in which I experienced religious community as a challenge.

I experienced religious community as a value and a challenge when I was in a community of two confreres. One of them was the novice master and the other was the parish priest whom I was assisting pastorally in three parishes. I was a newly ordained priest assisting in one of the most difficult parishes in the Aliwal Diocese. The parish priest I was assisting was suffering from throat cancer and his health was deteriorating everyday and this resulted in my working as an acting parish priest.

I experienced pastoral difficulties in the parish which had parish council members who had been in power for fifteen years and did not want to be replaced and allow other lay members to be in the council. I experienced difficulties from the parish council members when they started blocking me from pastoral work. For example, they would exhort me that "Father do not baptize a child from that particular family." At one stage, out of the blue, they brought their child to the parish house to be baptized. I refused to baptize the child. Eventually they started accusing me of not fulfilling my pastoral duties.

They reported me to the novice master who was also helping pastorally due to the illness of the parish priest. The novice master sat down with me to discuss the situation; I felt that he

supported me spiritually and morally. I had the feeling that he hid nothing from me in so far as the parish council members criticism was concerned. For me, the novice master was transparent and just in as much as he tried to help me in every possible way. The response which I received from the novice master after what was reported to him about me, is a religious community value which has brought me to where I am today as a member of a formation team. That response had the following community values: understanding another community member, trusting another community member, being patient with another community member and being transparent with another community member. I experienced these values from the novice master .I will always treasure these values because they made a strong impact on my life as a religious person even up to now. The response was a positive one which I received in the initial stages of my ministerial work. I should think that any negative response from him as a community member would have weighed heavily on me.

Yet, the response which I got from the parish priest was a challenge. He believed the parish council members and took their side. It became very difficult to work in that particular parish. In fact, I had decided to resign but the response which I got from the novice master helped me to persevere through the difficult time.

The common response of the interviewees made me recall my own community experience in which I found religious community life both a value and a challenge.

Apart from the experiences of the people I have interviewed, I also have religious friends who have shared with me their experiences in religious community, which in one way or the other are similar to those of the interviewees, or to the one which I experienced.

Ultimately, in spite of the challenges which the Mariannhill Missionaries experience, the results of their religious mission call is visible, as it can be seen in the Mariannhill Monastery in the Durban archdiocese.

From what the interviewees shared on their experience of religious community as a value and a challenge, I have come to the realization that religious community is not a 'natural'

community, and yet it is still an essential value which helps Mariannhill Missionaries to respond to their mission call.

A religious community is not 'natural' in the sense that its members are not naturally blood-bonded; rather it is composed of a group of people from different family backgrounds who respond to Christ's call which brings them together as a religious community to follow the charism of its founder. The Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries for example, is a religious congregation composed of people who come from different family backgrounds. They come together to form a religious community in response to Christ's call to mission as lived by their founder, Abbot Francis.

3.5 Other values: Transparency, patience, reconciliation, reflection and presence of oneself.

The way in which religious community is experienced both as a value and a challenge in religious life, at least by those whom I interviewed, brings me to the realization of other human values which I think help Mariannhill Missionaries to build up their religious communities and respond actively in their mission call, as it can be seen in the Mariannhill Monastery. Transparency, patience, reconciliation, reflection, and presence of oneself are the values which I have discovered to be necessary tools which in one way or the other help the Mariannhill Missionaries to build up their communities and work successfully, despite the difficulties they experience in their religious communities. I also treasure transparency, patience, reconciliation and presence of oneself as community values. In chapter 4, I should like to discuss the values of transparency, patience, reconciliation, reflection and presence and show how, explicitly and implicitly, the interviewees have pointed to them as values which help them to respond positively to their mission call.

CHAPTER 4

THE CITED ESSENTIAL VALUES FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY: FROM THE INTERVIEWEES

4.1 Values which help Mariannhill Missionaries to strengthen their religious communities

The discussion which I had on religious community in 3.3 has brought me to the awareness that the values of *transparency, patience, reconciliation, reflection and presence* build a strong foundation upon which the Mariannhill Missionaries are able to strengthen their religious communities and became actively involved in their religious call. I now discuss in depth the values of transparency, patience, reconciliation, reflection and presence.

4.2 Transparency

By transparency, in the context of this project, I refer to a way of life in which religious community members become more open to one another so that they get to know and understand one another in their ministerial work. The value of transparency in the research can be used interchangeably with the value of honesty. Hall understands honesty as a value which is "the freedom to experience and express one's full range of feelings and thoughts in a straightforward, objective manner. This ability comes from a personal integration of thoughts and feelings and results in experiencing one's own integrity and power"(1986:284). The above quotation shows how the values of honesty and transparency can be used interchangeably in this research. Transparency is a value which narrows the unknown part of a community member and broadens the quality of his relationship with other community members. This can be seen for example in the case of Ncube who says:

> In the early stages of my ministerial work, I found it difficult to be transparent to my community members. I thought I knew it all and I had fresh ideas from school. I would say the unknown part of me was very broad and my relationship with other community members was a narrow one. To my surprise when I learnt through experience that in the ministry I needed

the help of God and other community members, I became open to them and started sharing with them what I was experiencing in my ministerial work, and this broadened my relationship with them and made my work easier without blaming anyone. (Interviewed on 15-07-07).

Transparency is indeed the value which I see as a tool which frees one in one ministerial work. One does not hold only to one's opinion, one rather becomes open to the ideas of other people and this makes one's work more effective and easier, despite the challenges of community life which, in my opinion, are daily struggles. Oreilly also notes the importance of openness in religious communities as he writes:

> Members of a community must be prepared to reveal themselves. By this I do not mean psychic nudity, but some degree of openness in sharing the truth of who one is. All people wear same kind of psychic clothing, but hopefully all community members won't be wearing suits of armor. However, it is important to remember that because of people's different family histories, backgrounds, experiences, personality types and cultural identities, they will not communicate with the same degree of self-revelation (2001:125).

It is noted that a religious community is not a 'natural' community because it is not composed of people of the same blood ties. It is not like a marriage where a husband and a wife are attracted to each another. In fact, the two came to marriage out of their love for each other. If there is a misunderstanding between them they may find it easier to reconcile because what brought them to their community as a husband and a wife is the love which they had for each other. Even when they have children, the children strengthen their relationship and make it more solid, much of the time.

In contrast to a marriage , a religious community is composed of people who came together not necessarily out of love for one another; the purpose of their coming together was the mission call from Christ which they had in common, the call which they strive to fulfill together as a community of the Mariannhill Missionaries.

The fact that religious people respond to God's call and stay in the same community does not take away the reality of their humanity such as different family backgrounds and world views. God's call is open to anyone whom God calls and one responds to the call in a unique way because of various human aspects such as culture and personality differences.

From the interviews I conducted, it was evident that transparency is a value which helps some Mariannhill Missionaries to reveal themselves to other religious members so that they do not remain unknown or wrapped up in their own cultural shells. Their cultural shells become penetrable to other community members of different cultural backgrounds. When religious members become open to one another, they grow not only as a community members but in their ministerial work as well. They stop blaming others but experience God in their work. As Oliana writes: "When we experience God's liberating love in our hopelessness, we become humble and abandon ourselves into His hands. We feel lighter, freed from our impotence and helplessness. We stop condemning ourselves and others" (2002:27).

This can be seen in the case of Ntsikelelo. He is transparent to his community members with whom he shares the difficulties he experiences in his work place. In return the community members listen to him and constantly support him. The point here for me to note is that transparency is coming from Ntsikelelo in his taking the initiative of being open to his community members. This makes a difference to the issue of Vusi's experience in which some community members find it difficult to open themselves and consequently become arrogant.

The conducted interviews have shown that transparency is a powerful value which contributes to the community building and ministerial work. It has also been shown that when religious community members close themselves and won't allow other community members to know them better, the result is that both community and ministerial growth are greatly reduced. The discussion on the interviewees' opinions has pointed out that rationalization and individual life style can be self-destructive to one one's own life as well as to the whole community. The motto of the Mariannhill Missionaries *Ora et Labora*/Pray and Work is sometimes destroyed by the spirit of materialism whereby a few individuals seem to be more concerned with

owning material goods for their own benefit; they don't seem to get more involved in work for the good of the community

4.3   The two categories of the values: 'For me' and 'For others'

Community life is experienced both as a value and a challenge in a religious community. This has brought me the awareness of the two categories of values in one's life as a religious person. The two categories of values are 'for me' and 'for others.' In the situation in which individualism was highlighted, I become aware of the 'for me' and in the situation in which communal support was emphasized I became aware of the 'for others' category. The 'for me' category is the awareness of one's own needs in the community and the category 'for others' is the awareness of the needs of other community members.

Both of these categories are important in a religious community because it is important to be aware of one's needs as well as the needs of others. In the case of the 'for me', being transparent helps to express openly one's needs to other community members. For example, when someone realizes the need to be understood by others, he freely expresses himself. This can be seen in the situation of Ntsikelelo, who realized the need to express his difficult working situation to other community members. The 'for me' category is the one in which one becomes aware of material needs and openly expresses oneself about those needs to other community members.

In the case of the 'for others', one transcends the level of personal needs and sees the needs of other community members as well. There is no spirit of an individualistic life style and rationalization. A person becomes-broad minded and his happiness lies not necessarily in the material world, but rather in the quality of his relationship with other community members. His happiness lies in the fulfilling of his mission call in the Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries. Both categories are equally important; neither is better than the other. One needs to integrate the two. The emphases on the 'for me' category in one's life may lead to an individualistic life style, as I have already pointed out.

The emphasis on the 'for others' category may lead to the danger of over-working. For example, one may be extremely talented in various ways and then can be over exhausted with work, becoming a formator or a member of the provincial council, youth coordinator, pastoral work assistance and professor in the St Joseph's Theological Institute institute. One may do all these tasks gladly 'for others' and experience burnout in the long run. The balance of the two categories is extremely important. Religious community is a value in one's life for the individual who is also part of a community. In other words, one needs to be sensitive to one's own life as an individual and to the life of other community members as well. The tension of the two categories in one's life is quite normal. However, one has to be aware of the sometimes contradictory demands of these two categories and know how to deal with them.

4.4. Patience

The interviewees expressed different ways in which they face challenges in their working and religious communities. They strive together successfully in the creation of religious of quality despite the challenges they experience. Such religious communities, though not perfect, provide a conducive working atmosphere which allows the Mariannhill Missionaries to respond effectively to their mission call.

I asked the interviewees what values made them do well in their ministerial work despite the hardships they experience in various ways. In their common response, I then recognized that patience with one another is one of the vital values which keeps them together as a community and which does not lose its focus on the mission call of Christ. Christ himself was patient in his ministry. This can be seen in the relationship with his disciples and apostles. When they did not understand him, Jesus was patient with them and tried to remind them of some past events so that they would understand. This can be seen in the following biblical text: *"And Jesus knew it, and he said to them, 'Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not understand, still not realize? Are your minds closed? Have you eyes and not see? Ears and do not hear? Or do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of scraps did you collect?' They answered, 'Twelve' ' And when I broke the seven loaves*

for the four thousand, how many baskets full of scraps did you collect?' And they answered 'Seven' Then he said to them, 'Do you still not realize?' (Mark 8: 17-21).

Commenting on the above biblical quotation, Pardilla points out that eventually Jesus' disciples got to understand him. Pardilla writes:

> The issue reached its climax and had its happy conclusion in the scene of messianic confession, which took place in the region of Caesarea Philippi. Peter, on behalf of all the disciples, took the decisive step: On the way Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets". He asked them, " But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah". Mk 8:27-29. (2005:69).

Jesus' patience helped his disciples to know him and in this way he oriented them to do the mission which he started.

It was noted before that a religious community is composed of people who come to stay together as a community not necessarily because of love for one another; it is composed of people of different family backgrounds, different personalities and different world views. The interviewees expressed that, despite the fact that they share the same call of Christ in their religious ministry, community life is not always a bed of roses. Themba, one of the interviewees, said:

> I find community life challenging because sometimes I am misunderstood or I am taken for granted by my community members. Sometimes, when decisions are made in the community I am bypassed, and yet I am expected to co-operate in the outcome of those decisions. I also have experience of some confreres who think that their ideas are the best and no matter how much I try to express my views, they do not easily give up on their opinions. It always takes me a tremendous amount of effort to convince some community members who think that they know it all. I know that I joined Mariannhill Missionaries to follow Christ and in order to carry on answering my call I try to be patient with my community members because I am aware that we come

from different community backgrounds, and I may not change anyone's personality. (Interviewed on 12-07-07)

Chileshe explained his experience of challenges as follows:

> For me, communication is very important. I would like to see my community members communicating to me, especially in things that concern us as a community. It happens that sometimes some community members take communication for granted. One may, for example, change the decision which we have agreed upon as a community; he changes the decision and even acts upon it without the consultation of other community members. These are some of the challenges I face in community. I, however, challenge myself to accept my confreres and be patient with them because I know we have a mission in common: a mission to respond to the call of Christ. (Interviewed on 21-07-07)

I agree with Chileshe that communication among religious members is essential, more especially between the religious house superior and other community members. Commenting on the interaction of the religious house superior and the community members John Ford writes:

> Accordingly, the role of the superior is less a matter of issuing commands and more a matter of fostering dialogue, discernment, and discretion. Dialogue is necessary if the superior is to understand different apostolates from the viewpoint participants religious; though this does not necessarily imply that a participant's view is always the best, still it should at least be the point of departure for productive discussion (1986:216-217).

I, concur with Ford on the fact that dialogue is an essential value in a religious community. I ,however, should take a step further, and that's to say, apart from the dialogue, prayer is also vitally important. As Maria Agnes Karasig writes: "The call to Christian holiness is one unbroken movement sustained by vital contact with the Word of God in the breaking of the bread, the bread of Scripture, and the bread of the Eucharist. To do Eucharist and to pray Scripture are inseparable acts of desire and hope for unending life with God" (1988:583).

The motto of the Mariannhill Missionaries is *Ora et Labora* /Pray and work and I think prayer helps them to be patient with one another. Some people say that patience is a virtue, seldom in women and never in men. I therefore appreciate the men of Mariannhill Missionaries with their patience for one another. Both Themba and Chileshe said that they tolerate their community members because they are aware that they have a common mission call with them. The interviewees use the value of patience as a means to transcend their differences in order to reach the higher goal of fulfilling the mission call. They are able to distinguish their personal cultural backgrounds or personalities from the real mission which has brought them together as a community even when they clash. They could indeed spend a lot of time and energy concentrating on their community misunderstandings and then get diverted from the mission they are called to fulfill.

From the interviewees' common response, I recognize an link between the values of commitment and patience. In other words I see that the value of commitment among Mariannhill Missionaries leads to the value of patience with the goal of fulfilling God's call. If one is committed to one's work, one becomes patient with the other so that together they can fulfill the mission. The exercise of patience by the community members has made me aware that a religious community constantly always in the process of growth; the growth of its members as one community and the growth of the mission which its members have agreed to carry through together. I have also found that patience is a value which leads to an ongoing growth of the Mariannhill Missionaries both in their religious communities and in their ministerial work.

Listening carefully to the challenges which the interviewees shared, it appears to me that the work of building a religious community is never finished and it requires patience as a necessary value which constantly contributes to its growth.

One point to highlight here is that the communities of the Mariannhill Missionaries are not static; they change periodically as new members join the congregation. Thus, one may learn how to tolerate the challenges of a particular community and yet, at any time, be changed to another community and face new community challenges. Patience is then a value and a tool

which one needs in every community to which is one is sent. The community life-style portrayed by the interviewees indicates that community members are overtly aware of their responsibility to dialogue the pattern of their life together as a community which is to fulfill its mission goal. Patience is the value which helps them to do this.

4.5 Reconciliation

The term reconciliation in this context is used interchangeably with the term forgiveness as also noted by Louw who writes: "Forgiveness is a power promoting renewal and transformed behaviour. The believer can act differently in love because of the new dimension of reconciliation and peace" (1999:412).

Following closely the challenges of religious community life as expressed by the interviewees, I found that reconciliation is a value which also makes it possible for the Mariannhill Missionaries to live as a community which remains focused on its mission.

I also came to the understanding that, even though the Mariannhill Missionaries respond to their mission call in a focused manner, their religious communities are not necessarily composed of saintly people. The challenges which they experience in their religious communities as confreres affect each differently. According to the interviewees the community difficulties may sometimes become so serious that some people get hurt and find it difficult to relate well with other community members. Dhlamini, one of the interviewees, says:

> To be honest, religious community is not easy sometimes.
> I remember there was a time I shared something deeply
> personal with a confrere. To my surprise, I realized that
> the person to whom I had disclosed myself, betrayed me
> by revealing what I shared with him to other confreres
> without my consent. I then noticed that some confreres
> began to indicate that they knew something about what I
> had shared in confidence. I approached the confrere to
> whom I had disclosed myself, just to find out if he had
> spoken about what I had shared with him. He denied it at
> first. Later he admitted that he had shared with another
> member of our community what I had shared in

confidence with him. I felt so hurt. At one stage it was difficult for me to relate well with the person who had betrayed the trust. I had shared with him. Eventually I challenged myself to take positive action. I sat down and spoke seriously about the matter with him and tried to iron things out. My confrere apologized sincerely after he had realized how much he had hurt me. Now there is a fairly good relationship between us. (Interviewed on 25-07-07)

I agree with Dlamini that religious life is not easy sometimes. As noted also by Elizabeth Liebert who writes: Recent years have witnessed an ever-increasing incidence of burnout, depression and other stress – related conditions among men and women religious engaged in ministry.(1980:210).

I must acknowledge that as Dhlamini was sharing his experience, I felt deeply touched. What touched me was the initiative which Dhlamini took to challenge himself positively to sit down with his confrere to clarify the matter which hurt him. This is where I realized that reconciliation is indeed a powerful value which heals the inner emotional wounds which religious community members may suffer. Schneiders also notes the importance of reconciliation in the Church as she writes: " The community of reconciliation which the Church is called to be and to foster is a community of friends, of equal persons loved for themselves, who freely give and receive as they participate in the ministry of transforming this world into the place and material of the reign of God.(1986:263).

The positive approach which was used by Dlamini reminded me of what I was once told by a friend who is a religious Sister. She told me that in human relationships one has to learn how to catch a fly by using a teaspoon of honey instead of vinegar. This makes a lot of sense to me because Dhlamini could have opted to be nasty to the confrere who hurt him; Dhlamini instead opted to sit down with his confrere and look into the matter maturely. I was equally touched by Dhlamini's community member who hurt him. Humility is the value which I can identify in the community member who hurt Dhlamini, firstly he was able to admit that he had hurt Dhlamini and secondly he was able to say sorry to him.

Someone once said that one of the most difficult things in life is to say sorry to someone. I have fallen in love with Oliver Mutukudzi's songs which I find to be full of deep meaning. In one of Mutukudzi's album by the name *Nhava*, there is a song which has the following phrase: *kungoti thank you ndatenda sorry ndatadza,* meaning that in human relationship one has to be thankful when something good is done to oneself and one also has to say sorry to someone whom one wrongs.

Indeed, for me, the ability to say sorry demonstrates the virtue of humility value which naturally makes the one who is hurt feel naturally healed. The humble attitude of the one who hurt Dhlamini helped Dhlamini to forgive him. Many people say it is very difficult to forgive someone when one is hurt. I, however, tend to differ. I think it is difficult to say sorry to someone when one has wronged someone, hence the other finds it difficult to forgive. In my opinion where there is a humble value to say sorry there is a natural tendency for the other to forgive and even to forget. In the case of Vusi, who finds it difficult to challenge a community member who may be rationalizing a lot, I should think that reconciliation in such a situation is difficult, not because one finds it difficult to reconcile with the other, but because the other rationalizes, instead of just saying sorry.

From a realistic or human point of view, I think hurts should be avoided but it sometimes happens that hurts still may occur in religious communities. Religious communities are composed not necessarily of saintly people, but of normal human beings. It then follows that the value of reconciliation in a religious community is an on going essential value which unites community members, especially where a human relationship is broken. From the interviewees, I learnt that hurts may occur in their religious communities, but the value of reconciliation is a powerful entity which restores the broken human relationship and makes the missionary call possible.

4.6 *Ora et Labora*/Pray and Work

The motto of the Mariannhill Missionaries is *Ora et Labora* which means Work and Pray. This motto was referred to by the interviewees in various ways which led me to the understanding that work and prayer are values by which Mariannhill Missionaries respond to God's call. I must admit that during my time as a student, whenever I passed by the Mariannhill Monastery, I always felt challenged by the way I saw them working. I was always fascinated by the huge area of utilized land behind their monastery. The land is used as a farming area where they grow vegetables and maize. They also keep cows and pigs. When one goes to the Mariannhill Monastery, one can easily see the work which they do.

Earlier on, I explained in detail the nature of the work done by the Mariannhill Missionaries. When the interviewees expressed themselves on how prayer and work are values in their ministry, I could easily imagine the visible work done at Mariannhill Monastery. Some of the interviewees are some of the people who are committed to the work done at the Mariannhill Monastery. Commenting on prayer, one of the interviewees, James, said:

> In religious life I have learnt that prayer is a value which keeps me going as a missionary. Through prayer I have learnt how to share my faith experiences with my community members. One of the powerful prayers which I have seen to be quite effective in my ministry is reflection. When I pray, reflecting on how I respond to the call of Christ in my daily life, I feel connected to Christ spiritually and get energy to go on working. When I reflect I also become more aware of myself and get focused as a person, paying more attention to my interaction with other community members. (Interviewed on 28-07-07)

Louw also sees the importance of reflective prayer as he writes: "Being silent before God implies the supplicant's pondering and reflecting: both of these are intense psychic exercises, in which a person's memories and thoughts play a great role. 'Meditation' a way of living and

doing in which people seek to link God and the purpose of their lives to their daily actions, thoughts and words" (1999:436).

From James and Louw's understanding of prayer I have learnt that the prayer, which is practiced more especially in a reflective manner, is one of the values which contributes to the building of a religious community. This can be seen, for example, in the quotation where James expresses that reflective prayer helps him to get focused as a person paying attention to how he interacts with God and other community members. Successful missionary work is a result of a community spirit in which the community members reflect on their daily joys and difficulties and then find God's will in their response to God's call. According to O'Connor, prayer is important in the life of community members who stay together. He writes: Prayer is an indispensable element in the Christian life, and when Christians live together in community it is natural and inevitable that they should pray together (1977).

The foundation of a religious community upon prayer is part of the bedrock upon which the missionary work of the Mariannhill Missionaries flourishes. The prayer of reflection makes me recall Jesus' attitude towards his missionary work. Before an important missionary event Jesus would withdraw Himself from the crowd to recollect himself and to be in touch with God so that His work became effective. Even after working hard, Jesus would withdraw Himself from people to reflect and get strengthened spiritually. In fact I see the values of reconciliation, patience, transparency and reflection as values which are interwoven in the building up of a health religious community, and which make religious people respond positively to their missionary call.

The above-mentioned values are interwoven in such way that they form a solid ground in one's life as a religious person who then can respond to the missionary call in an effective way. This can be seen, for example, in the case of James, who expressed that a reflective prayer made him become more aware of himself. James' self awareness helps him to be transparent to the other community members and interact with them better. The value of reflective prayer in this way becomes a unification value which unifies James and his community members and helps them to focus on their missionary call.

Furthermore, I also see the value of reflective prayer as a powerful entity which leads one to reconciliation with one's community members For example, this is true in the case of Dhlamini who reflected on how he was betrayed by his friend and then eventually came to the realization of the need to forgive him. I am, in, fact realizing that reflective prayer leads one into the process of becoming more aware not only of oneself but of other members as well, so as to become patient with oneself and other community members in the areas where they falter in their missionary work.

Reflective prayer is a value which leads one to knowledge of oneself and God; it breaks the cultural shell which blocks one from relating in a better way not only with community members but also with the members of the community which one serves. This can be seen in the case of Bernard who says:

> Through the quiet prayer in which I reflect on my way of relating with others, I realized how I used to close myself in my cultural cocoon, being too quick to judge other community members because of being influenced by my family and cultural background. In fact I was not even aware myself that I was wrapped up into my own cultural shell which prevented me to be in a better relationship with other community members. One day as I was meditating, I began deeply reflecting on my own identity and realized that I am special in my own way and culture and so is everyone else. This indeed positively influenced my perception of other people and my way of relating with them. (interviewed on 31-07-07)

From the interviewees' experience of prayer, I came to understand that prayer is indeed a value by which one becomes united with the other community members and with God, who calls the Mariannhill Missionaries to the service of God's people. Joseph Ratzinger notices the importance of prayer in the lives of the young people who study for priesthood. He writes:

> If as a bishop or formerly simply as a colleague I have looked into the reasons why a vocation which

began with so much enthusiasm and so many hopes has gradually collapsed, what emerged was always the same: at some time silent prayer came to stop-perhaps with some sheerness of everything that had to be done. But now the keenness had become just a shell because its inner impetus had been lost (1989).

Prayer in a reflective manner leads one to the asking of questions such as 'who am I?', the answering which may bring one to the realization and integration of what one is; spiritually, emotionally, socially and psychologically. In short, I would say reflective prayer is a process which makes one whole spiritually, emotionally, socially and psychologically.

The common responses I received from the interviewees have brought me to the point of concluding this section on religious community by acknowledging a short true story which I read in the book *The Challenges of Religious Life In Africa Today.* The story goes as follows: A religious brother meets a very clever religious sister who happens to be a practicing psychotherapist. The two start talking about intercultural living and the Sister tells the Brother of the discovery she made when she was a religious superior of two hundred religious sisters living under one roof. Her discovery was that every one, religious leaders in particular, need a "crap machine" to deflect away from a person the anger, pettiness, immaturity, mean-spiritedness (things that she calls 'crap') found in many members of religious communities. The sister continues that, it is not uncommon to find that there are people in religious houses who, instead of looking into the causes of their unhappiness, prefer to throw their 'crap' to others.

According to the sister, when someone tries to dump on her, she simply swings her hand, just as she would brush away a fly on her face. Quoting the sister directly, Oreilly writes: "When some one tries to dump on me, I would swing my hand, just as I would brush away from my face" (2001:131). Such an action helps the sister not to take offense from the person who dumps crap on her, as she, at the same time, tries to understand the hurt which the other person might be trying to communicate to her.

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I have found the sister's story to be a powerful and useful tool when living in a religious community. In fact, it is wise for one to have a mature way of responding to the people who may provoke one instead of responding rudely.

4.7 Working community/the laity

I should like to make a shift from the discussion of a religious community to the discussion of the working community which one serves as a religious person. By *the working community,* the researcher refers specifically to the lay community or laity. John Ford explains the word laity as follows: " This word (from the Geek *laos,* meaning "people") refers to all those who have been incorporated into the Church by Baptism, with the exception of those who have received Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious community" (2006:107).

Almost all the interviewees showed great concern for the lay communities which they serve. They expressed this concern, in different ways. Some, for example, said, "I love God's people and I would like to serve them wholeheartedly." This dedication of serving the lay community reflects the words of Edward Schillebeeckx in the book *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ.* In this book Schillebeeckx writes: "Like Paul, the minister is one who 'preaches the kingdom' (Acts 20:25): he must devote himself to the cause which Jesus espoused, the kingdom of God which becomes manifest in the action and life of the community as it is inaugurated in the message and the action of Jesus, in which this kingdom of God becomes the object of concrete experience" (1981:32).

Some interviewees responded that they were motivated by the community they serve because in serving these communities they are encouraged. Bongani, for example, made a classic distinction of community life by qualifying it in the three perspectives which I have already mentioned. As Bongani was sharing on community, I listened with great interest and passion because he was so enthusiastic in his sharing.

First Bongani spoke about the importance of the value of the laity community and then he spoke of the challenges which he received from them. In his own words Bongani said:

> When I look at community life in connection with religious, I am not limiting it only to its religious members. I am rather extending it to the community of the laity which I find to be quite supportive in various ways, such as their positive feedback about the work I minister to them. It is the laity whom I am called to serve as a religious person who works among them. My interacting with them as I serve them makes me grow as a religious person in my religious ministry. Hence I take the laity community as something which is part of me in my religious calling. I also find the laity community to be quite challenging sometimes because it has its own expectations about me which it expects me to fulfill, and some of them may be unrealistic expectations. (Interviewed on 30-06-07)

I share the opinion with Bongani that the community of the laity in which one exercises one's religious ministry is, in one way or the other, connected to one's religious community. There is an interconnection between a religious community and that of the laity hence both communities may not necessarily be separated.

The interconnectedness of the religious and lay communities can be seen in the theological understanding of religious life which Schneiders theologically defines as: *a state of life in the Church* (2000:150). Like Schneiders, I also see religious life as a state of life in the Church, the church which, for me, is composed of both the religious and lay communities which are interlinked in one's life as a religious. Thus, Bongani's response to God's call is expressed in the community of the laity which he serves whilst living in his religious community.

Effective ministerial work in a religious community can be done more effectively if religious and lay communities are looked at in an integral way without a severe separation. A religious community is not just a community of people who come together to share food and share leisure time. A religious community is one which responds to God's call within the daily life-situation of the laity. In the context of the Mariannhill Diocese, the religious community has to

reflect on issues such as the experience of the lay community where there is the huge and painful reality of poverty and the immense gap between the poor and the rich. There is hopelessness among youth which results in crime. The HIV and AIDS pandemic is causing a destructive behavior among the youth such drug and sexual abuse. I am more inclined to think that the above mentioned social factors are not only a reality in Mariannhill Diocese but in the whole of South Africa if not in the whole of Africa. A reflection of these real issues which the community of the lay experience, can bring a practical religious response in which a religious community can work in an effective way as shown by the Missionaries of the Mariannhill Diocese.

David Fleming in his article entitled "Communion: Divine Life Enlarging Our Desires", also showed the importance of a reciprocal relationship between the religious community and the community it serves. In showing the importance of the community served by a religious community Fleming writes:

> I believe that, if we take the time to understand communion (*commuio*) and make the effort consciously to live it , we will find that it will clarify and enlarge our identity (who we are as persons and as a group) and enrich our mission (whatever, our ministry in Christ's name). For communion is about life-living life for God and sharing that from God with others (1998:40).

Indeed there is always a special link between a religious community and the community it serves as shown by the Missionaries of Mariannhill who express the love of their missionary work in the community they serve.

I have seen and learnt from the interviewees that the Mariannhill religious communities are trying in every way they can to integrate their religious mission call with the day to day life situations of the lay community whom they serve. In his book *Group Work- A Source Book for Religious Communities in Africa*, Martin Oreilly has also indicated that religious people are known by their works in the life of the church. Oreilly writes:

> The most obvious aspects of religious life that many outsiders are potentially knowledgeable about are its external aspects: the work religious do, their status in the church, and all that can be encompassed under the heading of life 'style'. But for those committed to religious life, there is another dimension which is more important than these external phenomena. This is the vibrant and living realm of personal experience for which the external or public aspects of religious life provide the form and context (1998:16).

I see the missionary call of the Mariannhill Missionaries as an evangelization. It then follows that the common response of the interviewees on community life is also a value which has opened my eyes to recognize that there is a direct link or relationship between the evangelization done by the Mariannhill Missionaries and their religious community life. I would, in fact, take this even further by saying that evangelization is the active promotion of God's Kingdom among the communities served by Mariannhill Missionaries.

A religious community is therefore not a group of people who aimlessly come to stay together for nothing. It is a value in itself which is a means of evangelization.

4.8 Family community

By family community, Bongani refers to the community composed of both his immediate and extended family members. Some of the interviewees were grateful to their families from whom they received the fundamental Christian background which resulted in their becoming Mariannhill missionaries today; they consider their family communities to have played an essential role which has shaped them positively to be successful missionaries. One of the interviewees, Thokozani expressed his view on family community as follows:

> For me a lot of what motivates me to work effectively in my religious life depends on my family background, the way I was brought up. At home we used to work very hard and get something from the soil. Whatever we got

we worked for. Respect is one of the most important values I learnt at home. Respect for elders, respect for life and another fellow human being. This kind of life orientation formed me already at home. If I was given a task I would do it well and today when given a task I try to do it well too. (Interviewed on 09-08-07)

What I deduced from the interviewees concerning their family communities is the concept *ubuntu* which almost every interviewee expressed in different ways, according to the situation of his family background. As for Thokozani, even though he did not explicitly mention the word *ubuntu* he implicitly explained it in all that he said about his family community.

The concept *ubuntu* was highlighted by almost every interviewee. Before expanding on how the interviewees see *ubuntu* as a value in their religious ministry, I must acknowledge that *ubuntu* is a concept I have always found difficult to define. Any attempt I make to define the concept of *ubuntu* seems unable to articulate its richness. I find the concept to be so rich that it is beyond definition. I imagine that for anyone who understands the concept *ubuntu,* the quick way to define this concept would be to say: *ubuntu* means humanness.

I, however, would like to define *ubuntu* as an African concept which refers to a moral human way of life lived communally. The concept *ubuntu* may also be understood in African sayings such as *umuntu ngumumuntu ngabantu* (in Zulu language) or *munhu munhu navanhu* (in Shona). This simply means a person is a person through other people. This is what defines an African; this is the integral way of understanding humanity in the African context. It points to the reality that in an African context no human person is an island, one may not live without people in the community. Such sayings as, 'It takes the whole village to raise a child' also clearly bring out the connotation of communal responsibility in the African context.

Many people have also made an attempt to define the concept *ubuntu.* In the book *Ubuntu and the Law in South Africa*, J. Mokgoro defines *ubuntu* as 'a Zulu word, literally meaning "humanness" Ubuntu is a social and spiritual philosophy serving as a framework for African society' (Mokgoro ngumuntu ngabantu) meaning in, essence, a person is a person through other persons" (1998:2) .

From the above two definitions, I would like to highlight that the practice of *ubuntu* is fundamentally inclusive of respect and concern for one's family and one's neighbour. In an unpublished article *The Spirit of Ubuntu* by Fr. Richhard Kugbeh-Kasin (2006) the person who has the spirit of *ubuntu*

i)   is friendly to other persons and to all creation;

ii)   is kind to all persons without discrimination

iii)   is hospitable to the orphan, the stranger, the poor;

iv)   is helpful to children, the aged and the sick;

v)   accepts other persons as they are;

vi)   respect other people's feelings;

vii)   respect other people without any prejudice;

viii)   is unselfish and generous;

ix)   is open and trusting;

x)   always put other persons first;

xi)   listens to what others have to say;

xii)   is willing to sacrifice for other persons;

xiii)   always looks at the common good;

xiv)   is humble and polite yet firm;

xv)   is willing to forgive;

xvi)   appreciate other people and their work;

xvii)   listens to other people's opinions;

xviii) stands for and defends the truth;

xix)   is ready to protect the weak and the innocent;

xx)   reacts calmly whenever there is hurt.

The above article is for the researcher on integral way of describing the spirit of *ubuntu* as used in this research.

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Following the understanding of the concept *ubuntu* in the African context, which was also expressed by the interviewees in different ways, one may see clearly how much family community plays a role in the life of an African religious person. If we take, for example, Thokozani's experiencing of growing up in a hard working family, his family community is for

him a value which has shaped him at an early age. This value has become part of Thokozani's way of life which influences him to work effectively in his missionary work.

In fact I studied with Thokozani at St Joseph's Theological Institute. He was two years ahead of me. Recalling the times I was with Thokozni at school, I would agree with him that his family background prepared him positively for his missionary work today. I must also acknowledge that looking at how Thokozani is seriously committed in his ministry, I have secretly admired him. He is one of the Mariannhill Missionaries who motivated me to undertake research on the values which make these missionaries successful in their religious ministry. In my definition I said that *ububtu* is a way of life which is lived in a communal way. The communal way of life in the Africa context in my opinion is a value which African religious can use as a positive tool to enhance the quality of religious community. From the theological point of view, community is the essence of religious life, as I have already stated.
It was also pointed out by the interviewees that family community has its own challenges. I am going to highlight these challenges when I discuss the common response in the interviews on vows.

CHAPTER 5

THE VOWS OF POVERTY, OBEDIENCE AND CELIBACY AS VALUES AND CHALLENGES WHICH ARE EXPERIENCED BY THE MARIANNHILL MISSIONARIES

5.1 Structure of the chapter

This chapter will be divided into three parts. The first part will be a theological overview of religious life. The second part will discuss how the vows of poverty, obedience and celibacy are experienced by the Mariannhill Missionaries as values which motivate them to work successfully in their religious ministry. The third part will discuss how the same missionaries experience the three vows as challenges in their religious ministry.

5.2 A theological overview of Religious life

In this section I would like to look at the theological aspect of religious from different authors' point of views and show how these authors complement each other in their theological understanding of religious life. According to Schneiders' point of view, theologically,

> The vows can be seen as ways not only of giving prophetic witness against the chief perversions of the basic human energies of possession, affectivity, and power, but also of committing oneself to fostering the most positive forces of transformation at work in the world. They can be ways of integrating the evangelical dimension into the struggle to convert society and to transform the world into a human and ultimately holy habitation for human beings. They can constitute concrete modes of fostering the movements from exploitation of material resources to responsible stewardship in a finite universe; from a male-dominated selfish, hedonistic society to one structured by mutuality and oriented toward responsible intimacy; from a social order characterized by domination and coercion of the weak by the strong to one in which people participatively and cooperatively seek the maximum of freedom and justice for every person (1986:111-112).

In the first line of the above quotation is the phrase *prophetic witness*. This affirms what Radcliffe has noted on how the word 'prophetic' is mostly used when religious people seek to understand their theological identity as seen in the following quotation: "When we religious discuss our identity, you can be pretty sure that before long the 'prophetic will occur. And this is understandable. Our vows are in such a direct contradiction with the values of our society that it makes sense to talk of them as prophetic of the kingdom" (1999:198). Radcliffe agrees with Schneiders that theologically the religious vows are values which give prophetic witness against the chief perversions of the basic human possession as he writes:

> In the first place, our vocation shows something about the human vocation by what we leave behind. We give up many of the things that give identity to human beings in our world; money, status a partner, a career. In a society in which identity is already so fragile, so insecure, we give up the sorts of things to which human beings look for security, the props of our unsure sense of who we are. We ask incessantly the question, who are we?' But we are those who give up the usual markers of identity (2000:199)

The question of uncertainty of one's identity as a religious is also noted by Joan Chittister who writes:

> It is not easy to write about vows in this period of religious history. Many religious doubt their worth altogether and would, if they could, simply collapse the traditional promises into a commitment to the Gospel life or some similar formulation. Many more at least question their content if not their existence. Many religious people who were formed before Vatican II give them less much attention now than they did then. Nor were vows an essential element of the early religious life. The question becomes then, "Are the vows an important part of the spiritual life for contemporary people or not?" And the answer may be a clear and firm. "Yes and no." No, if we use them as restrictions on life; yes, if we see them as attitudes toward life (1997:99).

The answer 'yes', if we see them as attitudes toward life, affirms Schneiders point of view that "Religious life in general, and the vows in particular, can no longer make sense to religious themselves if there are seen as totally irrelevant and to the process of transformation that the world is undergoing" (1986:111).

Religious people are engaged in many religious activities such as pastoral work. From the pastoral and theological point of views, Louw writes:

> The pastoral encounter, as a theological issue, is about the relationship between God and humanity. The relationship should be understood as a hermeneutics of pastoral care which endeavours to establish an encounter which, metaphorically speaking, is an embodiment of the presence of God. This encounter is also place with the context of culture and history and should be understood contextually (1999:81).

Louw's theological understanding of pastoral work is that which emphasizes the relationship of God with humanity. Schneiders also sees that religious vows have an evangelical dimension into the struggle to convert society and to transform the world into a human and ultimately holy habitation for human beings. The holy habitation for human beings which Schneiders writes about echoes what Louw metaphorically speaking, refers to as an embodiment of God's presence.

After giving a theological understanding of religious life specifically on vows, the researcher now enters into the discussion on how the three religious vows are experienced as values by the interviewees in their religious ministry.

5.3 The discussion on how the vow of poverty, is experienced by the Mariannhill Missionaries as a value in their religious ministry.

The interviewees expressed in many various ways how they experience the vow of poverty as a value in their religious ministry. The common way in which the interviewees experience the vow of poverty as a value is the freedom it gives them to respond to God's call without being enslaved by material goods. Poverty according to them, frees them to be sent anywhere without worrying about leaving material goods behind. Poverty in this way is a value which frees a religious person as pointed out by Oreilly who sees poverty as a value of " giving oneself, without reservation, to the cause of the reign of God, even if it means leaving one's family and renouncing the opportunity to marry and have family" (2001:168). Poverty is a value in which

the interviewees become available for the service of God's people. I found the one to one interview I had with the interviewees to be very enriching because most of them responded in depth. Dominic for example responded as follows:

> The vow of poverty is an essential vow in my religious ministry. In my opinion, the greatest scandal today, perhaps not only in the Diocese of Mariannhill but in the whole country of South Africa, is that there is a lot of poverty, hunger and destitution in an ocean of excessive wealth at a time when there is an oversupply of food and resources. I see this as a great injustice in our time; the economic injustices of greed, gluttony, exploitation and theft. I see in my local society of the Mariannhill Diocese, people who hoard more money and possessions than they can ever spend and others battling to make ends meet in order to survive. In short some people have more than they need to live on and yet others are starving. The vow of poverty is then for me a value in which I make an attempt to make a difference by contradicting the culture of accumulating money, and I do this by means of not owning personal goods but rather having the common goods which I share with my community members. It is also through the vow of poverty as a value that I cooperatively join other religious confreres to create a common fund which we direct to the poor and to those who are in need. (Interviewed on 17-08-07)

The words of Dominic that he cooperatively join other religious confreres to create a common fund which is redirected to the poor goes along with the contemporary understanding of poverty in which Schneiders notes that: "Religious life is the way religious people situate themselves in relationship to material goods and since material goods are foundational to our relationship with other people, religious poverty is necessarily a social virtue" (1986:183). I agree with Schneiders that religious poverty is necessarily a social virtue and it is in this social virtue in which religious communities generate funds and channel some of it to the poor.

I also agree with Dominic that there is an ocean of wealth in today's society which is not shared equally and this indeed is a scandalous situation. The rich people have various opportunities to create more money and the poor ones find it even harder to transcend their poor economic situation. It then follows that the vow of poverty is a value which helps Dominic to refuse to be influenced by the spirit of materialism which perpetuates a scandalous

culture of accumulating money and not caring about the poor. Commenting on materialism Pope John Paul II writes: "Today materialism craves possessions, paying no attention to the needs and suffering of the poorest and weakest. In this context the voluntary profession of poverty witnesses to God's view of material things and to the importance of human solidarity, sharing, and the service of the most disadvantaged" (1996:52).

Through the vow of poverty Dominic is conscious of and sensitive to the needs of the poor people. This helps him to take the initiative in helping the poor by means of creating common funds with his community members so that these poor people get helped. Apart from Dominic, almost all the interviewees were concerned about the influence of materialism in today's society. They also highlighted the social issues within the Mariannhill Diocese in which many children have become orphans as a result of the death of their parents who have died from HIV and AIDS related illness.

Listening to those whom I interviewed, I found out that they take the vow of poverty so as to consecrate themselves to God by willingly giving up their right to private property or ownership. This in turn helps them to respond freely to God's call. In fact the interviewees' response on how they experience the vow of poverty as a value was quite complementary. Kabelo for example, complemented what Dominic said as follows:

> The vow of poverty is a value in which I have personally decided to make a difference from the spirit of individualism whereby I see many people in our society being self centered striving to be as rich as they can in such a way that they do not mind squeezing the poor to starving point provided they get what they want. They do not seem to care about hundreds of orphans who have lost their parents on account of HIV and AIDS. All that they seem to care about is to find ways of having as much property as they can, the property which they often refer to as 'its mine, I deserve to have it', or rather say, 'It's my right to have what I own.' I find it pathetic to see some people being extremely rich when just around the corner some are staying in tin houses in both winter and summer. It is in this most challenging society of ours today that I respond to God's call by challenging myself to give up the little which I have and join the community of the Mariannhill Congregation so that we strive together to serve God's people

without being enslaved by the spirit of individualism or materialism. (Interviewed on 21-08-07)

I found the way in which Kabelo sees the nature of the spirit of materialism to be so real in our society today. This actually reminds me of president Robert Mugabe who has been president in Zimbabwe since 1980. President Mugabe uses language such as 'Keep your England and I keep my Zimbabwe; who told you that we are hungry in Zimbabwe? Point to me at least one person who has died of hunger in Zimbabwe. I don't care about your England, I care about my Zimbabwe.' I am a Zimbabwean and my opinion is that almost everybody in Zimbabwe is struggling his or her utmost to survive.

The vow of poverty is the value which helps Kabelo to deny the individual way of life in which he would not like to find himself; the situation whereby he accumulates material goods for himself while other people are struggling to survive. The insight which I got from the response of the Mariannhill Missionaries on the vow of poverty has led me to the opinion that in religious life today, 'the vow of poverty' as a term is somehow misleading. I find it misleading in a sense that religious people do not solemnly promise God that they will become poor, needy or destitute. I should rather think that religious people vow poverty so as to make their lives a prophetic witnesses and to witness against the scandal of poverty and destitution as expressed by the interviewees.

Religious people become such witnesses by vowing to share the common goods with one another in their communities as seen in Schneiders' definition of poverty which goes as follows:

> Religious poverty is an evangelically inspired and structured relationship to material creation which involves owning well, using well, and suffering well for the purpose of transforming human existence, our own included. Its goal is a community all have the material supports necessary for truly human living whose fullest realization is that total openness to God which makes salvation possible and real (1986:190).

My opinion is that from the African point of view, the term 'the vow of poverty' gives a wrong impression of the meaning of this vow. I am actually thinking of the local community outside religious life. How can they understand the term the 'vow of poverty' when they see religious people having a number of properties? For example when one sees the huge property which the Mariannhill Missionaries have in the Mariannhill Diocese I just wonder how a local person can ever understand 'vow of poverty' when taken by a religious person. I do not mean to project my middle class-background. From the interviews I had and from most of my religious friends who have shared their family background with me, it seems to me that many African religious come from middle- class homes (homes of society between the upper lower families) and the life living standard in our homes can hardly be compared to that of the religious life. The religious standard is indeed higher, at least in my opinion.

I am imagining a young man who joins religious the life coming from a township or a village. The young man succeeds in becoming a religious, his friends and family members see him now driving different community cars; they also see him in a big house where he has a self contained room. At home most probably the young man was sharing a bedroom with his brothers in a small house. When the young man visits his friends and relatives he tells them he has taken a vow of poverty to be poor. This certainly raises questions in me as to how the young man's friends and relatives can come to understand that this young man is now living a life according to the vow of poverty? Perhaps they think that the young man's vow of poverty makes him richer than he was before he left them. This is how I find the vow of poverty to be confusing in the African context especially when it is associated with material goods. On the other hand who would not think of poverty and not associate it with material goods?

It's an undeniable fact that the religious life is a secure life. Almost every religious member is insured medically. Religious houses and properties are insured. By its nature, religious life has a strong financial background which allows it to function. A religious person is quite sure of having three meals a day if desired. Studies are well covered financially. I continue to wonder how a young man living a secure religious life can convince his friends and family members

and those whom he serves that he has taken vow of poverty. Radcliffe has also noted religious life is a secured life as he writes:

> The vow of poverty, of course, goes to the heart of what gives people identity in the world of global markets. It is the renunciation of the status which comes with the income, the ability to be someone who buys and sells. It calls us to be a real encounter-sign in our culture of money. Of course we are not often that. As I write these words high on a hill above the timber in our enormous old priory of Santa Sabina, I can see a little shack on the bank of the river where a family is living and hanging out their washing. If it rains and the river rises their house will be swept away. I look at them, and I blush to think on how they see us (2000:203).

From the African point of view what sense can an African religious make of the vow of poverty and what sense can the African community make of the one who has taken the vow of poverty in a religious community? I think these are questions which African religious should seriously and constantly ask themselves. The temptation I think could be for a religious person to deny his or her poorer financial background as compared to the one of the religious life. One may even be tempted to use statements such as, "At home we have everything " I think facing the reality of the situation of the young man whom I have given as an example, is already a way forward in trying to understand the vow of poverty in the African context.

One of the interviewees said that for him the vow of poverty means the way he has given himself as a person to the Church, this for him means a lot because it results in his not marrying and having a family of his own. As an African man, society would expect him to have a wife and children. Radcliffe also expresses his opinion about giving up marriage as a religious as he writes:

> One of the most painful things, at least for me, is that one gives up the possibility of having children. In some societies that means that one can never be accepted as a man. I remember the desolation that of a newly ordained priest who went to celebrate the Eucharist at a convent in Edinburgh. When the front door was finally answered the sister looked at him

and said 'Oh, it's you, Father: I was expecting a man'
(1999:202).

The above quotation shows that giving up marriage for religious life is a great sacrifice in other cultures. It is in this sense that understanding the vow of poverty in terms of giving oneself to the Church or to God is appropriate to the African context as noted by Radcliffe who quotes an incident in which family ties to some religious postulants were cut. The incident goes as follows:

> I visited Angola during the civil war. I shall never forget a meeting with the postulants of the brothers and sisters in the capital Luanda. They were cut off from their families by the conflicts which surrounded the city, and they were faced with a moral dilemma. Should they try to cross the war zone to find their families and support them during this terrible time, or should they remain with the order? For Africans, with their deep sense of family and tribe this was a terrible situation (1999:202-203).

Family life is very much respected and valued in the African context. When a religious takes the vow of self-giving in which he gives himself totally to God to such an extent that he does not marry of have his own family, I should think that the vow of poverty would be understood even better in the African context. The term 'the vow of poverty' for me gives a wrong impression and interpretation in which one can immediately associate it with a situation of expecting religious people to have few material goods which is not the case with religious people. The fact is religious people have material goods as can be seen in the Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries in Mariannhill Diocese or in almost every religious congregation.

Fr. Albert Nolan has also reflected on the vow of poverty indicating that the term 'the vow of poverty' could be understood better as the vow of sharing. In his article the *Prophetic Witness of Consecrated in South Africa Today,* Fr. Albert Nolan comments on the vow of poverty as follows:

> The vow we take is commitment to sharing rather than to poverty. We give up our right to ownership in order to own all things in ownership with fellow religious community. The results for those who share and hold everything in common is

that nobody will be in need, nobody will be destitute. This precisely is what happened in the first sharing community of Christians in Jerusalem. We are told in the book of Acts that because they held everything in common "there was not a needy person among them" (2007:6).

Father Nolan thinks that the term 'vow of poverty' could be changed to the 'vow of sharing.' I think that Fr. Nolan's suggestion is very appropriate to the African context. If a young man who is living a secure religious life said to his friends and family members that he has the vow of sharing the community goods with other community members, I think that they would understand him better than he would be understood by saying he has a vow of poverty.

The idea of sharing common goods among religious community members is, of course, not only that all should be financially secure; the idea is also to be innovative in any possible way such as creating jobs and funds to help those who are in need. Such creativity, in which a religious congregation creates opportunities and possibilities of helping those who are in need, can be seen in the works of the Mariannhill Missionaries who have created many jobs in the Diocese of Mariannhill to help the local people whom they serve. In this way I think the local community of the Mariannhill Diocese would easily understand the vow of poverty if it were changed to the vow of sharing, because they see how the Mariannhill Missionaries try to share with them what funds they generate.

5.4 The discussion on how the vow of obedience is experienced by the Mariannhill Missionaries as a value in their religious ministry

What I learned from the interviewees' common response is that the vow of poverty which I have just discussed is very much interlinked with the vow of obedience. If one vows poverty one then has to obey religious norms which accord with the vow of poverty. Hence the vow of poverty is interlinked with the vow of obedience.

The way in which the Mariannhill Missionaries experience the vow of obedience as a value is also interconnected to the spirit of individualism and materialism. Zolile, for example, responded:

Look, for me I see the culture of individualism and materialism in today's society. What I see in the Diocese of Mariannhill is the cult of individual 'me', where life is very much centered on me. You hear for example people talking of 'my' career, 'my' studies,' my' rights, 'my' privacy, 'my' needs and 'my' freedom. I see our local community being influenced very much by the cultural aspects of the Western industrialized world which in my opinion is the life of an autonomous individual who thinks of his own life and not of anyone else. For me this is the context in which I have vowed the vow of obedience to a religious life in the Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries. I then experience the vow of obedience as a value which helps me to contradict the world of individualism and materialism. Obedience is the value in which I commit myself to the common good not only in my religious community but also in the local community of the Mariannhill Diocese. (Interviewed on 25-08-07)

Zolile, as well as other interviewees, highlighted that the vow of obedience was a value which helped them in striving to contradict the influence of materialism and individualism in the world, especially in the context of Mariannhill Diocese where they are working. By means of reflecting on the Word of God as community members, the Mariannhill Missionaries are trying, in practice, to obey and follow that which they reflect on as a community. They are striving to live according to the religious norms.

The vow of obedience is a value which makes the Mariannhill Missionaries not only listen to the word of God but obey that word even in difficult situations. This can be seen in the biblical text I have cited in which Jesus said to Peter *In all truth you, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you would rather not go.* (John 21:18). Jesus Himself is the example of such obedience as he showed in the Garden of Gethsemane: *'My father,'* he said, *'if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, let it be as you, not I, would have it'* Matthew 26:39). Obedience is then the value which brings order and discipline in the Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries; the missionaries try to maintain order and discipline by not doing their own will. They accept in obedience the

established orders of the Church, the constitutions of the Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries and the will of God.

I became aware from the response of those people whom I interviewed that the Mariannhill Missionaries experience the vow of obedience as a value in which they sacrifice their own will, interests and career for the sake of the common good in which they commit themselves to the needs of others.

In as far as I learnt the vow of obedience is experienced as a value by the Mariannhill Missionaries, I also realized that the term 'the vow of obedience' in religious life could also lead one to think that a religious person has only to obey the superior of the community.

Inasmuch as it is true that a religious member does have to obey his superior, the vow of obedience however goes further than merely obeying one's superior. The vow of obedience means to respect the common good, recognized and reflected on together by community members for the good of one another and those whom they serve in their ministry. The vow of obedience is not necessarily only to say 'yes' to the father or mother superior.

Fr. Nolan in his article *The Prophetic Witness in South Africa Today* which he presented to the male religious superiors in Pretoria in 2007, points out how unfortunately the vow of obedience can be easily misunderstood to mean a slavish submission. In his own writing Fr. Nolan writes: "Obedience has unfortunately come to be associated with the slavish submission to the will of others. It has often come to mean acting like a robot or a dog that has been trained just to obey. The vow of obedience has too often kept some religious childish and immature" (2007:8).

According to Fr. Nolan, it would be better if the vow of obedience could be changed to *a vow of pursuing the common good within a religious community*. I agree with Fr. Nolan in the changing of the term 'vow of obedience.' When I try to understand the vow of obedience from the African point of view, I tend to wonder seriously about what this vow of obedience means to an African religious. This brings me back to the days I was at school at St Joseph's Theological Institute. One professor said in the class that an elderly person or someone in

authority can say to an African person, 'do this' and one can physically do what one is instructed to do and yet intrinsically one is in opposition to what one is asked to do. The message behind the professor's theory is that in the African context the one in authority can hardly be opposed by those who are subjected to him.

I do not mean to affirm this general theory. I must however, acknowledge that I witnessed some truth in it when I was a parish priest. A parishioner who came to church once or twice a year passed away. I met the parish council members to discuss the way in which we were going to conduct the funeral of the deceased person. I suggested that we could celebrate Mass for the deceased one and all the parish council members agreed.

They suggested that after the celebration of Mass I would leave them to finish the burial process. To my surprise, when the funeral day came none of the members of the parish council attended that funeral Mass. Furthermore very few Catholics attended the mass and only then it become clear to me that the parish council members said yes to something they were intrinsically opposing without saying a word. That was a good pastoral experience for me in which I learnt that in the ministerial work I should go beyond hearing the words I hear and even listen to the body language, as well as understanding the cultural customs.

Coming back to the vow of obedience in religious life by an African religious, I do wonder how much the cultural background of saying yes to an elderly person or the one in authority positively and negatively influences one's attitude to the vow of obedience. Martin Oreilly has also noticed that the cultural background in one way or the other does affect a religious person's perception of the vow of obedience. Commenting on the vow of obedience from the African point of view, Oreilly writes as follows:

> The best way to see if a community is able to take on board a view of religious obedience where *truth* is said to reside in the group and not simply in designated leaders, is how they go about handling conflict. Many African religious are afraid to openly speak their minds in community meetings. This might be because some of them have had a very strict upbringing, have been brought up with high regard for

group identity or are being reminded too often the deference due to elders. The result is that as soon as there is conflict, many of them will simply withdraw into themselves. They want peace at all costs and refuse to entertain that conflict is inevitable in the life of any group (2001:177-178).

Having worked in a formation house of young men from five different African countries, on the one hand I agree with Oreilly that in general many African religious find it difficult to speak their minds. On the other hand I see African religious struggling to balance the two cultural backgrounds namely; their own cultural background which may influence them not to speak their minds explicitly, and the religious culture which is a mixture of African and Western cultures, the Western culture being one in which a person freely speaks in concrete terms.

My observation is that many African religious are caught up between the two cultures. On one hand, from their cultural background most of them may find it difficult to speak their minds and on the other hand they may struggle with how to cope in a community where some members speak their minds without difficulty. I think this becomes even more difficult when it comes to the challenging of one another. The one who comes from a Western culture may challenge the one who comes from an African culture. The challenged one may find it difficult to take an open challenge. However, this does not necessarily mean that two community members from the Western cultural background can easily challenge each other.

From the African point of view, one major critique I have for African religious in general is their lack of challenging one another openly without personalizing the issue. I see avoidance in which African religious avoid challenging one another. I am of the opinion that the lack of speaking one's mind openly by community members and also the lack of challenging one another among African religious, may result in community members living in a situation of submissive obedience to the house superior; a submissive obedience to which one may not even be committed, to but rather simply find some ways of continuing to live the religious life in one's own life style.

The other major critique which I have for the African religious is the extreme opposite of expressing oneself or speaking one's mind without discernment. For example, some people seem to take no for an answer from the person in authority, but may react verbally speaking out without necessarily listening to the other view. Alternatively, one may react passively which results in a passive participation of communal duties such as community meetings where one may simply keep quiet throughout the whole meeting.

The two extremes of not speaking one's mind and speaking one's mind in an unreflective manner could be a struggle for African religious trying to bridge the two cultural backgrounds. In short, one develops passive aggressive behaviour which results in deep anger.

I have highlighted the vow of obedience from the African point of view because religious vocations are increasing in Africa and decreasing in Europe. This is why I think that African religious should really stand together and pave a theological and cultural path way in which not only the vow of obedience but the other two vows as well can be lived soundly in Africa.

5.5   The discussion on how the vow of celibacy is experienced by the Mariannhill Missionaries as a value in their religious ministry

Some people say celibacy is a sensitive area of life among clergy and religious people. I am grateful for the interviews which I conducted in the Diocese of Mariannhill. The interviewees responded in an open manner which I found to be a helpful contribution to this research.

In their common response, those whom I interviewed expressed that the vow of celibacy is a value of self-offering in which they offer themselves to God and respond to God's call freely. It is a value in which they sacrifice a married life or a family of their own so that they experience a love which embraces everyone, even the marginalized ones, as Dube one of the interviewees said:

> I experience the vow of celibacy not just as a solemn
> promise to abstain from sex; for me that is the negative
> way of looking at the vow of celibacy. Positively, I

experience the vow of celibacy as a value in which I solemnly promise to love everyone and pursue a kind of love that includes all human beings. Celibacy is a value that enables me to commit myself to universal love in an unconditional and inclusive love. It is in this context that I exclude sexual relationships so that I can reach out to the unloved, the lonely, the rejected and the marginalized ones especially those who are discriminated against because they are infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. (Interviewed on 31-08-07)

Dube's response goes along with the response of the other interviewees even though they used different words to express the same reality. The common response of those whom I interviewed showed me that the vow of celibacy is a value in which one learns to love well. This in fact makes me think that the essence of the vow of celibacy is love. One becomes celibate so as to love as _Praem writes: "Celibacy is not simply a deprivation, it is a way of life. Therefore it must be a way of relating. While we can be impoverished in some ways of expressing love, we can be rich in loving others" (1986:101). Schneiders also understands celibacy a way which helps one to love more in a mature way as she writes: In the area of celibacy, as in that of poverty, the vow will make sense to the contemporary religious if it leads the person towards personal transformation in love and allows the person to participate meaningfully in the emergence of a new, whole, and loving world characterized by equality, responsible intimacy, and mutuality" (1986:105-106).

It looks to me as if the word love in terms of a relationship between the people of opposite sexes is very much misunderstood in today's society as Basilio, one of the interviewees put it.

The vow of poverty is for me a value in which I strive not to buy into the local society's assumption that love is sex; making love has become a euphemism for sexual intercourse. It looks to me as if many people in our local society think that if there is no sex there is no love and there can be no intimacy between the two who are in love. Some of the youth in our local community even think that those who do not have sexual relationships are not normal. The vow of celibacy is then a value in which I strive to give witness to the passion and faithfulness of

divine love; the inclusive love that loves every person as he is without expectations of sexual reward and satisfaction. (Interviewed on 18-08-07)

I have also came to realize the truth of what Basilio indicated, that some people think that love is all about sex and not loving a person as a person. I think in most cases, unfortunately, women are the victims of such a kind of love which loves another just for sex. I should think that our today's society in general has a hunger for a real love which loves a person as she or he is and not for selfish reasons. I have come across two female friends who share with me that they suffer from being envied sexually by men.

Pope John Paul II has also noticed that the real love in people of opposite sex is sometimes taken away by the cult of pleasure as he writes: " The cult of pleasure today tends to separate sexuality from true love and from objective moral norms, often treating it as a mere diversion or something to be bought or sold" (1996:51).

According to them when they relate freely and innocently with men even those whom they think they know well, to their surprise most of what they receive from them are sexual comments such as 'Oh you really have beautiful eyes' and the comments according to them go further than that. One of these ladies even said,' I hate my body because I am not loved as a person but rather as a sexual object'. I am not trying to imply in any way that sex is a bad thing, surely sex is a special gift from God's creation. I am just looking at the reality of the sour results of what our society today suffers in the name of so-called 'love' or from the phrase 'I love you' which seems to be an easy way of asking for sex. The result of such an attitude is often to perpetuate the HIV infection in our society.

Some young people are lured by the sexual behavior of their friends and they also get involved in the same kind of behavior. As time goes on they dump each other, get frustrated and some even commit suicide. Some of them get into the culture of sexual behavior and lose focus in life. They become failures in life and this may result in gangsterism and crime, including murder. In the book *Values and Ethics* Gerard Hartmann also comments on how young people in today's society easily influence one another in harmful ways as can be seen in the following:

I returned from the USA to live in Ireland in 1998, at the height of the Celtic Tiger. I was shocked and upset to see such a huge spiritual vacuum in the minds and hearts of so many young people, a huge loss of faith, a huge loss of vision, a huge loss of hope, a huge loss of values and a loss of ideals. It saddens me to see so many young people, dependent on alcohol and drugs to seek pleasure and to escape from problems. So many young people experiencing a lack of purpose in life. (2003:18)

Hartmann writing in the context of Ireland, expresses his sadness in seeing young people lose direction in life. The same reality which Hartmann expresses was also shown by the interviewees as I have already mentioned. Concerning how young people lose a sense of direction, I would say they are attracted to what I call *'a screen saver life attraction'* which does not last but rather results in a lot of confusion. A screen saver life attraction for me is a false attraction which does not last long because it's not real.

The interviewees see the vow of celibacy as a value of love through which they try to reach every person including the exploited women and men and children who are treated as sexual objects instead of as human beings.

5.6   The vows of poverty, obedience and celibacy experienced as challenges by the Mariannhill Missionaries

The challenges which were highlighted by the interviewees in connection with the vows of obedience, poverty, and celibacy, are also relevant to materialism, individualism and the sexual life. Some of the interviewees experience the vow of poverty as a challenge in a sense that they come from a middle class financial background and take the vow of poverty in a religious congregation which has a strong financial background. Some of the interviewees said that initially they experienced some challenges in this regard of different financial backgrounds. Some of the challenges came, for example, in the missionary work they do: the laity would not understand that someone who has joined a religious community may need support in pastoral

work. They would simply wonder why it could be necessary for them to donate money for petrol to a religious person who is doing pastoral work for the people of God, some one who is a member of a rich religious community.

As time went on they constantly explained to the lay community, which is now growing in understanding, that as part of the church it also has to be self- supporting. The other challenge is that different community members come from different financial backgrounds. This creates a challenge when it comes to pastoral matters. When a community member who has a 'better' financial background leaves the parish and is replaced by the one who has a 'poorer' financial background, the laity start comparing the two in terms of material goods. Some interviewees point out that a community member with a strong financial background may easily donate funds to develop the parish where he works or help the local people with school fees. When he gets replaced by another community member who fails to do the same, some of the laity may get angry and even blame the new person for not fulfilling his missionary work.

Oreilly has also noticed the difficulties and challenges of financial background as he writes:

> There is still a large number of foreign-born religious in Africa who, over the years, have developed a highly personalized approach to ministry. Armed with their own check books, they are able to put roofs on schools, provide medicines, and repaint churches. Well and good, but local religious cannot follow such an act. Most don't have the opportunity to be able to seek funding from abroad and, therefore, are unable to respond to needs that can so readily be met by foreigners. When compared to the generous missionaries, they appear in some people's eyes as mean and uncaring (2001:171).

Following Oreilly's opinion, I should think a ministerial approach which is not personalized allows the lay community to become supportive in the church and feel that they are also part of the church.

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Celibacy is also quite a challenge for those whom I interviewed. One of the interviewees by the name Matsotso said:

> As an African man, I am expected by the local community to marry and have children. At one stage I was in the mission alone and people kept on asking, 'Where is your family?' Eventually I started seeing female friends who became sympathetic to me and initiated some personal relationships. Sometimes I would wonder if the cases they presented to me were real. To be honest I also needed company because I was lonely before my confrere came to join me. I did not chase these female friends away but I drew some clear boundaries knowing that I am a religious. I decided to spend a lot of time in the garden to reduce my sexual desires. This is when I also learnt how to pray personal prayer not only prayer from books. I would get help from God who called me to work for God's people. (Interviewed on 23-08-07)

The vow of celibacy in the case of Matsotso was an integrated one in which he was able to love the female friends in a mature way which Len Sperry refers to as celibate intimacy. According to Sperry "celibate intimacy is the capacity to share a deep friendship without being married and without violating chastity physically or psychologically" (2003:59). In the case of Matsotso, the vow of celibacy was also a value which allowed him to welcome people of the opposite sex who visited him and he managed to create some clear boundaries with them. Rosemarie Carfagna also sees the importance of drawing clear in opposite sex relationship in the life of a religious as she writes:

> Loving another person in the temporary realm means loving him or her spiritually and from afar sometimes. Sexually arousing contact, be it eye contact, physical proximity, flirtation, or any seductive behaviour that intends to arouse sexual passion in the other, is highly offensive to God. It would be better for the religious to the community than to behave so, for this can only lead to unhappiness (1988:515).

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Another challenge which was expressed by the interviewees is the challenge of being suspected of having an intimate relationship with a female. When one was seen with an innocent female friend some would immediately connect that there must be an intimate relationship.

The response which the interviewees gave about the vow of obedience was based mainly on the relationship of the superiors with the community members. Joseph, one of the interviewees, said:

> What I find quite challenging about the vow of obedience is to know when am I following the will of God or the will of my superiors. For example, I may need to go for further studies but the provincial superior may have his own plans which contradict mine and ultimately I have to obey the provincial superior. (Interviewed on 28-08-07)

Joseph's response on the vow of obedience reminds me of someone who once said that out of the worst God makes the best. I am personally convinced that it is true. A superior is surely a human person who can make a mistake in dealing with the community members, but if one obeys I always think that there is a reward. In the book *Consecrated Life Today,* by the Union of Superior Generals, one reads: "What enables us to become best acquainted with the religious community is not the number of the members or the place where the group lives. What most reveals the state of a religious community are the human and Gospel attitudes of its members at the degree of communication that exists between them" (1993:88).

I certainly agree with general religious superiors that the application of human and Gospel attitude are important in religious life. In my opinion when religious people apply both human and Gospel attitudes in their way of life, they get transformed in their way of understanding the vow of obedience. In most cases there is a great tension or conflict between the superior and other religious members,. What matters in all this is not the size of the group but the attitude of its members as noted by Elizabeth Liebert who writes:

In a large community, how often have we heard (or said ourselves) :There's only a few of us who care anything about how things go around here." Nobody else does anything, so why

should I? "I'm not saying anything at the community meeting; it won't make any difference, and it'll just make some people mad at me" (1981:213). I agree with Liebert because I have experienced such a tension in my religious life experience.

What I observe is that in general some community members start planning something and finish all the plans before they ask for permission. After planning and with great conviction, they then go the superior to ask for permission. When the superior says no, they get hurt because they find it hard to reverse their plans.

I think for religious, it helps to remain open to whatever the answer from the superior might be. This helps one to take 'yes or no' for an answer. In general, I think the vow of obedience is becoming more and more difficult. I think the spirit of individualism in today's society in one way or another has an influence on religious people.

Even though the three vows are experienced by the Mariannhill Missionaries as challenges, the way in which these vows are experienced as values by the same missionaries is significant in the great work by which Mariannhill Missionaries are trying to make a difference by contradicting the spirit of materialism, individualism and the culture of sexual misconduct.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 The value of knowing and understanding one's life history in a religious ministry.

In conclusion of this work, I would like to point out that the responses common to all interviewees have in various ways shown that the sound knowledge of one's life history is the bedrock upon which one grows into an integral ministry as indicated by some of the interviewees such as Thokozani. The responses of those interviewed have indicated that the knowledge of one's life history is a useful tool which one uses to relate well with members of both religious and lay communities.

In this chapter, the researcher sums up the responses common to the interviewees into the following four main headings:

i)   How does a religious person's reading and reflecting on his life history enhance his religious ministry at the level of family of his origin?

ii)   How does a religious person's reading and reflecting on his life history enhance his religious ministry on the level of his religious community?

iii) How does a religious person's reading and reflecting on his life history enhance his ministry on the level of the laity?

iv)   How can the responses common to the interviewees, be applied in relation to Christ's life as model of integration?

The above first three headings can be seen as a mirror in which one may reflect and see the importance of knowing one' life history in the religious ministry. In the last heading, the

common responses of the interviewees will be synthesized in relation to Christ as the model of integration and this will conclude the entire research.

6.2 How does a religious person's reading and reflecting on his life history improve his religious ministry at the level of his family of origin community?

By the phrase 'reading and reflecting on one's life history' I mean the ability in a religious person to look at the events of one's life in a holistic manner and not as a series of historical events which are not connected. In other words, one looks at the historical events of one's life systematically so as to be able to make meaning out of them.

The responses common to those I interviewed have brought me to the realization that Mariannhill Missionaries are not composed of saintly people. They are communities composed of ordinary men who have their own life backgrounds like any other. Hence, I say knowing one's life-history is a fundamental ground which helps one to understand oneself as a religious person; knowing one's life history helps a religious person to understand other community members and to improve the quality of his interaction with them.

From the family community perspective, reading and reflecting on his life history makes a religious person aware of his family and cultural roots. He understands the events of his life history as a unity in which he is able to find a clear identity. Failure to read and reflect on one's life history may lead to a situation whereby one sees the events of his life history as separate disparate events whereby one cannot find one's true identity.

When one is aware of his cultural and family backgrounds through the power of reflective prayer can transform the negative part of his history into a positive experience which does not result in having hang ups with his family members. For example, John was brought up in a family in which he had an alcoholic father who abused him verbally by shouting at him. John also grew up seeing his father physically abusing his mother by beating her up. Later John became a religious brother.

In prayer, John reflected upon this family background. This reflection gave the grace to accept his father's problem. John was no longer ashamed of this part of his family history and could gradually establish a new and better relationship with his father. In my opinion, if a religious person rejects his past life, he is actually rejecting part of himself as a person. The acceptance of one's past life leads one towards full and integrated self-knowledge. This self-knowledge enhances one's relationship with family members and all those with whom one interacts.

Reflective prayer is one of the tools in which the interviewees are able to make meaning out of their life histories. The way in which some of the interviewees responded to how they pray and live as a community, was for the researcher an indication of how important it is for a religious person to accept his life history. Accepting in prayer his own identity, gives James the grace to pay more attention to the way he interacts with his community members. I find a special link between the reading of one's life history and reflective prayer. In reflective prayer, one's self-awareness is increased as indicated by James. Self-awareness is the awareness which entails the knowledge of one's total life with all its positives and negatives.

6.3   How does a religious person's reading and reflecting on his life history improve his religious ministry on the level of his religious community?

The reading and reflecting on one's past life is in itself a value by which a religious person grows in making sense out of the unhappy parts or episodes in one's past life. Cencini also notes the importance of knowing and understanding one's life history as he writes: "The resulting knowledge of self is not static and limited in time. It is historical, i.e, the fruit of an exam of one's past life, warts and all, leading to a clear understanding not only of what one is or has been, but also paradoxically-of what is called to be" (2004:72). From the above quotation, I should think that reflecting on one's past life in itself is a value by which a religious person grows in making sense out of the parts or episodes in one's past life. Reflecting upon one's past history may eventually become an interwoven thread which knits together the positive and negative events in one's life. This brings integration in the life of a religious person. When I look at the response I had from some of the interviewees, I can say

that out of the value of reading and reflecting on one's past life, a new value is born in the life of a religious person.

The new-born value is a transcendental value. The transcendental value has two elements: the human and the spiritual. On the one hand, the transcendental human element is the one in which one becomes aware of one's past history and realizes one's human needs in a religious community. On the other hand the transcendental spiritual element transcends human needs and realizes higher needs which seek God and not human material needs.

I find the reading and reflecting on one's past life an essential value in the life of a religious person, for I think that the more one knows one's past history and reflects on it, the more one becomes rooted in religious life and in one's response to God's call; one's ministerial work becomes more effective.

Ultimately, I would say the past life in the life of a religious person is like his shadow which he cannot ran away from. He may be a missionary for many years and work wherever he may be sent with community members of various cultures, yet he still may not run away from his life history which is composed of both positive and negative historical episodes. I then conclude that a religious person should not throw away any part of his historical past but use it to construct and reconstruct any undesired part so that one perceives meaning in it. This then may help a religious person to know his identity, accept it and also accept other community members for who they are according to their life histories as well. In this way a religious person may improve the quality of his relationship with other religious members.

6.4 How does a religious person's reading and reflecting on his life history enhance his religious ministry at the level of the lay community he serves?

A religious person or a missionary within the understanding of this thesis is one who is sent out by Jesus Christ to serve people as found in Matthew 28:20 where we read: *Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you*

always; yes, to the end of time. This biblical text contains the mission call of many religious congregations as can be seen, for example, in the mission call of the Mariannhill Missionaries which is *to respond to God's call, following the example of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the Good News to the poor; making their contribution towards the ministry of justice, peace and liberation.*

The above biblical mission which is followed by many religious congregations, including those of the Mariannhill Missionaries and the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, is a mission which is to be fulfilled in a community of people as commanded by Jesus. A religious mission is not to be fulfilled in a vacuum but in the context of people. In the book *Finding The Treasure*, Schneiders also pointed out the importance of the community which is to be served by a religious person when she writes: "The deepest meaning, the *raison d'etre*, of consecrated life celibacy is the love relationship between the religious and Christ. It is lived in the context of community both that of the Church and usually that of a particular order or congregation. In other words, religious life is not an isolated life." (2000:129).

The nature of the biblical mission call and thus that of the Mariannhill Missionaries shows the need for an evangelical response in which one has to work among people. It is a mission call in which one is sent out to proclaim the Good News to the poor. One is also sent as a teacher to teach people to observe God's commands.

The importance of reading and reflecting on one's life history, for a religious, lies in the fact that a religious person is sent out to work with people; he is to respond to God's mission call by serving God's people. One is sent to work among people of different races and cultures; people of different ages and worldviews. This is where I find it crucially important that a religious person has to have a good knowledge of his family and cultural background from which he gets his true identity. When one has a true identity which is rooted in one's life history and culture, one then finds it easier to understand the cultures of the people one serves, the way they pray, their life values and their beliefs. In this way one may then develop a better relationship with the people one serves.

Reflecting on one's life history, helps one to make sense of this life history with Christ who calls him to the mission. This results in a religious person developing a deep relationship with Christ which is rooted in his own cultural background. One can also transcend one's cultural understanding by understanding the cultures of the people one serves, reflect upon those cultures and develop a Godly and human relationship with the people served.

6.5 Understanding the responses common to the interviewees in relationship with Christ's life as a model of integration.

In the previous section, I have pointed out the importance of knowing and reflecting on one's life history as a religious person. I would like now to take a further step by discussing the responses common to the interviewees, in relation to Jesus' life as a model of integration.

Human integration is vitally important in the life of a missionary as noted by Sebastian Karotemprel who writes: "Today the Church sees human dimensions of development as an integral part of its mission. They belong to this mission, because the Church holds that "Jesus came to bring integral salvation, one which embraces the whole person and all humanity" (1999:240).

Jesus was aware of his identity as a missionary. He reflected on it and this made him more effective in His ministerial work. In His ministry Jesus was respectful and obedient to God as can be seen in John 6:38, *I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.* Even at the age of twelve, Jesus was clear about his identity, the value which helped in His ministry. He knew how to relate to his family members and other community members as it can be seen in Luke 2: 46-49. *It happened that, three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the teacher, listening to them, asking them questions; and all those who heard him were astounded at his intelligence and replies. They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, 'My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried father and I have been, looking for you.' He replied 'Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?*

At this point of this dissertation, I would like to point out that Christ knew His identity and where He was supposed to be in His ministry. We are now living in a society of rationalism, materialism and individualism, the individualism which Michael Crosby comments on as follows:

> The causes of individualism cannot be isolated in a way that points fingers to this or that reason or at this or that person. Our individualism mirrors society, whether in the East or West, the North or South. Despite slogans about freedom and equality, and commitment to solidarity, forces subtly develop forms of collective collectivization through political control of the media and economic dominance through advertising. Both forms result in increased glorification of individualism (2005:52).

Mariannhill Missionaries strive to fulfill their missionary call by living the vows of poverty, obedience and celibacy as values which help them to counterbalance the culture of rationalism, materialism and individualism. Community life is the central and core value in which they live a common life of sharing their material goods with the aim of fulfilling their missionary call.

What are the human values which are prioritized by the Mariannhill Missionaries in their missionary work? The vows of poverty, obedience and celibacy are rules chosen by the Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries. These rules are values to help them retain their religious identity and ministry. This research has in fact helped the researcher to come to the realization that there is a cluster of values which urge the Mariannhill Missionaries to respond effectively to their missionary work. The cluster of values is a composition of the values which the interviewees gradually assimilated in their native families, religious and lay communities. In short the "Passion for Christ and Humanity" are the profound values which motivate Mariannhill Missionaries to do their ministry passionately and zealously.

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