

# S A N Y A S A

## Journal of Consecrated Life



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# **SANYASA**

## **JOURNAL OF CONSECRATED LIFE**

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**SANYASA**  
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## **SANYASA Journal of Consecrated Life**

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## EDITORIAL

The recent visit of Pope Francis to our neighboring countries Myanmar and Bangladesh is indeed a great blessing and inspiration to Asia. The Pope was in Myanmar, a Buddhist dominated country from Nov. 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>, after which he visited the neighbouring Muslim dominated Bangladesh from Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> to Dec 2nd. While Myanmar's over 51 million population is nearly 90 percent Buddhist, where Catholics form only 1.2%, in Bangladesh Muslims account for nearly 90% of the population, and Catholics less than 1 percent.

The purpose of his apostolic visit was to confirm the faith of the tiny Catholic communities in these two Asian nations and to carry Christ's message of reconciliation, forgiveness, peace and harmony among the people for the common good. The theme of Myanmar visit was *Love and Peace*, and that of Bangladesh, *Harmony and Peace*. The Pope also encouraged ecumenical and interfaith cooperation in order to be a prophetic and healing presence in the life of the nation.

In both the nations, the Catholic communities are active, especially in their outreach programmes for the poor and needy, which the Pope commended and encouraged.

Pope Francis' visit to Myanmar in the backdrop of an international outcry against the atrocities on the Rohingya Muslims of Rakhine state who are fleeing to Bangladesh is very significant. Pope Francis has spoken for their rights on many occasions. He met the political leaders and encouraged the nation on the "arduous process of peace-building and national reconciliation" insisting that it can be achieved only through a "commitment to justice and respect for human rights." Pope also underlined the crucial role that the religious leaders have to play in this process.

The superiors of various religious communities of Myanmar were blessed with an unscheduled encounter with the Pope. In the encounter, Pope Francis urged them to work together to rebuild the country through unity amidst the nation's diversity, and not through uniformity. Meeting the bishops of Myanmar, he encouraged them in the task of healing, accompaniment and prophecy among a flock that bears the scars of conflict.

While meeting the Supreme Council of Buddhist monks, Pope Francis urged them on the path of compassion and love towards all to heal the wounds caused by conflicts, poverty and oppression. He also asked the young people in Myanmar to carry the good news of Jesus to their suffering brothers and sisters in need by prayers and solidarity and with enthusiastic commitment for human rights, justice, love and peace.

While meeting the authorities of Bangladesh and the diplomatic corps and civil society, Pope Francis appreciated Bangladesh's generosity and solidarity for Rohingya Muslims fleeing Myanmar. He called on the international community to find a solution to the Rohingya crisis and help Bangladesh to meet the emergency. He also stressed that the name of God be never invoked to justify hatred and violence on others.

The highlight of the entire Myanmar-Bangladesh visit of Pope Francis was a deeply moving encounter with 16 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. Grasping the hands of each of the twelve men, two women and two young girls, at the end of an interfaith and ecumenical meeting in Dhaka, the Pope intently listened to their stories of horror, suffering and pain. "The presence of God today is also called 'Rohingya,'" the Pope said boldly and prophetically, asking their forgiveness for all the hurt and indifference they have endured, and loudly demanded that their rights be recognized.

On the last day of his three-day visit to Bangladesh, the Pope visited a home for orphans, unwed mothers and destitute elderly run by the nuns of Mother Teresa. In his off-hand remarks to the nuns and priests there, he praised Bangladesh for having some of the best inter-religious relations in the world. As the last act of his visit, Pope met young Bangladeshis, among whom were also Muslims and followers of other religions. Speaking to them, he urged the young people to reject the false promises of happiness and go out of their self-centeredness to foster an environment of harmony, reaching out to others. Commending Bangladesh's respect for the elderly, the Pope urged them to talk to their parents and grandparents, without playing with their phones the whole day, ignoring everything around them.

It was indeed a great disappointment for the Christians of India that the extraordinarily popular compassionate Pope Francis could not visit our beloved nation after coming so close. I am sure that the Pope himself might have been equally sad and disappointed that the efforts taken did not bear the desired result. The reasons are obvious and it needs no further elaboration.

As usual, this issue of *Sanyasa* carries a few significant articles related with consecrated life. The first article is on “Reading Matthew as an Existential Story for the Consecrated: Becoming Countercultural Gospel Models in a Mythical Culture of Acquisitive Desire and Accusatory Violence”. George Panthalanickal, CMF, the author having Mimetic Theory as the background explains that the models of imitation play a critical role, both in originating violence and countering it. He brings out beautifully how Jesus of the Gospels is presented by the evangelists as supreme model as well as one who transcends the imitative desire for objects. In an overview of the Gospel of Matthew, the author attempts to demonstrate that the models of the world order (Satan and his allied forces in the world, such as violent socio-political and religious powers) are in conflict with the models of the Gospel (transcended victims like Jesus, John the Baptist, Mary, Joseph, disciples). For him, the Gospel of Matthew provides an existential story or essential story of imitation for the consecrated in their mission of radically influencing and transforming the world by becoming countercultural Gospel models (Matt 28:19; cf. Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

The second article is on “Response of the Church Leadership to Clerical Child Abuse” by James Kannanthanam, CMF. One of the major problems that the Catholic Church faced ever since the Reformation is the clerical child abuse scandal. It was the topic of media attention in the West and caused incalculable damage to the Catholic Church. The author in this informative and critical article brings out very vividly the emergence of the problem, the early responses of the Church authorities, the significant initiatives of St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, the steps taken by the universal Church after the outbreak of the scandal for preventing further damages to the Church and to the faithful and finally critically evaluating the response of the Church. In country like ours with recent awakening to this menace in the society, this article is an indispensable source of reference.

The third article is by renowned theologian George Mattam, SJ, on “Transformative Process of a God-Oriented Journey – A Must for Consecrated Persons”. The author speaks of the process of growth, the process of becoming like God as a transformative journey. This transformative journey necessarily involves dying to oneself and becoming more and more other centeredness. The model for the consecrated person for entering into this transformative process of a God-oriented journey is Jesus himself. Once we are transformed, we become free from all



forms of enslavement which enables us to reach out to others in love and empowers us to liberate others specially the poor and needy as Jesus did.

The next article is on “Called to Follow and Called to Lead: The Significance of Spirituality in Following and Leading” by John Kennedy Michael, CMF. The author who has so many years of pastoral experience in youth formation and education strongly feels that spirituality plays very significant part in the leadership role of the consecrated persons. The effectiveness of leadership depends upon the richness of one’s spirituality, the author argues. Another interesting finding of the author is that the leader does not become effective because of his/her position, power or abilities but his/her being. Leadership is primarily about being. It is spirituality that primarily shapes the ‘being’ of the educational leaders which results in their admirable ‘doing’. Indeed, this piece sheds immense insights for consecrated persons who are called to exercise leadership roles in different ambience.

The fifth article is by M.V. Johnson, OFM on “A Life Anchored in God’s Love, Seeking after His Joyful Heart: The Meaning, History, Characteristics, and Theology of Religious Life”. It is an informative and educative article. After explaining the general meaning of religious life, the author presents systematically the history and development of different forms of Religious Life, the significant characteristics of Religious life and the scriptural and magisterial understanding of Religious Life.

The last article in this issue of *Sanyasa* is by M. Arul Jesu Robin, CMF on “The Call of Matthew and Its Implications for the Consecrated Persons (Mt 9:9-13)”. The article is more technical and biblical in nature with practical implications. After explaining the text of the call of Matthew, the author points out the historical, literary and biblical contexts of the call of Matthew. Finally the author brings out the practical implications of the call of Matthew to the consecrated persons of today. The article is concluded with a few thought-provoking questions.

We present these articles to the readers with the hope that these writings would make a difference in the way you look at and live your consecration. We wish a pleasant and fruitful reading. May the good Lord bless you in the New Year 2018 and the years to come. Happy New Year 2018.

**Arul Jesu Robin, CMF**  
(Chief Editor)

## READING MATTHEW AS AN EXISTENTIAL STORY FOR THE CONSECRATED: BECOMING COUNTERCULTURAL GOSPEL MODELS IN A MYTHICAL CULTURE OF ACQUISITIVE DESIRE AND ACCUSATORY VIOLENCE

George Panthalanickal, CMF

The title of this article has its background in the definitions given to ‘myth’ and ‘Gospel’ in Mimetic Theory.<sup>1</sup> It is a groundbreaking theory coined by René Girard, a French intellectual. This theory holds that human beings have an observable primary nature of imitating others subconsciously; thus, in human beings’ desire is created primarily by imitation of others. But the person (model) who originally initiates in us the desire for an object eventually turns out to be a threat in the competition to acquire that object; this becomes a reason for conflicts. The theory connects imitative desire, which leads to the crisis of pervasive violence in the society, with the cultural mechanism of sacrificial system, which is introduced to overcome that crisis. It is a mechanism of arbitrarily accusing and sacrificing a scapegoat to purchase a seemingly miraculous peace from the crisis of pervasive violence. Mimetic theory<sup>2</sup> holds that violence and sacrifice form the foundation to human culture, religious practices, and civilization. But the exchange of peace and violence thus achieved by the cultural mechanism of ‘scapegoat sacrifice’ is not lasting, but only temporary.

In archaic religions, myths narrate culture as originating from supernatural intervention. It is presumed to be the action of a sacred being, a divinity, which is to be worshipped and propitiated by ritual sacrifice. However, the mimetic theory unravels this god as a mystified transformation of the victim of uncontrolled violence, when the rivalry of ‘all against all’ streamlines into the ‘violence of all against one’. Myths serve to overcome the problem of the arbitrary choice and accusation of the victim of sacrifice by granting it a sacred coating, avoiding the necessity of any rational justification. The success of the sacrificial system that brings in the seemingly miraculous unity and peace to the violent society rests on a general belief in the validity of the original accusation and the justifying myth. Since the

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accusation against the original victim is a lie, any narrative that unmasks the lie will weaken the power of the sacrificial system and undo the culture founded on it. Girard defines the narrative that conceals the founding lie on which cultures rely as *myth* and the one that reveals and deconstructs it as *Gospel*. Thus, myths are created from the perspective of the persecutors, whereas the Gospel narrates the innocent victim's witness. The Gospel is hated by the people in power, authority and position in the culture of the world because it unsettles the culture that is founded on 'scapegoat mechanism' and the sacrificial system (cf. John 11:49-53).

Readers who are new to mimetic theory require an introduction to some of the most important glossaries used there. The foundational human reality of 'desire' is, by and large, considered as mediated desire.<sup>3</sup> Someone signals a desire for a particular thing, and now you discover that you want that thing. Desire as analyzed thus has three components: a desirer, an object of desire and a model/mediator. But usually it appears as if desires were just between you and the object because mimetically generated desire operates on a preconscious or pre-rational level. This reflexive imitation is present even in newborns. For example, put two kids together with a surplus of toys and their desire(s) will inevitably latch onto the same toy, resulting in a tug-of-war and mutual claims that "I wanted it (or had it) first!"<sup>4</sup> Acquisitive desires subject to mimetic mirroring will inevitably attach themselves to a single object and generate hostility and violence. At this stage, to the desirer his first model will appear as a rival, an obstacle, an opponent. Reaction against the rival's potential (or actual) attempt to grab what I want always precedes the reflection that could uncover the true source of my desire: that I only want it because he/she wants it. Since mutual interest in the object of desire is generated by human interaction, metaphysical objects of rivalry can be manufactured by mimetic conflict. Examples might include prestige, power, position, fame, or success. Pursuit and defence of an acquisitive desire mimetically reinforces the desire of the model now turned into rival or obstacle and vice-versa, leading to an escalation of conflict. Girard calls this mimetic escalation as "scandal," after the Greek word *skandalon*, suggesting a "trap" or "snare."<sup>5</sup> As in the case of a 'snare,' conflict works in such a way that any attempt to escape the problem only makes the problem worse.

Just as the crisis begins and worsens with mimetic contagion, so a mechanism evolving to end the crisis also must operate mimetically. The new contagion evolved is catalyzed not by an acquisitive gesture, but by an accusatory one. Someone is accused or blamed arbitrarily for the violence and made a scapegoat. The violence of "all against all" is replaced by the more economical violence of "all against one." All the social trajectories become aligned, commonly focused on a single victim, who is

then eliminated. Unanimous violence “cures” the crisis on account of the unanimity born of accusatory violence. Mimetic theory holds the view that the present culture and world order is founded on this vicious circle: first, a subconscious or preconscious human imitative desire for the same object (physical or metaphysical), leading to violence threatening to be all consuming; then, resolution of the crisis and purchase of a unity by the arbitrary accusation of a victim, which also becomes imitative, leading to the communal sacrifice of the innocent victim.<sup>6</sup>

Girard refutes the dominant conflict models that focus on aggression or scarcity of things as the source of conflict. Such models propose that many of our problems are the direct result of exploitation and concentration of wealth and power in a few hands.<sup>7</sup> But Girard believes that they are insufficient to explain the diversity of situations around which we find conflicts. He believes that these insufficiencies are avoided when conflict is, instead, modelled on acquisitive mimesis (imitation), or “appropriative mimicry.”<sup>8</sup> He sees aggression as part of the problem of conflict, not part of the cause. “Persons learn by observing others, intentionally or accidentally; that process is known as modelling or learning through imitation.”<sup>9</sup> Girard radicalizes this proposition to say that “all human behaviour is learned and all learning is based on imitation.”<sup>10</sup>

What this article intends to show is this: to the present world order which is founded on models that create imitative desire leading to violence, the Gospel of Matthew reveals a counterculture founded on transcended models of imitation. The specific scope of this article is to make a perspectival reading of the Gospel of Matthew that helps us to obtain the vision of Jesus as the countercultural model for imitation. But this Gospel model, and this vision and mission of modelling in Matthew, are placed in the backdrop of an all-pervasive culture of violence induced by the models of the culture of the world. Matthew provides in his work a glimpse of the past (genealogy), present (birth to death of Jesus), and future (apocalyptic sermon) world order founded on violence or conflicts. The water mark in every page of the Gospel of Matthew is that of a torn world governed by a culture of violence, which is in conflict with the ‘model victims’ who live the counterculture of the Gospel.

In a world where imitation is the foundational human nature, the models of imitation play a critical role, both in originating violence and countering it. Rooted on the foundational human nature of imitation, Judeo-Christian revelation also defines spirituality (or expected human behaviour) as imitation of God, the supreme model (Lev 19:2; Matt 5:48; Luke 6:36).<sup>11</sup> Models who are led by the lure of the objects of the world originate violence. In such a world, God of the Bible as a

whole, and Jesus of the Gospels in particular, are presented as supreme models and are into the art of training persons (models) who transcend the imitative desire for objects. Judeo-Christian revelation always presents victims, or prospective victims who stand with the victims, as transcended models of imitation. In comparison with the gods of the religions, the radically new revelation about God in the Exodus event is that He stands with the victims. It is this primary nature and direction of His actions that makes Him different from gods of the nations and cultures.<sup>12</sup> In both the testaments of the Bible, the hero to be imitated is this God who stands by the victims. In contrast to the Judeo-Christian revelation, the myths of the world and cultures, witnessed a god who stood by the rich and the powerful, which in turn justified the violence and persecution against the victims as divine will.

In an overview of the Gospel of Matthew, this article attempts to demonstrate that the models of the world order (Satan and his allied forces in the world, such as violent socio-political and religious powers) are in conflict with the models of the Gospel (transcended victims like Jesus, John the Baptist, Mary, Joseph, disciples). The Gospel of Matthew provides an existential story or essential story of imitation for the consecrated in their mission of radically influencing and transforming the world by becoming countercultural Gospel models (Matt 28:19; cf. Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

## **1. GENEALOGY: GOD WORKING THROUGH INNOCENT VICTIMS IN A VIOLENT WORLD ORDER (MATT 1:1-17)**

The Gospels, and Judeo-Christian revelation as a whole in the Scripture, present the witness of the victims. So, unlike other genealogies in ancient literatures, the genealogy in Matthew establishes Jesus' significance not by the possession of acquisitive or metaphysical objects of desire such as wealth, human authority, power, position, or social status, but by locating him as the culminating witness of his chosen series of witnesses of innocent model victims. At the very outset, it appears that the genealogy of Matthew is arbitrarily selective in the sense that it does not mention many of the prominent men and women of the Old Testament tradition.<sup>13</sup> But its selectivity and partiality clearly betray the agenda that controls the Matthean retelling. From its very beginning, the story of Israel to which the names in the genealogy are alluding is the story of a model people who were marginalized and victimized.

The genealogy in Matthew starts with the memory of its founding father Abraham whose continuation in memory was really threatened by the biological and social factor of having a barren wife. Behind the theological interpretation of God's

command to Abraham to break away from his home land, people, and nation (Gen 12:1), there could be an event of forceful displacement due to socio-political reasons. The call of God to Abraham or anyone else in the biblical history was an invitation to become a model, by joining the group of the marginalized and victimized. That makes them act on behalf of the victims. Abraham and Sarah were poor aliens in Egypt (Gen 12:10-20). Other names in the genealogy evoke the memories of a marginalized group who were originally nomads, enslaved in Egypt, and later wandering in the desert; after the settlement in the Promised Land, they were repeatedly impoverished and displaced through many exiles and finally victimized and marginalized under the Roman domination. The five women that appear in the genealogy, namely, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, the wife of Uriah, and Mary, represent the models from the marginalized and victimized gender and groups — foreigners, widows, prostitutes, and the sexually abused and exploited.<sup>14</sup> This selective genealogy summarized from the Hebrew scripture was a tool in the hands of Matthew to place the model innocent victim Jesus in the backdrop of a violence-filled world order.

## **2. INFANCY NARRATIVES: MODEL VICTIMS IN A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE (MATT 1-2)**

Just as the story of Israel in the genealogy of Jesus started with a displaced and marginalized model couple, the beginning of the new phase in salvation history also starts with a displaced and marginalized model couple. Joseph and Mary represent the marginalized and victimized groups and individuals at the time of the birth of Jesus. Like Abraham-Sarah, they had to run for life and later were forced to live as aliens in Egypt (Matt 2:13). From the very beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, one can encounter two groups of people: the oppressors and the oppressed; the accusers and the accused. While the majority shares the victimizing culture, some represent the counterculture of the Gospel, refusing to imitate the culture of accusing, victimizing, and marginalizing others.<sup>15</sup> Joseph who represents the Gospel culture refuses to marginalize and victimize Mary even though she could have been easily victimized on the basis of her seemingly illegitimate pregnancy (Matt 1:18-25).

The events accounted in the second chapter of the infancy narratives contrast the actions of the models of these two different cultures. While Joseph, Mary, and the Magi, receiving angelic revelations, guard and protect the life of “the child,” the political power represented by Herod and the religious elites seek or collaborate in attempts to murder the child.<sup>16</sup> According to Carter, the socio-political and

locational dynamics of the division of models could be between the powerful and settled people at the centre (Herod and religious elites) and the apparently powerless, insignificant, and mobile victims who are at the margins or peripheries (Magi, Joseph, and Mary).<sup>17</sup> Unlike Herod and in contrast to traditional patriarchal household models of authority, domination and power (Matt 2:11; 12:46-50; chapters 19–20), Joseph does not rule over his family but serves it by protecting the members from dangers (cf. 1:19). Like the patriarch Joseph in the Old Testament, the revealing dreams make him a model of those who serve God's empire and protect the victimized.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast, the model from the culture of violence, Herod employs military, religious, and social resources to eliminate or victimize the innocent child Jesus.<sup>19</sup> The angel tells Joseph, "Get up, take the child and mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you" (Matt 2:13). And the reason for their flight is: "for Herod is about to search for the child, to *destroy* him" (Matt 2:14). Carter notes that the same verb 'destroy' will be used in both 12:14 and 27:20 to describe the goal of the religious leaders' opposition to Jesus.<sup>20</sup> Finally, like Pharaoh's attempt to exterminate the Israelites by massacre of Israelite children in Egypt (Ex 1:16, 22), Herod's efforts to destroy Jesus will end up in the massacre of the infants (2:16-18). They become the models, prefiguring Jesus who was murdered like an innocent victim at the hands of political and religious powers.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. JESUS' WORKS AND TEACHINGS AS A TRANSCENDED MODEL IN THE VIOLENT WORLD ORDER

The Gospel witness on behalf of the innocent victims in the backdrop of the culture of violence continues in the account of the public ministry of Jesus. The ministry of Jesus in Matthew is structured in five parts, each containing a narrative and a teaching section, all in the milieu of violence.

#### 3.1 *Models of Two Contrasting Cultures in the First Narrative Section (Matt 3–4)*

*John the Baptist versus political and religious elites* (Matt 3:1-12): In this first narrative section of the Gospel, Matthew contrasts the models of the two cultures and uses the theological dynamics of a consistent scenario of conflict between the two. As Prophet John confronts some resistant religious leaders (3:7) in the wilderness, the conflict between the models of the world (political, economic, social, and religious elites) and the models of the Gospel comes to light. Belonging to the prophetic models in Judeo-Christian tradition, John occupies the liminal place. The



narrative locates him in the wilderness, a place marginal to the culture of pleasures, comforts and power. His call for repentance (3:2) and the scathing denunciation of the religious elites (3:7-10) indicate a role model antithetical to the culture of the world. But he interacts with both the religious (3:7-10) and the political (14:1-12) powers. This liminal location and role are akin to Israel's prophetic models who interacted with models of power, like kings, prophets and priests; yet, they always spoke on behalf of God and the victims, never to please the elite. John, the prophet belongs to the models of Judeo-Christian revelation and shared their destiny of rejection, victimization and death (3:7-10; 14:1-12).

*Jesus, the supreme model of Gospel versus Satan, the supreme model of the world – the foundational theological dynamics of all conflicts* (Matt 4: 1-11): In the temptation scene, the conflict is between Jesus and Satan. According to mimetic theory, the central power that founds the existing socio-political order is one of accusation or Satan himself; "Satan" means the accuser, the prosecutor.<sup>22</sup> Through much of history, the foundation of the world order has taken place through scapegoating violence and the mimetically attractive power of accusation. Jesus also calls Satan "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31).<sup>23</sup> Satan, according to mimetic theory is the "Generative Mimetic Scapegoating Mechanism" (GMSM),<sup>24</sup> a feature of all human societies. In the story of the first sin, biblical tradition presents Satan as one who accuses God (Gen 3:1-24). The temptation of Eve was to mimetically join with Satan in accusing God. Sin is mimetically joining with Satan in accusing God and the innocents who are models of God.

In Matt 4:1-11, the central issue concerns sharing of characteristic acts of two types of models, namely, accusation of God or service to God. In the third temptation, Satan claims control of "all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour" (Matt 4:8-9). This startling revelation means that Satan controls the political empire represented by Rome and its order (Rev 12: 3-4).<sup>25</sup> But it is in his death and resurrection to the transcended existence, God will grant Jesus "all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18)."<sup>26</sup> Carter notes that linguistic links connect Satan, the Roman vassal king Herod, and the religious elite as opponents of God's purposes enacted in Jesus.<sup>27</sup> In 4:8-9, Satan refers to the world's empires as *basileias*. In 2:1 and 3, Herod is introduced as king (*basileus*). The two related terms identify Herod as Satan's ally and agent. This betrays the dynamics at work in the religious and political powers that persecute models of God. His kingship, derived from the devil and allied with Rome, contrasts with Jesus who is king by God's calling. Similarly, the verb "tempt" denotes the devil's actions in 4:1 and 3, and creates a link to what the religious leaders, the allies of devil do to Jesus in 16:1;



19:3; 22:18, 35.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the devil portrays the inner spirit of the empire and the religious elite. This text is programmatic of the rest of the Gospel in the sense that Jesus' success over Satan signals his status as a countercultural model to the world order of the Satan, represented by political and religious elites.

### ***3.2 Sermon on the Mount: Models of Perfection versus Models of Violence (Matt 5-7)***

Beatitudes and the following direction-pointing case studies portray the contrast between the models of the kingdom of God and the models of violence.<sup>29</sup> Models of the kingdom have to join voluntarily the marginalized and victimized and resist the temptation to get into the 'snare' of violence. The sermon sketches the models of the kingdom as free of imitative accusation and acquisitive desire for objects. They have to voluntarily become victims (5:6, 10, 20, 6:1, 33) to reformat the world, freeing it from the snare of imitative desire and the resultant violence. Given that these commitments and practices differ from current cultural practices, the sermon invites the audience to join voluntarily the marginal way of life as a model community which will be susceptible to persecution, suffering, and death. The sermon contrasts the two types of models more explicitly through teachings on anger (5:21-26), retaliation (5:38-41), the love of enemies (5:43-48), etc.; and the imitation of the primary quality of God ('perfection') is the standard for his models (5:48).

### ***3.3 Jesus' Care and Compassion versus the Elites' Harassment and Violence (Matt 8-9)***

The second narrative section presents the supreme model Jesus in contrast with the models of world's empire: their primary quality and the direction of their actions are opposed to each other. In 9:13, citing Hos 6:6, Jesus articulates compassion as his primary quality, like that of God. In contrast, Matt 9:36 identifies harassment and violence as the primary qualities of the existing culture of the world and its models. The display of God's empire collides with assertions of Rome's sovereignty. God's empire brings the wholeness which Rome's rule cannot provide (8:5-13). Signalling the influence and impact of the revealing Gospel, Matthew reports that even the representatives of Rome (the centurion) turn to Jesus (8:11-12, 28-34). At the same time, sharing the experiences of the prophetic models, Jesus' actions are questioned by the elite. Representing the culture of the world, the leaders of the town seek his banishment, because he stands with one of the scapegoats of the culture, namely, the demoniac (8:34). Opposition between the models of two cultures grows through chapter 9. As models of the culture of violence, the religious

elites reject any claims that his ministry enacts God's authority (9:3). They share the actions of Satan by accusing him for his association with marginalized people (9:11). In a significant paradox, they accuse Jesus of association with the devil (9:34), but do not realize that by this very act they are in fact sharing the acts and mission of the devil that is accusing God and his models in the world (Gen 3:4-5).

### ***3.4 Missionary Discourse: Conflicting Missions of Compassion and Domination (Matt 10)***

Mission involves both being and doing, thus becoming models, embodying the respective values. Being with God involves remaining in the peripheries of the society, where the victims are located, and making one's life a witness on behalf of the victims. Like the prophetic models, the mission signifies disciples' relation to the larger society. There is no flight from society, nor imitation of models of the world. The Gospel's missionary models confront Rome's models of injustice, power, greed, false commitments, and death, with God's mercy and justice. Despite conflict, division, suffering, rejection, and death, it offers an alternative to Rome's missionary models that employ military violence and cultural imperialism.<sup>30</sup> Mission means imitating God's primary nature and direction of actions to transform the victimizing or harassing culture of the world (9:35-38). The disciples' mission imitates and parallels Jesus' mission (10:21-23). Mission is imitating and creating models of Jesus' characteristic life style of itinerancy, poverty, defencelessness, and love.<sup>31</sup>

### ***3.5 Third Narrative – Gospel Models versus Models of Satan/Rome (Matt 11–12)***

In Matt 11:3, the disciples of John pose the central question about Jesus' identity: "Are you the one who is to come?" The scene (11:2-6) also provides the means of determining that Jesus is the one commissioned by God to become the model of God's empire. Jesus' ministry of compassion and care of the marginalized makes him a true Gospel model and testifies to his identity (11:4-5). Those who discern from Jesus' actions and words his identity as God's commissioned model or Christ are blessed (11:6). The rest of the narrative block will elaborate these concerns of Jesus' identity and the various responses to him. In the twelfth chapter, Jesus twice confronts the religious leaders over the Sabbath (12:1-14), because they do not see compassion as the primary identification mark of God and his models. His ministry is interpreted as that of the suffering servant in Isa 42 (cf. 12:15-21). In Matt 12:22-37, Jesus confronts the religious leaders who do the characteristic act of accusing Jesus, and prove that they are models of Satan (12:34). Here Jesus

clearly distinguishes the characteristic actions of the two models as scattering and gathering (12:30). He announces doom on this generation (12:38-45) and defines the alternative model of the community of disciples (12:46-50). As in chapter 11, scenes of conflict and rejection (12:1-14, 22-45) alternate with scenes that confirm Jesus' identity as God's true model (12:15-21, 46-50). The models of the religious elite are adamant in their characteristic act of conflict with Jesus, and refuse to accept his identity as God's model. They fail to call to mind the revelation of the scriptural tradition that the primary quality of the God of Israel, which distinguishes Him from gods of the nations, is compassion.

### ***3.6 Third Discourse: Ultimate Success and Apparent Success (Matt 13)***

This section consists of seven parables. The focus on God's empire and its eventual triumph over all things implies the demise of models of the culture of the world, represented by Rome and its allied forces. Matthew's third major teaching unit in chapter 13 explains that the lack of receptivity to the Gospel derives from human sinfulness and Satan's activity of luring people to the culture of the world. Models of God's empire resist the temptation by submitting to suffering, rather than endorsing Rome's empire and imitating it. Jesus' message is divisive: some welcome it, while others, especially the elite, resist God's self-revelation as God of the victims. It is disruptive and disturbing to imperial structures, practices and priorities, because it creates a new way of life which counters dominant societal models. It counteracts and competes with the devil's reign and its models. The parables in chapter 13 confirm these understandings. The parables are powerful revelations of the dynamics of the characteristic style of the God of Israel and its eventual success, which is unlike the seeming success of the gods of the nations (Satan) and their models.<sup>32</sup>

### ***3.7 Fourth Narrative: Life-Giving Works versus Violence and Murder (Matt 14:1-17:21)***

The section is placed in the backdrop of the murder of John the Baptist by Herod, the representative of Satan and his worldly empire. Despite the violent strike of the world's empire and the widespread rejection and opposition, Jesus continues to demonstrate God's life-giving works. Following the prophetic models, Jesus critiques the imperial structures and the oppressive world order that results in a situation of misery and want (hunger, illness); and he replaces that world order with plenty and wholeness. His miraculous and compassionate actions point to a different way of life, forms disciples in his model, and provide others with the opportunity to discern his identity as the model of the God of Israel. But the elite, who are models

of the gods of the nations/cultures, respond with hostility to what God is doing (e.g. Herod - Matt 14:1-12). Jesus displays his characteristic acts of compassion by supplying food to the hungry and healing to the sick (14:13-21, 34-36). In Matt 15:1-20, Jesus stands with the victims and becomes a prospective victim in contrast to the harassing religious leaders. In the pattern of the primary quality of God of Israel, Jesus responds with compassion to the need of the Canaanite woman (15:21-28); and in 15:32-39, Jesus feeds the four thousand people out of compassion. In each scene, Jesus manifests the primary nature and the direction of God's actions (1:21, 23; 4:17). Some discern the primary nature and the dynamics of the God of Israel in his works, while others do not. This narrative block in general speaks about Jesus standing with the victimized people and that is the good news of the kingdom. The religious elite continue to fail to discern Jesus' identity (16:1-4), in contrast to the disciples who "understand" his teaching (16:5-12). A summary scene (16:13-20 Peter's confession) restates the central focus on Jesus' identity and its implications. In Matt 16:21-28, Jesus teaches his disciples that God's purposes for him as God's supreme model ("the Christ," "the son" 16:16, 20) involve his death at the hands of the religious and political elite, and his resurrection. He also begins to teach them that this event has profound consequences for discipleship (16:18), because their lives become models of the Gospel only when they imitate the model of Jesus who voluntarily became the victim.

### **3.8 Community Discourse – A Counterculture to Domination (Matt 17:22–18:35)**

In chapter 18, Jesus instructs the disciples to become a countercultural community in contrast to the culture of violence and domination. Carter enumerates the six characteristic marks of this countercultural community that are accounted in the discourse: i) this alternative community lives as marginal children (18:1-5); ii) members do not cause each other to stumble (18:6-9); iii) they serve and take care of one another (18:10-14); iv) they exercise communal correction with *carefrontation* of the other (18:15-17); v) experience the living presence of their model with them (18: 20); vi) they forgive repeatedly (18:21-22), never forgetting that God's forgiveness requires them to imitate and offer the same forgiveness to others (18:23-25).<sup>33</sup> Forgiveness is presented as the principal value in contrast to the principal activity of the empire of Satan and the world, which consists of revenge, hatred, violence, accusation and victimization.<sup>34</sup> In the world's hierarchical structure, a few control all the others, promoting the model of arrogant privileging of the powerful and mistreatment of the marginalized; on the other hand, this community voluntarily moves to the margins, practices humility, includes the marginalized,

and exercises care for one another. Instead of excluding and scapegoating dissenters, it seeks inclusion and relationship (18:15-20), forgiveness and reconciliation (18:21-35).

### ***3.9 Fifth Narrative: A Counterculture to Households of Domination (Matt 19–22)***

Carter notes that the chapters 19 and 20 of Matthew should be read in the backdrop of the pervasive cultural understanding of households.<sup>35</sup> The model of households consists of four dimensions, namely the male's task of earning wealth and three other dominating relationships (husband–wife; father–children; master–slave). The power dynamics controlled the relationships in which the husband/father/master ruled over the wife/children/slaves. The household was hierarchical and patriarchal in that the male held power over women and children. It was marked by strict gender differentiation. According to Carter, the sections of chapters 19–20 reflect this household pattern: the husband–wife relationship (including divorce, 19:3-12), children (19:13-15), procuring wealth (19:16-30), being slaves (20:17-28).<sup>36</sup> However, whereas the chapters utilize this backdrop of the households, they do not endorse this cultural norm of domination. Rather, they envision countercultural Gospel models by subverting this hierarchical and patriarchal structure and instructing the disciples in a more egalitarian pattern (20:12). Husbands are not to rule over wives but to participate in “one flesh” relationship (19:3-12); as all disciples are children, there are no parents (19:13-15); it is the following of Jesus, not procuring wealth and status, that defines discipleship (19:16-30); as the disciples imitate the model of Jesus who has become a slave, there are no masters (20:17-28).<sup>37</sup> The parable of the householder in Matt 20:1-16 exemplifies God's countercultural ways of ordering life. The chapters provide disciples with instruction on a countercultural household that befits the empire or reign of God.

Chapter 21 brings Jesus into Jerusalem, the centre of religious and political power and the locale of his predicted crucifixion (16:21; 20:17-19). The voluntary entry of Jesus shows his power to become a victim and give up his life. It is this model of exercise of power that creates a counterculture. Jesus' entry sitting over an ass contrasts Rome's military and political power and pomp. The parable of the wicked tenants in 21:33-46 unmasks the violent and murderous design of the political and religious elite against Jesus who is sent by God as a victim. The readers are introduced to an ultimate model that transcends the lure of the objects, even one's own life.

### **3.10 *Fifth Discourse: The Revealing Gospel and the World-Ending Conflict* (Matt 23–25)**

In the final teaching section, the Gospel is placed in the backdrop of the culture of conflict in the parables of chapters 21–22, the woes against the Pharisees and scribes of chapter 23, and the world-ending violence in the eschatological discourse of chapters 24–25. Addressing the disciples and the crowds in 23:1-12, Jesus differentiates between the practices of his models and those of the Pharisees: the former are to remain in the margins, whereas the latter, being models of the imitative desire for central positions, initiates conflicts. In 23:13-36, Jesus delivers a blistering series of seven woes against the Pharisees and scribes, condemning them for their oppressive and victimising practices. The chapter increases the hostility between Jesus and the religious elite and prepares for his crucifixion as a model victim in chapters 26–27.

As already stated in this article, the world order is founded on sacrificial mechanism supported by concealing myths. But the Gospel is the witness of the victims that makes the culture transparent, so much so that it destroys the foundations of sacrificial mechanism of purchasing peace. A sacrificial crisis created out of concern for the victims of scapegoating violence has the perverse effect of increasing the threat and magnitude of further outbreaks of violence, since the sacrificial mechanisms that would otherwise keep them contained cannot survive after having been made transparent. The Greek word for apocalypse gestures both to this revealing and to the terminal violence that is produced by such revelation. For mimetic theory, what is “unveiled” as the Last Judgment (in the book of Revelation, in Daniel, and in numerous other prophetic texts such as the apocalyptic sermon of Jesus in Matthew chapters 24–25) is the world-ending violence that humanity calls down upon itself in its escalating spirals of rivalry. The models of political and religious establishments to rule the world with concealing myths, and its means of conquering and forcibly subordinating all to its will, are contrasted by the model of Jesus’ entrance to Jerusalem in humility (21:1-11). Chapters 24–25 are an unequivocal assertion that the model of the Roman empire, or any other political empire and their allied forces that rely on the culture of the world, is not ultimate. The culture founded on violence will end in this world-ending violence. It is mortal (24:28) and will be ultimately subject to God’s empire. In the meantime, the Matthean community is to live its alternative countercultural existence of active, subversive, nonviolent resistance in the sure hope of God’s coming triumph.

#### 4. JESUS' DEATH: THE SUPREME TRANSCENDED MODEL AND SACRIFICIAL VICTIM (MATT 26-27)

In the passion narratives, the understanding of Judeo-Christian revelation as witness of the victim reaches its climax, as it accounts the socio-political and religious forces uniting to accuse and murder Jesus, the perfect sacrificial victim. Jesus was accused and victimized in the model of his prefigures in scriptural tradition.<sup>38</sup> The revealing words and actions of Jesus threatened the violent culture perpetuated by the political powers and the allied religious leadership. His words, actions, and attitudes are found shaking the roots of the hierarchical, exploitative, and oppressive political as well as religious culture of the world. The religious leadership finds unity among them in victimising him with the allegation of blasphemy (26:57-68). The religious and political leadership collude for a common purpose of sacrificing the victim Jesus who was identified as the principal threat to the culture founded on violence. Religious power bought peace by mimetically accusing him of the religious crime of blasphemy (26:65-66); similarly, the religious and political leadership averted the threat of a political conflict with the Romans by mimetically sharing the accusation against Jesus of attempting to become the king of Jews (27:11).

Girard argues that the Cross is the supreme scandal that reveals and exposes 'scandal and its operation' through the scapegoat mechanism.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the crucifixion of Jesus is a two-dimensional picture. From one side, it appears that it is another successful episode of the cultural mechanism founded on violence and sacrifice. But the text makes it clear that Jesus is complicit in his own death, because it was a voluntary act to make his life the supreme model of a transcended victim. He declares in advance that it will happen (16:21; 17:12, 22-23; 20:17-19) and to let this happen he opted to go to Jerusalem, the elite's centre of power.<sup>40</sup> The voluntary death of Jesus is significant because it signifies his perfect transcendence of the compulsive human nature of imitative desire for objects, which makes one part of imitating the culture of violence and its models. It is this voluntary suffering and death that makes him the model of one who gained transcendence over every lure of mimetic desire. This is the pattern for his models in their witness of the Gospel. The two-dimensional picture of the episode is sharp and revealing in the naked image of Jesus on the cross which is at the centre of Christian worship and liturgy. In a world where models expose their bodies to create imitative desire for objects and sell physical and metaphysical objects, the model of the naked Jesus on the cross empowers his models to transcend the desire for objects that lead to pervasive violence like a 'snare.' It is in imitating these actions that humankind can finally find the hope of freeing themselves from the snare of violence.



## **5. ASCENSION TO TRANSCENDENCE AND COMMISSIONING OF THE MODELS OF THE GOSPEL (MATT 28)**

The combined opponents — the allied force of the religious and political elite — have removed the threat of Jesus, because he had threatened the foundation of their culture. But his resurrection has destroyed the foundation of the culture of violence, because all through history, it has exercised its power by threatening the people with death. Resurrection validated Jesus' teaching to his disciples that they need not fear those who can kill only the physical body.

Jesus' resurrection and ascension are towards a transcended existence and this new existence is our supreme object of desire and this Jesus becomes the supreme model of imitation. The Risen Jesus commissions his disciples to a worldwide mission of becoming models of the Gospel: a witness on behalf of Jesus, the voluntary victim, and a model by becoming a victim like Jesus. This invitation to the transcended existence was at the heart of his instructions on discipleship, making their program of life parallel to the predictions of his passion [(1) Matt 16:21-23; 24-28, (2) 17: 22-23; 18:1-5, (3) 20:17-19; 20-28)]; this was done to form his disciples as his models for this final commissioning. He promises to be with them as their supreme model for imitation (Matt 28:20).<sup>41</sup> This is realized when the community celebrates his transformed presence in the Eucharist, which ends all the sacrificial system (Matt 26:26-30).

Some movie directors and authors exercise such influence on the audience, that the parting in the story evokes a new beginning. They can exercise a compelling force on the audience to pick up from where the authors have left to carry the story forward. The Gospel ends with such a compelling force and commissioning. The readers are fascinated about this model and experience a compelling force to become models of the Gospel to transform the culture of the world. In the pattern of their model, they are going to be persecuted and victimized for overturning the culture of the world order founded on violence. They become agents of a 'Generative Mimetic Transcending Mechanism' (GMTM) in the place of 'Generative Mimetic Scapegoating Mechanism' (GMSM).<sup>42</sup> The Gospel will certainly invite violence because it is revealing and turning upside down a culture founded on violence. Witnessing this Gospel make the consecrated the prospective victims but it is this transcended life that will be the ultimate hope for ending the snare of violence produced by the imitative desire for objects.



## CONCLUSION

### ***Mission of Consecrated in this Mythical Culture Moving towards a World Ending Violence!***

Jesus and his Gospel have unmasked the culture that is founded on violence and its concealing myths. This has resulted in a sacrificial crisis due to the weakening of the sacrificial mechanism by which temporary peace is bought in the world. Thus, the threat of triggering a world-ending violence, as the apocalyptic sermon of Matthew (chs. 24–25) and all other apocalyptic books of the Bible have revealed, seems to be real. The recent unrest in some sectors of the world very specially after the recognition Jerusalem as the capital of Israel by US administration or any other similar sensitive issues in our contemporary time could flare up to a world ending violence. We can arrive at the following conclusions regarding the role of religious today based on our reflections on the theme ‘Matthew as an existential story for the consecrated to become Gospel Models in a mythical culture of acquisitive desire and accusatory violence.’ These conclusions on the theme are arrived at by making use of an overview of the Gospel of Matthew and applying them to consecrated life looking at it from the perspective of the mimetic theory of human self-understanding.

1. *Life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus and its re-enactment in the Eucharist as an existential story for the Consecrated:* Since scapegoating murder cured the original disease, ritual repetition of this generative event will be used either to cure reactively further outbreaks of mimetic violence or prevent them prophylactically. This gives rise to sacrificial ritual. In Christian life and especially in consecrated life, the re-enactment of the sacrifice of Jesus in the Eucharist gives us the transcended object and model for imitation, thus ending the culture of violence (generated by imitative desire) and the very sacrificial system.
2. *Imitating the biblical God/models and the mission of standing by the victims:* God revealed in the Exodus experience to Israel a God who stood with the victims. It is this primary nature and direction of His actions that makes Him different from gods of the nations and cultures. In both the testaments of the Bible, the hero to be imitated is this God who stands by the victims. In contrast to the Judeo-Christian revelation, the myths of the world and cultures, witnessed a god who stood by the rich and the powerful, which in turn justified the violence and persecution against the victims as divine will. Blessed Rani Maria of Indoor and her heroic martyrdom for the cause of the poor victims is a powerful example for the consecrated in imitating this model of biblical God

and other biblical models like Jesus, prophets, apostles who stood with the victims.

3. *Solution to the mimetically generated crisis of violence:* The impact of the theory of mimetic desire is universal and like Newton's Theory of Gravity, permits no exceptions. Human beings cannot escape their mimetic nature and any attempt to outflank mimetic influences is ultimately scandalous or leading to a snare/trap — we just end up playing the same mimetic games at a higher level. We can resolve the crisis only by playing the same mimetic games at a transcended level. The cure for mimetically produced violence will be a mimetically transmitted desire for lasting peace. The model will have to be someone who has transcended the snare of GSM. It is here that the model of Jesus in the Gospel and his transcendence over the imitative desire for objects can serve both as supreme model and as an object of imitation for the consecrated.
4. *Mission of the consecrated in the Gospel of Matthew:* The mission in the Gospel of Matthew can be understood as sending transcended models of imitation in the style of Jesus to the ends of the earth. This is the hope the Gospel of Matthew gives to a torn world, which imitates the gods of the nations and relies on myths that justify the persecution or violence against the victims. Being firmly rooted in Judeo-Christian tradition, the Girardian insights of the culture and religion can become the motivation for communities and individuals to engage in a new cooperative behaviour. Because of the inherently destructive nature of the GSM as exposed by Girard, we cannot behave blindly anymore, relying on violence to end violence. Since we recognize that violence has always abetted violence and that the minorities and women are always the first to be scapegoated, a conscientious effort from the consecrated to rectify the problem might greatly benefit the future of humanity.
5. *Role of consecrated in this mythical culture of looming world ending conflicts:* In the present context of culture becoming more and more transparent and myth losing its sacred coating, a culture founded on sacrificial mechanism is in crisis. The concern for the victim that has arisen out of Judeo-Christian revelation makes the sacrificial solutions to social disorder less efficacious, since vindication of the victim destroys the myth that justifies the violence. Given that the spectre of the world-ending violence revealed in the apocalyptic sermons (Matt 24–25) appears imminent, it seems more than ever necessary for our survival as a species to discover and model non-rivalrous, non-sacrificial ways of living. The present era in which the culture of conflicts appears to be escalating to the state of world-ending violence, the consecrated has to

prophetically witness to the world that the only choice is to follow the Gospel command of loving one another including enemies (Matt 5:44) or perishing together in the world-ending violence! A transcended life from acquisitive desires and accusatory violence by the consecrated can serve as role models to radically influence the culture of the world to adopt the counter-cultural values of the Gospels and avert the tragedy of a world ending violence!

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> R. GIRARD, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, Stanford 1987; RENÉ GIRARD, *Violence and the Sacred*, Baltimore 1977.

<sup>2</sup> The author wishes to acknowledge the editorial assistance on mimetic theory contributed by Paulson Varkey Veliyanloor, CMF

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<sup>4</sup> G. BAILIE, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroad*, New York 1995, 116-118.

<sup>5</sup> R. GIRARD, "Psychoanalysis and Sacrifice" in SERGIO BENVENUTTO – ANTHONY MOLINO, ed., *In Freud's Tracks*, New York 2009, 139-158.

<sup>6</sup> R. GIRARD, *The Scapegoat*, Baltimore 1986, 16-20.

<sup>7</sup> J. E. FARLEY, *American Social Problems: An Institutional Analysis*, Englewood Cliffs 1987, 17-18.

<sup>8</sup> R. GIRARD, "Mimesis and Violence: Perspectives in Cultural Criticism," *Berkshire Review* 14 (1979) 10.

<sup>9</sup> H.I. KAPLAN – B. SADOCK – J. GREBB, *Synopsis of Psychiatry*, Baltimore 1994, 169.

<sup>10</sup> M.I. WALLACE – T.H. SMITH, ed., *Curing Violence*, Sonoma 1994, 8.

<sup>11</sup> G. PANTHALANICKAL, "Be Agents of Life as Your Lord is Life: A Missionary Mandate from the Gospel of Life", in STANLY KUMAR – al., ed., *Like a Watered Garden*, II, Fs. Lucien Legrand, Bengaluru 2017, 284.

<sup>12</sup> R. GIRARD, *Job the Victim of his People*, Stanford – California 1987, 154-168.

<sup>13</sup> G. PANTHALANICKAL, "Reading behind the Infancy Narratives in Matthew", *Indian Theological Studies* 53/2 (2016) 188-189.

<sup>14</sup> A. STOCK, *The Method and Message of Matthew*, Collegeville – Minnesota 1994, 25.

<sup>15</sup> W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, Bangalore 2007, 66.

<sup>16</sup> A. STOCK, *The Method and Message of Matthew*, 36.

<sup>17</sup> W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, 73.

- <sup>18</sup> G. PANTHALANICKAL, "Reading behind the Infancy Narratives in Matthew", 196-97.
- <sup>19</sup> D. SENIOR, *Matthew*, Nashville 1998, 43-44.
- <sup>20</sup> W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, 73.
- <sup>21</sup> J.P. MEIER, *Matthew*, Minnesota 1990, 14.
- <sup>22</sup> R. GIRARD, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 419
- <sup>23</sup> R.H. MOUNCE, *Matthew*, Grand Rapids – Michigan 1985, 31.
- <sup>24</sup> R. GIRARD, "Mimesis and Violence: Perspectives in Cultural Criticism", *Berkshire Review* 14 (1979) 15.
- <sup>25</sup> W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, 106.
- <sup>26</sup> D. SENIOR, *Matthew*, 59-60.
- <sup>27</sup> W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, 106.
- <sup>28</sup> W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, 106.
- <sup>29</sup> D. SENIOR, *Matthew*, 69.
- <sup>30</sup> D. SENIOR, *Matthew*, 117.
- <sup>31</sup> J.P. MEIER, *Matthew*, 102.
- <sup>32</sup> D. SENIOR, *Matthew*, 148.
- <sup>33</sup> W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, 361.
- <sup>34</sup> D.A. HAGNER, *Matthew 14–28*, Word Biblical Commentary 33B, Waco TX 1995, 540-541.
- <sup>35</sup> W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, 376.
- <sup>36</sup> W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, 376-377.
- <sup>37</sup> C. H. TALBERT, *Matthew*, Grand Rapids – Michigan 2010, 217.
- <sup>38</sup> Joseph in Pharaoh's court (Gen 39–40); Esther under Haman's genocidal policy (Esther 3ff); Shadrach, Meshach, and Agednego under the edict of King Nebuchadnezzar requiring worship (Dan 3); Daniel under King Darius's edict (Dan 6); Susanna and the lustful elders (Dan 13); the martyrs (seven brothers and their mother) who refuse to comply with Antiochus Epiphanes' demands (2Macc 7) or the afflicted wise person of Wisdom 2–5. Cf. W. CARTER, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, 498.
- <sup>39</sup> R. GIRARD, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 419.
- <sup>40</sup> A. STOCK, *The Method and Message of Matthew*, Minnesota 1994, 269-270.
- <sup>41</sup> A. STOCK, *The Method and Message of Matthew*, 440-441.
- <sup>42</sup> R. GIRARD, "Mimesis and Violence: Perspectives in Cultural Criticism", 15.



# RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH LEADERSHIP TO CLERICAL CHILD ABUSE

**James Kannanthanam, CMF**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the major problems that Catholic Church faced ever since the Reformation is the clerical child abuse scandal. It was the topic of media attention in the West and caused incalculable damage on the Catholic Church. The unchristian behaviours of some of its own ministers tarnished the image of priesthood itself and put the hierarchy into embarrassment. The legal settlements caused financial crisis in some dioceses. No less was the impact on the faithful. Many got disillusioned and in anger left the Church. Church itself, having caught unaware of the magnitude of the problem, was ill prepared to respond adequately or to control the damage. As observed by Mons. Elio Sgreccia, Vice President of the Academy for Life in 2003 in the Symposium on 'Abuse of Children and Young People by Catholic Priests and Religious,' "To formulate responsible solutions requires the consideration of psychological, medical, ethical, anthropological, theological, pastoral, juridical and many other perspectives."<sup>1</sup> But learning from the missteps and failures, Church responded later with policies and programs to address the issue more meaningfully. This article is an attempt to look into the Church's responses to the scandal of the clerical sexual abuse of the minors and to evaluate them *vis a vis* the allegations and criticisms.

Generally today it is recognized that in the beginning when the issue of clerical child abuse started to appear in public, the Church in general tried to conceal the issues and tried to cover it up in an attempt to protect the name and dignity of the Church and its ministers. Thus perpetrators were seen as protected, by and large. Short term treatment and spiritual means were resorted to heal the perpetrators and they were put back into ministry. Sometimes they were transferred to a different

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parish where they did further harm. The stories of the victims were not heard adequately and the attempt was to hush up their voice. At the face of vehement criticisms of mismanagement and protectionism, the authorities had to open their eyes to see the harm done to the victims and come up with stringent steps to control the erring clerics and put in place programs for guaranteeing safer environment for children and the vulnerable. Lately with taking the position of ‘zero tolerance’ towards sexual abuse of the clerics and Church personnel and creating systems and programs to address the issue, Catholic Church is in the forefront in the fight against the problem of child abuse in the society in general and to abolish it among its own ministers in particular.

## 2. EMERGENCE OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of the child abuse by catholic clergy came to the public attention with cases in United States. The tip of the iceberg was already seen in 1980s. The issue received worldwide attention with the revelations of child abuse cases of the clergy by the Boston Globe’s “Spotlight” team, an investigative journalist unit in the United States which investigated the child sex abuse in the Boston area by Roman Catholic priests. The film ‘Spotlight’ produced in 2015 on the basis of the inquiry of those cases further highlighted the issue. As more and more case came to the public scrutiny in USA, cases began to emerge also in other countries. Ireland, largely Catholic, was shocked by the many cases of abuses publically discussed in Radio and TV channels in the beginning of the new millennium. Bishops too acknowledged “of a culture that was prevalent in the Catholic Church in Ireland for far too long. Heinous crimes were perpetrated against the most innocent and vulnerable, and vile acts with life-lasting effects were carried out under the guise of the mission of Jesus Christ. This abuse represents a serious betrayal of the trust which was placed in the Church.”<sup>2</sup> After USA and Ireland, Australian Church was rocked by the scandal of clerical child abuse. In the Catholic sexual abuse scandal in Australia, there were highly numerous cases involving diocesan clergy, members of religious orders (both priests and brothers) and lay teachers.

In 2012, a police report detailed 40 suicide deaths directly related to abuse by Catholic clergy in Victoria. In October 2012, the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, Ken Lay, in a submission to a parliamentary inquiry on the issue, recommended that some of the Church’s actions to hinder investigations (including dissuading victims from reporting to police, failing to engage with police and alerting suspects of allegations against them) be criminalised. A bishop in the Maitland-Newcastle diocese supported some form of public inquiry into the issue.<sup>3</sup>

In January 2013, the terms of reference were announced for an Australian Royal Commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse which would investigate institutional sexual abuse of minors related, but not exclusive, to matters concerning clergy of the Catholic Church. Church collaborated with the commission enquiry. Through the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, the Catholic Church established a national co-ordinating body, called the Truth, Justice and Healing Council, to oversee the Church's engagement with the Royal Commission and the pastoral and other ramifications that arose from the sexual abuse scandal.<sup>4</sup>

Though Church authorities elsewhere dumped it as an "American or Irish problem", the cases of abuse started emerging from worldwide and today it is recognized as a problem universally present.

### **3. THE EARLY RESPONSES**

The warning signs of the presence of abuse by the clergy in 1980s and early 1990s were not received well by the hierarchy in USA. The type of responses given initially by the Church was either wrong or inadequate. In the wake of the relentless effort of the media to highlight the magnitude of the problem specifically in the Catholic Church for whatever intentions and many lawyers allured by the prospect of easy money looked out for the cases and laws of USA making the Church liable for huge compensations the matter became the talk of the town. The Church found itself in an awkward situation of being questioned of its integrity and moral standards. It failed to understand the depth of the problem and to come up with adequate plans for dealing with perpetrators to control the problem. Church came under severe criticism for allegedly hiding the cases and protecting the perpetrators and doing very little to redress the sufferings of the victims.

#### **3.1 Transfer of the Accused**

It is observed that the Church in USA and in other countries generally dealt with child abuse issues in the beginning stages by transferring the perpetrators from one place to other places and they continued to abuse children in the new places. Some bishops have been heavily criticized for moving offending priests from parish to parish, where they still had personal contact with children. In Ireland in March 2002, a BBC documentary, highlighted the case of Seán Fortune, who abused Colm O'Gorman and many other teenage boys. It was alleged that the Church's practice of parish transfers of abusive priests allowed Fortune to be transferred to other parishes without notifying them about any former abuse allegations.



In Australia too media highlighted the failures of the Roman Catholic Church to prevent future abuse by clergy who had come to the attention of religious authorities (of dioceses, religious orders or schools), transferring clergy and religious to further opportunities for abuse, the handling of allegations of abuse and the continuing honouring within the Church of known sex offenders.

In defence of this practice of transferring the erring priests it is pointed out that no different was the approach of public school administrators in USA in dealing with teachers accused of sexual misconduct. The responses can be justified that the steps taken were corresponding to the awareness of the problem and its solutions. The American bishops too defended their stand as justifiable in proportion to the understanding of the problem.

In response to criticism that the Catholic hierarchy should have acted more quickly and decisively to remove priests accused of sexual misconduct, contemporary bishops have responded that the hierarchy was unaware until recent years of the danger in shuffling priests from one parish to another and in concealing the priests' problems from those they served. For example, Cardinal Roger Mahony of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, said: "We have said repeatedly that [...] our understanding of this problem and the way it's dealt with today evolved, and that in those years ago, decades ago, people didn't realize how serious this was, and so, rather than pulling people out of ministry directly and fully, they were moved."<sup>5</sup>

### **3.2 Spiritual and Psychological Assistance – An inadequate Solution**

Many dioceses directed the offending priests to seek psychological treatment and assessment. They were afterwards reinstated in pastoral ministries. Some bishops thought a good confession and spiritual direction would be sufficient for healing the problem. They easily believed the assurance given by the perpetrators.

It should be also noted that in reassigning priests after treatment, bishops were acting on the best medical advice then available. The prevailing psychology of the times suggested that people could be cured of such behaviour through counselling. Even in the film *Spotlight*, investigators find out that many of the accused were sent to psychologists for counselling before reinstating or being reassigned. The priests were allowed to resume their previous duties with children only when the bishop was advised by the treating psychologists or psychiatrists that it was safe for them to resume their duties.

Today it is known that many of the perpetrators of child abuse are paedophilic and this sickness cannot be healed with such simplistic approaches of recourse to confession or a short-term counselling. Thus even if the authorities did it in good

faith, the solution was inadequate. But the critics showed no sympathy for the hierarchy as if they were involved in calculated negligence to the damage it caused.

### **3.3 Failure to Report to Legal Authorities**

From a legal perspective, the most serious criticism in USA aside from the incidents of child sexual abuse themselves was about the bishops, who failed to report accusations to the police. In response to the failure to report abuse to the police, lawmakers have changed the law to make reporting of abuse to police mandatory. Thus Church leaders are accused of organizing cover-up of cases of sexual abuse of children. For example, 6,000 pages of documents released in a Milwaukee court case showed that Church administrators failed to inform secular law enforcement agencies.<sup>6</sup> Some bishops resisted the demand of the state authorities to have access to the confidential information about their priests.

It is argued that the reason why some bishops in the initial stages as the problem began to prop up failed to report to civil authorities was that there was no mandatory reporting yet and that they considered the sexual abuse as an internal matter of the Church. Abusive priests were sanctioned under Canon Law and sometimes received treatment from specialized Catholic service agencies. Some would have considered it uncharitable to hand over their priests to civil court for trial and thought that forgiveness and compassion should be shown to the offending members too. Once it became mandatory to report, the Church complied with the requirement.

### **3.4 Cover-up of Facts**

Media continuously accused the Church authorities for covering up the facts about the abuse. Alarmed by the enormous scandal created the abuse of the clergy many bishops tried to contain the damage by keeping the facts about the abusive priests secret. Dublin's Cardinal Desmond Connell was accused of mishandling the sex abuse scandal and accusing him of participating in a deliberate cover-up of facts. Though the Murphy Report praised him for making the archdiocesan records available to the authorities in 2002 and for his 1995 actions in giving the authorities the names of 17 priests who had been accused of abuse, he was criticised for his use of the concept of mental reservation to inadequately answer questions truthfully about his knowledge of the abusive activities of priests under his control.<sup>7</sup>

In Australia in 2012, the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, Ken Lay, in a submission to a parliamentary inquiry on the issue, recommended that some of the Church's actions to hinder investigations (including dissuading victims from reporting to police, failing to engage with police and alerting suspects of allegations

against them) be criminalised.<sup>8</sup> In February 2017 the Australian Royal Commission which was constituted to make an inquiry of the institutional responses to child sexual abuse released a report revealing 7% of Australian diocesan and religious priests and brothers, were accused of abusing children between 1950 and 2009. The report also stated that the Church was unwilling to investigate the reported abuse and also assisted in covering up the incidents after they were reported. Report said that documents were not kept or they were destroyed.<sup>9</sup>

### **3.5 Neglect of the Victims**

In the eagerness to protect the name of the Church, the authorities failed to perceive the damage done to the victims. They either neglected the complaints or even suppressed their voice. In reality, the abuse by the clergy did more havoc to the victims than would be the case with other people. In Australia, in 2012 a police report detailed 40 suicide deaths directly related to abuse by Catholic clergy in Victoria.<sup>10</sup> The abuse by clergy affected not only the psychological level but it was a hard blow for their spiritual life too. Hardly anything was done for extending psychological and spiritual help to the children who were abused or for their families. There are many reports of the victims committing suicide. In Australia, the Senior Counsel Gail Furness noted that the Church poorly dealt with allegations, “Children were ignored or worse, punished. Allegations were not investigated.”<sup>11</sup> As Lydia Marie Allen pointed out, “Wounds brought about by sexual abuse of minors by priests and religious are far deeper than we can imagine.”<sup>12</sup> It was only later that the Church responded with positive plans to redress the pain of the victims and look for just compensations.

### **3.6 Lack of a Comprehensive and Universal Plan of Action**

Initially the problem was considered a matter of the local Church and it was left to the local bishops to evolve their responses. There was no concerted effort to deal with it nationally or from the part of Vatican. It was when the problem reached huge proportions, Church began to formulate national or universal policies to give a better response in dealing with the issue.

## **4. THE POPES’ RESPONSES**

Burnt of the scandal was particularly born by the Popes who were constantly drilled by the media. Once the Popes became aware of the pervasive prevalence of the problem among the clerics, they responded with the seriousness it deserved.

## 4.1 John Paul II

One of the great pains of St. John Paul II was the scandal of the clergy. He was determined to contain the damage by making the laws stricter and demanding the bishops to act promptly and decisively to flush out the malice from the Church. In April 2001, he issued an Apostolic letter namely *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela* stating that a sin against the Sixth Commandment of the Decalogue by a cleric with a minor under 18 years of age is to be considered a grave sin, or *delictum gravius*.<sup>13</sup> In contrast to the accusation of covering up the cases by the prelates, Pope dared to acknowledge the great mistakes of the clergy and sought forgiveness from the people.

In November 2001 in his apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in Oceania*, John Paul II asked forgiveness from the victims for abuses committed by priests and religious. “In certain parts of Oceania, sexual abuse by some clergy and religious has caused great suffering and spiritual harm to the victims,” the Pope wrote. “It has been very damaging in the life of the Church and has become an obstacle to the proclamation of the Gospel.” He said that sexual abuse within the Church was a profound contradiction of the teaching and witness of Jesus Christ. He told that the Synod Fathers too join with him to apologize unreservedly to the victims for the pain and disillusionment caused to them”.<sup>14</sup> The western media appreciated the seriousness with which Pope responded to the issue. *The Los Angeles Times* reported, “The Church, he said, is seeking open and just procedures to respond to complaints in this area” and is committed to “compassionate and effective care for the victims, their families, the whole community, and the offenders themselves.”<sup>15</sup>

In his address to the Cardinals of the United States in April 2002, Pope said,

“Like you, I too have been deeply grieved by the fact that priests and religious, whose vocation it is to help people live holy lives in the sight of God, have themselves caused such suffering and scandal to the young. Because of the great harm done by some priests and religious, the Church herself is viewed with distrust, and many are offended at the way in which the Church’s leaders are perceived to have acted in this matter. The abuse which has caused this crisis is by every standard wrong and rightly considered a crime by society; it is also an appalling sin in the eyes of God. To the victims and their families, wherever they may be, I express my profound sense of solidarity and concern.”<sup>16</sup>

He further expressed his determination to see that Church will not be giving asylum to priests with abusive tendencies. He wanted the stand of the Church

should be made known to all people. He said, “People need to know that there is no place in the priesthood and religious life for those who would harm the young. They must know that Bishops and priests are totally committed to the fullness of Catholic truth on matters of sexual morality, a truth as essential to the renewal of the priesthood and the episcopate as it is to the renewal of marriage and family life.”<sup>17</sup>

About the response of John Paul II to the problem during his long period of leadership from 1978 to 2005, former Vatican spokesman Joaquín Navarro-Valls commented that Pope did not immediately understand the gravity of the sexual abuse crisis. “I don’t think Pope John Paul understood” the “cancer” of clergy sexual abuse immediately, said Navarro-Valls, adding: “I don’t think anyone did.”<sup>18</sup> But, the former spokesman said, once John Paul II became aware of the scope of the accusations being made against clergy, especially around the time of reporting on the Boston archdiocese in 2002, he “immediately” began taking action.<sup>19</sup>

## 4.2 Pope Benedict XVI

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), under Cardinal Ratzinger has won praise and recognition for his efforts to review and take action on a large number of priests accused of abuse of children. After becoming the Pope, he continued his efforts to responsibly deal with the challenge with greater seriousness.

A shift on the focus from protection of the name of the Church and the abusers to care of the victims was visible when Pope Benedict XVI wrote to the Irish Church expressing his feeling of solidarity with victims of clerical sexual abuse in Ireland and deep dismay about the clergy over their betrayal of Church. He wrote, “Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Church in Ireland, it is with great concern that I write to you as Pastor of the universal Church. Like yourselves, I have been deeply disturbed by the information which has come to light regarding the abuse of children and vulnerable young people by members of the Church in Ireland, particularly by priests and religious. I can only share in the dismay and the sense of betrayal that so many of you have experienced on learning of these sinful and criminal acts and the way Church authorities in Ireland dealt with them.”<sup>20</sup>

He said that the response from the prelates were inadequate and in order to heal the great wound it caused, the Church needs to acknowledge its failure before God and people.

“For my part, considering the gravity of these offences, and the often inadequate response to them on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities in your country, I have

decided to write this Pastoral Letter to express my closeness to you and to propose a path of healing, renewal and reparation.

I must also express my conviction that, in order to recover from this grievous wound, the Church in Ireland must first acknowledge before the Lord and before others the serious sins committed against defenceless children. Such an acknowledgement, accompanied by sincere sorrow for the damage caused to these victims and their families, must lead to a concerted effort to ensure the protection of children from similar crimes in the future.”<sup>21</sup>

If in 2004, as the head of the Vatican’s doctrinal office, he reopened the investigation into the accusations against Father Maciel, the founder of the Congregation of the Legionaries of Christ as Pope, he removed him from active ministry. And in 2010, he took control of the Legionaries of Christ, in what was then the Vatican’s most direct action on sexual abuse according to New York Times.<sup>22</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI acknowledged how sexual abuse has affected Catholic Church as a global institution when he said, “the power of evil penetrated so far into the interior world of the faith is a suffering that we must bear, but at the same time, we must do everything to prevent it from repeating.”<sup>23</sup>

Cardinal William Levada speaking on the occasion of the symposium for Catholic bishops and religious superiors on the sexual abuse of minors in 2012, recalled that Pope Benedict XVI in his reflections on the “Year for Priests” given on the occasion of the annual Christmas greetings to the Roman Curia spoke in direct and lengthy terms about priests who “twist the sacrament [of holy orders] into its antithesis, and under the mantle of the sacred profoundly wound human persons in their childhood, damaging them for a whole lifetime.”<sup>24</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI in 2010 approved and ordered the promulgation of the revised norms *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela* (SST). According to Cardinal William Levada, Pope Benedict deserves gratitude and appreciation for the steps he has taken instead of the attacks he received from the media.<sup>25</sup>

### 4.3 Pope Francis

Ever since he became Pope, Francis has been strongly condemning the child sexual abuse by clerics and has taken some important steps towards dealing with the issue. It is he who established the Vatican’s first pontifical commission dedicated specifically to the protection of minors in the Church.

In his letter to the bishops and major superiors communicating the establishment of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, he appealed for their full collaboration with the commission saying,

I now ask for your close and complete cooperation with the Commission for the Protection of Minors. The work I have entrusted to them includes providing assistance to you and your Conferences through an exchange of best practices and through programmes of education, training, and developing adequate responses to sexual abuse. May the Lord Jesus instil in each of us, as ministers of the Church, the same love and affection for the little ones which characterized his own presence among us, and which in turn enjoins on us a particular responsibility for the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.<sup>26</sup>

In April 2016, Pope Francis called sexual abuse of minors a “tragedy” and asserted that the Church cannot tolerate it and the abusers deserve severe punishment.<sup>27</sup> It is reported that he told this using a remarkably forceful tone.<sup>28</sup>

In his Apostolic Letter, “Like a Loving Mother” of June 4, 2016, Pope Francis reiterated his commitment at the care of the abused children. He wrote:

As a loving mother the Church loves all her children, but maintains and protects a very special affection smaller ones and helpless: this is a task that Christ entrusted to the entire Christian community as a whole. Aware of this, the Church dedicates a cure vigilant to protect children and vulnerable adults.<sup>29</sup>

“Such protection job and care belongs to the whole Church, but especially through its pastors that it must be exercised. Thus diocesan bishops, the Eparchs and those who have the responsibility of a particular Church, must employ a particular care in protecting those who are the weakest among the people entrusted to them.”<sup>30</sup>

Pope Francis in his letter to the Bishops around the world on 28 December 2016 has told that they must adhere to a policy of zero tolerance for clergy who sexually abuse children and begged forgiveness for “a sin that shames us”.

we also hear the cry of the Church our Mother, who weeps not only for the pain caused to her youngest sons and daughters, but also because she recognizes the sins of some of her members: the sufferings, the experiences and the pain of minors who were abused sexually by priests. It is a sin that shames us. Persons responsible for the protection of those children destroyed their dignity. We regret this deeply and we beg forgiveness. We join in the pain of the victims and weep for this sin. The sin of what happened, the sin of failing to help, the sin of covering up and denial, the sin of the abuse of power. The Church also weeps bitterly over this sin of her sons and she asks forgiveness. Today, as we commemorate the feast of the Holy Innocents,



I would like us to renew our complete commitment to ensuring that these atrocities will no longer take place in our midst. Let us find the courage needed to take all necessary measures and to protect in every way the lives of our children, so that such crimes may never be repeated. In this area, let us adhere, clearly and faithfully, to “zero tolerance”.<sup>31</sup>

Despite his avowed strong determination and pronouncements to bring about a thorough renewal in the Church to stop child abuse by the clerics, Pope Francis’ critics did not spare him. They say that he did not speak out on the subject more strongly and had to act more forcefully against abusers and those who have covered up abuse. They also accuse that though Vatican announced that the Pope had approved an outline for a new system of accountability for bishops who do not appropriately handle accusations of clergy sexual abuse, there has been no news of movement on that matter since.<sup>32</sup>

To such criticism, it should be noted that Pope Francis took stern actions against some bishops who were either involved or did not respond adequately to the problem of sexual abuse of children. An example might be that in 2015 Pope Francis ordered the trial and defrocking of a Polish archbishop accused of paying for sex with minors in the Dominican Republic.<sup>33</sup> In the spring of 2015, Pope Francis accepted the early resignations of three active U.S. bishops: Bishop Robert W. Finn of the Kansas City-St. Joseph MO diocese, and Archbishop John C. Nienstedt and Auxiliary Bishop Lee A. Piché, both of the St. Paul and Minneapolis archdioceses. All three had been investigated by public prosecutors and had generated negative press following revelations that they recently had harbored sexually abusive priests.<sup>34</sup>

## 5. STEPS TAKEN BY THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

Initially the problem of sexual abuse of the minors by clerics was addressed at the local level by the dioceses or by major superiors of the Religious Congregations. But as the problem emerged with such magnitude as to create its ripples all over the world, Vatican had to step in to advice, admonish and propose guidelines for addressing the issue.

### 5.1 Legislations to Deal with Sexual Abuse

The first most important step from the universal Church to deal with the issue of sexual abuse was to introduce more stringent laws. In 2001, Pope John Paul II promulgated the *Motu proprio Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela* (SST)<sup>35</sup> by which sexual abuse of a minor was included in the list of more grave crimes (*delicta graviora*) reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF). In the revised *motu proprio* of 2010, the prescription in the case of abuse of minors is changed from 10 to

20 years calculated from the completion of the eighteenth year of age of the victim. The canonical delict of acquisition, possession, or distribution of pedopornography is also specified in the revised *motu proprio*.<sup>36</sup>

Guidelines are given as regards cases in which measures are to be taken to restrict completely public ministry or at least exclude the cleric from any contact with minors and cases where dismissal from the clerical state is warranted.

In his Apostolic letter “Like a Loving Mother”, Pope Francis indicates how Church would handle the child abuse by clerics seriously by even taking serious actions like the removal from the office of those bishops who are negligent in dealing adequately with the issue.

With this letter I intend to point out that among those “good cause” is including negligence of the bishops in the exercise of their office, in particular in relation to cases of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, provided by MP *Sacramentorum Sanctitatis* Protection promulgated by Saint Giovanni Paolo II and amended by my beloved predecessor Pope Benedict XVI. In such cases it will be observed the following procedure.<sup>37</sup>

## **5.2 Circular Letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith**

Circular letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith<sup>38</sup> was another major step. The letter was sent in 2011 from Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to assist Episcopal Conferences in developing guidelines for dealing with cases of sexual abuses of minors perpetrated by clerics.

The Circular aimed to protect minors and to help victims in finding assistance and reconciliation. It clearly stated that bishop or his delegate should be prepared to listen to the victims and their families, and to be committed to their spiritual and psychological assistance. It pointed out the example set by Holy Father, Benedict XVI, who met with and listened to the victims of sexual abuse and had words of compassion and support. The Letter provided directions on the aspects to be included as the Bishops’ Conferences prepared their guidelines for the countries.

## **5.3 Care for the Victim**

If one of the most important failures of the Church in the response to the abuse of the minors was about attending to the victims, Circular letter from CDF demanded the bishops to make ‘attention to the victims first’ as a policy.

In the letter to Catholics of Ireland, Pope Benedict XVI expressed his solidarity with people who suffered on account of the clerical sexual abuse. He said, “You have suffered grievously and I am truly sorry. I know that nothing can undo the

wrong you have endured. Your trust has been betrayed and your dignity has been violated.”<sup>39</sup> Presently action plans are made by Church in various countries to listen to the stories of the victims, and provide the help necessary for coping up with the situation.

#### **5.4 Programs of Education and Prevention**

In order to ensure “safe environments” for minors, Church in different countries initiated programs of education and prevention. As noted in the circular of CDF, they are meant to help parents as well as those engaged in pastoral work and school administration to recognize the signs of abuse and to take appropriate measures. CDF observed that such programs of the Church have become models for the interventions against child abuse by anybody in the society today.

#### **5.5 Formation of Future Priests and Religious**

Church has provided guidelines for the screening of vocations and their formation in view of preventing sexual abuse by clerics and religious in the future. The statement of Pope John Paul II as he addressed the American cardinals, 23 April 2002, that there is no place in the priesthood and religious life for those who would harm the young<sup>40</sup> strongly cautioned about the selection of candidates to priesthood and religious life.

The Circular from CDF exhorts in the context of sexual abuses, to give more importance than ever for the human and spiritual formation of the candidates. It says, “In particular, candidates should be formed in an appreciation of chastity and celibacy, and the responsibility of the cleric for spiritual fatherhood.”<sup>41</sup> The document, *The Gift of Priestly Vocation (Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis)*, guidelines for priestly formation demands that greatest attention should be given to the theme of protection of minors and vulnerable adults during the formation. It says that persons with crime or problem behaviour in this area should not be admitted to Holy Orders. It further states that courses, seminars about the protection of minors should be included in the initial and ongoing formation programme.<sup>42</sup>

#### **5.6 On-Going Formation**

The Circular from CDF asks the Bishops to take special care for the continuing formation of the clergy, especially in the first years after ordination. The circular insisted on providing adequate information for the priests. “Priests are to be well informed of the damage done to victims of clerical sexual abuse. They should also be aware of their own responsibilities in this regard in both canon and civil law.”<sup>43</sup>

## 5.7 Legal Actions

In the pursuit of the cases, bishops are asked to follow thoroughly as possible the discipline of canon and civil law. Though a cleric is to be presumed innocent until the contrary is proved, bishop can limit the exercise of the cleric's ministry until the accusations are clarified.

As sexual abuse of minors is a crime, Church advises all concerned to cooperate with state authorities to do justice. This is to be done in cases not only against clerics but also those involving religious or lay persons who function in ecclesiastical structures.

## 5.8 Care of the Accused

CDF directs the bishops and major superiors to assure that appropriate measures are taken to guarantee a just process for the accused priest, respecting his fundamental right of defence. It is noted that the imposition of a permanent penalty such as dismissal from the clerical state requires a penal judicial process in accord with canon law (CIC can. 1342). For permanent penalties matter should be referred to CDF.

## 5.9 Organizing of Conferences on Sexual Abuse

To bring awareness of the problem and draw out strategies to deal with it, various seminars and conferences have been organized under the auspices of different organisms related to administration of Vatican ever since the problem came under scrutiny.

In April 2003, the *Pontifical Academy for Life* organized a three-day conference, entitled "Abuse of Children and Young People by Catholic Priests and Religious", where eight non-Catholic psychiatric experts were invited to speak to near all Vatican dicasteries' representatives. The panel of experts identified the following factors contributing to the sexual abuse problem:<sup>44</sup>

- Failure by the hierarchy to grasp the seriousness of the problem.
- Overemphasis on the need to avoid a scandal.
- Use of unqualified treatment centers.
- Misguided willingness to forgive.
- Insufficient accountability.

The international symposium "Toward Healing and Renewal," on the sexual abuse of minors held at Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, 6-9 February

2012 was intended to help bishops, religious superiors, and others in positions of special responsibility to make an honest examination of conscience, as requested by the Pope, and to be a stimulus to personal and ecclesial renewal. According to its organizers “symposium was intended to be another step in a long and painful journey that the Church has undertaken in order to deal with what Pope Benedict has called the “open wound” of abuse.”<sup>45</sup> An international seminar was conducted in Florence in April 2017 to instruct the bishops and Rectors and formators of the Seminaries regarding the care to be taken in formation of priests.

### **5.10 Establishment of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors**

Announcement of establishing the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors was made by Pope Francis in December 2013, and was instituted on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2014. The commission received its statutes on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2015. Its singular purpose is for offering proposals and initiatives meant to improve the norms and procedures for protecting children and vulnerable adults. Pope appointed to the Commission a number of highly qualified persons well-known for their work in this field. The commission began meeting with bishops and sponsoring training for Church staff worldwide.

### **5.11 Centre for Child Protection (CCP)**

The Centre for Child Protection (CCP) is among the decisive responses of the Catholic Church to acknowledge, respond to, and prevent abuse. CCP was launched in Munich in January 2012 by the Institute of Psychology of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in cooperation with the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising and the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy of the State University Clinic of Ulm. The founding of the CCP was part of a global initiative for the prevention of sexual abuse of minors. After successful completion of the pilot phase at the end of 2014, the CCP relocated its headquarters to Rome in January 2015. The main task of the institution is the creation of a global e-learning training centre for pastoral professions responding to the sexual abuse of minors, taking into account multilingual and intercultural issues.<sup>46</sup>

Presently Masters and Diploma courses on Protection of Minors is also offered in view of preparing personnel world over for dealing with issues on sexual abuse and helping for its prevention. CCP has organized in collaboration with other Church organizations various international seminars in Rome and many countries to enlighten people in authority and formation for evolving strategies in dealing with the issues related to child sexual abuse.

## 6. POSITIVE RESPONSES OF THE CHURCH IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES

### 6.1 In USA

The Catholic Church responded to the scandal at three levels: the diocesan level, the episcopal conference level and the Vatican according to the gravity of the problem.

Before the Boston Globe coverage of the sexual abuse scandal in the Boston archdiocese, handling of sexual abuse allegations was largely left up to the discretion of individual bishops. Many of the accused priests were forced to resign or were laicized. In addition, some bishops who were alleged to have participated in the cover-up were also forced to resign or retire. The dioceses in which abuse was committed or in which abuse allegations were settled out of court found it necessary to make financial settlements with the victims. In many instances, dioceses were forced to declare bankruptcy as a result of the settlements.<sup>47</sup>

As the scandal reached huge proportions the bishops in USA looked for collective strategies to respond adequately to the problem. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) came up with what is known as Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and Essential Norms which gave concrete action plans. In June 2002, the USCCB unanimously promulgated a Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. It stated in no unclear terms the intentions of the bishops to deal with the issue. They said, “We pledge most solemnly to one another and to you, God’s people, that we will work to our utmost for the protection of children and youth. We pledge that we will devote to this goal the resources and personnel necessary to accomplish it. We pledge that we will do our best to ordain to the priesthood and put into positions of trust only those who share this commitment to protecting children and youth. We pledge that we will work toward healing and reconciliation for those sexually abused by clerics.”<sup>48</sup>

The charter committed the Catholic Church in the U.S. to the goal of providing a “safe environment” for all children and youth participating in activities sponsored by the Church. To accomplish this, the U.S. bishops pledged to establish uniform procedures for handling sex-abuse allegations against lay teachers in Catholic schools, parish staff members, coaches and other people who represent the Church to young people.<sup>49</sup>

The thrust of the charter was the adoption of a “zero tolerance” policy for sexual abuse. It would involve suspension or defrocking of a priest after a single substantial accusation of abuse.<sup>50</sup>

At the June 2002 conference, to ensure that each diocese/eparchy in the United States had procedures in place to respond promptly to allegations of sexual abuse of minors, the Bishops also decreed Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priest or Deacons. The document of the Essential Norms was approved and promulgated in May 2006 after receiving recognition from the Holy See.<sup>51</sup>

The USCCB instituted reforms to prevent future abuse by requiring background checks for Church employees. They now require dioceses faced with an allegation to alert the authorities, conduct an investigation and remove the accused from duty.

The assessments in the later years confirm that it had great impact. According to Bishop Blase J. Cupich, then Bishop of Rapid City, by 2008 the U.S. Church had trained 5.8 million children to recognize and report abuse. It had run criminal checks on 1.53 million volunteers and employees, 162,700 educators, 51,000 clerics and 4,955 candidates for ordination. It had trained 1.8 million clergy, employees and volunteers in creating a safe environment for children.<sup>52</sup>

## **6.2 In Ireland**

After USA, it was the Catholic Church of Ireland came under the scanner of media for the alleged scandal of sexual abuses of the minors. The report of the Irish Bishops' Committee on Child Abuse (now known as the Bishops' Committee on Child Protection) published in 2003 acknowledged that child sexual abuse by clergy has occurred over an extended period.<sup>53</sup>

In an attempt to give more positive response to the problem, in June 2001, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Ireland established the Catholic Church Commission on Child Sexual Abuse to investigate how complaints about clerical abuse of minors have been handled over the past three decades. Later Bishops' Conference discussed about the report from the Commission and acknowledged that Church institutions failed to prevent an extensive level of sexual, physical and emotional abuse and neglect.

In 2006, the Church set up the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSC) to suggest ways to safeguard children, improvements in policy and to monitor practices and observance of policy.<sup>54</sup>

The bishops offered four immediate responses to address the issues raised in the report:<sup>55</sup>

1. Sadness over the "suffering of so many for so long."



2. An invitation to survivors to “engage with us” in an effort to understand how to assist the victims of abuse.
3. The intention to respond as pastors “despite the inadequacies at times of our previous pastoral responses.”
4. Praying for the “wellbeing and peace of mind for all who suffered” and urging all Catholics to join them in prayer.

### **6.3 In Australia**

In January 2013, the terms of reference were announced for an Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse which would investigate institutional sexual abuse of minors related, but not exclusive, to matters concerning clergy of the Catholic Church. Church collaborated with the Commission enquiry. Through the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, the Catholic Church established a national co-ordinating body, called the Truth, Justice and Healing Council, to oversee the Church’s engagement with the Royal Commission and the pastoral and other ramifications that arose from the sexual abuse scandal.<sup>56</sup>

### **6.4 In Various Other Countries**

Allegations have come up in various other countries too of the sexual abuse of the minors by clerics. Germany, France, Belgium, Malta, were under the scanner. In other countries like India it was more of a sporadic attention in the media and the impact was less. Learning from the mistakes of the Church where the problems emerged earlier, the responses of the Church in these countries were more positive. They were quick to acknowledge the mistakes, denounced the perpetrators, attention was given to the care of the victims, and collaborated with the secular authorities in the inquiry. These responses go along the lines of the present approach and instructions of Vatican.

When a case came up of a minor impregnated by cleric in Kerala, India, the bishop was quick to write a circular letter to the diocese expressing solidarity with the victim and collaboration with legal procedures of the Church and the state.<sup>57</sup> Most of the Bishops Conferences complied with demands of Vatican to draw out guidelines in dealing with the issues of the sexual abuse of minors.

## **7. EVALUATION OF THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH**

The responses of the Church, universally and locally, raises number of questions still worth discussing in view of a healthy way of dealing with the problem. We need

to clarify the basic questions underlying the problem and evaluate how they are addressed by the Church and look into their merits and demerits

## **7.1 Social Problem or Church's Problem?**

Child sexual abuse became a focus of attention with revelations of clerical sexual abuses in United States. But today it is recognized not as a problem confined to the Church or USA but as a social problem all around the world. Sam Miller, prominent Jewish Cleveland businessman has pointed out, "While much of the recent media hype has focused on the Catholic Church's paedophilia scandal, relatively little attention has been given to the high rate of sexual misconduct in the rest of American Christendom. This is truly a crisis that crosses the borders of all religions."<sup>58</sup> In fact, the Catholic Church has taken a lead in addressing the problem seriously and became a model in evolving programs to confront the problem.

The clerical abuse of the children itself is to be seen as evolving from a social situation variously called, 'sex revolution', 'sex freedom', 'sex anarchy', 'sex obsession' of which Pitirim Sorokin spoke as early as 1956 when he said, "Sex obsession now bombards us continuously from cradle to grave, from all points of our living space, at almost every step of our activity, feeling and thinking."<sup>59</sup>

While the society expects its priests should be above the sexual problems and live a life of sanctity, it is naïve to think that they would be unaffected by a culture which cares very little about the presence of sexual stimulations all around and hardly considers it as a moral issue. One should not forget that the candidates who enter priestly or religious life come from such a culture where moral consciousness about sexual matters are not adequately formed. Where pre-marital sex has become rampant and teenage sexual behaviours are not restrained by the society, priestly candidates too may not perceive it as serious matter. Church's failure was to pay sufficient attention to the possible impact of it on the candidates to priesthood and evolve formative plans to mould proper conscience. It should be added that even with our present awareness of the problem, it is naïve to think that it is possible to draw out a fool-proof formative plan to completely eliminate the problem.

## **7.2 Victim-first Approach**

In the initial response to the problem, the Church in its concern to protect itself failed to grasp the damage it caused to the victims of abuse and attend to them adequately. Popes Benedict XVI and Francis called the attention of the bishops and major superiors to the need of listening to the victims and caring them as the prime responsibility while dealing with cases of child abuse.

While the responses today reflect ‘victim-first’ attitude, it may be asked in some countries whether Church now fails in justice to the accused clerics. The bishops who were accused of protecting the abusers did it according to the prevalent understanding that they have a duty to protect the name of the Church and they had to be fatherly to their own priests. Having seen that it had the opposite effect, the Church authorities now seem quick to distance themselves from the accused and leave them with hardly any time given to hear their story. While that can help to avoid the accusing glare of the media, it is doubtful whether such an attitude is very Christian or just.

### 7.3 ‘Zero Tolerance’ and ‘One-strike-out’ Stand

Pope Francis has maintained that the Church has ‘zero tolerance’ towards child sexual abuse and there is no place for abusive people in the priesthood. Vatican has approved the stand of removing clerics from public ministry for grave reasons of child sexual abuse. Yet zero tolerance is not a concept about punishing priests but about preventing incidences of sexual abuse in the future. It is a proactive step to prevent such occurrences.

American Bishops’ Conference has taken the stand of zero tolerance to mean also the action of removal of the clerics from ministry for one substantial incident of sexual abuse of the minor. The revised Article 5 of the Charter says,

Diocesan/eparchial policy is to provide that for even a single act of sexual abuse of a minor — whenever it occurred — which is admitted or established after an appropriate process in accord with canon law, the offending priest or deacon is to be permanently removed from ministry and, if warranted, dismissed from the clerical state [...]. The diocesan/eparchial bishop is to exercise his power of governance, within the parameters of the universal law of the Church, to ensure that any priest or deacon subject to his governance who has committed even one act of sexual abuse of a minor as described below shall not continue in ministry.”<sup>60</sup>

This has raised many questions as whether ‘one-strike-out’ policy is basically Christian in nature and psychologically valid stand. It raises also other questions like what to do with such priests removed from ministry. The problem is indeed very serious when it is related to a young priest whether he is to be punished with either to have no ministry for the rest of his life or he is forced to seek laicization.

The question should be asked also whether an offender who has abused many children and a one-time abuser are to be considered in the same level. The ‘one-strike out’ policy does not make a distinction between a pathological case and a rare situational or developmental instance in the life of a priest. Not every case of sexual

abuse of minor is related to paedophilia or weird up-normality. The truth is that only a very minor portion is real sickness and beyond treatment.

While considering the possibility of healing and return to the ministry, the understanding of the human person from a psychological and spiritual perspective is to be considered. Psychologically the distinction is to be made between persons who can be treated and others who will have no much impact even with a long term therapeutic intervention. Psychological interventions and counselling are based on the belief that a person can change his behaviour. Maturity, psychologically or spiritually, is not usually achieved without its missteps and failures. Some of the sexual abuses happened in adolescent and early adulthood could be developmentally considered as coming from the normal curiosities and explorations normally expected at the adolescent or early adulthood stages of development. They should not be taken as serious offence so as to condemn the priest for the rest of his life, especially when it is a one-time incident and the person has psychological and spiritual resources to outgrow it.

To think that ‘once an abuser always an abuser’ is not psychologically true. Out of the priests treated with a comprehensive clinical program of long term treatment with excellent team, Fr. Stephen Rossetti found only 6.2 percent relapse.<sup>61</sup> So, though there is no cent percent certainty of perpetrator getting totally healed through treatment, to think that all perpetrators of child sexual abuse cannot change is not true.

One may happen to have an abusive relationship at a developmental stage towards adulthood out of curiosity or situational response. It need not necessarily mean that this person is dangerous. An expert evaluation of his maturity and religious values may be warranted in such cases than a drastic decision to put him out of ministry. Psychologists should be able to distinguish real paedophiles from those who had an occasional incident of abuse due to situational or developmental reasons who could be transformed with psychological and spiritual interventions. It might be more reasonable to keep the priests away from the contacts with children if they had abusive incidents in the recent past, say of five years, than to strike them out for an incident that happened many years back. If they are proved later to be living a holy life and responsible in ministry, they will deserve consideration.

#### **7.4 Need of a Christian Approach to the Perpetrators**

Jesus tells, “If anyone causes one of these little ones — those who believe in me — to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around

their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” (Mt 18:6). Causing one of these “little ones” to sin is a grave offence according to Jesus. If in Mark and Luke ‘the little ones’ appear to be referring to any believers, in Mathew, one may safely conclude, the context is more directly to the children. In verse 2, Jesus calls a little child and makes it stand amidst the people and his teaching is referring to the child. Any misuse of sexuality is condemned by Paul in strongest terms when it appears among believers. In 1Cor 6:18, Paul advises to flee from sexual immoralities. He tells, “Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality [...] these are improper for God’s holy people” (Eph 5:3). If that is the case for the believers in general, can we think of it happening among the priests and religious? It is very difficult to understand how such an evil like child abuse can find a place in the life of people who are dedicated to the work of the kingdom. The kingdom of God belongs according to Jesus to people who are like the little children (Mt 18:3). Paul asserts that people with such things as sexual immorality, homosexual behaviours shall not inherit the kingdom of God (1Cor 6:9-10). If so how can people with sexual abusive behaviours with children can ever be at the service of the kingdom! This is what makes clerical sexual abuse a serious contradiction. Paul advised the Corinthian Church to show no sympathy towards the one who made a grave sexual offense. He was surprised that such immorality that is not found even among pagans are found among the believers. He tells them that the Church should be feeling grief and ashamed about it. He told them to outcast such persons from the community (1Cor 5:1-5). Paul would not be certainly less harsh with child abusers!

If so the question is relevant whether Church should deal mercifully with child molesters, whether priests or lay people. When does Jesus show mercy to the offender? He remained harsh with the Pharisees and scribes who showed no sign of conversion. But to the sinners who expressed repentance, Jesus was kind and forgiving. To the woman caught in adultery he said, “I too do not condemn you, go now and leave your life of sin.” (Jn 8:11). To the repented thief, Jesus was generous to offer the kingdom of God, telling, “you will be with me today in paradise.” (Lk 23:43). Once repented and came back, the prodigal son is welcomed back unconditionally with compassion. (Lk 15:20). Paul who wanted the sinner to be severely treated, mellows down and tells, “The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, “you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore to reaffirm your love for him [...] in order that Satan will not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes” (2Cor 2:6-11). Punishment for Paul was to gain the sinner back to the Church and putting him out permanently is playing into the

schemes of the Satan. I think we have clear guidelines in dealing with offenders in these instances even when the sins are very serious in nature.

When dealing with perpetrators, however, we have other problems. When are we sure that the person has repented and he is determined to change his behaviour? Perpetrators are known for lying and so is it possible to believe in their verbal assurances? We may need some time before the seriousness of their decisions can be determined and until that time, supervision is required. Another problem is, even when the perpetrators in all honesty want to change, they may still be lacking the capacity to do so. They could be easily falling back to the abusive behaviours. Here too a reasonable time period — five years, as mentioned above — free from abusive behaviours gives reasonable guarantee of recovery and change.

Stephen Rossetti says, “The perpetrators of child sexual abuse have committed a heinous crime. However, the current trends toward ostracizing and demonizing perpetrators is not only unchristian, it actually increases their likelihood of re-offending [...]. We hate the sin, but we love the sinner. We despise what molesters have done, but we try to rehabilitate offenders, making them productive members of our society whenever possible.”<sup>62</sup>

So the question is, “What could be done with a perpetrator?” This is a difficult question. On the one side there may be a reasonable certainty that after a proper treatment, the relapse is very little. Still knowing that a certain percentage of possibility of relapse being true, can a priest be sent back to ministry? If sent, will he be accepted by the people? Should the bishop determine the future of a priest based on his acceptability by the people? Is it justice if he is confined to a ‘house arrest’ situation while perpetrators from the general public can be back to their work after the term in the jail is over?

While making decisions on the basis of fear of media and possible financial burden that the diocese or congregation may have to bear there is a danger that one may totally ignore the good of the accused. Some argue that once a priest is accused of sexual abuse of children he would not be accepted by the people in a parish. But can the acceptability by people be an important criterion for deciding the future of a priest? Further people are often divided about the acceptance of the priest – some will be for him, some others against. Hence the decision has to be based on whether there is a reasonably high risk about the person to be reinstated. We should not forget that some risk is always there about anybody as far as one is human, whether he had an incident of sexual abuse or not.

When dealing with cases from the past, it should be also evaluated whether the person who abused had at that time the same moral understanding of the issue as one has today. To apply a moral responsibility in retrospect to an action that was not done with such awareness and to judge the person as a threat to children is unwarranted.

Today the question could be asked whether the Church is too harsh with its own ministers? In the effort to protect the name and fame of the Church and priests the Church leadership earlier meted out milder treatment to their abusive priests and showed no understanding to the victim. Now the pendulum seemed to have swung to the other pole! Today they show little sympathy to the offending priests. With the fear of accusations and possible financial liabilities, the Church in some part of the world seems to over-react to the problem, especially in dealing with accused.

By keeping the priests to a lonely life with no meaningful ministries or de-frocking even after treatment and reasonable guarantee of healing, the Church might be able to restrict or eliminate the problem of clerical child abuse but inadvertently depriving itself the ministry of many who could have served the Church. Confinement and de-frocking might in turn aggravate the risk as they have little outlet for meaningful expression of their energy. While Church has to take reasonable precautions that children should not be put to risk, such stands as “one strike out” does not appear a Christian approach.

## **7.5 The Effects on the Non-offending Clergy**

The effects of the clerical child abuse is enormous also on the normal life of the priests who are living an honest life. Many countries, as a precaution to the possible abuses, have put stringent code of conduct over the priests in relation to children. While protective in nature they seem to undermine the natural interactions between priests and children. It has inadvertently affected the image of the priests in the society. Sometimes it gives conflicting images of priesthood. On the one side, we have the images of Jesus or of recent Popes welcoming children while now people are cautioned about priests in their own locality as if they are dangerous species! Is it fair to put a total restrain on the naturalness of relationships because of the existence of a few abusive priests?

In some countries, the problem has lowered the status and dignity of priests in the eyes of the public. Some people began to look upon priests as criminals and derogatory comments were made indiscriminately. To walk on the streets with priestly attire is no small challenge in some places. With bishops taking strong steps



to ward off abuses, bishops-priests relationship too is affected. Some priests began to feel that they have nowhere to go in their difficulties. At least in some dioceses, seminars were conducted to accompany the priests in their struggles to adjust to the new situation.

Another area where the impact will be felt is in the vocation. To respond to priestly and religious vocation is all the more challenging in the new context. The status and specialness of priesthood being lost and knowing that people might look at them with suspicion and contempt, it is but normal that less number of candidates would be found in vocational pursuit.

## **7.6 Response to Media**

While many have appreciated the media for bringing an important issue to the awareness of the society, often Church authorities have accused the media for its selective attention of the Catholic Church as an effort to malign its name and fame. As Miller, a Jew, points out about the situation in USA, "There is a concentrated effort by the media today to totally denigrate in every way the Catholic Church in this country. You don't find it this bad overseas at all. They have now blamed the disease of paedophilia on the Catholic Church, which is as irresponsible as blaming adultery on the institution of marriage. You and me have been living in a false paradise. Wake up and recognize that many people don't like Catholics. What are these people trying to accomplish?"<sup>63</sup>

It is also accused that such a focus came from political motives to divert the attention from more serious issues of the time. The question looks reasonable when researches show that the occurrences among Catholic priests of child sexual abuse is less than the percentage of the incidences among general population or in other Churches.<sup>64</sup> Arguably when something which has a claim of high morality and of social standing is affected with an evil, it would be more sensational and get more social attention. Media seems to have exploited this to its advantage. If the media is genuinely interested in eliminating a social evil, it needs to continue its fight against it whether it occurs in Catholic Church or other Churches or in the families or in any institutions. Can we expect it from a media which thrives on promoting sexual stimulations all around? Christian media has to make genuine effort to address the issue in the society by highlighting the effort of the Church towards eliminating the evil from the Church and society. At the same time we can consider it providential that media highlighted the degeneration of values within the Church and is now challenged for renewal. As Cardinal Reinhard Marx points out, "It is useless to rail against the media or condemn public opinion rather, we should be openly and

persuasively taking a stand through exemplary action, through conversations, and through clarifications in the media.”<sup>65</sup>

### 7.7 **Compensations to the victims**

One of the reasons the issue of child abuse by clerics received great attention in USA was due to the financial implications of it. Many dioceses and Religious Congregations had to pay a large amount in compensation to the victims of child abuse. Some lawyers are accused of making profit by searching for cases of clergy.

Why has the Church specifically become liable for huge compensations in some countries? Church has never in its history encouraged any of its members for an evil. On the other hand, the formation is for higher values and holiness. So the root of the problem is inherited from the family and the society. It is often found that victimizers were themselves victimised in their childhood. One could say that the clerical formation is inadequate to heal such backlogs the candidates carry with them as they join the seminary. The financial obligation should not have been a matter to be attended by the Church but of the society at large. It could be argued also whether the money that the people contribute to the ministries of the Church could be syphoned off for the compensation for victims of misbehaviours of some irresponsible or sickly priests. It is a pity that the attitude of the lawmakers in USA to implicate Catholic Church for the abuses of the priests was not challenged effectively. One wonders why no other institution was asked to pay such huge compensations as Catholic Church! Does monetary compensation really amend the problem? Church should have been asked to attend to alleviate the spiritual and psychological pain and damage caused to the victims. European countries were more reasonable in making the monetary compensation by the Church only nominal. But anybody would agree that above the legal prescriptions, Church should be keen to extent any help to the victims for their rehabilitation as part of the charity it is called to practice.

### 7.8 **Celibacy, Homosexuality and Paedophilia**

For the critics of the Church, the outbreak of the scandal of clerical child abuse provided a forum for criticising Church's stand on celibacy for priests. Surprisingly no less a theologian than Hans Kung sees a strong connection between *the celibacy rule* and *the abuse problem* and under this pretext, he seems to advocate marriage of the clergy.<sup>66</sup> But different studies<sup>67</sup> have shown that child abuse is not found more among celibates than the general population and celibacy is not connected in a serious way to the problem of abuse of minors. To ridicule the practice of priestly

celibacy or the teachings of the Church on priesthood on the ground of clerical child abuse is unwarranted.

The caution given by Vatican in admitting persons with homosexual orientation to priesthood was interpreted by some as a step to control the problem of child abuse by clerics. But paedophilia is not necessarily associated with homosexuality. Homosexuals are not particularly attracted sexually to children any more than heterosexuals.

## 7.9 Formation of Clergy

One area that requires particular attention from the Church today is the human formation of the candidates to priesthood and Consecrated life. As Pope Benedict XVI puts it, “We must accept this humiliation as an exhortation to truth and a call to renewal. Only the truth saves. We must ask ourselves what we can do to repair as much as possible the injustice that has occurred [...]. We must be determined to make every possible effort in priestly formation to prevent anything of the kind from happening again.”<sup>68</sup> *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, the instructions on priestly formation from the Congregation for Clergy has instructed that aspirants involved in any way with any problematic behaviours in this area are not admitted and formators should ensure that those who had painful experiences in the area of abuse receive suitable accompaniment.<sup>69</sup>

The different national and international seminars on child protection and prevention have been trying to bring home this idea to formators and Church authorities. Various national bishops’ conferences have also given guidelines for updating formation program to address the issue. The services of the Centre for Child Protection, Gregorian University, Rome is a big step forward to disseminate ideas and prepare personnel for helping Church authorities to plan and implement programs of prevention and protection.

## CONCLUSION

Catholic Church has been under heavy criticism due to the abuse of the clergy in the past decades. We should not forget that most of cases of abuses that came up are not of the recent occurrences. All that happened in a span of some fifty years or so came to the fore all at once and thus appeared huge in number. The problem received much public attention as it was concerned with people believed to be with integrity and high moral standards.

The Church as much as society has failed to perceive the magnitude of the evil. Church or society even now does not have the means to eliminate such a pervasive

problem. All it can make is an honest attempt to address the issue. The solutions initially taken by the Church were mostly inadequate and ineffective. Church was accused of complicity with an evil especially in such actions as transferring the accused priests to other places where the perpetrators still continued the abuse. But one cannot judge an action done in the past as wrong from the present awareness of the problem and its solutions. Today with such awareness of the damage on the victims and the repercussions on the abusers themselves, new occurrences are bound to be rare. As pointed out by Andrew Brown, “Certainly the safeguards against paedophilia in the priesthood are now among the tightest in the world. That won’t stop a steady trickle of scandals; but I think that objectively your child is less likely to be abused by a Catholic or Anglican priest in the west today than by the members of almost any other profession.”<sup>70</sup> We have better mechanisms too to screen out possible pathological cases of child sexual abuse. We should also admit that a minimum amount of risk is there about any human person.

Church has to be careful when drawing policies and action plans that it is not unduly influenced by the anti-Catholic attitudes of media or governments. It will be playing into the hands of those who want to tarnish the Church. Gospel values and the larger mission of the Church should be at the centre of focus. Learning from experiences, success and failures, Church has moved forward in addressing the problem in a healthier way. Church can today claim that it has done more than any other institutions in drawing out plans and projects for prevention of child abuse and protection of minors. After having put its own house in order, church can move forward to address the problem of over sexualisation and child abuse in the society at large.

The Church, government, society at large are to be collaborators in understanding and finding solutions rather than blaming each other or targeting one institution in particular.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> R.K. HANSON – F. PFAFFLIN – M. LUTZ, ed., *Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church Scientific and Legal Perspectives*, Vatican 2004, 5.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic\\_sexual\\_abuse\\_cases\\_in\\_Australia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_sexual_abuse_cases_in_Australia) (Retrieved on 23 April, 2017)

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic\\_sex\\_abuse\\_cases\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_sex_abuse_cases_in_the_United_States) (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic\\_sex\\_abuse\\_cases\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_sex_abuse_cases_in_the_United_States) (Retrieved on 15 September 2017)

<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman\\_Catholic\\_Church\\_sexual\\_abuse\\_scandal\\_in\\_Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church_sexual_abuse_scandal_in_Ireland) (Retrieved on 23 April, 2017)

<sup>8</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic\\_sexual\\_abuse\\_cases\\_in\\_Australia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_sexual_abuse_cases_in_Australia) (Retrieved on 23 April, 2017)

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*

<sup>12</sup> R.K. HANSON – F. PFAFFLIN – M. LUTZ, ed., *Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church Scientific and Legal Perspectives*, 196.

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/resources/resources\\_introd-storica\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/resources/resources_introd-storica_en.html) (Retrieved on 19 April 2017)

<sup>14</sup> <https://zenit.org/articles/pope-asks-for-aborigines-forgiveness-for-abuses-by-priests/> (retrieved on 19 April 2017)

<sup>15</sup> <http://articles.latimes.com/2001/nov/23/news/mn-7458> (from Los Angeles Times November 23, 2001, retrieved from internet on 19 April 2017)

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/resources/resources\\_american-cardinals-2002\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/resources/resources_american-cardinals-2002_en.html) (Retrieved on 19th April 2017)

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.ncronline.org/news/accountability/vatican-john-paul-ii-took-immediate-action-sexual-abuse> (retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*

<sup>20</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2010/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_let\\_20100319\\_church-ireland.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20100319_church-ireland.html) (Retrieved on 20th April 2017)

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/11/world/europe/papal-responses-to-sexual-abuse-in-the-church.html> (retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>23</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centre\\_for\\_Child\\_Protection](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centre_for_Child_Protection) (retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>24</sup> C.J. SCICLUNA – *al.*, *Toward Healing and Renewal*, New Jersey 2012, 3.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* p.5

<sup>26</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/letters/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150202\\_lettera-pontificia-commissione-tutela-minori.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/letters/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150202_lettera-pontificia-commissione-tutela-minori.html) (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-rails-against-child-sexual-abuse-saying-abusers-must-be-severely-punished> (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*

<sup>29</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco\\_lettera-ap\\_20160604\\_come-una-madre-amorevole.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_lettera-ap_20160604_come-una-madre-amorevole.html) (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*

<sup>31</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2016/documents/papa-francesco\\_20161228\\_santi-innocenti.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20161228_santi-innocenti.html) (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-rails-against-child-sexual-abuse-saying-abusers-must-be-severely-punished> (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/uk-pope-abuse-idUSKBN14O17O> (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.bishop-accountability.org/bishops/removed/> (Retrieved on 29 May 2017)

<sup>35</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/resources/resources\\_introd-storica\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/resources/resources_introd-storica_en.html) (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>36</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/resources/resources\\_norme\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/resources/resources_norme_en.html) (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>37</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco\\_lettera-ap\\_20160604\\_come-una-madre-amorevole.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_lettera-ap_20160604_come-una-madre-amorevole.html) (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20110503\\_abuso-minori\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20110503_abuso-minori_en.html) (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>39</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2010/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_let\\_20100319\\_church-ireland.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20100319_church-ireland.html), no. 6 (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>40</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2002/april/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_20020423\\_usa-cardinals.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2002/april/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20020423_usa-cardinals.html) (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>41</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20110503\\_abuso-minori\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20110503_abuso-minori_en.html), (I c.) (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>42</sup> *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, 202.

<sup>43</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20110503\\_abuso-minori\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20110503_abuso-minori_en.html) (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>44</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curial\\_response\\_to\\_Catholic\\_sexual\\_abuse\\_cases](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curial_response_to_Catholic_sexual_abuse_cases) (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>45</sup> C.J. SCICLUNA – *al.*, *Toward Healing and Renewal*, p. v.

<sup>46</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centre\\_for\\_Child\\_Protection](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centre_for_Child_Protection) (Retrieved on 20 April 2017)

<sup>47</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic\\_sex\\_abuse\\_cases\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_sex_abuse_cases_in_the_United_States) (Retrieved on 23 April, 2017)

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/2011-Charter-booklet.pdf> (Retrieved on 23 April, 2017)

<sup>49</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic\\_sex\\_abuse\\_cases\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_sex_abuse_cases_in_the_United_States) (Retrieved on 23 April, 2017)

<sup>50</sup> G.T. KURIAN – M.A. LAMPORT, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Christianity in the United States*, V, London 2016, 603.

<sup>51</sup><http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/2011-Charter-booklet.pdf> (Retrieved on 23 April, 2017)

<sup>52</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic\\_sex\\_abuse\\_cases\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_sex_abuse_cases_in_the_United_States) (Retrieved on 23 April, 2017)

<sup>53</sup>[http://www.bishop-accountability.org/reports/2005\\_10\\_Ferns/ferns\\_2\\_0\\_abuse\\_abusers.pdf](http://www.bishop-accountability.org/reports/2005_10_Ferns/ferns_2_0_abuse_abusers.pdf) (Retrieved on 23 April, 2017)

<sup>54</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman\\_Catholic\\_Church\\_sexual\\_abuse\\_scandal\\_in\\_Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church_sexual_abuse_scandal_in_Ireland) (Retrieved on 23 April, 2017)

<sup>55</sup> *ibid*

<sup>56</sup> *ibid*

<sup>57</sup> mattersindia.com, Internet News, Published on February 28, 2017

<sup>58</sup><https://fratres.wordpress.com/2008/06/24/redemption-comes-through-the-jews-jewish-businessman-sam-miller-whaps-anti-catholic-bias-in-news-media-full-text/> (Retrieved on 2 May 2017)

<sup>59</sup>Quoted in M. EBERSTADT, *Adam and Eve after the Pill. Paradoxes of the Sexual Revolution*, San Francisco, 2012, 13.

<sup>60</sup><http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/2011-Charter-booklet.pdf> (Retrieved on 23 April, 2017)

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*, 34

<sup>62</sup> C.J. SCICLUNA – *al.*, *Toward Healing and Renewal*, 35.

<sup>63</sup>[HTTPS://FRATRES.WORDPRESS.COM/2008/06/24/REDEMPTION-COMES-THROUGH-THE-JEWS-JEWISH-BUSINESSMAN-SAM-MILLER-WHAPS-ANTI-CATHOLIC-BIAS-IN-NEWS-MEDIA-FULL-TEXT/](https://fratres.wordpress.com/2008/06/24/redemption-comes-through-the-jews-jewish-businessman-sam-miller-whaps-anti-catholic-bias-in-news-media-full-text/) (Retrieved on 2 May 2017)

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.newsweek.com/priests-commit-no-more-abuse-other-males-70625> “Since the mid-1980s, insurance companies have offered sexual misconduct coverage as a rider on liability insurance, and their own studies indicate that Catholic churches are not higher risk than other congregations.”

<sup>65</sup> C.J. SCICLUNA – *al.*, *Toward Healing and Renewal*, 142.

<sup>66</sup> HANS KUNG, [http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/vatican/vatican\\_rattinger10.htm](http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/vatican/vatican_rattinger10.htm) (Retrieved on 2 April 2017)

<sup>67</sup> “According to the best available data (which is pretty good mostly coming from a comprehensive report by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in 2004 as well as several other studies), 4% of Catholic priests in the USA sexually victimized minors during the past half century. No evidence has been published at this time that states that this number is higher than clergy from other religious traditions. The 4% figure appears lower than school teachers during the same time frame and



certainly less than offenders in the general population of men.” (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/do-the-right-thing/201003/six-important-points-you-dont-hear-about-regarding-clergy-sexual>, Retrieved on 29 May 2017)

<sup>68</sup> C.J. SCICLUNA – *al.*, *Toward Healing and Renewal*, 141.

<sup>69</sup> *Ratio Fundamentalis Instructionis Sacerdotalis*, 202.

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/andrewbrown/2010/mar/11/catholic-abuse-priests> (retrieved on 29 May 2017)

## TRANSFORMATIVE PROCESS OF A GOD-ORIENTED JOURNEY – A MUST FOR CONSECRATED PERSONS

Joseph Mattam, SJ

The word “journey” normally refers to a movement from one place to another with a purpose. In the above title “journey” means the same as the process of a seed being buried under the earth, sprouting and becoming a fruit bearing tree. Or it is like the gradual growth of a little baby who spends most of his/her time sleeping and being fed, becomes a lively, mischievous toddler and eventually becomes a responsible wo/man. This process of growth is what we mean by ‘journey’ here.

The image of the seed I used above helps us to understand our growth process. We are seeds of God. God shares God’s life — that is what we are. It is not accurate to say, as we often do, that God shares God’s life “with us”, as though we existed independently of God’s sharing to be able to receive God’s life as something other than what we are. No, we are not there to “receive” God’s sharing; we *are* what God shares; we are the “contagious existence” of God. Our faith tells us that we are all created by the word of God, in the “image and likeness of God” (Gen 1:26ff). The creative word (*dabar*) of God presupposes no existing matter for God’s creation; hence we are saying that God brings us into existence by God’s sharing God’s own life, like a seed which is the self-gift of the tree.

The God we talk of here is the Holy Trinity: Father-Son-Spirit. Each *is* God and person by *being for and with the other*; *other-oriented-ness* is the very nature of God. This *other-oriented-ness* is what we see in creation, for everything in creation is other oriented; e.g. a tree produces fruit not for itself, but for others; similarly, the same other-oriented-ness is seen in the mission of the Son and the Spirit; this is also what we see in Jesus’ life: a totally other oriented life.

As we are created in the image of God, God’s dream for us is that we grow unto God’s own likeness, as revealed to us in Jesus Christ: “You have seen me, you have

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seen the Father”, said Jesus. Such then is our growth process. We have to keep Jesus in front of us, our gaze focused on Him so that we know what it is that we have to become, or in which direction we have to travel. It is not a restless, ‘hope-less’ urge to move away from the present to be something else, to be like someone else, but the inner urge to let the seed manifest all its potentialities. When a seed of God actualises its potentialities, it becomes like Jesus, for in Jesus God has shown us how God lives in human form. A seed of God, then, has to grow unto God’s likeness, unto the likeness of Jesus.

When we observe Jesus, we notice the following: Thanks to his Abba-experience he was a person rooted in God, truly a man of God; the awareness of his Father’s love, “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11) guided his life. He manifested this attitude in his prayer and his obedience; daily, mornings and evenings he spent time in silent prayer, he spent time with His Father. This led him to be totally free from all internal and external bondages like greed, lust, hatred, fear, attachment, poor self image, legalism and ritualism. Being free, he was able to love all, without any discrimination, without any limit. He loved all, even those whom he challenged and opposed; for example, he often opposed and even attacked the Pharisees, but he was not against any particular Pharisee and would accept the invitation of any Pharisee to be his guest. This inner freedom enabled Jesus to distinguish between the person and his/her behaviour, qualities, defects, group, gender, appearance which normally control our attitude to people. He could go beyond these and love the person even when he opposed his/her attitudes and actions which were not according to God’s mind and heart. Whenever he saw anyone in need, he reached out in compassion (see Luke 7:11ff); he brought newness and opened up a new future to anyone in a hopeless, ‘lost’ situation (see Jn 4:4-26; Lk 19:1-10). Jesus transformed the person, gave him/her a new future, new orientation, recreated the person. In other words, Jesus brought freedom and wholeness into the lives of people. Keeping the Father at the centre of his life, he committed himself to bring about the Kingdom of God and took responsibility for it. His own life and all his words and deeds were geared to bringing about the kingly rule of God, where there would be freedom, love and justice. This universal love became option for the poor, since he was living in an unjust situation, just as YHWH had made an option for the poor.

Such a God-centred life necessarily brought him into conflict with those in power, those who preserved a system that oppressed and dehumanized people, and they had him hanged on a cross by the Romans. But that type of life, that other oriented life could not be destroyed forever and so God raised him up to life, so

that he would continue his transforming, re-creating work in the world and be a continual presence of God through each one of us.

This very brief description of the life of Jesus gives us, the consecrated persons an orientation in our God-oriented “journey”. Our journey has to follow the path Jesus followed: rooted in God’s love, freeing ourselves from everything that enslaves, we love all, and commit ourselves to bring about the Kingly rule of God and we make an option for the poor and dis-privileged of society. This liberating process would just happen if one has an experience like that of Jesus; if however one does not have such an outstanding, extra ordinary experience, one need not despair, for as Jesus has shown us the way we can follow after him. We will need to spend time in silence with God in prayer. This, unfortunately, is neglected by many consecrated persons.

We have to become aware of the areas of un-freedom in us and recognize that ultimately we are responsible for our enslavement or freedom. If we remain enslaved to greed, lust for power, pleasure, consumerism, racism, casteism, hatred, fear, poor self image, and the values opposed to the Gospel of brotherhood and sharing, we are responsible. It is true that society, culture, religion and other forms of conditioning would lead us to un-freedom but remaining in it is our choice. Hence we have to decide to free ourselves from these and reject the power structures that keep millions enslaved and impoverished. Once we are free, we love, for love is our very nature; we are only removing the obstacles to let our nature manifest itself and live, to let our true nature be operational. Since we are in an unjust world, this love would mean that we make an option for the poor.

But love is a word that needs further clarification, as that word is used for all types of manipulative relationships. Jesus has enlightened us by telling us “Love as I have loved you”. Jesus has loved us as the Father loves (cf. Jn 15:9, 12; Mt 5:43ff). It is not any type of love, but the way Jesus loved: wholeheartedly, without ever letting the action, qualities, defects, appearance, the group or gender of the person hinder him from truly loving. This way of loving would mean understanding the other from his/her point of view, forgiving seventy times seven, being compassionate, being sensitive to the other’s needs and finally dying to oneself. That means, giving primacy to the other person and his/her perception of reality over one’s own. This way of being for and with the other totally unconditionally is the way we progress in our God-oriented journey. Such a life of love leads one to grow in true compassion; it makes us truly God-like, as God is compassion.

That would mean moving away from self seeking concerns to other- oriented behaviour. *It is a continual conversion* (Lk 24:47; Mt 28:19; Acts 2:38). Belief in

the Good News, in the unconditional love of God is the root of this movement of freedom from self-centeredness and bondage, to fellowship, justice and love — the Kingdom of God. The conversion is not a purely individual affair; it has to have its social effect. It is a conversion from agreeing to differentiating wealth and its systems; from individualism in religion and society to corporate existence; from spiritual and economic selfishness to the truth of the community and of the world which God loves; from rigid doctrines of private property and privatization of life to Trinitarian communion; from ritual preoccupation to pursuit of justice, from law to grace, from sacrifice to mercy. The Lima text on Baptism puts it this way: “Turning from idols and from selfishness to the living God, to Jesus Christ and to his people must become embodied in the believing community and socially expressed in a new life style” (no. 15). Conversion is rejection of sin and Satan. It means the rejection of greed, jealousy, lust, selfishness, etc., as we saw above.

The words of Swami Vivekananda may enlighten us: “This life is short, the vanities of the world are transient, but those who live for others alone live, the rest are more dead than alive. In this world, one has to always take the position of the giver. Give everything and look for no return. Give love, give help, give service, give any little thing you can, but keep out barter.” This is what Jesus had said long ago in the Sermon on the Mount.

Such a freedom enables us to reach out to others in love, and enable, empower and liberate people as Jesus did. Hence the poor become the centre of our concerns; we commit ourselves to their service, in empowering them and in being with them. Now concern for nature and its integrity too will have an important place in our priorities, as we are becoming aware of the great harm humans are doing to creation, and its effect on us humans.

There is another dimension to this ‘journey’: we have to grow to responsible adulthood; in other words, move away from being ‘infants’ to responsible adults. For many people, God is a paternalistic father who does everything for them, protects them, takes care of their needs, etc.. Belief in a paternalistic God keeps us infantile and we refuse to take up responsibility for our world and for ourselves. This is not what God would want of us. History shows us that God is not paternalistic, God does not do things instead of us, we and the whole of creation have to be the channels of God. God acts in and through us and hence, we have to become responsible channels of God’s creative, liberating love, acknowledging all the time the indwelling God as the source of our power and actions.

Another characteristic of this God-oriented journey is to be *in the present*. As God is in the Now, the God-oriented person has to be in the now; he/she has to

let go of the past and future and live in the present. Most people waste their life being in the past or the future, worrying about what has happened or is to happen; that way, they are not fully alive; life is in the present, in the here and now. A God-oriented journey would make a person to be fully in the present and thus be a channel of the God who is in the present.

We have also to understand that the path from where we are to where we want to go is not always smooth and straight. Jesus warns us that his way is “narrow”, but not impossible. The conditioning and the attractions of the world, wealth, power, greed, lust, and the like are going to be there all the time. Jesus himself was tempted. He had to overcome the temptations; but temptations are not bad — they are necessary for us to grow, they show us our real nature, our true mettle. When we hit those roadblocks our character, our determination, our true mettle reveal themselves and we progress. Hence Jesus also told us to pray “lead us not into temptation”. That means, we have to opt to live according to the way of the Kingdom of God by not hoarding, but sharing, caring, and forgiving, “seventy times seven” so that we all contribute to building up a human family of brothers and sisters.

This God ward journey implies that we keep an optimistic spirit always; for in spite of our awareness and efforts, it is likely that we fail, we fail to live up to what we want to, we fail to “do the more loving thing”. That need not discourage us — each set-back becomes an impetus to move forward trusting in that inner divine power which is inexhaustible and infinite. *When we have the goal clear in mind, then all obstacles and all setbacks become stepping stones for our growth.* When we have our goal clear, when we know where we want to go, our success is certain. Since we are born as sharers of the divine, and God is the indwelling power within us, as God is totally other oriented, “for the other”, we too can be sure that we will reach that goal, whether others recognise it and call us “saints” or not. The label is not important, but life and attitudes are.

If we do progress, it is thanks to the Divine power that is within us, not our own power, hence it is grace. This leads us to a true spirit of humility and gratitude, finding God in all things and in everyone and learning to respond to everyone with as much love as possible. The question we need to ask ourselves is: “what is the more loving thing in this situation?” and respond to that situation; we do not have a pre-determined agenda; we keep moving; for ultimately God is *the* mystery and if our journey is God-oriented, then it is into that mystery that we are moving.

A story that I read some time ago might help us to see that it is not the situation that determines us, but our attitudes.

While most of the parishioners of a village found it difficult to adjust to the functioning of their parish priest, there was an elderly lady who took things in her stride and adapted well to the administration of the past and the present parish priests of the Church. She enjoyed a healthy reputation because of her common sense and her amicable nature. The parish priest was curious to know the secret of her flexibility. So he visited her one day. The old lady was sitting in her well-maintained garden enjoying its beauty when the priest interrupted her silence. The priest finished enquiring about the lady's health and household and got straight to the purpose of his visit. "I came to visit you," he said, "for I have heard good things spoken about you and I gather you are the only person in the village who has not had problems or misunderstandings with any of my predecessors. What is the secret of your flexibility?" The old lady stood up, showed him her garden and replied: "Father, this garden was first looked after by my grandparents, then by my parents, then by my husband and myself and now it is looked after by my children and grandchildren. Although each one of us differed, perhaps sometimes lapsed in our gardening efforts, yet we manured, watered and maintained the garden in our own way. The plants and the trees have never grumbled about our gardening methods, but have given us fruits and flowers as they were nourished. They keep soaring upwards. "I used this lesson I learnt from nature in my dealings with the clergy who administered to the parish needs. Each priest has his own way of administration and yet all of you have a common goal — to meet the spiritual needs of the parishioners. And like the plants and the trees I always keep my eyes on the main altar, without concerning myself with the base issues."

To conclude let me merely add: this is a journey with Jesus, guided by His Spirit, with all those who are moving in the same direction. We support, correct, encourage, and carry each other to that fathomless Mystery of Love (cf. 1Thes 5.12ff). It is a journey unto Christ likeness, with the awareness of Jesus' Spirit guiding and leading us to continual dying to ourselves by living other-oriented lives. In other words, this journey is into Love, to let our love-ability to blossom and bear fruit, so that we become revealers of God and God's love; we become fruit bearing branches of the divine tree. Even though we do not know when we will reach the goal, we want to hear the Father tell each one of us: "You are my beloved daughter/son; I am well pleased with you."



## **CALLED TO FOLLOW AND CALLED TO LEAD: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SPIRITUALITY IN FOLLOWING AND LEADING**

**John Kennedy Michael, CMF & Allan B.de Guzman Ph.D.**

Empirical investigation on the role of spirituality in leadership effectiveness has found great interest in recent years. Corporate world and management institutes seem to have realized the importance of spirituality for creating lasting and great organizations<sup>1</sup> and are making efforts to integrate spirituality in management and leadership training and in work places. However, academic research in this regard seems to have taken a cautious approach towards religion which is systematically sidelined (considered ‘untouchable’) by an increasingly aggressive secular culture facilitated by liberal (‘liberated’ as they like to be viewed) philosophies ruling the world and a free and free-for-all media. It is a fact that in our present world influenced by secularism, rationalism, materialism and the ensuing consumeristic culture, organized religions and their dogmatic and moralistic stances have come under severe criticism.

In such a context, a growing number of researchers speak of “secular spirituality”<sup>2</sup> compatible to a secular setting which has nothing to do with religion. The attempt to divorce religion from spirituality becomes conspicuous. Many scholars emphasize the need for spirituality without any reference to religion while others recognize the inter-relatedness of spirituality and religion but still believe that spirituality can survive without religion<sup>3</sup> as religion is built around ritualism and dogmatism often leading to fanaticism and bigotry. Going into the details is not the scope of this article. Nonetheless, it is good to know the trends.

For an ordinary consecrated person (‘religious’ as normally called) or any believer religion and spirituality may seem to be inseparable — two sides of the same coin.

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Religion and religious practices do form the springboard for their spirituality to take off. In this article an attempt is made to share some of the findings of a research undertaken by the authors to study the role of spirituality among a group of educational leaders in their leadership life and practice, in Tamil Nadu, India. Thirty (30) educational leaders participated in the research: Christians (24 – a mix of lay people – Catholic, non-Catholic and consecrated persons), Hindus (4) and Muslims (2); male (20) and female (10). They consider themselves spiritual persons while valuing and recognizing unambiguously the role of spirituality in their leadership life and practice. Contrary to the “secular spirituality” propagated by many in the West, the participants of this research are believers and ardent members of their religions and believe that their religious practices play a role in the growth of their spirituality. The study followed a qualitative research approach employing phenomenological and grounded theory research designs. The emerged findings can contribute to our reflection on the leadership of consecrated persons, as most of us (religious) are engaged in various missionary endeavors (including education) involving some form of leadership role and function.

The phenomenological inquiry generated a model that explains the role of spirituality in empowering educational leaders with powers influencing the personal, relational and professional domains of educational leaders. The model is dubbed the wheel of spirituality power-steering educational leadership (figure 1).

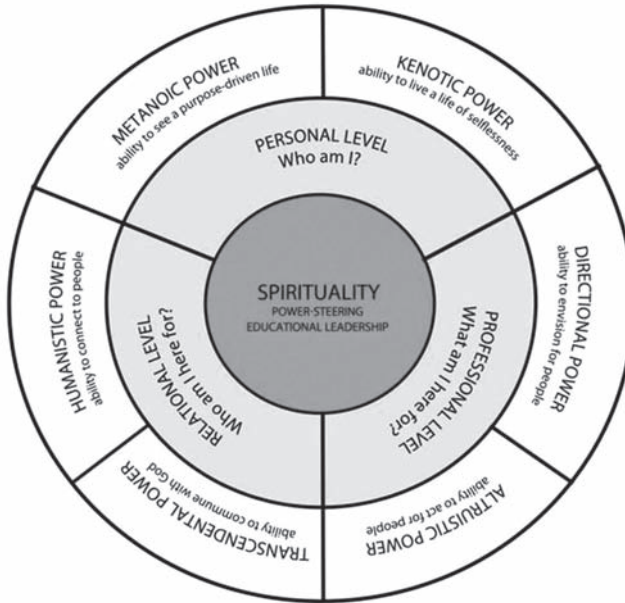


Figure 1– The wheel of spirituality power-steering educational leadership

Leadership is commonly defined as the ability to influence others and inspire them to achieve collective goals. John C. Maxwell expressed that, “Leadership is not about titles, positions or flowcharts. It is about *one life influencing another*” (emphasis added). One does not need to have a top job or position to be able to do what leadership requires doing — influencing and inspiring. “Leadership is a process of influence. Anytime you seek to influence the thinking, behaviour, or development of people in their personal and professional lives, you are taking on the role of a leader”<sup>4</sup>. The vital question is: who is able to influence people? Or when is one able to influence people? Or what does one need to do to be able to influence people? Power and position may instill fear and compliance but may not on their own evoke followership and admiration.

### **Leadership of “BEING”**

An important finding of the study pointed to the answer to the above question. A leader does not become effective because he/she holds a position, wields power or does many things. Leadership is primarily about being. Leadership doing (function) follows the kind of leadership being one is. Leadership is increasingly understood as what a leader is (being, behaviour and character) than what the leader does. What the leader does certainly counts. The simplest logic is: One’s doing cannot be good if one’s being is not good. One’s doing flows from one’s being. Trying to do good when one’s being is bad will be all faking and pretensions. “Leadership begins with being but ultimately results in doing”. Jesus, the servant leader (I came to serve, not to be served and to give his life as a ransom for many – Mt. 20:28) said, “You will recognize them by their fruits. Do you ever pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? A good tree always produces good fruit; a rotten tree produces bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit and a rotten tree cannot bear good fruit” (Mt. 7: 16-18).

Does one’s being become good automatically? We learn that everyone is innately good. If so, how does one bring out that goodness and remain in that goodness or enhance that goodness? This is where spirituality comes into play. Spirituality is often understood as the search for ultimate truth, beauty and goodness (*Summum bonum*): what really matters in life is man’s search for meaning as Viktor Frankl pointed out in his book. It is the quest to find the answer to the “Why” of life (He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how - Nietzsche). In the burgeoning western literature relating to the spirituality in leadership, spirituality is defined as a search for truth, meaning, purpose, self-realization and interconnectedness with fellow human beings and the universe<sup>5</sup>. Eastern spiritual traditions speak of the fruits

of spirituality as the awareness and realization of self and leading to the communion with the Supreme and the entire cosmos. This spiritual search to understanding the truth leads to finding answers to life's most important questions.

The research found that the impact of spirituality is primarily on the self (*Aham Brahmasmi* in Sanskrit); “the core of my being is the ultimate reality, the root and ground of the universe, the source of all that exists” according to Hindu philosophy; The Kingdom of God is within you (Lk 17:21), leading to personal transformation empowering them with *metanoic* and *kenotic* powers. Spirituality also impacted two other vital but related domains of the leaders namely, relational — empowering them with transcendental and humanistic powers and professional — empowering them with directional and altruistic powers. This article makes a modest attempt to expand a bit on some findings of the study related to the vital domains of the leader.

### **Spirituality – the empowering Force**

Spirituality for the educational leaders in the study does not preclude or exclude their faith in a religion (Christianity, Islam and Hinduism). They realize that their religious practices contribute to their spiritual growth. However, they go beyond the confines of dogmatism and ritualism often associated with their religion, to look for transcendent spiritual values. For them, their religion is a springboard for their spirituality rather than a stumbling block. The essence of their search experience (spiritual journey) leads to the discovery of truths such as: honest self-discovery, a reverential relationship to God (Ultimate / Transcendent Reality) which offers a sense that one is part of a whole, the connection to others and environment and the realization of a call to commit oneself, utilizing all available resources to creating a better society (vocation/mission) through service while transforming their own lives in the course of the journey. As one participant articulated, “When I am spiritual I have a cosmic consciousness, a feeling that the entire human race belongs to one family.”

Spirituality primarily shapes the ‘being’ of the educational leaders in this study which results in their admirable ‘doings’. The respondents expressed categorically and convincingly that spirituality is at the root of the transformation and consolidation of their personality as educational leaders, empowering them to live with integrity, credibility, honesty and humility. Educational leaders experienced spirituality to be the driving force, the source of energy, strength and power for their leadership life. One respondent verbalized, “Spirituality is my source. It makes me content with what I am, to be humble and confident. I see my spirituality as my energy and the basis of my life. Otherwise I feel something is lacking in me [...]

it is the yeast that leavens the whole dough of my life". Another explained, "Spirituality gives me inner strength and makes me resilient and enduring when the times are tough [...] it enables me to meet all challenges, and it helps me to stay on." Spirituality is like an abode that rejuvenates and revitalizes an educational leader with the requisite inspiration and enthusiasm. Spirituality provides uninterruptedly the force, strength and power to an education leader to influence and motivate members of his organization. Spiritual practices like prayer, meditation, reading or listening to scriptures and community celebrations form the bedrock of a steady supply of energy and enthusiasm. They explain that the springs of spirituality never go dry. As one participant metaphorically said, "See, spirituality is like charging the battery of a cell phone." Another participant succinctly expressed, "There is a driving force within me [...] that is spirituality. It is an inner force that keeps me moving. You may call it by any name, for me that is spirituality, the driving force. Without spirituality I will burn out fast."

Consecrated persons have been called to a life of union with God. "And Jesus appointed twelve to *be* with him [...] he wanted to send them to preach" (Mk 3:14). Being in communion with God is the primary purpose of the call for consecrated being. "Union with God — this is the heart of our spirituality and the heart of our spirituality as leaders".<sup>6</sup> This union will lead inevitably to personal transformation and the acquisition of powers (the religious may prefer to call them 'graces') so necessary for effective leadership.

## **SPIRITUALITY IN PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION**

### **Metanoic Power: The Ability to See a Purpose-driven Life**

The impact of spirituality likens to the 'yeast that leavens the whole dough'. A spiritual search for self-discovery often led them beyond their self-knowledge to self-transformation. Their experiences vouch for the fact that spirituality shapes educational leaders into *metanoic* personalities. *Metanoia* is a Greek term that stands for conversion — a fundamental change in the character and purpose of one's life leading to the commitment to a powerful cause that makes life meaningful. Spirituality while offering a new purpose and direction also empowers leaders in the formation of healthy and effective attitudes, habits, and practices. It leads to developing positive thoughts and outlooks. These psychological dispositions are of paramount importance for productive personal and professional lives. Spirituality helps in the cultivation of virtues, commitment to values. Their human maturity which includes cognitive, emotional and psychological realms is embraced and influenced by their evolving *metanoic* personality offering them the *metanoic power*

— the ability for self-transformation and lead a purpose —driven life. Calm, peaceful, kind, helpful, appreciative, resilient, loving, compassionate, humble and confident are some of the terms utilized by the participants to express their *metanoic* experience.

### **Kenotic Power: The Ability to Live a Life of Selflessness**

Simultaneously the *metanoic* persona of the leader is also experiencing the formation of a *kenotic* aspect in their personality — the other side of the coin. The Greek word *kenosis* means self-emptying or self- abnegation. The spiritually influenced educational leaders are ready to lose/sacrifice themselves in service for a meaningful and noble cause. Selfishness becomes meaningless for them. They consciously avoid any form of self-projection and self-promotion while gaining *kenotic power* — the ability for saying ‘no’ to all forms of greed and self-centered tendencies and joyfully forgoing one’s entitlements for the sake of others while growing in humility. *Kenotic* attitude and aptitudes lead to a personal disposition where there is an increase of self-transcendence which is indispensable for an effective leader. Growing as *metanoic* and *kenotic* personalities spurred by their spirituality they also develop a strong personal intelligence — the ability for comprehensive self-awareness and self-knowledge which includes the desire for maturity, the courage for transformation and the ability for ‘deeper living’.

As a result of their *metanoic* and *kenotic* experience, their whole personality voluntarily embraces virtues like humility, authenticity and integrity. These virtues are inevitable and indispensable for leaders to be able to inspire followers. Collins (2001) spoke of humility being the hallmark of level five executive — the highest level leader. Management consultant Patrick Lencioni (1999) defined, “humility as the realization that a leader is inherently no better than the people he or she leads, and charisma as the realization that the leader’s actions are more important than those of the people he or she leads. As leaders we must strive to embrace humility and charisma.” Does this not remind us of St. Paul’s exhortation to consider others as better than one self? “Let each of you gently consider the others as more important than yourselves. Do not seek your own interest, but rather that of others. Your attitude should be the same as Jesus Christ had” (cf. Phil 2: 3ff). Genuine spirituality leads to real self-knowledge and the graciousness of granting others their due.

Flowing from the *metanoic* and *kenotic* experience, leaders display characteristics relating to authentic leadership and self-sacrificial leadership much talked and written about in today’s leadership discourse. Authentic leaders know their strengths

and limitations and are able to put their mission and its needs before their own self-interests. They lead with their hearts or “lead from within”.<sup>7</sup> Authenticity creates an atmosphere of trust, confidence and credibility. Followers feel assured and certain and trust their leader. Trust and confidence lead to motivation and commitment. Self-sacrificial leadership embraces “voluntary self-limitation, vulnerability, being present to others, voluntary powerlessness, continual purification from self-centeredness, humility and openness to others”.<sup>8</sup>

### **Leadership of “RELATING”**

When a leader becomes transformed and transcends his ego, the dynamics of his relationship also experiences a metamorphosis. Simplicity, genuineness, humility and openness pervade his relationships. He is increasingly open to God and the movement of His Spirit. His relationship with community members and people around is marked by empathy and compassion. He is ready to listen, learn and relate in a whole new way. The essential environment of religious life is community — living with others in communion which is the first act of our mission. How good and delightful to see kindred living together in unity! It is like precious oil poured upon Aaron’s head, running down his beard onto the collar of his robes (Ps 133:1-2).

Spirituality creates conducive attitudes, docility and psycho-social dispositions in leaders for healthy, empowering and life-giving relationships. The participants in the study recognize unequivocally that their life will be meaningless without life-giving relationships with other people especially those with whom they deal on a daily basis owing to their leadership function. The journey towards the ‘other’ is an open and joyful journey. The obviously identifiable feature among the participating educational leaders in this study is their openness and capacity for relationships. A welcoming and warm attitude surrounds them. They are outgoing and their outer journey has a vertical dimension filling them with transcendental power (journey towards the Ultimate – God) and a horizontal dimension filling them with humanistic power (journey towards fellow human beings).

### **Transcendental Power: The Ability to Commune with God**

The leaders in the study realized that there is an inner desire and thirst to seek and connect to God (higher power). All the participants are believers, who attend to their religious practices regularly, although in different religions except two (one man and one woman) who confessed to be occasional (irregular) temple-goers and ritual-participants, but believe in an Almighty power and the ideals of their religion.



Their spiritual practices facilitate communion with God, ensuring of God's presence and accompaniment in all they do and filling them with transcendental power — the ability to move beyond the physical and visible to some power that unites all creatures with invisible bonds. They perceive God as someone who accompanies them in their work, encouraging and empowering them to do their best.

Living in constant relationship with the Almighty empowers the educational leaders to develop a sense of self-transcendence which takes them to higher levels of understanding of their leadership role and dedication. This promotes their spiritual intelligence, their ability to understand the unity of the universe, the creator and metaphysical realities and relationships and deal with them meaningfully. As one participant verbalized, "This is my personal understanding of spirituality that is self-transcendence. I am able to go beyond my own little boundary and reach out to God and when I get connected to God, I naturally move toward people. The more I am able to self-transcend and reach over to people and God, I am more spiritualized".

### **Humanistic Power: The Ability to Connect/reach out to People**

Educational leaders in this study understand fostering life-giving relationships as the heart of spiritual living and leadership. They look at their subordinates as partners and co-workers in a common mission. Friendliness, understanding, acceptance, encouragement and empowerment are the ways to influence people around to achieve collective objectives. Openness to listen actively, to respect others deeply and readiness to forgive are some of the hallmarks of a spiritually-led educational leader. Their spirituality fills their hearts with enormous power for humaneness — humanistic power. One participant voiced, "I am always searching for opportunity to give life as I read in the Gospel of John 10:10, 'I came so that they may have life, life in all its abundance' (Jesus), so that is where I see my spirituality, the effort to give life to those who are living with me, those who are coming in contact with me, so any effort to give life to those who come to me, I see as the essence of spirituality".

Spiritually-led leaders develop capacities of emotional intelligence inspired and enhanced by their spirituality. They tend to be compassionate and empathetic who can well understand their co-workers' feelings and psychological temperature and tendencies. They grow in their ability to accept, understand and forgive people. Another participant explained, "Forgiveness is another very important fruit of spirituality which is indispensable for a leader." They estimate human resource as the critical asset to achieve their organizational goals. Therefore they learn to relate consciously and reverently with the Almighty (vertical relation) and positively and

compassionately with people around (horizontal relations) constantly being on an 'other-oriented' outer journey. Deep listening to one another, collective and courageous discernment and decision making, desire for self-empowerment and empowerment of other brothers and sisters are some of the qualities of spirituality-led leaders.

### **Leadership of “PERFORMING”**

The search for answers to the question “what am I here for?” led them to find their calling (vocation) to be servant leaders and to contribute their part to creating a better world. As leaders they felt the urge to use the resources at their command to improve their institutions though empowering members and building up communities. Their actions, emerging from their convictions reflect the values and ethical standards that guide their life and mission as leaders.

### **Directional Power: The Ability to Envision for People**

The leaders in the study strongly felt called to carry out a noble job for the sake of the world. Hence they are filled with tremendous passion for their work. Their spirituality gives them the impetus and clarity of vision as leaders of educational institutions. Their compelling vision fills them with energy, enthusiasm, inspiration and power to move the organization in the direction of realizing that vision (directional power). They are passionate to offer an education for societal change, egalitarian society and values promotion. As one educational leader verbalized, “Yeah, certainly, because of the spirituality, we are able to have a vision that is broader, that can envelop all sorts of people [...] a vision that seeks people’s welfare, a better society and not profits”. The passion and positive attitudes that ooze around them and the commitment they display are contagious.

Spiritually-driven educational leaders unequivocally feel they have a great responsibility to contribute to society through the education they impart. Education is the tool that can bring about change in the society. As one participant educational leader responded, “If God has not touched me, called me and strengthened me, I would not have joy in my life, the passion for my mission in the middle of hurdles and challenges. I attribute my leadership to God, his word and my spirituality”.

### **Altruistic Power: The Ability to Act for People**

The educational leaders in the study have a strong sense of a mission to be achieved. Spiritually-led leaders necessarily, as they articulate, turn out to be serving persons, willing to contribute their best to improve society through their leadership

responsibility. A sense of altruism overpowers them and they are inspired by an urge to serve. They put their heart and soul into their service and cherish their mission as educational leaders. Their active love manifests itself in unending altruistic service (altruistic power). One participant narrated, “Passion to achieve is part of my spirituality. I want to do the maximum with my life. As long as I can I should be of help to others, serving them. Service is integral part of spirit-led leadership.” Another expressed, “I enjoy being a leader, being a servant leader, rendering my service in whichever way possible and I see my leadership here is enhanced because of my spiritual experience.”

Educational leaders prompted by spirituality hone their capacities for social and moral intelligence which manifest in their commitment to human, social and moral values, ignited with the passion to contribute to creating a better world (the religious may call it the Kingdom of God) through their accomplishments as educational leaders in collaboration with all co-workers, thus engaged continuously on a goal-oriented group journey.

Summarily, the study found that the power and nourishment the leaders experience flow from their spirituality. Almost everyone acknowledged that they would not be the kind of leaders they are without their spirituality. Based on their experience some even wondered how one can be an effective leader without a firm spiritual foundation. As one participant verbalized, “I can vouch from my experience: if you want to be an effective leader you need to be a spiritual person. And if you are not a spiritual person but an efficient leader, the impact that you create in your administration may be only fifty percent. Efficiency backed by spirituality, you will do well, achieve a hundred percent”. Another expressed, “When you are a spiritual person, the aura of influence automatically spreads in your environment”. Spirituality powers educational leaders’ personal (being), relational (relating) and professional (performing) lives.

### **Points to Ponder**

Pope Francis calling the consecrated persons to “Wake up the World” in the year of consecrated life wrote in his apostolic letter, “the apostolic effectiveness of consecrated life does not depend on the efficiency of its methods. It depends on the eloquence of your lives, lives which radiate the joy and beauty of living the Gospel and following Christ to the full” (no.1). Personal joy abounds in self-transformation and self-emptying guided by the Gospel and its values. Such person’s presence (being) brings joy to people. Mahatma Gandhi invited people, “be the change you want to see in the world”.

Consecrated persons at some point of time in their lives felt inspired by the ideals and vision of Jesus and they felt attracted, influenced and called by Christ — the servant leader. Achieving conformity with Christ through our spiritual practices is the primary objective of consecrated life (cf. Rom 8:29; Col 3:10). Our calling includes the invitation to offer moral and spiritual leadership to the community in which we live and work. In the light of the above findings of the study, certain points (questions) are worth pondering.

The study found that spirituality has the potentiality to transform people's lives (achieving conformity with Christ, exuding the joy of the gospel). What role does our spirituality have in our life? How much are we embracing and engaging in life-changing spiritual practices? Or how willing are we to open ourselves to the transforming powers of spirituality? Are we constantly on the path of spiritual maturation through reflection, prayer and contemplation?

The participants in the study experienced ongoing *metanoia* and *kenosis* spurred by their spirituality. Does our spirituality help our personal transformation and self-transcendence? Spirituality helped the leaders in the study to become open, humble and warm in relationships, grow in positive attitudes, compassion, empathy and forgiveness. What role does our spirituality play in defining our relationships with our brothers and sisters? Have we overcome our narrow-mindedness leading to divisive tendencies based on clan, region and language? Are we becoming increasingly loving and serving people fostering community living? Spirituality clarified the purpose and vision of leaders in the study. Consecrated persons are invited to participate in the purpose and vision of Christ — the kingdom of God. How much are we focused and passionate about this vision (passion for Christ, passion for humanity)? Are we really and joyfully living our life in service? A sincere and serious reflection can help us renew our response to God's call and make it more meaningful and fruitful, bringing joy within us and to people around us. Spirituality can become the empowering force that facilitates our following of Christ our servant leader and in turn serve as leaders, leading people to God and His Kingdom.

"It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but by attraction" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 15). Our life and leadership can offer that attraction. A fragrant flower does not need advertisement. (You catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar – Proverb). The fragrance spreads automatically. Humility, simplicity, honesty, integrity and service-mindedness are fragrances that smoothly and pleasantly spread. People like them and like to be in the presence of those who embody them and are delighted to listen to them and follow them.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. COLLINS, J., *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't*, NY 2001. See also JONES, L., "What Does Spirituality in Education Mean? Stumbling towards Wholeness", *Journal of College and Character* 6/7 (2005) 1-7; THOMPSON, S., "Hidden Strength: Encouraging Spiritual Leadership Attributes among School Leaders", *Kentucky Journal of Excellence in College Training and Learning* 10/9 (2002) 107-118.

<sup>2</sup> GEIGLE, D., "Workplace Spirituality Empirical Research: A Literature Review", *Business and Management Review* 2/10 (2012) 14-27.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Fry. W.L., "Toward a Theory of Spiritual Leadership", *The Leadership Quarterly* 14/6 (2003) 693-727.

<sup>4</sup> BLACKABY, H. – BLACKABY, R., *Spiritual Leadership*, Nashville 2011, 182; BLANCHARD, K. – HODGES, P., *Lead like Jesus*, Nashville 2005, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. ASHMOS, D.P. – DUCHON, D., "Spirituality at Work: A Conceptualization and Measure", *Journal of Management Inquiry* 9/2 (2000) 134-145; CRUMPTON, A.D., *An Exploration of Spirituality within Leadership Studies Literature* [access: 10.09.2015], <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Crumpton-paper.pdf>. 2011

<sup>6</sup> Cf. FARNAN, V., "Spirituality for Leadership in a Changing Church" [access: 22.09.2015], <http://enews.mercyworld.org>

<sup>7</sup> Cf. LOWNY, C., *Heroic Leadership*, Chicago 2003; PAWAR, B.S., "Leadership Spiritual Behaviors toward Subordinates: An Empirical Examination of the Effects of a Leader's Individual Spirituality and Organizational Spirituality", *Journal of Business Ethics* 122/3 (2014) 439-452.

<sup>8</sup> McDERMOTT, M.H., "Self-sacrificial leadership" [access: 23.09.2015], <http://cfnthethevoice.com/self-sacrificial-leadership>.

# A LIFE ANCHORED IN GOD'S LOVE, SEEKING AFTER HIS JOYFUL HEART: THE MEANING, HISTORY, CHARACTERISTICS, AND THEOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

**M.V. Johnson, OFM and Dr. Francis Fernandez**

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The word 'religious' is a complex term. It can mean either the vowed members of religious institutes or the institutes themselves. It can also be used as an adjective to describe all of the persons, objects and activities that relate creation to the Creator. Thus all believers, members of religious congregations and secular Christians, as well as members of other faith traditions and many, who align themselves with no institutionalized faith tradition, can be considered as religious people.<sup>1</sup> However, in this article we use the word 'religious' to designate the vowed members or consecrated persons of religious orders or Institutes in the Catholic Church, and the term 'religious life' to identify the life of the religious in these religious orders or Institutes.

Much ink has been spilled in the attempt to answer the question: who are the consecrated religious? Religious life in the church has been adapting itself since its inception and we have every reason to believe that religious life will continue to evolve according to the signs of the times and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Today, religious life is seen as a life of participation in the mission of God, a life of proclamation of the Good News of Jesus, a life of witness of the gospel radicality, a life of liberating service of the Kingdom of God, a life of prophetic dialogue with peoples and cultures, a life of inclusive loving concern for all creatures and creation, and a life of prayer and contemplation. Though an all-inclusive definition of religious life valid for all eternity may remain a utopian ideal, this essay makes an attempt to trace back the origins of religious life and to describe religious life by studying its meaning, history, significant characteristics and theology.

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## **1.1 A GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE MEANING OF RELIGIOUS LIFE**

The life of a religious in a religious order is called religious life and it can only be described in the light of the membership and existence one has in a particular religious order.<sup>2</sup> The religious binds himself or herself to God through the evangelical counsels by a sacred promise, in virtue of which one is “totally dedicated to God by an act of supreme love, and is committed to the honour and service of God under a new and special title.”<sup>3</sup> Religious life is embraced under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit and approved by Church authority as an authentic expression of the Christian vocation.<sup>4</sup> In the canonical sense, religious life refers to one form of consecrated life, characterized by public profession of the Gospel counsels, observance of common life, and some form of “separation from the world.”<sup>5</sup>

Religious life is a conscious, explicit, constant expression of separation from this world. It is part of the overall service of religious in the Church to bear public witness. It is a call to identify with God as Person, who is ‘totally other’ from all that He has made.<sup>6</sup> Religious life is a call to become free and creative, to love truly and to be part of a community, prophets in God’s name, speaking on God’s behalf. It is a charism within the Church, a charism of radical freedom and radical love. It is a following of Jesus by profession.<sup>7</sup> Religious life is a particular way of living out the baptismal vows by the single-minded devotion of oneself to the worship and service of God.<sup>8</sup> Religious life is charismatic and prophetic both in its origin as well as in its mode of operation. It is a permanent gift in the Church. Religious life is the public and institutionalized recognition of the fact that human experience includes a dimension that goes beyond history. It is fundamentally an experience of hope and confidence in God beyond the present.<sup>9</sup>

## **1.2 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE**

It is extremely difficult to date the origins of religious life. The phenomenon of a lay reforming movement can be found as early as the 6th century before Christ. The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls brought to light signs of religious communities in pre-Christian Judaism.<sup>10</sup> Already in the first generation of Christians, we see virgins and ascetics present in the local Churches. Acts 21:8-9 speaks about the four daughters of Philip the evangelist. These virgins with the gift of prophecy lived in their father’s house. During this period, the Judaeo-Christian Churches were characterized by an ascetical tendency. These ecclesial ascetical communities were



living a life that we today would designate as a monastic life. These communities were known as the Sons and Daughters of the Covenant, about whom we are informed by St. Ephrem at Nisibis and Edessa, and by St. Aphrahat in Persia. However, formal monasticism appeared at the end of the third century.<sup>11</sup>

However, most historians opt for the second half of the third century (250-300 AD) and trace the origins of Christian religious life to Northern Egypt. There was a wide diversity of ways of living the religious life. One of the earliest practitioners was St. Antony (251 -356) who, towards the end of the third century, gave away all his possessions and retired to live as a solitary ascetic at Pispir in the Egyptian desert. In the desert, living together with other ascetics, these devotees of God witnessed the primacy of God in their lives through their unusual and amazing way of life.<sup>12</sup>

Hence, there is no single system of classification, as we find a diversity of religious groups that existed in the Christian tradition. The following classification, based on the charism and similarities among different congregations, are discussed in the following pages.

### **1.2.1 Eremitic Orders**

Eremitism is a form of monastic life characterized by solitariness. The words 'eremitical' and 'eremitism' are derived from the Greek *eremia* meaning desert, wilderness or uninhabited region.<sup>13</sup> These two root words indicate that in this form of religious life, the social dimension of human existence is totally sacrificed to the primacy of religious experience in the desert or in uninhabited regions. Therefore, eremitical life is regarded as the purest and most perfect form of a life consecrated to God. Eremites live only in order to cultivate their spiritual life through prayer, meditation, reading, silence, asceticism, manual work and intellectual pursuits. Eremitism suppresses all relationships.<sup>14</sup> In the 3rd century and thereafter, young men and women abandoned the cities for the solitary life in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Arabia and Europe. This vast eremitical experience generated a rich spiritual literature. This literature greatly influenced all major currents of Christian spirituality.<sup>15</sup> Eremitism is a general term binding a diversity of ways in which individuals in the Middle Ages lived their lives disconnected from the secular world in order to experience the divine. They dedicated themselves to the service of God.<sup>16</sup>

### **1.2.2 Cenobitic Orders**

The English words cenobite and cenobitic are derived, via Latin, from the Greek words *koinos*, (common), and *bios* (life), meaning common life. It designates a monk or one who lives in community as contrasted with a hermit living separately from

others. The cenobitic model originated in the Eastern Church under regulations composed by St. Pachomius in the 4th century.<sup>17</sup> The eremitic life was healthy for some but led to imbalance in others. Thus, St. Pachomius understood that some monks needed the supervision and rhythm of a community (cenobium). He is generally credited with founding the first community of monks in Thebaid, northern Egypt, thus launching the cenobitic style of monasticism.<sup>18</sup> The word cenobitic is also used in a technical sense for anchorities who occupy separate dwellings, observe the rule of silence, and live as a community of monks in a common enclosure.<sup>19</sup> It is an early form of monastic organization which began primarily as a flight from the world in search of inwardness, recollection and a life hidden in God.<sup>20</sup>

### 1.2.3 Monastic Orders

The Greek word *monos*, from which monasticism and all its cognates derive, means one, or alone. According to this etymology, the basic monastic person may be a hermit, a wandering ascetic, or simply someone who is not married or a member of a household. However, the term monastic normally refers to people living in a community and thus embraces the cenobitic as well as the eremitic and nomadic lifestyles.<sup>21</sup> The term *monachos* as a substantive was a Christian creation. In the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas the word is used in the general sense of a solitary, or single-minded, or celibate person. In the second half of the fourth century, the word came to be restricted to ascetics who withdrew from the Christian community to do battle with the demons either alone or in community.<sup>22</sup> Christian monasticism owes its origin to the desire of leading a life of perfection. The chief aim of the monk is personal sanctification. The day of the monk is spent in the two activities of prayer and work (*ora et labora*). The Divine office (*opus Dei*) is the centre and source from which both his private prayer and work draw their inspiration.<sup>23</sup> Christian monasticism is based on loving focus on Christ, worship, personal prayer, study of scripture, spiritual reading, and simplicity of life and shared goods.<sup>24</sup> Monks are persons who have gone apart to be alone and one with God. They have gone apart to find silence to pray, to live in communion with God. Monastic life is meant to foster a deepening faith, a faith that comes from listening. Monks believe that they do not have a lasting dwelling place here; they are en route, they are pilgrims.<sup>25</sup>

### 1.2.4 Canons Regular

In the course of time, Christian monasticism needed an alteration to correct abuses as well as to reinvigorate its ideals. Toward the end of 11th century Pope Gregory VII initiated the much-needed reformation, which had a twofold effect: the birth of the canons regular and the emergence of a new monastic order, the

Cistercians. Unlike monks, canons were a group of clergy residing at the diocesan cathedral, who lived in common and performed various ministries under the guidance of a bishop.<sup>26</sup> They had a share in the revenues of the Church and were bound to live a common life. 'Canon' as an ecclesial title was first applied to all clergy on the official staff of a diocese, but gradually the word was applied only to those secular clergy belonging to a cathedral or collegiate Church.<sup>27</sup> However, in the course of time, the canons assumed many features of monastic life.<sup>28</sup>

### **1.2.5 Mendicant Orders**

The term mendicant or mendicancy comes from the Latin *mendicare*, meaning to beg. It denotes renunciation of all worldly possessions and the practice of begging alms from door to door. The custom is of ancient origin and its observance assumed a varied character from place to place. The general impetus for the phenomenon seems to derive from the idea that the discipline of living solely on alms is conducive to the attainment of spiritual goals.<sup>29</sup> It was a Spanish canon regular, Dominic, and Francis of Assisi, who were responsible for the emergence of mendicant friars or mendicant orders. Unlike the canons or monks, the mendicants could move about freely to carry out the tasks of teaching, preaching, studying and serving the poor.<sup>30</sup> In the early Christian history, pious mendicants used to wander through the cities and countryside, preaching and begging alms. The Council of Lyons approved the four mendicant orders, namely, Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites and Augustinians (1274). St. Francis of Assisi insisted that his followers own nothing, for they were to be pilgrims and strangers in this world, living with confidence in God's care and subsisting on alms received from those among whom they preached and worked. After the death of Francis and Dominic, Church authorities mitigated the orders' rules to allow for possession of worldly goods.<sup>31</sup>

### **1.2.6 Religious Institutes**

A religious institute is a society in which the members pronounce public vows, either perpetual or temporary, which are to be renewed when the period of time has elapsed. They lead a life in common as brothers or sisters. The public witness to Christ and to the Church which is carried out by the religious demands a separation from the world proper to the character and purpose of each institute (Cf. Can. 607). Religious institutes were also called apostolic institutes. The adjective 'apostolic' comes from the Greek *apostellein* meaning to send. It implies the sending of a messenger on a special mission with the emphasis on the relationship between the messenger and the sender. Until the Middle Ages the word 'apostolic' implied either a relationship to the twelve apostles, or it referred to the attachment to the

Chair of Peter, or to any preacher sent by Rome.<sup>32</sup> Religious institutes followed an apostolic spirituality. The term ‘apostolic spirituality’ refers to an understanding and integration of one’s life in terms of participation in the saving mission of Jesus.

### **1.2.7 Secular Institutes**

Secular institutes are societies whose members, lay or clerical, dedicate themselves to a life of apostolic work and observance of evangelical counsels while living in the world. Pope Pius XII in his Apostolic Constitution, *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, published on 12 February 1947, formally recognized secular institutes as a new category of the state of perfection. The members live and work in the world (in *saeculo*). Persons do not change their canonical condition when becoming members of a secular institute. Vatican II recognizes secular institutes as one of the forms of seeking perfection.<sup>33</sup> The members of the secular institutes do not make public vows or wear distinctive habits.<sup>34</sup> They express and exercise their own consecration in apostolic activity. The lay members participate in the evangelizing function of the Church through the witness of a Christian life and fidelity to their own consecration. They also cooperate in the service of the ecclesial community according to their own secular way of life. The members of the same institute are to preserve communion among themselves as brothers or sisters.<sup>35</sup> They do not live in common but support each other in pursuit of the profession to which they are called.

## **1.3 THE SIGNIFICANT CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE**

The religious orders within the Catholic Church have certain common characteristics. Some of the main features are prayer life, community life, faithfulness to the charism of the founder, the following of the evangelical counsels, certain ascetical practices, formation, relation to the Church and administration.

### **1.3.1 Prayer Life of the Religious**

The prayer life of the religious emphasizes the value of being in contrast to excessive activity and productivity. Prayer is important in developing a contemplative attitude towards life and its values.<sup>36</sup> Religious life cannot be sustained without prayer, which is individual, communal, and liturgical. The religious are called to pray and like Jesus deepen their union with God (Lk 5:16). Prayer is a necessary condition for proclaiming the Gospel (Mk 1:35-38). Prayer of the religious is not only a personal turning to God but also a community response of adoration, intercession, praise, and thanksgiving. It is only through prayer that the religious are ultimately able to respond to their consecration.<sup>37</sup> “The religious is less than faithful to Jesus’ example if he fails to pray much and to pray regularly.”<sup>38</sup>

### **1.3.2 Community Life of the Religious**

Community life is one of the supreme values in religious life. Creating a community means to identify a common unity in Christ and to break down the barriers that divide one from another. Community is *koinonia* - being together in communion with Jesus.<sup>39</sup> Common life, formed on the model of the early Church, should be lived in prayer and the communion of the same spirit. The community must be a real family gathered together in the name of the Lord. Furthermore, the unity of the members is a visible guarantee that Christ will return.<sup>40</sup> Religious community life derives from a common experience of God, and it matures out of a faith experience.<sup>41</sup> It is superficial and fragile if it rests only on common religious interests, such as a mutually acceptable theology or shared apostolic objectives. Authentic religious community exists only when the source of being together is the Lord Himself. Community means something similar to the give-and-take of a good relationship.<sup>42</sup>

### **1.3.3 The Charism of the Founder**

The word 'charizma' means grace. Charism is "a grace given for the sake not only of the recipient but also and primarily for the up building of the Church."<sup>43</sup> It is not easy to define the term charism or grace.<sup>44</sup> The word 'charism' has many shades of meaning. In the New Testament (NT) it is used especially of a quality in God. This quality is God's graciousness and benevolence towards man, his favour and good will. This graciousness of God manifested and communicated itself through Jesus Christ and all that he did for us. The effects in us of his work can also be called grace.<sup>45</sup> There are four well-known lists of charisms in the Pauline writings (1Cor12:8-10; 1Cor12:28-30; Rom 12:6-8; and Eph 4:11). The charisms are gifted to the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers. There are two elements essential in the charism of the founder and that of each religious order: the charismatic and the institutional. Both are essential, as one needs the other. The charismatic element is a constituent of the religious life. The institutional element guarantees that the changes are organic, evolutionary and not revolutionary, so that religious life in its ever-changing forms and through all the processes of development will remain connected to the life lived by Jesus with his apostles. Without the institutional element as a point of reference, the charismatic aspect becomes explosive and atomistic, the principle of chaos. On the other hand, without the charismatic element, the institutional element ends up in moribundity and sclerosis.<sup>46</sup>

### 1.3.4 The Evangelical Counsels

Religious life is a state of life in the Church, entered into by perpetual profession, and constituted by evangelical counsels.<sup>47</sup> Evangelical counsels or religious vows are promises or oaths made to God in religious institutes. The religious vows are the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. There are other particular vows: to serve in the mission lands, to be at the disposal of the pope, the vow of stability, the vow to educate children and so on. There are private and public vows. Canon law and the teachings of the Church, regulate the nature, the extent and the purpose of religious vows. Holy Scripture, Council Documents and the teachings of the Popes explain the meaning of the religious vows and how they should be lived. The Superior General of the particular religious community also gives specific directions to their respective members.<sup>48</sup>

Evangelical poverty is the radical sharing and renouncing of all that a religious, as a human person, has and all that a religious is and hopes to be, after the example of Jesus and the founder of the religious order. The religious, through the vow of poverty, imitate Christ the Poor. "The deepest root of our religious vow of poverty is the readiness it affords those who live it to love God with total abandon."<sup>49</sup> The vow of obedience is listening to Jesus and imitating him, who came to serve and not to be served.<sup>50</sup> Evangelical obedience is listening, serving, obeying, and imitating Jesus even to the point of suffering and death. It is living the paschal mystery, the mystery through which we participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The consecrated virginity of a religious constitutes more appropriately the vow of chastity. Consecrated virginity means that the religious be personalized and possessed by Christ. It is an exclusive and total commitment to Jesus Christ. The vow of chastity is a total and selfless commitment to love based on an experience of God's unconditional love. It is rooted in an experience of the kingdom of God. The vow of celibacy is the radical relationship of love towards God and the neighbour.<sup>51</sup>

### 1.3.5 Asceticism of the Religious

The word 'ascetical' or 'asceticism' comes from the Greek *askesis*, which means exercise, training and discipline. The ascetical life is appropriating the divine gift of grace by training oneself through the works of purification. Ascetical practices, methods and programs are designed to deepen the union with God. Ascetical practices are human strategies for spiritual living. They have elements of deprivation and voluntary suffering. Effective asceticism is the work of grace, not merely heroic will power or high tolerance of pain.<sup>52</sup> The asceticism of the religious includes fasting, sexual continence, participation in prayer, humble acts of service, acts of submission

and rejection of the individual will, acts of altruism and charity, submission to the liturgical worship, and participation in the sacraments.<sup>53</sup>

### **1.3.6 Formation of the Religious**

Etymologically, the term 'formation' is derived from the Latin verb *formare*, which means to mould. Formation can also mean education, instruction and learning.<sup>54</sup> Religious formation is a process that brings about a transformation in a person which affects one's entire life.<sup>55</sup> Religious formation includes various dimensions such as human and Christian, and the study of one's own religious order.<sup>56</sup> It is a lifelong process, lasts all through the life of a religious, and ends only at death.<sup>57</sup> It is the development of the human person to the point where one attains a sense of his/her responsibility in the use of freedom.<sup>58</sup>

### **1.3.7 Relation to the Church**

Religious life is "a gift of God which the Church has received from her Lord and which by his grace she always safeguards."<sup>59</sup> The Church sees and values religious life as a commitment both by herself and to herself, to the point that it's difficult to imagine the Church without the work and witness of so many consecrated women and men. The Church as an institution no longer sees herself without religious life.<sup>60</sup> The religious are "called to be an ecclesial community in the Church and in the world, witnesses and architects of the plan for communion, which is the crowning point of human history in God's design."<sup>61</sup>

### **1.3.8 Administration of the Religious Orders**

The administration of the religious Order is based on faith and on the reality of the religious' response to God in community and for a mission. The government of the religious institute reflects the Christian hierarchy, of which the head is Christ himself. It is a form of government that expresses Christian values and a particular form of religious authority. The Church confers it at the time of the establishment of an institute and by the approval of its constitutions. It is an authority invested in the superiors for the duration of their term of service at general, provincial and local levels. There is no good government without an honest respect for the principle of subsidiarity. The principle of subsidiarity is fostered by and the union between the head and the members of religious communities is expressed especially through the chapters and councils. The purpose of the latter is to help the superior by giving independent feedback.<sup>62</sup> The religious superiors do not exercise their authority in isolation. They have the assistance of a council whose members collaborate with



the superior according to norms that are constitutionally established. In their task of administration religious superiors are God's trustees, with the right and duty to protect and help the subjects entrusted to their care. The religious superior is the human steward for the divine Master. The ideal is that he or she should reflect in himself or herself the image of Christ. So, the graces the religious superior receives are given to him or her not through his or her office but in view of the fact that he or she has to govern. This faith in the providence of God is the answer to the doubts and anxieties arising from the human limitations of a superior. The perfection of the superior's judgments and actions is not divinely guaranteed, but God's effective love towards all is guaranteed. In the religious government that functions according to the mind of Christ, the mystery of incarnation is present.

## **1.4 SCRIPTURAL AND MAGISTERIAL UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGIOUS LIFE**

In order to arrive at a scriptural and theological understanding of religious life, we need to delve into the teachings of the Holy Scriptures and the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church.

### **1.4.1 Old Testament Understanding**

The Old Testament (OT), even if it does not speak directly about the religious life, foreshadows it in a number of individuals and groups that appeared alongside the official institutionalized structures of Judaism to serve the special needs of the community. The first of these were the Nazirites, individuals who consecrated themselves to God for the divine service. They manifested this externally by vows of uncut hair, abstention from strong drink, and total evasion of contact with the dead. The second group, somewhat similar to the Nazirites but united into a community, was called the Rechabites (Jer 35). They devoted themselves to the retention of the nomadic ways of life as a protest in the name of Yahweh against adaptation to the pagan ways of Canaanite culture. The third group, one more important than the above two groups, which foreshadowed religious life, consisted of the prophets. They were men with a special vocation to the service of Yahweh and the people of Israel, working for the purification of doctrine and morals. Even at the time of St. Anthony, Elijah was considered as the precursor of all religious life by reason of his continual awareness of God, his eremitical sojourns, his purity of heart and his life of prayer.<sup>63</sup>

Another exceptional prophetic figure was Jeremiah. He is the first biblical character to embrace celibacy as a state of life. He did this to symbolize in his own

person the sterility and death confronting the people of Israel (Jer 16:1-4). Just as significant as the prophets in the context of religious life was the spiritual movement centering on spiritual poverty that existed among the Jews after the exile. Their poverty consisted of a complete dependence on God alone with no trust in the world and its values. Towards the end of the OT period, forms of life closely similar to the religious state emerged. Celibacy was observed among some of the Essenes. The Qumran community not only possessed a strong sense of life in common and a rigorous discipline of obedience, but also enjoined celibacy and dispossession of property on its inner group.<sup>64</sup>

#### **1.4.2 New Testament Understanding**

The real roots of religious life are found in the New Testament. The ultimate source of religious life is the poor, celibate, and communitarian life of Jesus Himself. The ideal of life after the example of Jesus was lived in a new form with the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. The first Christian community, after the Pentecost experience, was formed to be an exemplar of the values that should be visibly present in the Church throughout her history. The thrust of religious life in the course of its history has always been to evoke, restructure and continue the life of Jesus as practised by the Apostles. This life of first Christian community was a fellowship of one heart and one soul, living in an organized manner centered on the Apostles, as the ambassadors of Christ. It was animated by the 'breaking of the bread' and by prayer, and committed to voluntary surrendering of property. Therefore, religious life witnesses to the ideal Christian community described in Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37. It is the model of a collective response to the mystery of the Church, not only with respect to common life, shared prayer and worship, but also with respect to its source, namely, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.<sup>65</sup>

The values of this apostolic community included virginity and celibacy. The daughters of Philip, the Evangelist were charismatic virgins with the gift of prophecy (Act 21:9). It is obvious from 1Cor 7, where Paul talks about Christian virginity, that the inclusion of virginity as a primary Christian value for those called to it was part of the first catechesis given to the converts.<sup>66</sup>

The Gospel of Matthew chapter 19 can be considered as the charter of religious life. Matthew presents the teachings of Jesus in a way peculiar to the nature of the Church existing at the time he wrote his gospel. After a preliminary clause on divorce in verses 10 to 12 of chapter 19, Matthew presents Jesus saying that in the Christian community there must be some people with a particular vocation to be eunuchs — celibates who have abandoned the use of sex for the sake of the

kingdom. It means that people with the extraordinary vocation to it will prefer celibacy since thereby they are already in a state similar to that of the fullness of the kingdom, where “they shall neither marry nor be given in marriage” (Mt 22.30).<sup>67</sup>

Another characteristic of the Church brought out by Matthew’s presentation of Jesus’ words, ‘sell what you possess and follow me,’ is in striking contrast to the presentation by Mark 10:17-22 and Luke 18:18-23. In Mark and Luke poverty is presented to a particular person as something he needs if he is to gain eternal life. But the person involved in Mathew’s Gospel is explicitly said to be a young man to whom poverty is offered as a means to enter the special class of the perfect. The perfect by their profession of poverty mirror in their lives the values of the final stage of the kingdom where the only possession will be the vision of God. Matthew, therefore, envisions the existence of two special types of persons in the community; the celibates and the perfect. Both types are called to special functions by which the eschatological values of the fullness of the kingdom will be expressed in the community.<sup>68</sup>

Therefore, religious life, as seen in the NT, is an imitation of the life of Jesus and of the apostles. It is following the life and mission lived by the apostles in the company of the Lord and taught by the apostles to the first Christian community, and which was encapsuled in later monastic life. Hence, religious life, as observed in the NT, is firstly to follow Jesus and carry out the demands of Jesus as the apostles did, and to make this response during a whole lifetime. Secondly, religious life is an apostolic life because it tries to embody the ideals of community as this was constituted by the apostles in the early days of the Christian Church.<sup>69</sup>

#### 1.4.3 Magisterial and Theological Understanding of Religious Life

Abundant are the teachings of the Church on the religious or consecrated people in the Church. The following are some of the principal documents of the Vatican Council and of the post-conciliar period on the biblical and theological identity of religious life. The dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* (1964), the decree *Perfectae Caritatis* (1965), the exhortation *Evangelica Testificatio* (1971), the document *Mutuae Relationes* (1978), the document on the *Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life* (1980), the document on *Vocation Ministry* (1982), the Instruction on Essential Elements (1983), the exhortation *Redemptionis Donum* (1984), the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), the exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (1996), *Starting Afresh from Christ: a Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium* (2002), a letter of Pope Francis to consecrated men and women (2014), *Service of Authority and Obedience* (2008), *Rejoice*, the apostolic

letter of his holiness Pope Francis to all consecrated people on the occasion of the year of consecrated life (2014), the apostolic constitution *Vultum Dei Quaerere* on women's contemplative life, (2016). However, in the following section, we consider only two magisterial documents, which are generally considered to be the most essential and contain whatever is said in other documents on religious life, namely, *Perfectae Caritatis* and *Vita Consecrata*. We will conclude this section after glancing through the most important recent teachings of the Church on religious life after *Vita Consecrata*.

#### **1.4.3.1 *Perfectae Caritatis***

The decree *Perfectae Caritatis* (PC) on the adaptation and renewal of religious life, deals with the concrete reality of religious life. PC starts with a reference to *Lumen Gentium*, which affirms that the evangelical counsels reveal the presence of the Kingdom of God. It presents the evangelical counsels as the surpassing value of consecrated life, a value that has a preeminently Christological character (PC 1). The following are the main magisterial teachings on religious life;

- i) Religious life as a life established within the norms and the precepts of the Church: Religious life is to assist the Church in her mission and support “her for every good work” (PC 1-2).
- ii) Religious life as a life lived in the religious communities: PC distinguishes the major types of religious communities as contemplatives, monastic orders, religious institutes, and secular institutes (PC 7-11).
- iii) Religious life as a life dedicated to living the evangelical counsels: The document talks about the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience (PC 12-14).
- iv) Religious life as a life centred on certain specifics: The document deals with some of the basic aspects of religious life, namely: communal living, papal cloister, habits, education and formation (PC 15-18).
- v) Religious life as Institutional: The document also deals with institutional aspects of religious communities (PC 19-24).<sup>70</sup>

#### **1.4.3.2 *Vita Consecrata***

The Vatican II document *Perfectae Caritatis* mandated the religious Congregations to return to the sources of their foundations. *Vita Consecrata* (VC), the apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II, kept up this momentum with enhanced theological insights.<sup>71</sup>

- i) Religious life as rooted in the life and teachings of Jesus: VC talks about consecrated persons in the Church, as deeply rooted in the life and teaching of Jesus, and as a gift of God to his Church through the Holy Spirit. The foundation of consecrated life is Jesus, the poor, chaste and obedient son of God. “The Consecrated Life, deeply rooted in the example and teaching of Christ the Lord, is a gift of God the Father to his Church through the Holy Spirit” (VC 1).
- ii) Religious life as a distinct form of life in the Church: The consecrated persons in the Church, as icons of transfiguration, are called to represent and reflect the transcendence, the immanence, and the intimacy of the Transfiguration of Jesus that Peter, James and John experienced (VC 1).
- iii) Religious life as an anticipation of the Kingdom of God: The consecrated life is an anticipation of the Kingdom of God here on earth. “In the heart of the Church and the world, monasteries have been and continue to be eloquent signs of communion, welcoming abodes for those seeking God and the things of the spirit, schools of faith and true places of study, dialogue and culture for the building up of the life of the Church and of the earthly city itself, in expectation of the heavenly city” (VC 6).
- iv) Religious life as image of Christ the Lord: The consecrated life transforms the religious into images of Christ the Lord, fostering through prayer a profound communion of mind with him (Phil 2:5-11), so that their whole lives may be penetrated by an apostolic spirit and their apostolic work may be imbued with contemplation (VC 9).
- v) Religious life as a gift of the Holy Trinity: The consecrated life is a gift of the Holy Trinity. It “proclaims what the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit, brings about by his love, his goodness and his beauty” (VC 20).
- vi) Religious life as a life rooted in the paschal mystery: The consecrated life is a life deeply rooted in the paschal mystery of Jesus. “by its fidelity to the mystery of the Cross, it confesses that it believes and lives by the love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In this way it helps the Church to remain aware that the Cross is the superabundance of God’s love poured out upon this world, and that it is the great sign of Christ’s saving presence, especially in the midst of difficulties and trials” (VC 24).
- vii) Religious life as an eschatological sign: The consecrated persons are signs of the Spirit pointing to a new future, enlightened by faith and by Christian

hope (VC 26). “This is clearly shown by the history of the consecrated life, which has always borne abundant fruit even for this world. By their charisms, consecrated persons become signs of the Spirit pointing to a new future enlightened by faith and by Christian hope. Eschatological expectation becomes mission, so that the Kingdom may become ever more fully established here and now” (VC 27).

- viii) Religious life as sign of holiness: The consecrated life witnesses the gospel beatitudes and holiness of life. “The consecrated life thus continually fosters in the people of God an awareness of the need to respond with holiness of life to the love of God poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5)” (VC 33).

#### **1.4.4 Church's Teachings on Religious Life after *Vita Consecrata***

We see a paradigm shift in the Church's self-understanding of religious life in its post-synodal teachings on religious life. The same was again re-emphasized in the recent teachings of the Church.

- i) Religious life for God's glory and salvation of the earth: The religious life is a consecrated life. Consecration is the basis of religious life. By insisting on this, the Church places the emphasis on the initiative of God and on the transforming relation to him which religious life involves. Consecration is a divine action. God calls an individual whom he sets apart for a special dedication to himself. God offers the religious the grace to respond so that consecration is expressed on the human side by a profound and free self-surrender. It is a covenant of reciprocal love and fidelity, of communion and mission, established for God's glory, the joy of the person consecrated, and the salvation of the earth.
- ii) Religious life as deeply ecclesial and rooted in Christ: Religious life is rooted in Christ who was sent by the Father to do His work. The religious are dedicated to God and sent into the world. Their vocation is the active proclamation of the Gospel through works of charity and compassion. For this reason, the apostolic activity of the religious is not simply a human effort to do good but an action that is deeply ecclesial. It expresses a consecration by God which sends the religious to serve Christ in his members in concrete ways (EN 69).<sup>72</sup> The religious life is flooded with an apostolic spirit and all their apostolic activity with a religious spirit.

- iii) Religious life as Prophetic Witness: *Starting Afresh from Christ: a Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium* in 2002 goes further and calls religious life prophetic witness. The Spirit calls the consecrated people to a continual conversion to give new vigour to the prophetic dimension of their very existence.<sup>73</sup> The document highlights religious life as a gift of the Trinity for God's chosen people, and their call to holiness and their lifestyle as a powerful prophetic witness to the others.<sup>74</sup>
- iv) The Religious as bearers of joy, the gift of the Gospel: The consecrated religious are to take joy in the fact that they have been chosen and called by God. The consecrated people are persons who glow with the joy of the gospel, "wherever there are consecrated people, there is always joy." The religious are prophetic witness, the bearers of joy that they have found in their religious life. They radiate this joy in the world around them. They spend quality time with God who has called them in love, and meditate on the word of God so that their hearts are warmed by God. The religious transmit the joy they have found, incarnate the gospel, enliven their communities, and make their communities a home, a circle of friends like a family. The consecrated religious are called to reach out to people, to step out of their comfort zones and to maintain a culture of encounter. Pope Francis sees the consecrated life as a major resource for the Church's witness to the world. Hence, he invites them to 'wake up the world.'

## 1.5 THE RADICAL NATURE OF CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS LIFE

Religious life is a movement in the Church that has taken on a wide variety of forms all through its history. The diversity makes it impossible to generalize or define religious life from a single point of view as every generalization is bound to be challenged. However, we say that religious life is a permanent, stable, and recognized public form of life in the Church. Though, it is envisioned and lived by Jesus, rooted in the scripture, lived by the apostles and early church, it does not have a hierarchical position in the structure of the Church.<sup>75</sup>

Religious life is a participation in the life and mission of God. It is the participation in the dynamic communion of God's triune life.<sup>76</sup> The religious participates in the mission of God within the Church, because the Church is the overflowing love of God, expressed in the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit (AG 2). The theological basis for the life of religious as participation in the mission of God has its foundation in God's involvement in history in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>77</sup> So, religious life is rooted in God and His very being.



Religious life is a proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ. The proclamation of the Good News by religious is the continuation of the ministry of Jesus and the action of conveying the Gospel of Jesus. Religious tell the story of Jesus, his life, ministry, teaching, death and resurrection through their words and deeds. Proclamation of religious is the communication of the mystery of salvation realized by God for all in Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit.<sup>78</sup>

Religious life is a liberating service of the Kingdom of God. The involvement of the religious in the interpretation of Christian faith in the context of the suffering and struggle of the poor is a critique of society and the ideologies sustaining exploitation and injustice. At the human level, liberation is conceived as a historical process in which people develop consciously their own destiny through the social changes. At the human level, religious work with the oppressed demanding justice and fairness as agents of social change. At the religious level, liberation means emancipation from sin, injustice and oppression. It brings people back into communion with God and society, which is the radical and total liberation.

Religious life is a prophetic dialogue with the world. It means 'living' prophetic dialogue, and not so much 'doing' prophetic dialogue. The prophetic dialogue is a way of life. It calls for personal transformation from activism to contemplation, individualism to collaboration, conquest to dialogue, evangelizing to being evangelized. In this way, the dialogue of the religious becomes prophetic and a dialogue of life, a dialogue of action, a dialogue of prayer, and a dialogue of theological reflection.

Religious life is a life of contemplation and prayer. All religious, whether contemplative, active or a combination of both, by the virtue of their consecration to God, live a life of prayer and contemplation.<sup>79</sup>

Despite of all we have said, religious life faces numerous challenges today. Crisis in the religious life, deteriorating membership, alleged irrelevance, turmoil in religious Orders, regional and cultural intolerance, linguistic, liturgical and caste-based discriminations, multi-directional mission, fragility of vocations, difficulties in community life, lack of inter-congregational collaboration, partnership in mission with the laity, are some of the challenges which can disfigure the radical nature, beauty, purpose and meaning of religious life. These challenges from the globalizing world invite the religious to be evermore dynamic and participative in living the gospel radicality of religious life.

## 1.6 CONCLUSION

Religious life is in constant flux. In the early Christian society, there were faithful men and women known as virgins, widows, ascetics, eremites and cenobites, and later came the monastic orders followed by the canons regular, mendicants, the military orders and the knights, missionary societies and congregations, religious and secular institutes.

Religious life, which started off as monastic life within an agricultural society, faces an urbanized and globalized world in the present day. In order to remain relevant to varying situations and changing times, the life of the religious has undergone paradigm shifts over the centuries. Religious life, a radical protest movement in the institutionalized Church, is not controlled or determined by the effectiveness of its methods. It depends on the expression of the lives of its members, which must glow with joy and beauty of living the radicality of the Gospel. In contrast to the old model of religious life as flight from the world, the present model urges the religious to embrace the world and leave the nest. In the welter of change and conflicting ideas, the religious are called to be prophetic and be attuned to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, so that they may be ever ready to face the fluid society of their times with courage and become carriers of the joy of the gospel. Joy is a characteristic of God's love. True joy comes from the presence of God and His presence is fullness of joy. Thus, religious life is a life anchored in God's love, seeking after God's joyful heart and committing oneself to it. "I will commit myself to you forever; I will commit myself to you in righteousness and justice, in steadfast love and tender compassion. I will commit myself to you in faithfulness" (Hos 2:19-20).

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# THE CALL OF MATTHEW AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CONSECRATED PERSONS (Mt 9:9-13)

Arul Jesu Robin Muthiah, CMF

## INTRODUCTION

The call of Matthew reinforces the theme that God accepts human beings not because what we are but because what he is. He calls even the so-called unworthy sinners into his kingdom. Jesus calls even those rejected and hated by the world. Just by uttering the words *follow me*, Jesus called the common laborers of Jewish society, such as fishermen, and then he sought after one of the most hated persons in Jewish society at that time, a tax collector, who collected duties and fees like a troll under a bridge. He took the hard earned money of the people, and gave it to the invading foreign oppressors, the Romans. This was such an act of treason and unspeakable evil that the average person called these tax collectors the worst of sinners. For Jesus, he is also a human being, a brother who needs him too to continue his mission of establishing God's kingdom here on earth.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. The Text

The passage which speaks about the call of Matthew is found in all the synoptic Gospels (Mk 2:13-22; Lk 5:27-39). In all three synoptic gospels, this episode takes place shortly after the miracle of healing the paralytic at Capernaum and is followed by New Wine into Old Wineskins. Also in all three synoptic accounts Jesus is then invited to a banquet, with a crowd of tax collectors and others. The Pharisees then complain. In Mark and Luke, he is called Levi while in the Gospel of Matthew, he is called Matthew. Is Levi and Matthew one and the same person? Did the Apostle Matthew have two names? It is difficult to answer as we do not have many texts to answer these questions. Many scholars believe that we do not have sufficient reasons

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to believe that the tax-collector turned disciple had two names. So, possibly, the name Levi must have been changed in the Gospel of Matthew to make him one of the Twelve. The passage which deals with the call of Matthew divides the second and third triads of Jesus acts of power (8:23-9:8; 9:18-34). It is a narration bracketed or sandwiched between miracles of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

### ***1.1 Some Lexicographic Observations***

a) Follow me: The Greek term ἀκολουθεῖν (*akolouthēō*) literally means going behind someone or coming after someone or following one who proceeds. Figuratively, it means discipleship and total commitment for the master and his teaching. Jesus saw Matthew, and called him with two simple words, follow me. Two words, when powered by the Spirit, will change a person to the core if he makes the response by his faith. Matthew made such a response, and showed great faith to permanently leave his prestigious job, and with overwhelming gratitude, threw a big feast in Jesus' honor so his friends could see for themselves this most incredible God-Man.<sup>3</sup>

b) Matthew: Matthew means a "gift of the Lord" contracted from Mattathias. It was a common Jewish name after the exile. He is called as Levi in the gospels of Mark and Luke.<sup>4</sup>

c) Matthew arose and followed: Matthew responded positively to Jesus' radical command to leave all and follow Him. He could never return to his old job, as he would be viewed as a traitor. This radical decision needs steadfast faithfulness, obedience, and trust. He had to lose so much by the standards of the world. Yet, he gained so much by clinging on to the precious treasure, Jesus. Well, Matthew showed great faith by being willing to leave his prosperous position, to follow Jesus to a life of the unsecured and unknown. In reality, there is nothing more secure than following Jesus!<sup>5</sup>

### ***1.2 The Composition of the Passage***

The short passage of the call of Matthew has only five verses with two parts. The first part (9) deals exclusively about the call of the Matthew and the second part (10-13) the dinner hosted by Matthew as his sign of gratitude and joy for being recognized by Jesus while the entire world cursed him and pushed him down as traitor and sinner.

Interestingly, the first part which actually speaks of the call of Matthew proper has just one verse. In that one verse, we find Jesus encountering Matthew who was

sitting in the tax booth, extending an invitation for radical discipleship by the typical call phrase “follow me” and the immediate positive response of Matthew, one of the hated men of the society of that day.<sup>6</sup>

The second part speaks of the fellowship meal hosted by Matthew after his categorical “yes” to Jesus’ invitation for radical following. In the second part, we find Jesus sitting at the table with the sinners and tax collectors, the reaction and complaints of the Pharisees about Jesus to the disciples and Jesus’ authoritative word which highlights mercy and not sacrifice and his mission for the sinners and not for the so-called righteous.

The pattern followed here is Jesus’ forgiveness of the public sinner, the objection of the so-called righteous Pharisees and Jesus’ authoritative word to silence them and to highlight the mercy of God.

## **2. Context**

### ***2.1 Historical Context***

We shall analyze a few terms to understand better the text of the call of Matthew.

a) Capernaum: Capernaum was the most northern fishing village on the western side of the lake. It was on the main trade route connecting Egypt and Damascus. Capernaum was smack on a major trade route. Taxes were collected before the traders moved north into the tetrarchy of Philip.<sup>7</sup>

b) Tax Office or Booth: There were tollhouses (Mk 2:14) set up at roads, bridges, harbours, and lakes to collect and gather revenue for duties, and tolls even for “fish tax,” (Lk 3:13). A major international road went from Damascus through Capernaum to the Mediterranean coast and to Egypt (Isa 9:1). A Publican is a tax collector. Matthew was a Publican, a tax collector, similar to modern day custom agents who collected taxes. He did so on Herod’s behalf in an office at Capernaum. His duty was to charge tax on imports, or what we call “duties” today. This was a very lucrative profession, as he could levy his own percentage, as well. The tax collected was a symbol of Roman oppression and sign of humiliation for the Jews who rejected any subjection except to God.<sup>8</sup>

c) Tax Collector: The tax collectors were Jews and were despised as they extorted as much as they could from the farmers, fishermen and merchants under their jurisdiction. They were expelled and even barred from attending the synagogue. They were in collaboration with the Romans, an invading occupying army, and were thus considered traitors. They were not allowed to serve as witnesses or as a judge.

They were totally shut out from Jewish society, with only their wealth to give them comfort. Perhaps Matthew saw how fleeting wealth was, and missed genuine loving human relationships and the subsequent satisfaction, happiness and peace of mind.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.2 Literary Context

The literary genre is narrative and if we want to specify it, it is a call narrative as there are other narratives such as annunciation narrative, mission narrative, healing narrative, exorcism narrative.

Literary form is a stereotype pattern found in the literary genre. The literary form of call narrative is more or less as the one proposed by Betty Jane Lillie. 1) call; 2) hesitation; 3) assurance and 4) acceptance.<sup>10</sup>

- Call: It is God's word to a faithful servant who is designated for a particular mission (Jer 1:5). Sometimes all the details of a call are not described with precision. The call always comes from the Lord, directly or indirectly.
- Hesitation: Hesitation by the person called is not a mark of infidelity or distrust. It marks the feelings of inadequacy in the face of an overwhelming mission assigned to him or her. "I am so insignificant and unworthy (cf. Jg 6:15). How can I carry out such an enormous mission?"
- Assurance: God's assurance gives the person confidence in God's help and power in the ministry (Jer 1:8-10). This assurance is also the grace of God enabling the fulfillment of the prophetic mission. Assurance is given by word and sign. The typical assuring words are: *Do not worry, I will be with you.*
- Acceptance: Finally the person surrenders to God's call as Mary did, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy Word" (Lk 1:38).

The form is not always fully developed in every call narrative (cf. Ex 3:4-22; Jg 6; Isa 6:1-11). Some elements can be assumed from the succession of events as the story unfolds.

Most of the call narratives in the Gospel have different literary form than the one found in the Old Testament vocational narratives. They have four structural elements:

- Jesus passes before someone
- Jesus sees or encounters someone
- Jesus says: "Follow me!"

- The called leaves everything and goes behind Jesus

Let us analyse these four elements as all these elements are found in the call of Matthew.

a) Jesus passes before others without stopping. Already in the OT, we find the similar case: YHWH passes before Moses on Mount Sinai (cf. Ex 33:19) and before Elijah on Mount Horeb (1Kings19:13). We can therefore conclude that the fact of passing before someone without stopping is not casual but belongs to the so-called technique “of the way of the Lord” to call persons for his mission.

b) While Jesus was walking, he saw or encountered many people. It is not a simple ordinary look on the thing that he saw. The look of God has its own goodness and richness in theology. In the creation narration, the evening of every day, God *saw* everything that he created as good. Everything that he created acquires their natural goodness thanks to a final look of God. The look of God possesses a creative and liberative force. At the virtue of Jesus’ look, John and Andrew were transformed. Peter had the privilege of having all together another particular look, different from one that Jesus gave to other disciples (cf. Jn 1:42; Lk 22:61) which made him a new person with the new name. Matthew too made as disciple by the look of Jesus.

c) Jesus accompanied his look with the words “follow me”. Already in the OT, the word of call was very binding. One has to follow the one who calls him/her. Abraham left his land, family, house and left to the region indicated by YHWH. To imitate does not signify following from far. It means to bind oneself fully and totally with the person who called. In the case of Matthew, he has to bind himself totally and conditionally with Jesus.

d) “To follow” means to bind and obey all the orders without hesitation. In all these narrations of call of the disciples, the called is accompanied by the words: “and he followed”. To imitate means abandoning everything: the haves and the relatives. Andrew and Peter abandoned boats and nets; Matthew the tax collecting job; John and James, their father Zebedee. Finally imitating Jesus, following him signifies loving him above everything: “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Mt 10:37; Lk 14:26; Jn 11:16).

### **2.3 Biblical Context**

Though there are many call narratives in the NT as well as OT which can be seen in the light of the call of Matthew, I would like to focus on the call of Abraham.

The call of Abraham as well as Matthew surprises all by their readiness to say “Yes” to the call without even a single word of hesitation. Though “hesitation” or “expression of inadequacy” is one of the elements of the literary form of call narratives, this element is completely absent in both these call narratives. In the case of Abraham, God asked him to “Go” (*Halak* in Hebrew which has rich meaning in the context of call) and Abraham left everything including persons who were very close to him, the place to which he was greatly attached and things which were useful for him to begin a new journey trusting totally in the Lord who called him. In the case of Matthew too, Jesus calls him with the imperative, “follow me” and he left everything including the job security and began a new life trusting totally in the person of Jesus who called him to leave everything and follow him.

In the case of the call of Abraham, the imperative “Go” is attached with the consequence of “divine promises”. “If you go leaving everything aside, I will bless you, you will be a blessing and every nation will find blessing in you”. The Hebrew term *Baraka* (blessing) is very rich in meaning. In the modern language, it implies everything that a man longs for in life. So, Abraham will get all that he left in hundred fold and much more than what he had left. Though in the call of Matthew, we do not find the imperative “follow me” attached with the divine promises, we can know it implicitly by associating with another text from Mt 19:27 where Peter asks Jesus, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?” Note the occurrence of the term “follow”. The reply of Jesus points out the divine promises given to Abraham: “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for the sake of my name will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life” (Mt 19:29).<sup>11</sup>

The call of Matthew also has a lot of similarities with the call of Peter and Andrew and John and James as narrated in Mt 4:18-22. In both these call narratives, we notice: Jesus taking the initiative and calling the person, the persons’ utter readiness to answer to the call by the leaving everything and following Jesus and the focus on the powerful word of Jesus which creates discipleship.

### **3. The Implications of the Call of Matthew to the Consecrated Persons**

a) There is a profound difference between the religious attitude of Jesus and of Pharisees. For Pharisees ritual purity and table fellowship were important religious practices. For Jesus it is genuine love that heals a person, not condemnation or ostracisation. Jesus was so close and familiar with the outcasts and the excommunicated of his day (Hos 6:6). Could it have been that the first experience Matthew had of Jesus was that Jesus was simply looking at him in a way no one had ever looked

at him? When their eyes met, Matthew must have seen love and compassion, not blame and judgment. Jesus did not look on him with hate and contempt. Jesus simply looked at him with care, compassion and genuine love.<sup>12</sup>

Matthew immediately sensed that Jesus somehow understood the predicament he was in. He got himself into this and he had not been an attractive character at all. He played the role people had put him in. But, Jesus didn't fix him in that role somehow. Before he uttered a word, he might have heard the words of Jesus in his inner self: "I know this isn't really you. I understand how much playing this role is distorting you, souring you, hardening you".

How do the consecrated persons look at those who are at the crossroads? Do we look with compassion like Jesus or do we condemn like the Pharisees? We can touch human beings only with the attitude of Jesus. We should love specially the youth like Jesus did with Matthew. It is important not to condemn or judge but understand, accept and love all without any categories and baggage.

b) That Jesus would call a man like Matthew to be part of his mission and would enjoy the company of his friends should give us confidence in the compassionate mercy of God. We need not fear that we have nothing, that we are unworthy and that we do not merit his calling. Jesus calls us not because what we are but because what he is. No one should feel unworthy to be called by Jesus. Jesus looks and treats each one of us as his brother and he can call us at anytime irrespective of our personal difficulties, weaknesses and social status. But the importance lies in our response. Nothing can stop Jesus from taking initiative, taking the first step towards us. But, am I ready to take the second step like Matthew who gave up everything, gave a categorical "yes" to Jesus' invitation "follow me" and invited him to celebrate his conversion and vocation?

c) If there is no room for sinners in the Church, there is no room for anyone and it is not the Church of Jesus. Jesus' willingness to accept Matthew as a disciple prepared the way for the acceptance of all kinds of people into the Church. It is because we are sinners that we need the intimacy of communion with Jesus. All we need to do is to humbly and with gratitude accept his invitation to dine with him and come out as transformed persons and as people who has seen Jesus, being touched by him and being fully changed for better by him. This should be a challenge for every consecrated person. Each person is valuable. Jesus does not brand anyone as "sinners" or "rebels" or "problem makers"? As consecrated persons, we too need to follow the same.

d) "Follow me": The words must have made their ways straight to Matthew's

heart. Never had his heart been so opened by such understanding, compassion and loving acceptance. For a moment, he must have thought, “Me? I’m just a ... can’t change ... I’m stuck here ... and, what will they say about ...”. But, those protests surely were replaced with something responding from deep inside that welcomed this call, this liberation, this vote of confidence more than anything in the world. Without a word, with their eyes still locked in that communication of intimacy, Matthew’s heart said, “Yes! Amen! I’m yours!” Nothing else had a hold on him. There were no excuses, doubts or fears. Matthew had been healed as he had been called. His ‘yes’ was his surrender to being loved. As consecrated persons, take a few moments in silence; hear the words of Jesus “follow me”. Be aware of the spontaneous reaction within you; try to articulate them in words. Are you ready to take up the challenge like Matthew?

## CONCLUSION

As conclusion, a few questions to provoke further reflection and critical questioning.

- What is it about Jesus’ words, “Follow me”, that cause some to respond with passion, and others to flee in anger?
- What do you think motivated Mathew to show great faith and commitment by permanently leaving his so called lucrative prestigious job?
- What requires steadfast faithfulness, obedience, and trust, for you to undertake Jesus’ path? What is in the way of your responding to the “Follow Me” call?
- Matthew actually got up and followed! What is the cause and motivation for you to get up and follow Christ? Or what is the cause and motivation for you not to get up and follow Jesus Christ?
- What do you see as important in your life that you just could not lose? Compare your list to the world’s standards, versus God’s.
- Do you really believe, with confidence, that there is nothing more secure than following Jesus? What does secure mean to you?
- Have you ever made a big response of gratitude for what Jesus has done for you? If so, what was it? If not, what could it be?
- Matthew saw what he was to gain! What do you see when you come to Jesus Christ?



- Why do you suppose that most people only see what they will leave behind?
- Follow me are two very powerful words, yet are so easily blocked when we are too puffed up with ourselves. How can you make a commitment so that it will not happen to you?

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> PHILIP L. SCHIFFMAN, “Matthew”, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, Bangalore 2005, 613; R.T. FRANCE, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The International Commentary on the New Testament, Cambridge 2007, 350-351.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. DONALD A. HAGNER, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary 33A, Nashville 1993, 236-237; CRAIG A. EVANS, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary, Cambridge 2012, 201-202.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. DONALD A. HAGNER, *Matthew 1-13*, 238.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. DONALD A. HAGNER, *Matthew 1-13*, 237-238; W.F. ALBRIGHT – C.S. MANN, *Matthew. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 26, London 1971, 105; BENEDICT T. VIVIANO, “The Gospel According to Matthew”, *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Bangalore 1995, 649; R.T. FRANCE, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 352; DENNIS C. DULING, “Matthew”, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, IV, New York 1992, 619-620; M. KILEY, “Why «Matthew» in Matt 9,9-13?”, *Biblica* 65(1984) 347-351;

<sup>5</sup> Cf. WILLIAM BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, I, The New Daily Study Bible, Bangalore 2009, 380-382; CRAIG A. EVANS, *Matthew*, 201-202.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. DONALD A. HAGNER, *Matthew 1-13*, 236-237.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. WILLIAM BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, I, 382- 383; VIRILIO C. CORBO, “Capernaum”, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, I, New York 1992, 866.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. BENEDICT T. VIVIANO, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 649; STEPHEN J. BINZ, *Jesus, the Messianic King, I, Maththew (1-16)*, Threshold Bible Study, Bandra 2013, 84.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. DONALD A. HAGNER, *Matthew 1-13*, 238; R.T. FRANCE, “Matthew”, *New Bible Commentary*, Secundrabad 1953, 2005<sup>3</sup>, 916; CURTIS MITCH – EDWARD SRI, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, Michigan 2010, 134; R.T. FRANCE, *The Gospel of Mathew*, 351; DENNIS C. DULING, “Matthew”, *Anchor Bible Dictionar*, IV, New York 1992, 621.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. B.J. LILLIE, “The Vocations of Elijah and Elisha”, *The Bible Today* 33 (1995) 87-98. See also N. HABEL, “The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives”, *ZAW* 77 (1965) 297-323.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. KENT HAROLD RICHARDS, “Bless/Blessing”, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, I, 753-755; C. WESTERMANN, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church*, Philadelphia 1978.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. WILLIAM BARCLAY, *The Gospel of Matthew*, I, The New Daily Study Bible, Bangalore 2009, 385-387.



## BOOK REVIEWS

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*More Than You Could Ever Imagine, On Our Becoming Divine*  
by Bernie Owens, SJ (Mumbai: Pauline Publication) 2017, p. 198, Rs. 200/-.

The book “More Than You Could Ever Imagine. On Our Becoming Divine” by Bernie Owens, SJ, is an attempt to bring about a deeper experience of Abba, Father in our lives. The Author presents the book as a spiritual journey into our self as a journey into God. Lots of insights are provided from the Bible, and an outpouring love of God, manifested in Jesus. Our Passover Journey is a journey towards oneself and tells us the Spirit of God works in us mysteriously. The book maps out the main experiences and describes many of the rich blessings we are given during the great unfolding of our lives, our Passover journey into God.

This book offers us a glimpse of what we shall become both individually and as a human race transformed into Christ. The author gives rather a long description to introduce the readers into the theme “on our becoming divine”, through the cry of a child who trusts her father so intimately her Abba experience, to show us there is deep longing in every human being to seek for assurance and security of a reliable love. We often long for to know who we are and then eventually to be known and loved for whom we are. This book is meant for all those who aspire to grow spiritually. The book is divided into nine chapters and written in simple language for all to understand.

First chapter takes us deeper into the mystery of God’s love. Author tells us every human experience is potentially an experience of relentless love’s presence, unconditional present and lasting. God’s unconditional love is manifested in the heart of human being. At the core of our true self each of us knows and believes that we are loved and cherished as sons/daughters of the Divine Abba — treasure of our true self, mystery of God.

Second chapter explains the slavery that human being goes through by alienating oneself from the true love of God. The core of our sin does not believe that we are loved and lovable. We make God in our own image and likeness and get alienated from our true self, true nature of God. God's grace is much greater than our sinfulness and Jesus is waiting for our consent to take us to the heart of the Abba Father.

In third chapter, we see the reign of God. We all experience a deep longing for God within the depth of our being. When we allow ourselves to be forgiven and embraced with tender acceptance, we experience ourselves ushered into a new way of being. With this depth experience, we are now exposed to take the next step into our Passover journey into God.

Fourth chapter enlightens us into the mystery of Jesus himself. In Jesus, God became one of us to experience all that we experience as a human. In the rich silence, God's spirit communicates what is sacred beyond words into our depths. The author feels that our souls must be bathed in love and overflow with a sense of humble unworthiness.

Fifth chapter explains about two opposing value system — the kingdom of God and kingdom of Satan. Author invites us to humility and radical truthfulness about ourselves as opposed to pride and arrogance. Christ is the inner star who is invisible within our being.

Sixth and Seventh chapters draw our attention to the deeper spiritual transformation in our lives. We are to grow into spiritual adulthood. For this, we have to step out in faith and cross over a bridge to God's side of relationship. We need to go through an amazing metamorphosis to be born to the fullness of life in Christ. In Jesus, God became one for us so that he may lift us beyond the power of death and strengthen us in all ways.

Eight and Ninth chapters attempt to give some description of what we will become at the end of our journey. Our longing for communion is the God given energy that moves us and all creation to being freed from anything contrary to Christ. God is moving those who are willing to be transformed in Christ to become wholly mature emotionally, intellectually aesthetically, morally and religiously.

Bernie Owens offers in this book an authentic, meaningful, and thought-provoking spirituality for all humanity. The pages of this book are engulfed with deep experience, exposure and profound insights for everyone who has a quest for deep spiritual life. Insertion of some spiritual exercise would have been of great help. It is meant for spiritual nourishment not a reference book.

Valsa Antony, SCSC

*The Prodigal You Love, Inviting Loved Ones Back to the Church*  
by Sr. Theresa Aletheia Noble, FSP (Bandra: Pauline Publications) 2016,  
p. 214, Rs. 180/-.

The author using the parable of prodigal son shares her own story of return to the Church as well as practical tips to invite the loved ones back. She tackles this tough issue from her own personal experiences as a prodigal daughter. If our loved ones lost their faith, she encourages us to meet our loved ones where they are and also gives tips to encourage them to return to the Church.

The book consists of 12 chapters. The first chapter gives a detailed life story of the author; how she lost her faith and then the process of coming back. The remaining chapters presents different tips to bring back our lost faith or bring back our loved ones who already lost their faith. The book is ending with several prayers as help to boost our faith.

Chapter I: She explains her faith story by telling her great fall from a faithful to faithless life. She stopped going to Church at the age of fourteen and this faithlessness she continued during her college studies. She had several experiences of coming back during these times. In this process she met Buddhist monks, while teaching in a school she started practicing yoga, attended several prayer meetings but these activities did not lead her to a life of faith. She always felt emptiness in her heart. Later when the author went to Costa Rica, the faith of the ordinary people and the parish priest turned her life and she returned to her faith.

Chapter II presents about the importance of humility. When humility grow in one's life, it will help one to interact respectfully with others and help one to communicate with other as God communicates with him. She emphasizes the importance of humility because it helps to die to one's false self and help that person to do proper evangelization. She also gives a structure to grow in humility such as: pray for humility, this will lead one person to go through different opportunities to grow in humility, these opportunities may not give always answers, but teach us silence as the best response, this also will help one person to know the realities the other is facing in day to day life. She also says that the father in the parable of the prodigal son is the best picture for humility.

Chapter III: The author is telling about the importance of listening the ways of the Holy Spirit contrary to one's own will. This will give confidence to stay in our faith and help others to guide in their difficulties. Personal contact with the Holy

Spirit is the best way to know the true inspiration of the Spirit. Mother Mary is the best example of the person who led her life according to the inspiration of the Spirit and in the story of prodigal son, it is the decision of the prodigal son to return to his father's house which is the inspiration of the Spirit.

Chapter IV: The author highlights on truthful love. It is an adventure because God asks us to learn how to communicate and love in His way, not ours. It requires change, flexibility and a deep humility from our part. Jesus is the best example because he converts peoples' hearts effectively with the perfect balance of truth and love. The father of the prodigal son had a truthful love that's why when he came back without asking anything, he accepted him.

Chapter V: This chapter covers some negative influences common today which shatters our faith. They are relativism, spiritual individualism, struggles with Church teachings, the noise of the world, etc. She is also comparing the life of prodigal son; he left his traditional inheritance and went away towards worldly pleasures. Later when he focused on father's love he came back.

Chapter VI: This chapter explains the importance of accepting doubt and embracing doubters. Some even doubt if Jesus is the true living water. In some occasions when we have said all right things to bring back these doubters back to the Church, they may walk away. The central role in our loved one's conversion belongs to God, not to us. The elder son in the prodigal son shows his rebellious anger, the father comes out of the house and begins 'to plead with him'. The father reveals the divine response to different kinds of doubt in our loved ones' lives.

Chapter VII gives catechetical teachings that provide some of the basic reasons why actually practising the faith when many people see nothing wrong with identifying themselves as spiritual not religious. It also deals with the importance of institutional Church in our relationship with Jesus. What the prodigal son lost is not only wealth but also the relationship with the father. Similarly, the person who is going away from the faith is going away from baptismal inheritance.

Chapter VIII is focusing on the importance of free will. It is God's gift given to us so that we may freely love him. Free will help us to choose between actions that bring us closer to God and those that take us away from God. Sometimes we have to keep silence in order to respect the freedom of others. When prodigal son freely spent, everything he had his father always respected his freedom. In our attempt to bring back others, we also should be humble, patient, and forgiving.

Chapter IX underlines the importance of prayer. Prayer is the fire, we can use to warm the hearts of those who have grown cold in their faith. When we pray together as one community, it will create miracles in the life of other person who lost their faith. When the younger son went away from him he understood the best thing he can do is an inward journey with openness and prayer.

Chapter X speaks about the inevitable suffering in the life of human beings. Suffering has the power to push people away from God, but as Christians, we can live the message that God is powerful enough to bring good from whatever we experience. This will be a channel of grace for ourselves, our loved ones, and the whole world. The prodigal son also suffered when he lost all his wealth. Father did not send anyone to help but waited and respected the free will of his son.

Chapter XI highlights the importance of a saintly life which each person wants to lead. Saintly people never talk about their pious life, but rather those who live their lives to the fullest, loving every around them. People will be transformed and attracted by their life because when we live in Jesus, his holiness begins to act from within us, attracting others to God through our closeness to him. All are invited to participate in the saintly life of our Father not to stand out like the elder son in the parable of prodigal son.

Chapter XII is telling us to become a person of hope. Sometimes one has to wait long hopefully in their life because for God everything is possible. Author is also telling about some practical tips to grow in hope such as by practicing charity, by continuous prayer, by practicing reverence for God through simple activities. St. Paul is the best example for hope. In the parable of the prodigal son, father maintained his hope till his return.

This book is a practical guide to develop a life based on faith. The experiences which author passes through is not a unique experience of a single person but most of them are experiencing it in different degrees in one's own life. This book is indeed a great help for all religious, priests and lay people to strengthen their faith. It is the life experience of a fellow traveller. The author practically explained different suggestions in eleven chapters and only in the first chapter, she gave her life story. She could have given little more explanation of her life in other chapters too because life experiences will attract more people than different theories. This book indeed is a great contribution of Sr. Theresa Alethesia Noble, FSP, to Catholic Church.





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