

MULTICULTURAL LIVING
IN THE
THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS
OF
THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION:
A PROPHETIC WITNESS

T E Moyo

IN THE
THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION:
A PROPHETIC WITNESS

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THANDI ELSIE MOYO

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JOINT SUPERVISOR: DR S F DE BEER

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Declaration

“I declare that **Multicultural living in the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception : Prophetic Witness** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references”.

T E Moyo

Summary

MULTICULTURAL LIVING IN THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION: A PROPHETIC WITNESS

Globalization has turned the world into one “huge village”. Various nations and cultures have integrated during this process and multiculturalism has resulted. Yet, many people are struggling to accept one another as members of one “global village”. The difference in culture, race and ethnicity are creating barriers amongst the various nations. These hurdles prevent many communities from living in peace and harmony. Religious community are also facing similar struggles. The Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (FIC) and other international congregations are called by the Bible and the church to give hope of unity in a diverse cultural context. These congregations are challenged on a continuous basis to search for processes that will assist them to take up their prophetic dimension in witnessing the possibility of living multicultural life in unity.

**MULTICULTURAL LIVING IN THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF THE
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Key Words

Multicultural living, Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, culture, missionary, community life, consecrated life, unity, Gospel living, church documents, prophetic witness, Franciscan family, insertion, analysis, theological reflection, change of attitudes, conversion, process, vision

Abbreviations

- AGD = *Ad gentes divinitus*: The Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity
EA = *Ecclesia in Africa*: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father John Paul II
FIC = Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception
GS = *Gaudium et spes*: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World
ICC = Inter-Community Consultative
IUM = Institute for Urban Ministry
LP = *Legend of Perugia*
LG = *Lumen gentium*: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
NA = *Nostra aetate*: The Declaration on the Church's Relationship with non-Christian Religions
PC = *Perfectae caritatis*: The Decree on the UP-to date Renewal of Religious Life
SCRSI. = Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes
SACBC = Southern African Catholic Bishop's Conference
SABC = South African Broad Casting
SAMS = Southern African Missiological Society
TBVC = Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei: South Africa's former Independent States.
VC = *Vita Consecrata*: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father John Paul II
1C = The life of St Francis by Thomas of Celano

MULTICULTURAL LIVING IN THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION: A PROPHETIC WITNESS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: EXPLORING MULTICULTURAL RELIGIOUS LIFE

1. INTRODUCTION

In the Gospel of Matthew (28:19) it is written: “Go, therefore; make disciples of all the nations”. Christianity spread to the far reaches of the earth, those who spread the message strove to adapt Christianity to many different cultures. From country to country, the Gospel was preached. Many religious congregations heeded the call of the Gospel. Each congregation attempted to highlight at least one aspect of the Gospel through the example of its charism. Since the thirteenth century the Franciscans have striven to bring the Gospel message to different countries:

One very special means of their success was the establishment of the Third Order — a real religious order open to lay folk, by means of which men and women, married as well as single, who continued to live in the world, following their professions, rearing their families, lived under the direction of the Friars, according to a modified version of the Friars’ own rule, lived in the spirit of the order, sharing in all the spiritual advantages of such associations with it and helped in their life by a constant endeavour to introduce into it something of the order’s own ideal (Hughes 1958:108).

One such group was that of the women who lived as **Secular Franciscans**¹ in Graz, Austria. Prompted by the Spirit and their own generosity of heart, they opened their home to young women of their times who were deprived of education. In this dissertation, I analyse how this particular congregation adapted to the South African culture that had become so diverse over the years. I consider how the pioneers of this congregation read the signs of the times and how they responded to the challenges posed in the context of multiculturalism. I will look at the ways in which the Austrian sisters integrated with the indigenous South African women who joined their congregation. I enumerate the challenges they face as they live in a multicultural community and society, and how they play a prophetic dimensional role in witnessing to unity in a world that is diverse — divided by lines of race, ethnicity, tribalism and nationalism.

1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM

How are the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception living their prophetic dimension in a multicultural community? Are they a visible sign of unity to a society that is culturally diverse?

In order for the reader to understand and appreciate the reasons for this study, I need to present the perspective and background of the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (FIC). This congregation was founded in 1843 in Graz, Austria by Franziska Antonia Lampel. She and five other women applied to the bishop of their diocese to live together as a Third Order Regular under the Rule of St Francis:

The petitioners feel that they are urged by God to choose for the bond of their union the so-called “Third Rule of the Seraphic St. Francis” which, since it is primarily created for seculars, they have known for a long time and practised, as far as possible, out of private devotion (Petz 1993:18).

This was duly granted and they became a religious congregation. This endeavour to live together and educate young women spread throughout the neighbouring countries and was adapted and adjusted to suit many cultures. In the twentieth century, this charism came to South Africa. When they realised that education was not easily accessible to the women of their time, the Franciscan Sisters decided to live together in order to combine their efforts to promote the education of the women of their country. They

¹ This is one of the Orders of the Franciscan family that has embraced the Franciscan spirituality, living out the ideals of Franciscan charism within a family or single life-situation, rather than in a community life such as that experienced by consecrated people in a monastery

took this decision so that women could be better mothers to their families. The FIC history book tells us:

The sisters' intention is constantly to combine instruction with formation, so that the girls can grow into good mothers, who are so important for the well-being of the family (Petz 1993:37-38).

The sisters realised that in order to do this, they would have to do something different from what had become the norm among other religious orders of the time. Accordingly they took simple vows and lived among the people, while striving for constant union with God. Theirs was a simple life-style, and they would avoid being conspicuous by adopting in the dress of the simple people of the time. Their specific charism is described as follows:

Faithful to the spiritual heritage of our Foundress, Mother Franziska Antonia Lampel, we wish to live among people, striving for constant union with God. We serve them as instruments in the hand of God. We try to become small and humble so that God may take us into his Almighty hands and act through us (FIC Constitution no.4).

Although the original aim was the education of young women, the foundress wished that the Congregation be available, as much as possible, for any ministries in the church (FIC Constitution no.5).

These two excerpts are found in the FIC Constitution numbers 4&5. What is important in this study is contained in the two phrases: "... we wish to live among people ..." and "... the Foundress wished that the congregation be available, as much as possible, for any ministries in the Church." When reflecting on the foundress's missionary vision one realises that she was open to all people of different cultures, because she welcomed candidates from neighbouring countries such as Tyrol and Slovenia. She sent sisters to other countries to start schools at the request of bishops and priests:

The accomplishments of the School Sisters did not go unnoticed; people wanted to establish congregations of the same type or similar to them. During her first term of office Mother Frances received five such requests and so the community even undertook the formation of members of other communities (Petz 1993:59).

From the beginning, she was also open to include other languages in the school curriculum:

The instruction that the Sisters offer in Graz is not limited to the elementary subjects of the German schools, but also includes (according to the desire and abilities of the students) geography and history, French (Italian will soon be offered, drawing, painting and music) (Petz 1993:37).

Franziska Lampel was sensitive to other cultures, and sought to introduce the sisters and children to different languages. Hence, today, the congregation has become more multicultural than ever before due to her initial efforts. It has spread to China, Australia, France, the Ivory Coast, Montenegro, Albania, Brazil and South Africa. In 2003, the Albanians, in order to take care of their American brothers and sisters, opened a house in the United States of America. There are also other groups in the United States of America which branched off from the original congregation, so perhaps the title of this paper could have been: “A multicultural congregation in a multicultural context”.

Looking at the above discussion, one begins to recognise the vision of the foundress — it was to promote women’s dignity no matter what culture they came from. Unity was very important within the congregation. In their history, book we read that when the congregation was in tumult, Franziska preferred not to interfere, despite having been its foundress and loving it so very much:

Because Mother Frances saw herself as the main cause of the dissension and wanted nothing other than peace and unity, she soon saw that there was only one way out: to move, and to leave the order herself (Petz 1993:90).

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE DISSERTATION

There are various personal, congregational, and contextual reasons that prompted me to do this study on multiculturalism in my congregation, and they may be delineated as follows:

1.2.1 PERSONAL INSERTION INTO MULTICULTURALISM

1.2.1.1 Personal experience

1.2.1.1.1 Family background

I come from a multicultural family. My parents immigrated to South Africa. My mother came from Swaziland, while my father came from Zimbabwe. My four sisters married men from various cultures and ethnic groups; namely: Tsonga, Tswana, Swati and Shona. All my sisters met their husbands in Soweto where we grew up. Soweto is the biggest black township in South Africa situated in the South Western part of Johannesburg. Because of its proximity to the gold mines, it became home to people from every culture in Africa who migrated to Johannesburg to work in those mines.

1.2.1.1.2 School

Since my parents were working as domestics in different parts of the city, there was nobody at home to care for us, and so therefore we were sent to boarding school. It was there that we associated with other children who came from similar situations but from various cultures, and it was at boarding school that I first had contact with the religious sisters. There were black and white sisters who taught us, and the priests who ministered to us came from various countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Later, my social circle widened as I undertook my tertiary education in Kwa-Zulu Natal Province. It was in this environment that I came into contact with other South African ethnic groups; namely, Indians and Coloureds.

In South Africa, multiculturalism is closely linked with race. Riebe-Estrella shows that this problem also exists in other parts of the world, where tensions are ascribed to culture, while “the root cause is racial difference (which is linked with cultural difference)” (Riebe-Estrella 1996:513). He takes this argument further by saying that social class is the mainspring of tension. He states that:

The assumption of multiculturalism, namely that cultural diversity is the core cause of tensions between ethnic-group members and members of the dominant [country] culture and among ethnic groups with each other, suffers from an incorrect analysis of the true heart of the tension (Riebe-Estrella 1996:513).

Riebe-Estrella argues that race and social standing are core causes of tension in countries where people are not yet seen as equals. Race has been a problem in this country and has caused biases and prejudices in people’s attitudes towards each other. My parents worked for white people, and during school holidays I, too, worked for a white family. From this experience of working and being closer to white families in the suburbs of Johannesburg, I began to believe that whites were superior and blacks inferior. Although they treated me well, deep inside me I always regarded them being as better and more intelligent because they were rich and had more prospects than blacks, and also because they were our madams and masters.

There is a wedding song I often think of which goes like this: “**Tswang tswang lebone ngwana o tshwana le le “calate”**”¹ In the nineteen-sixties and seventies, when Black consciousness was not in existence, this Sesotho song would be sung as the bride came out of the house after days of

preparation using skin-lightening creams. She would be heavily made-up. Because she was now lighter-skinned and had straightened her hair, it was believed that she was more beautiful, like whites or coloureds. The country itself promoted this kind of thinking. As recently as 2003 on an SABC 1 show (*Let's Talk/Asikhulume*: 5th June 2003), Mr Motshega, a former premier of Gauteng Province, said that the war in Rwanda between the Hutu and the Tutsi was due to tribalism. Missionaries had said that one tribe was superior to the other because of their physical features. One was lighter in skin tone and therefore closer to the Europeans and to God. Krog, in her book, *A Change of Tongue*, cites a well-known professor who argues that:

In pre-colonial times, Rwandans were ruled by a monarchy, and diverse administrative, artistic, religious, military and other structures were shared by Hutu and Tutsi alike. These multiple structures were mainly destroyed by the dualities embedded in Christianity (body/soul, sinner/saint, heathen/Christian). As nearly all Rwandans (98 per cent) converted to Catholicism during the twentieth century, people were trapped in a bipolar world of colonizer and colonized, Hutu and Tutsi, crop-farmer and cattle-farmer, administrator and peasant, from which they seemed unable to escape. Added to this was the Belgian colonial authorities' policy of issuing identity cards classifying tall people with thin noses as Tutsis, worthy of top positions in the colonial administration; and squat, solid people with flat noses as Hutus, worthy of manual labour on the land (Krog 2003:148).

Bosch (1991:291) gives an example of this by citing Chaney (1976):

In the early years of its existence, the American Board distinguished between darkness, blindness, superstition, and ignorance among pagan nations on the one hand, and light, vision, enlightenment, and knowledge in the West on the other.

Although this kind of thinking was common during apartheid blacks had to learn that this was not true. I had friends in social circles and in the work place from different races and cultures to whom I could relate as an equal. I saw people, not colour, race, culture or status, something which is encapsulated in the phrase: **Umuntu ngu muntu**². This is the cornerstone of Ubuntu which sees people for who they are: "The Divine in me honours the Divine in You".

1.2.1.1.3 My experience in consecrated life

Later, when I had to make a decision about my way of life, I purposely entered a multicultural community. At that time, South Africa was very much under the influence of the apartheid system. The

¹This literally means: "Come, come and see the bride who looks like a coloured".

²This is a Zulu phrase which means that a human being has an innate dignity simply by virtue of being human: literally "a human being is a human being". Most African languages have a similar phrase.

Group Areas and Migrant Labourers Act, Forced Removals and the Pass Laws were strictly enforced. Racism was the order of the day. I had great expectations of the people in the church and of those I had joined in my consecrated life. My expectations of this life were that people living such a life would treat each person with respect, and promote equality, not only among themselves, but among all people, regardless of their colour, race, nationality, culture, language or status. This kind of thought had been inculcated in me by the religious sisters who prepared and taught me catechism at school. The equality and dignity of every person had been emphasised in these sessions. Again and again, it was reinforced that all are created in the image of God: “God created man in the image of himself, in the image of himself God created him, male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). These were consoling words for me as a child who admired this way of life. This encouraged me to start questioning some of the injustices I saw and experienced.

1.2.1.1.4 My experience of working with the youth.

Several years later, between 1993-1997, I worked with the youth in the diocese of Witbank. When I was visiting the parishes, the legacy of apartheid was still evident. Communities in one parish were still separated according to the Apartheid Segregation Act and Group Areas Act of 1950, although one and the same priest served them all. Priests as bridge-builders within these

communities were unable to bring the people together. All Catholics in the diocese were called upon to participate in the events such as youth days, pilgrimages or the ordination of priests or bishops, but these were attended only by blacks. Some white, coloured or Indian communities gave excuses that the journeys and services were often too long and that the African music was too loud. Yet, looking at this in the deeper sense of multicultural living, the reason for this resistance among the people of God could have stemmed from the difference in cultures, as culture and race are so closely imbricated in this country. This attitude has existed for many years. The authorities of the Catholic Church had acknowledged this situation of segregation which existed in the church in the late nineteen-fifties. Flanagan maintains that:

In 1957 the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference included the following passage in its statement on apartheid: 'The practice of segregation, though not officially recognised in our churches, nevertheless characterises many of our church society, our schools, seminaries, convents, hospitals and the social life of our people. In the light of Christ's teaching this cannot be tolerated forever. The time has come to pursue more vigorously the change of heart and

practice that the law of Christ demands. We are hypocrites if we condemn apartheid in South African society and condone it in our own institutions' (in Prior 1982: 90-91).

Flanagan argues further that no reaction was forthcoming after this statement:

Nothing came of this. It was never followed up. Soon after the statement was issued the bishops were caught up in the Second Vatican Council, and South Africa was caught up in the Sharpeville riots and in becoming a Republic outside the British Commonwealth (:91).

Brain (1991:259) cites the *Catholic Magazine of South Africa*, edited by Father Sydney Welch:

The Catholic Church in South Africa had refused to apply any colour bar from the earliest times and, at the time that Welch was writing, Catholic Churches were open to all and there was no opposition to this from white parishioners. However, when it came to agreeing with him that the constitution was unjust and protest was necessary, Welch failed to gain support of his readers. The bishops at the present time, speaking individually or through the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, have the same problem as Welch had in that White Catholics often disagree with the bishops' statements on racial and political matters, while even those who do agree are unwilling to speak up in support.

For many years, the black youth have been voicing their concern to the church authorities regarding the lack of attendance in any church or societal activities by other youth race groups. I often wrote reports and addressed bishops, priests, church councils and parents in our diocese concerning this issue but at that time it did not seem to reflect a need amongst the people. Only in 2003, the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) issued a statement to mark the South African Youth Day. This statement which attempted to address this issue, was to be read on June 15th, 2003. The SACBC said:

We urge you all to look for ways to bring people of different cultural and ethnic traditions into greater fruitful contact with each other. The call is to go further than casual and superficial acquaintance, to work together and to build a real family relationship in one family of the church. In particular we, as Bishops, feel challenged to assist people in overcoming the uneasiness they feel with each other. This uneasiness often results in their not participating in church or civic activities when there is a difference in cultural and ethnic expressions (SACBC:2003).

When I read this statement I felt it was overdue, but I was happy nevertheless and welcomed it. I have often felt that it has been taken for granted that black communities are community people, that they therefore socialise easily and are known to be polite to strangers. But the question that has often come to my mind is: are they capable of fending off potentially difficult situations such as those so often instigated by the apartheid regime? Apartheid had taught them to accept unquestioningly anything and everything as being good for them. Whites, on the other hand have been taught to be individualists. For

example in a church situation white children will keep only to their immediate families, while in black communities black children will mix easily among themselves. Fowler (1995) confirms these two attitudes of Westerners and Africans when he says that:

The conflict between Western individualism and African communalism is not a conflict between the Christian Gospel and pagan idolatry. Viewed in biblical terms, it is a conflict between two idolatries, each of which distorts the human person and society. On the one hand, Western individualism is founded on the idolatry of the autonomous human person, resulting in a distorting over valuing of the individuality of the person and an undervaluing of communal relations. On the other hand, African communalism is founded on the idolatry of spiritual powers operating through traditional communal structures. The result is a tendency towards a distorting submersion of individuality in an all-embracing communal life. A view of the human person and society that does justice to the Gospel needs to be purged of the distortions that come from both these idolatries, the one just as much as the other (Fowler 1995:34).

Ecclesia in Africa (EA Simplified Text 43) maintains that:

African culture has an acute sense of solidarity and community of life in the extended family. Feasts are celebrated with the whole village. Africa must preserve this priceless cultural heritage and never succumb to the temptation of individualism which is so foreign to its best traditions.

It is hoped that this warning by the African Bishops does not come too late to the Africans, and that other communities will learn from this beautiful tradition. However, we know how European culture has been perceived in regard to this issue of individualism and community life. This is due to the legacy of the past, and some people have become victims of this. Fowler (1995:26) again cites Ester Njoro (1985), pointing out that:

... the individualism of missionaries led them to a generally negative assessment of the traditional African social structure with its strongly communal character. The individualistic values that they taught as intrinsic to the Christian faith tended to undermine the value basis of the existing African social structure.

This confirms what I have said regarding the fact that blacks have been expected to accept everything unquestioningly. On the part of the priests, there has been a fear that they will lose white parishioners who are few in numbers and whose financial support is very important. The power of money plays a role here. This confirms De Beer's (1998:83) standpoint when he argues that political economy, race and class have been closely linked: "The racially oppressed and the economically oppressed were the same people". Whites had money and could be treated better because of their status. In my experience,

I have observed blacks being treated insensitively, and even coerced into accepting anything for the sake of funds that are to be donated to them, without being given a chance to make their own choices. For example, a youth group would be forced to go and sing in some white parish in which they were normally not accepted. The organisers would entice the group by telling them that these people were the ones who donated this and that to a black community church. Statements such as: “ You need to show your gratitude because this money is needed to help your people after all” were the kind of utterances one often heard from some of the clergy. Such talk is so paternalistic, and has not helped either to further unity between the different racial groups in the parishes, or to recognised the dignity of blacks.

1.2.1.2 The Church

The church calls upon its members to foster unity, through the documents of Vatican II such as *Gaudium et spes* (GS) and *Nostra aetate* (NA), encouraging its daughters and sons, to respect people of diverse cultures, races and languages, as well as to recognise the various churches, faiths and religions of different nations. In GS (29) in particular, the church points out why there should be respect for each person. It acknowledges that all have been created in the image of God and that therefore all people have to be treated equally so that their dignity is maintained. In GS 29 we read:

All men (sic) are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God’s image; they have the same nature and origin and, being redeemed by Christ, they enjoy the same divine calling and destiny; there is here a basic equality between all men (sic) and it must be given ever greater recognition.

The Council, through these documents, lays further emphasis on mutual relationships and interdependence, as well a shared respect for the full spiritual dignity of all human beings. It suggests that everyone should be engaged in mutual dialogue and respect for each other as equals. It highlights this by saying: “In his fatherly care for all of us, God desired that all men should form one family and deal with each other in a spirit of brotherhood” (GS 24).

During the **African Synod** of 1994, a new model of ecclesiology emerged, namely the image of the Church as “The Family of God”. The synod drew this image from a rich tradition of the African extended family:

... where the deep African value of life comes to be, is protected and nourished, a place of belonging where sharing and solidarity are at the heart of daily life and where each feels himself or herself at home (EA Simplified Text 63).

The Synod reaffirmed the vision of the Council and that of the Gospel. If the church is to be a true family, any distinction between the members of one family has no place. Colour, race, ethnicity, tribalism, nationality and different cultures, should not be barriers to unity in this family. This does not mean that diversity is ignored, but rather that unity in diversity is acknowledged and fostered.

1.2.1.3 South Africa in the twenty-first century

We realise that the interconnectedness of the different cultures and **globalization** are facts of life in South Africa, particularly after the democratic elections in 1994. Therefore, due to the power of globalization, South Africa cannot be excluded from the “World Village”. Krog argues that:

UNDER MANDELA, SOUTH AFRICA HAS TO GLOBALIZE at breakneck speed. One of the first big international events hosted by the country is the twelfth summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (Krog 2003:186).

The influx of migrant labourers and immigrants a profound impact on the country. De Gruchy has made an observation about students in universities and other tertiary institutions that confirms this:

... as we have witnessed an influx of students from countries like Zambia, Malawi, Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria. They bring with them their cultures and their spiritualities — but they also bring with them their stories of church involvement in post-colonial socio-economic development (De Gruchy 2003:2).

In De Gruchy’s paper, he only mentions students from African countries, but we know that many others arrive from the East and West, perhaps not for education, but for other reasons. Trade summits and sports events held in South Africa, together with the influx of tourists, are now familiar to us. Twenty percent of economic income in South Africa comes from tourism. Political negotiations between and with other countries have been held in this country. These events continuously change South Africa into an even greater multicultural nation. We hear how South Africa and other countries are interested in forging ties with each other. Many people from neighbouring countries in Africa come down in great numbers in the hope of finding “greener pastures”. This has brought about a xenophobia reaction amongst some South Africans. This attitude has caused many foreigners to lose their lives in the streets and on the railway lines in our country. Not only people from Africa make their way to this country, but

also those from other countries take advantage of coming to South Africa to further trade links. This nation has become a “melting-pot” or “catchment area” for many people who think that South Africa is rich, and that they will find new opportunities here. Multiculturalism cannot, therefore, be ignored. Kalilombe (1989) made an observation on his country and other African countries post independence concerning the entry and re-entry permits of missionaries:

We shall be hearing a lot about entry or re-entry permits, work permits, submission of plans to competent authorities, investigations of the life and activities of the church workers, and so forth (Kalilombe 1989:186).

Missionaries cannot come and go as they used to:

“The missionaries will not be able to invite themselves anymore into the countries of Africa; they will depend on being welcomed by the powers that be” (Kalilombe 1989:186).

Besides people of other nationalities coming into the country, South Africa itself is called a “Rainbow Nation” because of the diverse cultures and languages that exist in it. There are eleven official languages. Some even say that there are thirteen if one includes “**fanakalo**³” and “**tsotsi-taal**⁴”. There are still other languages such as Khoisan that need to be recognised as official languages. This multiculturalism in South Africa poses a challenge even to our media, as the media, is struggling to accommodate all eleven official languages. The educational system finds a similar challenge in schools. Therefore, South Africa is a complex multilingual country because of its various ethnic groups.

In spite of the country being termed a Rainbow Nation, there are still people who are clinging to the past in terms of racial and ethnic discrimination. Today, people still die because others do not recognise that change has taken place or because scores need to be settled regarding issues like the treatment of farm labourers, or simply because of sheer greed. The SABC news on the 2nd of September 2003 said that the problem on farms is being investigated by the Human Rights Commission. People have wanted to believe that the killings on the farms are merely criminal acts, and have refused to admit that they are racially motivated. In South Africa, farmers continue to evict people from farms unfairly despite the fact that the new government laws forbid such actions. It has come to light that unless the truth of racial

³This is a language used in the mines where there are many cultures and languages. It is also used on the farms between white employers and black employees.

⁴This is a street language used mainly by gangsters but which has spread throughout the country especially in the townships. It is used in every day communication. It contains slang words of different or mixes several languages in one sentence.

injustice is accepted, the killing of white farmers will not cease. In the media we have seen, heard and read how people have been killed just because of the colour of their skins. Often in the South African media we hear of racism still occurring in the work place, schools and in sport. We are in the ninth year of our democracy, but we still experience racial discrimination. Recently we heard Mr Mbeki, our President, call tribalism “the demon which needs to be eradicated in the whole of Africa”. We find that tribalism is just another excuse for blood-letting, for, perhaps, settling scores and not allowing others to be different. One has to keep all of this in mind as one explores the church and religious life in the South African context.

1.2.1.4 Religious Communities

In religious communities, just as in society, there is a sense of dualism which still exists in spite of Christianity. Downey describes this it way:

... with roots long, deep, and strong in Christian history, a marked dualism characterizes this worldview. In such a perspective, all reality in every sphere of life is divided into two parts, with the implication that one is superior to, and dominant over, the other: mind over matter, objective over subjective, intellect over affect, the analytical over the intuitive, prose over poetry, God over humanity, humanity over nature, clergy over lay, American and Western European over the Third World, rich over poor, speech over silence, the strong and powerful over the wounded and weak (Downey 1999:123).

Again, there are other groups who wish to remain homogeneous, while some refuse and are reluctant to learn the languages of the other groups. This reluctance is not only experienced in relation to expatriate groups but is also found in ethnic groups within South Africa. The mistake made by some of the expatriates was that they concluded that non-verbal communication is universal: this has caused serious misunderstanding and pain. On the other hand, some of the minority cultural groups learn the languages of others, not as a necessity, but for survival, because they have been made to feel inferior to the others and therefore less assertive. The so-called minor cultures need to reflect on how best they can deal with what was imposed on them in the name of civilisation, rather than meekly accepting everything foreign, or even rejecting what is good and valuable in their own culture. Arbuckle recognises that there are already some signs, when he states that: “The Third-world delegates are reacting against a well-entrenched tradition of paternalism and cultural superiority on the part of the dominant culture” (Arbuckle 1995:332). His reference to ‘a well-entrenched tradition’ points to the fact that any counter-reaction is going to involve a struggle.

Reflecting on what has just been discussed, we therefore realise that what happens in the church and society at large also happens in religious communities. Yet more is expected in terms of an understanding of Christ's values, as he calls us to be united in a single community. Gottemoeller maintains that: "Community living is not an accidental dimension of the way of life we have chosen, but a determinant of the way in which we realize every dimension" (1999:141).

Some people have lived in multicultural communities because circumstances have forced them to do so. One sister shared her insight that: "If it was not for war in Austria I would not have come to South Africa" (Interview:27/02/2003). If the circumstances of their lives had been different they would not have lived among certain racial, ethnic, tribal or national groups. Malone's view is that:

Some congregations, in their beginnings, were not founded as international groups. In recent years they may have called themselves international because of their "physical" expansion to different nations. They go through birthpangs when this accidental internationality becomes a purposeful or intentional internationality (Malone 1996:372).

In society we realise the same situation of which Malone speaks of. For example, in South Africa the abolition of the Group Areas Act of 1950 annoyed some ethnic groups in South Africa because they found themselves living side by side with people whom they had previously looked down upon. The resources such as hospitals, schools and business sector are now shared by all. Everyone has to queue in the same line on a first come first served basis. Some groups do not live a truly multicultural life because they have been forced by circumstances into this way of life rather than freely choosing to live it. In consecrated life, a similar situation exists. When sisters were still coming to Africa on missions from overseas, the thought of accepting indigenous people into their communities was a remote dream. Some of the religious communities lived their multicultural life unconsciously when they accepted indigenous people. However, they expected the indigenous sisters to adapt to their way of living and the way they had lived their religious lives in Europe. Missionary congregations integrated black people into their communities because their numbers were decreasing as there were no expatriate members coming from Europe. The age of the white sisters increased, and this made them think of recruiting blacks into their congregations to continue the work they had begun in the missions. Unfortunately their living together failed to bear the witness it ought to as they were not truly united. When they eventually found recruits,

they did not live as members of one family, and allowed nationality, race, tribe and ethnicity to divide them. The ideal of prophetic witness remained unrealized within the society in which they lived:

Too many communities changed to survive and then, when the social costs of change became apparent, they stopped changing for the same reason. They changed without theological conviction or spiritual consciousness. They changed but did not renew the life energy, the consciousness of new purpose needed to make the change enlivening. Change for its own sake is frivolous. Change for the sake of personal comfort without public impact is meaningless. Only change that enables us to change the world for the sake of the gospel engages the religious soul to its real depths (Chittister 1995:160-161).

Many communities seem to have changed simply for the sake of change, but not out of deep conviction. Therefore, the results of this change have not borne fruit and the people have failed to bear witness to a life of unity, with an accompanying failure to respect each person's dignity. It is a pity that even Christians have to be reminded by civil policies and laws that we are all made in the image of God.

As stated in the introduction the FIC are members of the Franciscan family and we are motivated by the life and spirit of St Francis of Assisi. St Francis was open to other cultures and religions. He went to the Far East to preach to people of other nations and religious beliefs, and in his early life he went to Syria. Celano describes St Francis's experience in the following way:

In the sixth year of his conversion, burning intensely with the desire for holy martyrdom, he wanted to take ship for the regions of Syria to preach the Christian faith and penance to the Saracens and infidels (1C55).

Again in 1C57 we read:

But he was not able to rest without following even more fervently the impulse of his soul. Accordingly, in the thirteenth year of his conversion, he set out for Syria, at a time when great and severe battles were raging daily between the Christians and pagans.

The above two statements regarding St Francis attempting to go to Syria are indications that he was willing to go and preach the Good News to other nations and religions. His open-mindedness towards other nations is evident again when he shares his dream with his followers (whom he called brothers) in order to allay their fears at being only few in number. He told them to rejoice in his vision, which he described to them as follows:

I have seen, as it were, the roads filled with their great numbers coming together in these parts from almost every nation. Frenchmen are coming, Spaniards are hastening, Germans and English are running, and a very great multitude of others speaking various tongues are hurrying (1C27).

From the above instances, we see that Francis of Assisi was ready to embrace people of different cultures. He respected their human dignity and saw them as brothers and sisters of the same family. In the Third Order Rule (23) we read: “whenever they meet each other, they should show that they are members of the same family”. Whenever Francis of Assisi talked of his followers, he referred to them as brothers and sisters. This attitude came from the deep relationship he had with God. It was easy for Francis of Assisi to acknowledge the Divine in himself and in others. He also recognised this presence of God in all creatures and also called them brothers or sisters. In Third Order Rule (10) Francis of Assisi says:

The brothers and sisters are to praise the Lord, the king of heaven and earth, ... with all his creatures and to give him thanks because, by his own holy will and through his only Son with the Holy Spirit, He has created all things spiritual and material and made us in his own image and likeness.

In *The Writings of St Francis of Assisi* we find “The canticle of Brother Sun”. In this canticle, St Francis witnesses to his interconnectedness with nature as fellow creatures of God. He reconciled people with nature and with God. It is because of these actions that today he is called an instrument of peace. As members of the Franciscan Family, the FIC are called to follow in his footsteps — in our own way, of course. Angalia and Boisvert say: “Just before he died, Francis of Assisi had these encouraging words for his brothers: ‘My work is finished; may Christ teach you yours’” (1998:123).

Mother Franziska Lampel too was also open to influences from other cultures. She allowed herself to be affected by the outside world and to affect it in turn. This stemmed from her deep faith which was enhanced by her “constant union with God” (FIC Constitution no.4).

The vision that Francis of Assisi and Franziska Antonia Lampel had, was the vision born out of their deep faith in God. Their constant union with Jesus made them aware of the needs of their brothers and sisters. The question that we as members of the FIC now need to ask ourselves is: how closely is our

vision in line with that of our foundress and with that of St Francis of Assisi? Both St Francis and Mother Franziska respected and uplifted the dignity of human beings, both strove for unity both within and outside their communities, both endeavoured to read the signs of their times as far as possible in order for their work to be relevant to those times. Our Rule and Constitution invite us to follow the Gospel message which stresses treating others with respect as St Francis and Mother Franziska indeed did.

1.2.1.5 Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

As FIC, if we want to be faithful to our charism which encourages us to be ready for the church wherever she needs us (FIC Constitution no.4), then we must be available for mission work. Today the church has moved into different cultures and we, too, are called to participate in a multicultural context. Young people constantly move from one part of South Africa to another, and some come from different countries. Some of these young people show an interest in joining the religious life. Certain congregations have made a move to combine their formation houses in order to share resources. Multiculturalism in such houses is inevitable: even if they have one common language, other elements of culture will be shared, even if only unconsciously. We all need to embrace them as our own family members. In most parts of the world, a monocultural community no longer exists. If we acknowledge the reality with which we are faced in our own communities and the world around us, we can then say that we are reading the signs of the times. We can also find out how best to respond to people in this context. We also need to heed the call of the church when it acknowledges that the world in which we live is multicultural. So, in order for us to be effective, we need to enter such a world, not in a naive way, but with an awareness that it is full of divisions. Nations are fighting each other, whilst some cultures consider themselves to be dominant over others. Due to ethnocentrism which exists in all cultures, there are tribal and ethnic factions. There are languages that are forced on others while some languages are already becoming extinct because they are thought to be less significant than the dominant ones. Therefore, there needs to be serious analysis and reflection on the part of the FIC in order to see how best they can bear witness to unity and peace in a country where xenophobia is the order of the day, and where tribalism and ethnocentrism divide people, with people of the same race calling each other names such as **(makwerekwere , magrigamba)⁵, (makwapa, mapono)⁶ and (ilwanyana)⁷.**

⁵ These are names given to African foreigners who come to South Africa. They have no meaning except that they intend to imitate the sounds that are not familiar to the South Africans.

⁶ These are names used mainly by the Northern Sothos to refer to anyone who is foreign to them.

⁷ This name is used by the Zulu people, referring to anyone who is not a Zulu. Literally, it means: "a mere animal".

If the consecrated life is to be effective, then the FIC need to be relevant and to take the contemporary context in which they find themselves seriously. Only then will the FICs be able to ask and respond positively to the question: are we seen to be living in unity within a multicultural diversity? The FIC will then be reading the signs of the times and will be trying to be faithful to the prophetic dimension they are called to embody. The signs of multiculturalism in South Africa are clear, as revealed in the purpose of this study. EA106 says: “The Church must continue to play her prophetic role”. The members of a multicultural community have a responsibility as part of the church, to say to the world in which they live: this kind of Christian living is possible, and to live it themselves. The church continues to recommend to her members some means of enhancing this unity. In GS1 on dialogue, the Vatican II says:

... dialogue ... means any form of getting together and communication between persons, groups or communities, in a spirit of sincerity, reverence for persons, and a certain trust, in order to achieve either a greater grasp of truth or more human relationships.

The church acknowledges that problems in groups and communities are inevitable: thus, the church suggests means of communication and dialogue. EA (Simplified Text 117,10&27) points out some of these: a) To make religion a way to greater unity, we have to promote sharing rather than confrontation; b) we need to learn dialogue, respect and tolerance through opening Catholic schools to all without discrimination, so that an initial dialogue among young people of different religions is initiated. Catholic Cultural Centres should be places where such values as listening and tolerance are promoted, and Christians should be assisted to discover the positive values within the African Traditional Religions. The church says people who have different opinions need to dispel the prejudices that exist and to increase, as far as they are able, consensus amongst themselves (GS92). Yet, oftentimes, dialogue and communication are lacking because each person in the group thinks she knows the others' cultures. This is often the cause of misunderstandings and prejudices. It is these factors that this dissertation wishes to explore. People in society are tired of hearing words over and over again: they want to see living examples. Christ calls us to live a New Commandment of love. He calls us to love one another, emphasising that, in this way, people will know that we are his disciples (John 13:34). We are to be a living sign in a world which considers such a life of unity impossible, by making it possible. Only then people will believe in what we want to say to them, especially in a world torn apart by so many divisions of race, colour, tribalism, ethnicity, nationality, and so forth.

The church in this country has been actively involved in trying to eradicate the apartheid system and we need to give credit for that, but also attempt to eradicate divisions within the church itself, as Flanagan (in Prior 1982:91) maintains in section 1.3.1.1. In light of this, I hope to make a humble contribution towards initiating a process of taking multiculturalism seriously in religious communities. The aim is to raise awareness or to conscientize members of communities so that they can face multicultural living effectively, consciously especially in those communities where people have been living together for decades with one dominant culture, and where other cultures have been seen as minority cultures.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

This dissertation is based on qualitative research, and two approaches will be used; namely, the Social Analysis Cycle/Pastoral Cycle and the Narrative approach.

1.3.1 QUALITATIVE APPROACH

The qualitative approach is used because this dissertation does not seek in a facile manner, to prove what is right or wrong. The topic is one which deals with values, relationships, events and situations and the dissertation is meant to engage in serious reflection and to offer a self-critique of the FIC, rather than investigating mechanical events and thoughts (Maxwell 1996:12). It also seeks to understand the meaning of multicultural living for participants in the study, as well as examining the significance of events, situations and actions which they experience. I have also looked at the context within which the participants act and the influences that this context exercises on their actions and vice versa. The process by which events and action take place is also analysed (Maxwell 1996:19-22).

1.3.2 PASTORAL CYCLE

This is a cycle which, according to Holland and Henriot (1983), has four stages: Insertion/Identification, Analysis, Theological Reflection and Action. These stages overlap, so therefore there is no clear division between one stage and another. As the name explains, it is a cycle. It is therefore an ongoing process. Culture, community, awareness, reading the signs of the times, conversion and witnessing are also ongoing and never completed. Such a method is fitting for this kind of subject.

The Pastoral cycle has been chosen for this thesis, which looks at a particular congregation in a specific era and context to try and see how each stage interrelates, and what influence each has on the other. In this dissertation, history will be very important, since the unit of study which reflects the FIC has been in existence for one hundred and sixty years. It is important to evaluate how FIC history has influenced or itself been influenced by cultures over the years, and what its role is today in the multicultural context in which the congregation finds itself. As its charism stresses: “Its members are to live among the people, striving for constant union with God” (FIC Constitution no.4). It means that the congregation must not exist in a self-contained cloister, but in one which takes account of a multicultural context. The charism statement continues to say that its members must be “ instruments in the hand of God” (FIC Constitution no.4), and that they should “... be available, as much as possible, for any ministries in the Church” (FIC Constitution no.5). The church needs this in today’s multicultural world. This cycle will therefore be used in all its four stages; namely: Insertion, Analysis, Theological Reflection and Action. It will be utilised in order to examine the past and the present so that these may be projected into the future. First, there will be an investigation of how this method was applied by the pioneers of the FICs when coming to South Africa; second, I will discuss how it is still applied, and third, I will demonstrate how it could continue to be of use in planning for the future.

1.3.2.1 Four stages of the pastoral cycle

1.3.2.1.1 Insertion/Identification

This study concerns about the FIC Congregation in a South African context. I have inserted myself into this study by using my personal experience, as I myself am a member of the unit. I am a South African citizen and have participated in this congregation for twenty five years. Therefore, I enter “the field with pre-conceived ideas and expectations based on past experience...” (Bryceson, Manicom and Kassam (1993:28). I have been fortunate to observe and to have participated in its history through discussions as a full member of the congregation. I have collected the data from other members through the narrative approach, in order to discover their viewpoint and to find out how we have lived as multicultural communities as well as what witness we have given to South Africa a “Rainbow” nation affected by race, tribalism, ethnicity and other diversities. I must ask: how effective have we been, and how can we continue to play our humble role in witnessing to the democratic new South Africa? I have used history books, chronicles, constitution, and the log books of the congregation here in South Africa in order to explore this concept of multiculturalism.

1.3.2.1.2 Analysis

A background history of early missionaries and FIC pioneers will be given, since the first members who arrived in South Africa as pioneers came from Austria in Europe. Their coming, and their approach to their mission, will be analysed in order to see how the socio-political, religious and church systems and structures had an influence on the consecrated life and also on multiculturalism. Furthermore, the powers and laws that existed in these systems will be examined and in particular, how these affected the FIC in bearing the witness which they did or did not bear. South African history will also be visited in the light of a similar perspective of consecrated life and multiculturalism. Social analysis is used in the hope of helping us to see the dynamics of social realities, thereby enabling us to respond effectively, having looked at the elements described above (Holland and Henriot 1983:13).

1.3.2.1.3 Theological Reflection

The third component of the Pastoral Cycle, namely theological reflection, is based on the Scriptures, Church documents, the Franciscan vision and sources, the particular charism of the FIC and the Congregation's Constitution. The Bible serves as the main source, as all the abovementioned components have their roots in the Bible. The members of the FIC also play an important role in this reflection, in endeavouring to reach the fourth stage of the process. This stage of reflection is fundamental to the growth of the congregation, as we have to read the signs of the times. In years to come another cultural trend might replace multiculturalism as a major issue of the time. When the need arises to examine another important social issue, then we need to start the process of reflection over again because it is ongoing. We should remember that this is a long process involving not only a cycle, but also a spiral. The aim should therefore be to conscientize ourselves as FIC members so that we revisit this pastoral cycle in order to plan our effective witness, not only in the present, but also in the future.

1.3.2.1.4 Action

This stage is presented in the form of some recommendations as it represents the start of a long process, as I have mentioned, one which requires all its members to participate in the journey. It needs the commitment and the conversion of all. As the Correspondence Course on Franciscan Missionary Charism says (study unit 9/2): "Learning cannot be secured individually; rather, it is the result of a vital exchange with others, within a community of brothers and sisters". It is recommended that this "vital exchange" takes place through discussion and/or debates among the members of the community. The

community should not feel obliged to accept the recommendations put forward by an individual, and therefore the FIC are free to accept or reject these recommendations.

1.3.2.2 Limitations of the pastoral cycle

I recognise that this approach has its limitations which and I would like to borrow the words of Holland and Henriot (1983:11-12) in sketching these. First, they say, it does not provide immediate answers to questions or problems. It helps us to analyse and diagnose, but does not offer a cure. It establishes broad parameters within which specific tactics and strategies can be suggested, but on its own it cannot formulate these. I am quite aware of this and do not aim to offer solutions. However as a member of the congregation and as a researcher, I wish to be:

... perceived as a committed, participatory social actor, who must seek to combine his[her] critical insight and knowledge with the understanding and resources of the local people to trigger new awareness of contradictions facing them (Bryceson, Manicom and Kassam 1993:26).

I have written this dissertation in the hope of starting a process whereby the members of the congregation can, in a collectively look at the strategies and consciously decide how to go about living a more effective multicultural community life in order to attain the results they desire.

Secondly, Holland and Henriot (1983:6) say that the pastoral cycle is not an esoteric activity for intellectuals. It is used in the everyday events of our lives. Consecrated life is precisely such an example of everyday life, so I do not find this a limitation for the congregation. Rather, I find it useful, since we are to examine ourselves daily and ask: who are we and why are we here living our own lives among the people?

Lastly, Holland and Henriot (1983:11) warn us that this approach is not value free. It is not a neutral approach, offering a purely “scientific” view of reality. Bryceson et al (1993:24) outline the broad features of this method, one of which is subjectivity. They state that:

... subjectivity commitment on the part of the researcher to the people under study is essential. This implies a rejection of the possibility of value-neutrality and of the conception of the social researcher as a tool or technician. The researcher must have a sensitivity and democratic identification with the people, ...

I have been battling with biases and loyalties as a member of the congregation under study. I found Holland's and Henriot's (1983:10) warning very helpful for my situation, in that, when using this approach, beliefs and values must be followed by commitment, and we need to wrestle with the biases of our consciousness, critique our deeper assumptions and explore the new horizons that are opened to us. Bryceson et al, (1993:30) say: "Values are not regarded as certainties but rather as hypotheses of prospective questions. Ideas guide actions. Actions are undertaken to maximize desired values". By saying this, I do not think that I have overcome the difficulties, but I feel it is a sound warning and a challenge for me. Knowing this is not an end in itself. I will be keeping the limitations in mind as I go along. I identify with some of the struggles mentioned by Holland and Henriot since, as I have mentioned, one of the struggles I have experienced is that concerning being neutral. I cannot be neutral because the FIC Congregation is my religious family. I do not wish to find solutions to the problem, but can only offer recommendations.

1.3.3 NARRATIVE APPROACH

As I was struggling with these limitations, I had to look for a suitable method to collect data and as already mentioned, I decided on the narrative approach. Because I am part of the people researched, I have been struggling not to be subjective, and the narrative method allows and recognises subjectivity and prejudice. To use the narrative method entails the use of stories. Therefore, the story of the congregation will be built up by many stories of individual members. I will attempt to integrate of all the stories told by the sisters.

In his book on counselling, McLeod (1988:45) has made an interesting observation which I take for granted in daily life. He says: "Every day we are surrounded by stories. We live in a culture that is saturated with stories, novels, television soaps, office gossip, family histories and so on".

This is confirmed by Reissman in the book, *Qualitative Researchers Companion* by Hubberman & Miles (2002:219) when he writes: "Telling stories seems to be a universal human activity". These authors are saying that stories are very powerful in our daily lives but, in most instances, they have been ignored. McLeod (1988:45) continues to say that psychotherapists, sociologists and researchers have

listened to stories but converted them into abstract categories, concepts or variables, while the actual story has been largely ignored. He cites Bruner who suggests that “we should take the stories more seriously”. This is what I wish to do in this dissertation to take the stories shared with me seriously.

An observation which I have made as I used this method was the effect it had on the co-researchers who shared their stories with me. They were glowing with happiness as they were listened to, as they shared their struggles and joys of the past. Weingarten (1995:69-94) cites people like Epston, White, Morris and Maisel who have used this method in treating their clients suffering from anorexia/bulimia. They found that clients responded positively and were healed because their stories were taken seriously, and they were able to turn a new page and start a new life. My sisters (co-researchers) felt understood when they shared their life experiences and those of convent life. The same applied to those of us who were listening: we started to understand some of the behaviour of the sisters in our community. In short, the older sisters felt appreciated for their efforts in the past, and the younger ones started to appreciate and take seriously what the older sisters did.

The narrative method deals with the past, present and future. What I try to bring out in this dissertation is an examination of multiculturalism prior to the existence of a democratic South Africa and how this affected the congregation, as well as how the pioneers influenced the situation in turn. I also will look at how we are living multiculturalism in this post-apartheid era. Müller, Van Deventer & Human (2003: 4), in their book on *The Narrative Approach* stress the “now”: “... the now is action, and therefore dynamic in nature. To take the action seriously and to have it told is to open up a possibility, to create a new now for tomorrow” (:4).

There are three tools Müller provides in this method. First, one has to take the deliberate position of not knowing. This does not mean you do not know the people, but rather that you do not act as an expert. That is why, in this dissertation, there is no hypothesis and no prepared questions I simply initiate the conversation and a story within a story develops. Secondly, Müller says that one needs to be active in one’s response: one clarifies, one wants to know. One of the most important questions here is “Why?” However, this should not make one an interrogator or a dictator. One must be a good listener. I have been struggling with this in acting as a researcher, and I have asked my co-researchers to let me know say when I enter a zone that is not comfortable for them. One realises that this is different from the other research method where one becomes a passive listener. Thirdly, this method has no fixed questions and

this brings about stories within stories. Müller feels that one's aim should be: "To story stories that are not storied" (Müller 2000:26). It is here that one listens very carefully to hear the stories of anger and frustration, of power and domination. Müller says that in each story one listens and looks for unheard and untold stories. One other warning he gives is that one should encourage persons to tell what is not normally told, without forcing the story. At the end, one accepts what is given and takes it seriously (Müller 2000:24-29).

1.3.3.1 Rules in story-telling

First, the stories are not told in one telling. This has been my experience when I was collecting data. The story-teller would come back after several hours and confirm or clarify some or other part of the story. It has been helpful to know this rule, but it needs patience. Second, following the first rule, this method stresses that a story develops. This means that a story needs time, and a story-teller needs trust. The third rule comes as a warning that if people do not trust one they will give answers that they think one wants to hear and nothing more.

These limitations have made me aware of the patience that is needed to elicit the stories I have been told. In order to be concise I have found it a great benefit to use a tape recorder and of course, to constantly take notes. The three approaches and methods — namely, the qualitative, the pastoral cycle and the narrative approach — are integrated as this dissertation takes shape.

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following are key terms in this dissertation:

1.4.1 CONGREGATION

This means an institute of religious people who have a common constitution and share the same charism of their founder/foundress. Their place of origin is called a Motherhouse, and the leadership is called the Generalate, consisting of a General Superior and her/his Councillors. The satellites in other countries are called provinces or regions, with the same structure of leadership, but called Provincial or Regional Superior and her Councillors. Each province or region has houses called communities.

1.4.2 COMMUNITY LIVING

Community living is an essential aspect of religious life. A definition given by Gottemoeller (1999:139) states that:

... community living is what happens when two or more people relate to one another in a significant, mutually beneficial, and ongoing way. A significant relationship is one which is mutually valuable, more than casual; it is multidimensional, not just spiritual, financial, social or spatial.

The author maintains that these dimensions are integrated in a mutually beneficial and ongoing way. The members of the community are tied together by the same charism, the same rule and by the same constitution, and thus they share the same vision. These members by virtue of their shared lives, have been bonded together by the same **evangelical counsels**⁸ they have professed. This is the basic element in the unity of the institute. They have come together, not by choice or by coincidence, but because they have been called by God to this institute. Gottemoeller (:141) argues that: “Community living is not an accidental dimension of the way of life we have chosen, but determinant of the way in which we realise every other dimension”.

Jesus always longed for this unity and, in his sermons, we hear him say: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). When he said: “You did not choose me but I chose you” (John 15:16), he expresses this unity. In his prayer before he died, he pleaded to the Father for the shared community which characterised his life: “may they be one in us as you are in me and I am in you”. Jesus adds, that this is “so that the world may believe it was you who sent me (John 17: 21)”. VC100 adds to this text:

Christ’s prayer to the Father before his Passion, was that his disciples may be one (cf. John 17:21-23), lives on in the church’s prayer and activity. How can those called to the consecrated life not feel themselves involved? The wound of disunity still existing between believers in Christ and the urgent need to pray and work for the promotion of Christian unity were deeply felt at the African Synod.

This unity was not only for unity’s sake but also for bearing witness. After his resurrection, Jesus said to Mary of Magdala: “go and find the brothers, and tell them I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. (John 20: 1-18). All the above examples give some indication of how Jesus wanted his followers to be united like children with the same Father. Therefore, once a member of

⁸ These are the three vows of chastity, poverty and obedience a religious person professes.

the congregation has been inspired to say “yes” to the call of God in consecrated life, just as the apostles said “yes” to Jesus, one automatically says “yes” to the members of that congregation and becomes a family member. This family becomes the fulfilment of the prayer of Christ when he asked that his disciples might be one, as he and the Father are one.

St Francis of Assisi called those who were attracted to his way of life “brothers”, talking of the time “when God gave me brothers”. St Francis, who followed closely in Christ’s footsteps, strove for this spirit of unity and family. In this family we know that people are from different cultures and backgrounds but they are called to live in a family spirit. It is possible for people to live together in harmony. When God shared life with men and women, he called them to live in a community, in the human family, all different, yet equal (VC92).

1.4.3 CHARISM

Vatican II, in the document *Perfectae caritatis* (PC), describes charism as a gift of the Holy Spirit to the founders of institutes who were raised up by God within the church. The document puts it this way:

In reality, the charism of the religious life, far from being an impulse born of flesh and blood or one derived from a mentality which conforms itself to the modern world, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who is always at work within the Church (PC11).

This gift is given to the individual who, in turn, lives it in such an obvious or radical way that other people feel inspired and are attracted to this kind of living. So, together, they pursue a life of holiness for themselves, but the church is then also renewed through them. The Holy Spirit continues his work as he did in the early Church by inspiring others to live according to the Gospel and to give witness to Christ for the Glory of God throughout the ages. VC36 discusses three dimensions of charism. First, charism leads members of that particular congregation to the Father by making them seek faithfully the will of the Father, through a process of unceasing conversion:

... wherein obedience is the source of true freedom, chastity expresses the yearning of a heart unsatisfied by any finite love, and poverty nourishes that hunger and thirst for justice which God has promised to satisfy [cf. Mt. 5:6] (VC36).

Second, it leads one to the intimate and joyful communion with the Son who teaches us the generous service of God and neighbour. This cannot occur be without us following Jesus in his footsteps of

suffering for the Kingdom. Lastly, the charism makes us aware of how the Holy Spirit, guides and sustained by him, and make choices according to his inspiration. This threefold dimension of charism exists “because in every charism there predominates a profound desire to be conformed to Christ to give witness to some aspect of mystery” (VC36).

Each Institute then gives witness to one aspect of the life of Christ so as to complete the Body of Christ: “Now you together you are Christ’s body; but each of you is the different part of it” (cf. 1Cor.12:27). In Ephesians (4:7), we are reminded that “Each one of us, however, has been given his own share of grace, given as Christ allotted it”. In this way, the church is enriched by the different charisms of the founders and foundresses.

1.4.4 CULTURE

The word “culture” is used in many different ways. We talk of “ the culture of youth”, “religious culture”, “the culture of violence”. But culture here simply means the way we do things. We will include some of the things we do in our daily lives, elements like language, norms, dress, food, art, symbols and rituals. Arbuckle maintains that:

Culture is a pattern of shared assumptions expressed in symbols, myths and rituals that a group has invented, discovered, or developed while coping with the problems of external adaptation and internal cohesion. This instrumental view of culture, while it assumes the importance of factual history and visible phenomena, highlights the developmental and ever evolving survival role of culture for people in a world of change, prejudice, and discrimination. Culture is not one aspect of life ... for example, religious, political, and economic activity. It embraces all human activity (1995:328-329).

In this dissertation we will discuss structures such as those relating to religion, politics, society, church and family. Morals, rules, values, beliefs and attitudes are an integral part of culture. The work of certain scholars will be utilised in helping to define culture, as culture is a very complex phenomenon. Downey (1999:120) defines culture this way:

Culture is the whole constellation of the means by which human beings express what is deepest and most important to them, for example, about family and progeny, social arrangements and sexual taboos, and how to deal with illness and ageing. They do this through art, literature, and ritual. Culture includes the ethos of a people, the central story or vision that gives direction to their lives, the principles and governing concerns by which they gain a sense of order and cohesion in their lives. Culture encompasses economic systems, political structures, and the laws that give shape to a sense of right and wrong. Also included are the many ways in which human beings strive to express their perceptions of beauty in music, dance, architecture, and the fine

arts. Because human beings perceive and pursue the gift and task of self-expression in different ways, cultures differ, sometimes so much so that they appear irreconcilable (Downey 1999:120).

The SACBC in its pastoral statement on inculturation said:

Culture is talking about things that make us feel at home. Our way of singing, speaking, behaving, celebrating life events, expressing joy, sorrow, relating to others and all the revered customs, rituals handed down to us by our forefathers (1995:2).

These two definitions show how complex this phenomenon of culture is, and how difficult it is to define. They reveal how culture is second nature to human beings. It concerns the things that people value. In both definitions we realise that culture is a human construction: it is inclusive in nature, a collective tradition which is directive, yet which also has a constraining influence. On the other hand, it is dynamic not static and grows and develops through time. These are some of the elements Pobee (1992: 58) sees in African culture, although one must agree that they are relevant to all cultures. Since culture is collective, it is society that formulates its own culture, and consecrated life is a reflection of this culture. As consecrated life is made up of diverse cultures, “Nobody is permitted to make of his/her culture a dogma or an absolute, from which to combat against, despise or simply judge others”. This is an appropriate statement made by the General Council of the Comboni Order (1999:12) in the letter on *Cross-Culture in the Comboni Community*. It can easily happen that one has an ethnocentric perspective about one’s culture because of the differences that seem irreconcilable. Again, culture is not static: culture is to serve humans and not to enslave them. Kidd (2001:13) asks a question and gives the answer to this phenomenon: “Does this culture still serve the purpose or not? As the species evolves its biological needs may change, so too will the culture of that species”. This shows that culture is dynamic. It changes, grows and develops through time. Arbuckle (1995:328) states that: “Culture is not an entity, but is primarily a process that is persuasively at work, particularly in the unconscious of the group and individuals”.

Culture plays an immense role in our lives because it gives us our identity, our worth, and our sense of belonging. This means that we are to respect other people’s culture, just as we respect our own. We know how each culture finds it hard to let go of the element of ethnocentrism. Yet, at the same time, “All cultures are human creations and thus there is a need for ongoing evaluation, purification and discernment” (Kidd 2001:26). It is essential to keep in mind this thinking of Kidd when diverse cultures

come together. When people of different cultures unite, dialogue and communication are essential elements in this process.

Culture in South Africa has become a complex issue because of the different cultures that are found in the country. This country is culturally diverse because of the different backgrounds of the people from rural to semi-rural, urban to semi-urban, from the elite in the suburbs to the poorest in the rural areas, and the informal settlements within the same country. This diversity in South Africa is again brought about by the different languages, tribes and ethnic groups.

1.4.5 MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY

“Multiculturalism is a buzz word” (Newton and Peklo 1995:75). It is difficult to define multiculturalism because it touches many levels of life. Multiculturalism in this dissertation refers to the integration of members from different nationalities, tribes, or ethnic groups living together as one family. This, then, means that the members in this family not only have diverse personalities, but also diverse cultures and backgrounds. Often, when multiculturalism is spoken about, elements of dominant and non-dominant, majority and minority groups, superior and inferior cultures come to the fore (Malone 1996:366). The FIC Region in South Africa is formed of eight Austrian sisters, nine South Africans and two Tyrolians. The South African sisters come from five ethnic groups in South Africa: Northern Sotho, Shona, Swati, Tsonga and Zulu. We can therefore say that this congregation in South Africa is ethnically diverse (Riebe-Estrella 1996:507). Riebe-Estrella goes further to divide the ethnic groups into white ethnics and non-white (sic) ethnics in order to show how each group lives a community life: “The White ethnics shy away from the more substantive ethnicity that demands involvement in a concrete community ... mutual commitments, and some elements of restraint” (Riebe Estrella 1996:510). On the other hand, “Non-white (sic) ethnics, find themselves locked into concrete and limited communities because of [the dominant group’s] refusal to treat them as equals” (:510). All religious believe that they are called by their baptism and profession to live together as a community to witness unity to a world that is diverse in many ways. Christ is to be visible in religious communities. The incarnation of Christ in a multicultural life is crucial. Arbuckle emphasises this incarnation when he states:

Multiculturalism is an inculturation imperative. Inculturation is the incarnation of the Christian life and Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs, and unifies the [cultural context], transforming and remaking it so as to bring

about a “new creation” Multiculturalism is a process of inculturation whereby cultures are so transformed and remade into a “new creation” that they interact with one another in justice and charity in the service of personal and community growth (Arbuckle 1995:327).

Arbuckle, in this definition of multiculturalism, emphasises the interaction and the manifestation of Christ among the community members of different cultures after they have been transformed. He takes this argument further when he brings to our attention the fact that:

This interaction does not occur through command from above or the planning of “just a few experts,” as Pope John Paul II reminds us in *Redemptoris Missio* (#54), but through the involvement of people at all levels of society (1995:327-328).

1.4.6 PROPHETIC WITNESS

This section on prophetic witness deals with four aspects of a prophet: a) Who is a prophet? b) What is the role of a prophet? c) The context in which the prophet is called to work. d) What challenges does the prophet face in his prophetic role? These four elements will not be dealt with consecutively but will be interwoven in the text.

Prophecy is usually understood to mean the ability to forecast the future. It should be noted, however, that this is a rather restricted and confined meaning of prophecy. Prophecy, refers to the mediation and interpretation of the divine mind and will (Vawter 1970:224-225).

Heschel in his book, *The Prophets*, describes a prophet as a person who faces humans, who in turn are being faced by God. The prophet is one who speaks from the perspective of God as this is perceived from the prophet’s point of view. The prophet’s task is to convey a divine view, yet, as a person, s/he also has his or her personal standpoint. S/he is also a poet, preacher, patriot, statesman, social critic, moralist. S/he is a person not a microphone. S/he is not a mouthpiece, but a partner and associate of God. S/he is endowed with a mission, with the power of a word not his/her own that accounts for his/her greatness, but which is also with his/her own temperament, concerns, character and individuality (Heschel 1962:iii).

In the above description one realises that a prophet is still a human being like the rest, of us but one who takes the word of God and the context seriously. Prophets are people who emerge from their own society: they know the culture, and whatever they say about it is relevant to the context of the time. These are the people who challenge culture and tradition. Chittister, in her talk on the *‘Prophetic*

dimension of religious life” (1998: tape) states that prophets are called to challenge even their own religion, church, country and communities. They are to gamble with their own lives, give all they have in order to be models, signs and living witnesses of their age. She continues to argue that: those who call themselves prophets are to risk everything because those who risk nothing risk much more. These people challenge authorities and the powerful on behalf of the minorities, the powerless, the poor, the exploited and the marginalised of the country. They go on to challenge the religious who do not care about their way of life, who scandalise the weak, and those who do not advocate for the poor. Heschel argues that:

The prophet knows that religion could distort what the Lord demanded of man (sic), the priests themselves had committed perjury by bearing false witness, condoning violence, tolerating hatred, calling for ceremonies instead of bursting forth with wrath and indignation at cruelty, deceit, idolatry and violence (1962:11).

This truth causes difficulties and makes the prophet’s work onerous. Heschel (1962: xvi) says that for this challenge the prophet needs “ a skull of stone to remain callous to such blows”. This comes about because one cannot ignore the voice of God inside one’s heart which motivates and calls. He also talks of this person as one who faces God, and then the people. This shows that this person has a very close relationship with God and that prayer is at the centre of this person’s life, or else one would not be able to read the signs of the time, or to see things from God’s perspective. Although the words of a prophet are: “stern, sour, stinging, behind his austerity is love and compassion for mankind” (Heschel 1962:12).

Heschel also maintains that the prophet is not insensitive to the beauty and good that is present in a context, but instead seeks justice. He says: “the prophet’s ear perceives the silent sigh. While others are intoxicated with the here and now, the prophet has a vision, an end” (Heschel 1962:10). In the tape by Chittister (1998) referred to about on “*Prophetic dimension of religious life*”, she reminds us how the different prophets were seen to be “out of step” when they talked about things people did not see. She refers to Amos who prophesied at a time when Israel was prosperous, totally satisfied, and spreading the religious message. Yahweh was blessing them, and they prayed, believing that their relationship with Yahweh was good. However, they failed to see the injustices that were occurring. At the time of Hosea, religion had become politicised. The Word of Yahweh did not matter to the inhabitants of Israel, especially to a religious people: the word of the King was more important. Micah also prophesied at the time when Israel’s prosperity was achieved at the expense of the poor, with forced labour being used to

build the country. The leaders and priests talked religion and philosophy, but failed to live up to the tenets of their faith and to speak for the poor. Isaiah prophesied against military power. Leaders called this, time of progress, priests called it period of blessing, and the rich simply associated it with having a good time. This argument shows that the people of Israel, with their kings, priests and leaders, failed to perceive the implications of their actions but the prophets were able to see beneath the surface. Chittister ends her talk by saying that today these prophets are no longer there, but religious communities are called to be Amos, Hosea, Micah and Isaiah of today.

Therefore the prophet in this dissertation is understood as a human person, who knows the culture and traditions of his/her times. S/he is incarnated into his/her context, as Christ was incarnated into his world and culture. Christ was not afraid to challenge those traditions and the culture that was contrary to His Father's Will. We know that that led him to his death, and, more specifically, a terrible death on the Cross. So it should be with, the prophet who should be ready to die for his/her convictions. The prophet burns within for the conviction that s/he feels: thus, the prophet Jeremiah says: "Lord you have seduced me, Yahweh, and I have let myself be seduced" (Jeremiah 20:7)". When Jeremiah uttered these words, life was very difficult for him: he was scorned and beaten and put into jail by the priest who did not want to hear what he was saying. Jeremiah, for his part was burning with fire for God and he could not resist God's power over him. We hear him say: "you have overpowered me: you were the stronger one". We, too, as religious need to burn within ourselves and feel that God has seduced us with his call, therefore, we should want to do everything in our power to witness to God's unity in the diverse cultures in which we find ourselves. VC that the consecrated people may realise this truth when it says:

True prophecy is born of God, from friendship with him, from attentive listening to his word in the different circumstances of history. Prophets feel in their hearts a burning desire for the holiness of God and, having heard his word in the dialogue of their prayer, they proclaim that word with their lives, with their lips and with their actions, becoming people who speak for God against evil and sin (VC84).

Temperini (1998:15) tells the FIC that we must be the first to live this kind of witness:

We must not only act as ministers or servants of the Gospel, but we must first of all bear witness ourselves. The Gospel must flow in our veins, we must carry Jesus in our hearts and bodies otherwise we are only "sounding brass".

He adds: “We are to be convinced ourselves that the Gospel can convert, change and renew our consecrated lives, the church and the society of our days” (:16). To complement this, Chittister (1998: tape) quotes St Augustine when he says: “The weapon we would use to attack the enemy must first pass our own hearts”.

Prophecy as such is not something limited to the ancient world of the Bible, but is a reality even in the modern world. Throughout history, God has and continues to speak to his people through such instruments as Francis of Assisi, Theresa of Calcutta, Tutu and Mandela and others. As long as these people mediate and interpret the divine mind and will, they can be referred to as prophets. The FIC are not excluded from this call of God.

1.4.7 RELIGIOUS LIFE/CONSECRATED LIFE

The two phrases, Religious life/Consecrated life, are to be used interchangeably. Consecrated life is a way of life to which one is called much like any other form of life such as marriage or the single life in order to live one’s baptismal vows and commitment to the full. Chittister (1996:91) puts it this way:

Consecrated life is a lifestyle, a time-honoured way of being Christian in the world. It is simply one form. Distinct from all others in style, devoted to the Christian pursuit, designed for those with a passion for the mystery of life, it concentrates exclusively on plumbing and proclaiming the Good News that Jesus is, Jesus saves and Jesus cares. For all of us. For everything. For both people and planet. Always. And it does so not simply by bringing a service to the world but by being a faithful presence within it that sets out to speak a gospel language in a mother tongue.

Consecrated life is not shown in what one does, but in who one is. The service which religious people give is just an expression of who they are. The very essence of consecrated life is to be a prophetic presence in the world.

A religious person takes three vows, those of chastity, poverty and obedience, as signs of a deeper commitment to Christ. The person who pronounces these evangelical counsels is responding to a call which comes from God. A person desiring to live a consecrated life needs to have had a deep and long relationship with the Lord in prayer. The very grace to respond and persevere is also a pure gift from God.

Gottemoeller (1999:141) argues that: “Each of us experienced a call to a way of life, an invitation from Jesus Christ to a life of greater intimacy”. She makes a distinction between a person who is a religious and one who is not when she maintains that: “A single person living alone in the world could take a vow of poverty, but it would not be the same vow that a religious takes. It would differ in its expression and its obligations” (:141). This would also apply to any of the other two vows:

In every age there have been men and women who, obedient to the Father’s call and to the prompting of the Spirit, have chosen this special way of following Christ, in order to devote themselves to him with an “undivided heart” (cf. 1Cor.7:34) (VC1).

A person does this in order to be free for God and for his people. (VC1) Simplified Text continues:

For the profession of the evangelical counsels in consecrated life makes them a kind of sign and prophetic statement among Christians and before the world. For they try to live the gospel radically and make Christ and his mission the one focus of their lives.

Chittister (1996:5) states that:

The relationship between culture and religious life is closely woven. Across every period of history, religious life has been a source of social enlightenment, a centre for education, a place of personal liberation as well as a place of spiritual growth.

This statement by Chittister shows that the person who commits herself to this life does not exclude him/herself from the culture and the society in which s/he lives at any time. A religious is part of culture and has a responsibility to take an active part in making it better or, simply, just to be a sign of hope. However, as we know, one person in a community cannot achieve much as an individual: it is through combined efforts that much can be achieved. So, one then feels it is better to join a community of other people with the same aim and focus:

It has been proven by experience that concerted efforts produce greater results, especially when they are united in God, in whose service they are dedicated for the good of mankind... (Petz 1993:17).

This is a statement made by our Foundress at the beginning of the congregation. She further supported it wishing the members of this congregation “to live among people and strive for constant union with God”. Here she thinks of a wider community. This is very much in agreement with the African value of

community living: “**Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu (Zulu)/ Motho ke motho ka batho (Sotho)/Munhu i munhu hivanhu (Tsonga)**”. This is a proverb found in most of the African languages to stress that one cannot be complete if one does not embrace other people. (You become fully human through other people). As Franciscans, we are to see the world as our cloister. This is similar to Christ who lived among people because this is where God wanted him to dwell.

1.5 SCOPE OF STUDY/ PARAMETERS

This dissertation is a missiological and theological study from a Catholic point of view. It looks at how multicultural life is lived by the religious communities of the FIC in order to offer a prophetic witness in a multicultural society that is divided by discrimination due to race and the colour of a person, the factions caused by tribalism and different ethnic groups. This study is set in a South African context in the Diocese of Witbank, located in Mpumalanga Province.

The time frame for this study is from nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. The Congregation in question was founded in 1843, came to South Africa in 1939 and still has communities here. The indigenous African Sisters started joining this congregation in 1962. That year saw the beginning of Vatican II. The political history of the time was clouded by the apartheid regime, and in 1994 the country held its first democratic elections. All these factors influenced the consecrated life of the FIC in South Africa.

As the name of the congregation under study is Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, so the Franciscan Charism is to be looked at, as the congregation follows the Third Order Rule, and its Constitutions are based on this Rule and charism. The dissertation does not claim to study all the facets of the FIC congregation, concentrating instead on the multicultural aspect and how this has been lived in a congregation that is international, involving the integration of a number of cultures. Although the congregation exists in eight countries and spans three continents, the nationalities that will be dealt with in this study are some of the cultures of Europe and Africa, since the sisters of this congregation come from Austria, South Tyrol and South Africa. Even then, I cannot claim to generalise but rather try to be as specific as possible. The questions are: how have the sisters integrated themselves as a community, and how have they given witness by living together as a multicultural community? What has promoted their integration and witnessing in their context? What stumbling blocks have been present to prevent

them from living this life themselves and giving the witness they ought to have given? Has the diversity impoverished or enriched them? Was the fact of their living together multiculturally conscious or unconscious? This dissertation looks at the ecclesial, political and congregational structures that existed over the particular period in question, and how these contributed to, or diminished, the multicultural living and witness of the sisters.

Although I have written this dissertation as a member of the FIC congregation, this is my personal experience and viewpoint. The sisters have shared their stories, and have given advice and criticisms, but I still cannot claim that I am writing on their behalf. My hope is that this will start a process of consciousness-raising, reflection and discussion on multiculturalism within our communities. This is to be carried out with great truthfulness, openness and honesty for the good of the congregation and the society we serve.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.6.1 METHODOLOGY

I decided to use qualitative research after consulting Maxwell (1996) in his book called *Qualitative research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Maxwell assisted me in differentiating between qualitative and quantitative research by giving me the reasons behind both, as well as delineating their advantages and disadvantages. Reissman, in the book, *Qualitative Researcher's Companion* by Huberman & Miles (2002:219) assisted me further in understanding this methodology. Holland, J & Henriot, P (1983), in their book called *Social analysis: linking faith and justice*, were also helpful, as their study deals with questions of faith, and helps people to delve more deeply into the theory and practical issues, as well as to probe the underlying causes of situations surrounding faith. The readers of this study and those interested are going to be religious who, hopefully, are familiar with the social analysis process as the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference uses and recommends this methodology in the Pastoral Plan. As I was struggling with biases and loyalty in this study, I had to find a tool that would allow me to be a part of the unit under study (a member of the FIC). J Müller, W van Deventer and L Human, in their book on narrative research: *Fiction writing as metaphor for research: A Narrative approach*, and J. Müller, in his paper on *Spirituality and Narrative* were helpful in this regard. D Bryceson and K Mustafa (1993) assisted me in understanding and complementing the narrative approach in their discussion paper called *Participatory Research: Redefining the Relationship*

between Theory and Practice. Connected to this, the discussion paper by Bryceson et al (1993) entitled *The Method of the Participatory Approach* offered further clarification.

1.6.2 CHURCH DOCUMENTS

Church documents have been used in order to find out what they say about consecrated life, multicultural living and witnessing. The documents of Vatican II have been enlightening in the way in which they deal with issues of culture and witness. The document on religious life, *Perfectae caritatis* (PC), confirms that the function of religious life is to give witness of Christ to the world. When it deals with community living, words like “unity” and “dialogue” are very common. The same is true of such documents as *Nostra aetate* (NA) and *Gaudium et spes* (GS). They all encourage us to respect other cultures and to use various modes of communication and dialogue to preserve the unity which Christ asked the members of the Christian faith to strive for. GS in particular stresses the dignity of the human being which needs to be respected. A document like *Vitae consecrata* (VC) deals with consecrated life in many aspects, seeing it as a gift to the church, the main function of which is to bear witness, while also reading the signs of the time. The PC and VC documents both highlight their importance of unity in community life. Other church documents like *Ecclesia in Africa* (EA) and the Southern African Pastoral Plan — *Community Serving Humanity* — also stress the unity which stems from the life of the Divine Trinity. EA has been known for its outstanding work on the Church-as-Family. This document speaks about African culture and its values explicitly and, by so doing, it gives the church community a vision to follow.

1.6.3 CULTURE, MULTICULTURAL AND INCULTURATION

Other books that have contributed to the definition and understanding of culture are from authors such as Downey (1999), who has contributed to a broader understanding of the purpose of culture, Karecki (2000) who, in a book called *Intercultural Christian Communication* has combined culture and faith, and Pobebe (1992) who has done the same in his book called *Skenosis: Christian Faith in An African Context*. All three agree that culture is dynamic and that it is a human creation in a collective way. Therefore, there needs to be an ongoing evaluation of culture. The SACBC, in some of their statements, and in books such as *Community serving humanity* and a *Pastoral statement on Inculturation* and *Pastoral Message to the Catholics in Southern Africa*, talk about the struggle for unity among diverse cultures and how the Gospel needs to be incarnated in these different cultures. These documents further deal with the dimension of culture and faith.

1.6.4 RELIGIOUS LIFE

Review for Religious, and other journals which deal with consecrated life, especially in a multicultural context, have been consulted. Some of the authors who contribute to *Review for Religious* also write on internationality and cross-cultural issues which are very relevant to a consideration of multiculturalism. These have been very informative and have contributed a great deal to this dissertation. They have offered ideas on what struggles religious are grappling with in living a multicultural life, the challenges in which they are engaged, and some ways and means of overcoming such challenges. Although most of the authors who contribute to this journal deal with multiculturalism and give examples of various countries, they do not as such address the ethnic and tribal aspects of the African continent and of South Africa in particular, with its particular problem of apartheid. Whilst some of the examples given in this journal reflect similarities with the South African situation, most of the authors of the articles in this journal deal with communities overseas, although they deal with common problems that also affect South African communities. One needs to adapt some of the information and recommendations to the local situation. Malone (1996) spells out stages that a community needs to undergo if it wants to be transformed, but the one thing she stresses is a corporate conversion in a community. She is not biased in dealing with 'community' as she is not afraid to reveal the flaws of the different constituent groups. Authors such as Gottemoeller (1999), McGinn (1996), Newton and Peklo (1995) are some of the writers that I have consulted. Arbuckle (1995), who has done case studies in several communities, sheds practical light on how the dominant cultures have dealt with minor cultures, and this has also been found to be very helpful. Witnessing is one of the issues with which most of them deal. The contributors in this journal see witnessing as witnessing as an essential function of consecrated life — consecrated people are to witness not by what they do, but by their very presence. People like Chittister speak strongly on the issue of presence, and, on this issue, Heschel A (1962) and Malone (1996) have been enlightening in describing the characteristics of prophetic witness.

1.6.5 MISSIONARIES

Other books on the history of missionaries in Africa and Third World countries have been helpful. Authors such as Bosch (1991) and Fowler (1995) are profoundly aware of the situation in South Africa, and therefore their examples are particularly suitable for this dissertation. This missionary history is important as it has shaped the church in Africa, and our Sisters (FIC) are part of this missionary history. Kalilombe (1989), as a missionary bishop from Africa living in a multicultural community, deals with

issues that missionaries need to look at as they work with people. He warns missionaries not to make unilateral decisions, but to consult the people with whom they work at grass-roots level. What he speaks about is common in the African context.

1.6.6 HISTORY

Several authors have been consulted on the history of religious life. People such as Hoare and Heuser (1966), Hughes (1946 and 1958), Orlandis (1993) and Renwich (1958) have given a general background of the history from Europe and the perspective of the church and religious life in Europe. While authors like Brain (1991), Nefzger (1994), Prior (1982) and the Catholic Directory (1996-1997) have provided a specific history of the church in South Africa. Nefzger, in his book entitled *Comboni Missionaries in South Africa 1924-1994*, in particular, details the specific history of the Diocese of Witbank where the FIC Sisters started to work in 1939. He does not go into details about the FICs, but mentions them here and there as they worked closely with the Comboni Missionaries. Brain gives valuable information relating to the politics of South Africa from a Catholic perspective. This perspective has been useful in that it spells out how the Catholics contributed to eradicating racism in the church itself and in the country. Karecki and Wroblewski, in their *Franciscan Study Guide Series* (2002-2003), discuss the Franciscan Family History. Although they deal with Franciscanism in Europe, they also clarify many issues about charism: how it was lost and what effect this had on the Franciscan family. However, they do not deal with the Franciscans in South Africa.

1.6.7 FRANCISCAN AND FIC RESOURCES

Franciscan and congregational sources like *The Writings of St Francis of Assisi*, biographies, Third Order Rule, Constitution, history books and log-books have been read, with the aim of finding out what they say about multiculturalism and prophetic witnessing. Unfortunately, the log books and chronicles of the FIC are written in German and therefore had to be translated to English to enable me to use them. This is a shortcoming because I could not find what I wanted except what was translated. Some of the sources were in old German which even some of the German-speaking sisters could not read. The Franciscan and FIC sources assisted me in discovering what structures, powers and laws existed *in situ*, in promoting the Franciscan Family as a whole and specifically in the FIC. In these sources, not much was specifically said about multiculturalism, but there are indications that the Franciscan Family and the FICs were open to all cultures. When we come to the witnessing part of it, the same is found. In the Franciscan sources, this aspect of witness was very important. In both the Franciscan and FIC early

documents, it is seen that they started the Order/Congregation because they were able to read the signs of the time and they responded positively, wishing their members to do the same. St Francis of Assisi is said to have involved himself and his first followers in situations such as the lepers' colony, and, through his way of life, he challenged the rich of his time and even the church which he respected and loved. In response to her milieu Franziska Antonia Lampel said to her followers that they were to live among the people and be ready to go wherever the Church might need them (FIC constitution).

Lastly, one other source which has contributed immensely to this dissertation, is the history book by Petz (1993). She documents the history and happenings in the early years of the congregation, spelling out the charism and vision of the founder, and also how the founder was open to new developments that were taking place in her time. In terms of my dissertation, this book falls short in that it deals with the history of Europe and the religious life in the FIC around Austria, and does not go beyond where the FIC would undertake mission work.

1.7 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

In the introductory chapter, I gave a short history of how South Africa has become a multicultural country and of what is expected of the church and her sub-structures. I then went on to give reasons for this study. After that the methodology and tools that would be used were discussed.

I then provided definitions of the terms that were going to be used in this study. Lastly, I spoke about the books which would contribute to my research.

In the second chapter, I sketch the background relating to the development of consecrated life in the nineteenth century, primarily because that is the time when the FIC that I am researching came into being. I also wish to present the missionary efforts as the background to consecrated life in South Africa. I analyse the structures, policies and traditions of both the missionaries and those in the consecrated life and show how these structures, policies and traditions have influenced the FIC in the present multicultural reality of South Africa. Lastly, I deal with how the FIC faced the challenges that beset them as they settled in South Africa.

The third chapter deals with a theological reflection on the process of the pastoral cycle. In it, I explore the biblical, ecclesial and Franciscan visions of multicultural living, and I look at how the FIC congregation has implemented this vision.

The fourth chapter examines the process of forming multicultural local communities and how new members are groomed so that they can be more effectively integrated into a multicultural context. This chapter also evaluates how the FIC responds to the challenge of being a gift to the church, and whether or not the FIC is united in its mission to give a prophetic witness.

Chapter Five: The Conclusion. Since this is a study of community, and since no one individual can dictate what needs to be done without the involvement of the entire congregation or community, recommendations will be given in the hope of starting a process of looking seriously at our prophetic witness as a multicultural congregation in the context of a multicultural South Africa.

1.8 CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this chapter has established the aim of this dissertation and provided an orientation relating to the background of the FIC which comprises the unit for this study. I have also endeavoured to elucidate the context in which the FIC work and to describe my own personal experience relating to multiculturalism in various aspects of religious life and, lastly, to elucidate the process to be followed in the writing of this dissertation. In an endeavour to provide a prophetic witness, the second chapter will analyse the consecrated life and the missionary impulse in order to discover how multiculturalism has been perceived and lived.

CHAPTER TWO

CONSECRATED LIFE

2. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to **analyse** consecrated life and the various cycles it has been through from the time our congregation was founded. It also aims to examine how missionary efforts have influenced both South Africans and the consecrated life. I will then endeavour to look at how the FIC fitted into this scene, and how its members reacted to the challenges posed by this period.

2.1 THE DEVELOPMENTS OF CONSECRATED LIFE

Consecrated life is not a new concept. In most parts of the world, it has been lived differently by Christians and people of other faiths. People embraced consecrated life in various ways and called it different names. In Christianity, consecrated life has been lived to imitate the life of Jesus Christ:

From the very beginning of Christianity there were Christians who embraced a life of complete imitation of Jesus Christ. Later, Christian asceticism adopted forms associated with abandonment of the world and with life in community: this was how monasticism started. The monastic life flourished from the fourth century onwards, in both east and west (Orlandis 1993:51).

People were attracted to this kind of eremiticism and monasticism. In the early centuries, people lived a consecrated life according to the Rules of St Augustine and St Benedict. Their existence was orderly and based on that of the early Christians in the Acts of the Apostles. This was the ideal: living in community, sharing all their property as one family and giving witness by the way in which they lived together.

As time went on, people lost the first fervour of monasticism and neglected its aims. As a result of this laxity many movements started to reform consecrated life. Renwick details such movements. The Benedictine Order was founded in Italy in 529. The Cluniac Movement, was started by Bernard in 910 at Cluny in France in order to counteract the corruption and lack of zeal which had manifested itself in the Benedictine Order. The Cistercians were founded at Cîteaux in Burgundy by monks who wanted to keep the original Benedictine rules in their strictness and purity:

... the most striking signs of all that a new age has dawned are the many religious orders, especially the new monks of the Order of Cîteaux and the new Canons Regulars of Premontre (1958:95).

In the Mendicant Orders: the Franciscans and Dominicans, members were recruited from humble life and their democratic spirit gave them a wide appeal (Renwick 1958:75-76). Hughes continues to argue that: Reforms of religious life have continued throughout the ages. Men and women have been founding new religious communities under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Consecrated life has had its challenges and struggles: as society changed, religious life had to struggle to adapt to the needs of the people over the centuries. Consecrated life has changed, although many resisted the changes. PC10 concludes that: “The holy synod... confirms the members in their vocations and urges them to adapt their life to the modern requirements”. Most of the congregations have been started due to the needs of the society, or rather due to reading the signs of the times. PC argues that religious life:

... should also be in harmony with the needs of the apostolate, in the measure that the nature of each institute requires, with the requirements of the culture and with social and economic circumstances. This should be the case everywhere, but especially in mission territories (PC3).

We know that God raised prophets at times when they were needed. Over the centuries, too, he raised people who were to fulfil his plan and he gave them gifts of the Spirit in the form of, their specific charism. Other people were attracted to these charisms. They formed communities in order to combine their efforts in fulfilling the plan of God. Some congregations have continued for centuries, while others, because their mission had been completed, ceased to exist. One example of a person raised up to fulfil God’s plan was St Francis of Assisi, who answered this call and responded to the needs of his time in the thirteenth century. He came onto the scene of church history when the world and the church were enmeshed in materialism, and the poor were neglected by both state and church. It was at the time of the feudal system. Karecki and Wroblewski (1997:6) in the Franciscan Study Guide One on *The Life and times of Francis of Assisi and Clare* tell us that:

Towns had been part of the classical world, but feudalism had shifted the centre of life to rural areas. By the end of the tenth century, the manor system began to decline. When Francis of Assisi and Clare took their place in history the social movement toward the re-founding of towns and the discovery of the importance of money was coming to its culmination in the war between the merchants and the feudal lords.

The church and State were in conflict over material goods, especially land. People like Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Dominic were the prophets of their time. The Franciscan Family grew in strength and in number over the centuries. The different Orders of this family were known world-wide, and people were interested in Franciscan charism. As mentioned in the first chapter, the foundress of the FICs, Franziska Antonia Lampel and her companions, were in the Third Order Secular before they became the Third Order Regular in 1843.

2.2 CONSECRATED LIFE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

2.2.1 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SITUATION

Consecrated life in the nineteenth century in the European countries was clouded by **revolutions and movements** such as the French revolution, the Enlightenment movement, Gallicanism, and hostile governments which sought to limit the influence of the church in society (Wroblewski & Karecki 2002:6). These movements came about as revolts against the power of the church (Hoare and Heuser 1966:68):

... Bismarck sought to make Catholicism in Germany subject to the State and what has been called the Kulturkampf (Battle of the Creeds) followed. By a series of laws passed between 1871 and 1875, Bismarck abolished the Church's control of its own schools, expelled the Jesuits and other religious orders, took seminaries and claimed the right to appoint the clergy.

Some other movements like Liberalism, Trade Unions, Marxism, the Congress of Vienna and Holy Alliance made their voices heard against the church and the consecrated life of that time. Popes and Bishops were arrested and others sent into exile (Orlandis 1993). These movements also came about due to the fact that the church had tax-free property: "their very great number and their very great wealth which was not taxed, became a point of concern" (Wroblewski & Karecki 2002:7). Some of these revolutions and movements had already started already in the eighteenth century, but culminated their purpose in the nineteenth century. In the FIC history we read:

At the beginning of spring 1848 Europe was shaken by a wave of revolutions that can be explained by external short-term causes, such as rises in prices following a poor harvest in 1846, government ineptitude, the example of successful revolutions; in short the time was ripe for revolutions. ... The revolution began in Paris in February and quickly engulfed the rest of Europe (Petz 1993:72).

In addition to the fact that consecrated life was clouded by these movements and revolutions, it was also influenced and affected by resolutions of the First Vatican Council of the Catholic Church which was held from 1869-70. This council proclaimed the infallibility of the pope and this added more hostility and confusion to the church and consecrated life. All this brought turmoil and fear to religious congregations which, in turn, strengthened their faith:

In spite of all the upheavals between the church and the state new orders were founded: the Sisters of Divine love, the Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus and the Poor Sisters of St Francis (Hoare and Heuser 1966:68).

The latter was a congregation that existed in the Tyrol area, and later the FIC congregation was called by this name for a short period, instead of the School Sisters. But later it went back to its name, The School Sisters. In our history book it is written that the congregation was in great danger due to various other movements:

There was great danger, especially since the Sisters had lost their influential protector. On April, 29, 1848 a petition was circulated, one that had been prepared some time before, demanding the suppression of all religious houses and fraternities (Petz 1993:75).

In spite of all these movements, the congregation spread to other nations and accepted candidates from neighbouring countries. These had an influence on the congregation's growth and image (Petz 1993:19). One could say that where there is chaos, there is growth. We remember that Christianity spread to different parts of the world in its early years because of persecution in Jerusalem. Religious life also spread to other parts of the world because of the revolutions, movements and wars. FIC in particular came to South Africa because of the Second World War.

2.2.2 MONASTICISM

In the nineteenth century, one thing we take note of is that consecrated life was lived in a **monastic** way. Religious had huge buildings and a fixed routine of prayer and other spiritual exercises. When the FIC congregation was started, it took a different form.

The Foundress and the pioneer Sisters shared their house with the poor children who were unable to pay the fees for boarding. We hear how Franziska Antonia Lampel warned those who applied to be received into this congregation using the following words:

The difficulty of our vocation must be explained quite well; we are only beginners, and therefore cannot have things like the religious who have been living for centuries in a well ordered monastery (Petz 1993:48).

To a postulant who wanted to transfer from a Carmelite monastery to the School Sisters, she wrote:

It was too hard for you with the Carmelites, but it is not any easier here. The nuns pray more, but our sisters must work more and strain their lungs through constant talking; therefore you would find it too taxing in our order. By the way, you would have to have a period of probation. Our life is an active one, difficult on the body and yet meditation has to be a part of it (Petz 1993:48).

To another applicant she sent this reply:

Concerning your wish to be able to lead a quiet, withdrawn life, I must inform you that the house of the School Sisters is often noisy. ... While at work the sisters practise inner prayer; indeed, they cannot let up in this if they want to persevere in their vocation... . There are young women whose only concept of consecrated life is to serve God in solitude, quiet, prayer and contemplation. I find nothing wrong with this desire, but among us it is of no use — even with stubborn persistence. Here one must know how to make one's work prayer. The hours for solitary prayer are indeed few (Petz 1993:49).

We see that this kind of consecrated life was different from what the people of her time were used to. They were accustomed to a structured consecrated life, but this new community was different. When applying to found the Congregation, the foundress wrote the following to the Bishop:

The undersigned are not forming an order with solemn and perpetual vows, but a religious association for the education and upbringing of girls. In the same manner of the Sisters of Mercy, they pronounce their sincere intention before God and the Church through the simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, to live and persevere in community, according to the Rule and Statutes. This does not, however, hinder their return to the world due to circumstances, or their dismissal.

Later, on the above issue became a point of contention. The Superior who followed the Foundress, wanted the congregation to be similar to that of other established institutes where the sisters professed perpetual rather than simple vows. The new Superior wanted to have regular and structured prayer, instead of living among the people and striving for constant union with God while working, which was the vision of the Foundress, together with the idea of praying formally when time permitted. The new Superior also wanted to have sisters renounce their property and possessions instead of retaining the right of ownership. She wrote to the Bishop and said: "it is the petitioners' wish, under the guidance of the Franciscan Order, to become like the sisters in Tyrol" (Petz 1993:108). (The sisters in Tyrol followed the monastic way of life). At this time, the FIC were called the School Sisters but the new Superior changed the name to the Poor Sisters (:119), This was the name taken by one of the congregations living a monastic life in Tyrol. At the beginning of the FIC, the sisters were in touch with

the world: they read the signs of the times and thus saw the need for this new kind of consecrated life. The new Superior seemed not to be in touch with what was happening around her in society, thus insisting upon a monastic life above all else.

In Vatican Council II we hear the Church calling all religious to go back to the Gospel and their charisms in order to be effective. Prior to 1983, Canon Law did not differentiate between various forms of religious life, although on the issue of the charism, the founders and foundresses had already said Vatican Council II that:

It is for the good of the Church that institutes have their own proper characters and functions. Therefore the spirit and aims of each founder should be faithfully accepted and retained, ... (PC2).

Further in the same documents we read:

Only in this way will you be able to reawaken hearts to truth and to divine love in accordance with the charisms of your founders who were raised up by God within his Church (PC11).

Many Franciscans did not know of their charism (Karecki & Wroblewski 2002:9), and the sources and biographies of Francis of Assisi have only been recently discovered. In another study guide on Clare, they write:

The rediscovery of the sources was only the first step. Not until the middle of the 20th century would religious communities hear the call for renewal by going back to the sources (Karecki & Wroblewski 2003:6).

Many congregations followed the model of St Benedict as their way of life. The Legend of Perugia tells us how Francis of Assisi refused to follow an institutionalised existence. When the brothers wanted him to adopt a Rule that already existed, he said:

My brothers! My brothers! God has called me by the way of simplicity and showed me the way of simplicity. I do not want you to mention to me any Rule, whether of St Augustine, of St Bernard, or of Saint Benedict. The Lord has told me that he wanted to make a new fool of me in the world, and God does not wish to lead us by any other knowledge than that. God will use your personal knowledge and your wisdom to confound you; ...(LP114).

It is a human tendency to resist change and adaptation to new ways. We find it hard to tread new paths and to take risks. Anything that is unknown is hard for us to embrace. We want old, well- tested and proven ways because they are safe; we say no to risk because it might be leading us to failure. Yet, we do not realise that we might even be failing to say (yes) to God's new ways of calling and leading us. We often want the security of the past, as we can see in the story of the Founder and the new Superior and also that of Francis of Assisi and his early followers. In the context of congregations becoming international, Malone argues that:

It is normal for there to be resistances, biases, prejudices, and stereotypes as a congregation becomes truly international, for various members are at different stages of consciousness awareness (and conversion) in their own enculturation, acculturation, and inculturation. It has been my experience in working with international groups that resistance to change in the form of prejudices and stereotypes comes from very sincere people who feel threatened by the unknown and wonder how the proposed changes will affect them. Like most things in life, consciousness raising does not happen all at once (Malone 1996:367).

2.2.3 SOURCES OF FOUNDERS AND FOUNDRESSES

The **lack of sources relating** of their origins made the Franciscans in general, and the FIC in particular, deviate and lose the spirit of their charism recently, but not out of ill will as Malone says above. The church has been wise in saying that all institutes and congregations need to go back to their charism, as each congregation with its own particular charism is a special gift to the church and society. Therefore, the members are to keep this spirit alive as long as the congregation lives.

Consecrated life in the nineteenth century was influenced by the belief of the time that spirit and body, mind and heart and feelings were distinct from each other, and that one was better than the other, or that one hindered the other in helping people to be fully spiritual or holy. Thus, the body was considered evil and the good. This was influenced by Sir Isaac Newton's research in the seventeenth century which saw everything existing as discrete entities, as parts, and this was carried into the early part of the nineteen hundreds. As a result of this philosophy, people took up religious life in order to be cloistered and seek holiness in monasteries. Karecki & Wroblewski (2003:9) made the point that:

The cloister became associated with holiness because it distanced the nuns from what was regarded as a contaminated society. The theme of contempt for the world was pushed to the extreme. The regulations were made severe and even inhuman.

In African culture, all was integrated. Body and soul, mind and heart, the living and the dead were considered part of each other, and this indeed clashed with the European culture.

2.2.4 THE MINDSET OF CONSECRATED LIFE

2.2.4.1 Straight-line thinking

Consecrated life was affected by **straight-line thinking**; that is, thinking in parts and squares rather than in systems, circles or spirals (Community consulting services on systems 1996:2). This is seen in the way the church and congregations dealt with issues such as education, care for the sick, and skills training. They started their own schools, hospitals and clinics, and even opened their own factories for certain needs. Fowler (1995:26) makes the following observation:

The individualistic approach to the Gospel is nowhere better illustrated than in the classic work of Arthur T. Pierson (1955), one of the great 19th century advocates of Christian missionary endeavour. In the concluding chapter of his work (1955:119) he asserts that whenever the missionary has gone around the world “he has planted the cross, and about it the Christian home, school, church, college, theological seminary, printing press, hospital, church, and every characteristic institution of Christian land”.

2.2.4.2 Interdependency and interconnectedness

One congregation was different from the other by the way they dressed; they lived separately from each other; they would be in one parish or diocese doing the same work, but independently, without sense of collaboration. There was no **interdependency** or **interconnectedness** between them. The only members were cloistered from the influences of the outside world. They became self-sufficient and self-absorbed. The interdependence and interconnectedness of the world is obvious in the way the world operates today. The world thinks in systems, and in terms of how each system is connected one to another, how each system plays a crucial role in relation to for the whole. This cannot be ignored by the religious communities: “Culture, values, and vision are fields that permeate organisations and connect everyone in the organisation” (Inter-Community Consultants on Organisational change and planning 1995:1-2).

Another characteristic of consecrated life in the nineteenth century was **fixed routine**. Anything that clashed with or disturbed this would be seen as irreligious. Routine was looked upon as a value because it brought order and stability. Members knew what, when, how and who were to do various tasks. Tasks were even more important than relationships. People were valued according to what they did and

not to who they were. A person was good because she was seen to be more prayerful and hardworking, following the routine more faithfully. Productivity was highly valued and this showed itself in the building of huge buildings and large and busy mission stations. This resulted in seeing Africans as lazy people who did not know the value of time. Let us see how Karecki and Wroblewski (2003:10) put it:

The emphasis was on “doing” rather than “being”. The spirit of competitiveness prevailed, one trying to outdo the other in the amount of work done and the number of penances and mortifications practised. To be worn out by work and penances was a special means of sanctification. This had nothing to do with working for a living but with perfectionism in housework and embroidery. Abbesses thought it was their duty to demand that one work to the limit of one’s strength. Many Religious died young of tuberculosis and exhaustion and privations; they worked hard and ate little.

2.2.4.3 Blind obedience and conformity

Other characteristics of consecrated life in the convents were **blind obedience and conformity**. **Blind obedience** was an integral feature of this time. Authority was not to be questioned. **Conformity** to the routine of the house, and doing things mechanically without internalising them, was seen as a virtue. In our times in South Africa, we find such people in society, churches or religious communities who have been trained in this kind of thinking. Zwane in Prior describes them as:

... people who say ‘Yes Father’, ‘Yes Sister’, ‘Yes Madam’, and ‘Yes Master’. ... These are people the government and a large section of the white population call the law-abiding element of the population, which has to be protected from agitators and communists. This section of the black community is likely to adopt the same attitude toward the situation as those who have influence over them, be they government propagandists, the clergy, employers, the madam or the master (Prior 1982:165).

This is the kind of obedience the Africans have carried from society into the religious life. It is to be remembered that what affects society also influences the different structures of the larger community, religious life being one of them.

2.2.5 CONSECRATED LIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA

This is how consecrated life was introduced to the Africans. Yet, in Africa the meaning of ubuntu was that everyone was important and valued because each person was a human being. Elderly people were

respected because of their wisdom, not because they were productive. People living with a disability were accepted as an integral part of the family. What mattered most was life.

Since consecrated life was a new phenomenon in Africa, Africans had to conform to the kind of religious life which has handed to them. They still had to inculturate this new life and make it their own. In Europe, it was an honour to have a member of one's family entering the cloistered life. When this concept came to Africa, it clashed with the values of Africans. They valued prosperity in the form of procreation. Men had to perpetuate the family name, and if one died without a child it was considered a curse for both men and women. On the other hand, women had to bring a dowry through **lobola**. It is known that when consecrated life was introduced in Africa it brought problems in many families and still does. Not many people understand this kind of life in Africa. However the church reminds all her members that when she speaks of the vow of religious celibacy in PC, this is a gift from God. The Church puts it this way:

For our part, we must be firmly and surely convinced that the value and the fruitfulness of chastity observed for love of God in religious celibacy found their ultimate basis in nothing other than the Word of God, the teachings of Christ, the life of his Virgin Mother, and also the apostolic tradition, as it has been unceasingly affirmed by the Church. We are in fact dealing here with a precious gift which the Father imparts to certain people. This gift, fragile and vulnerable because of human weakness, remains open to the contradictions of mere reason and is in part incomprehensible to those whom the light of the Word Incarnate has not revealed how he who loses his life for him will find it (PC15).

The above statement shows that some of the Gospel values will be incompatible with certain cultural ones, and need to be introduced slowly. Therefore, people living a consecrated life have a duty to continue evangelizing. As the settlers and missionaries made their way to many different countries, the religious life went to those countries as well. The women religious were often invited to the different missions by the clergy who had arrived before them. Brain argues that the first women religious who came to South Africa were invited by the Oblate Congregation. Brain mentions the Holy Family Sisters, the Augustinian Sisters and the King William's Town Dominicans Sisters as pioneers in South Africa, but he does not mention the exact dates for the arrival of these congregations (Brain 1991:80). Telephonically, I learnt from the Generalate of the Assumption Sisters that they were the first to arrive in Port Elizabeth, South Africa on the 3rd December 1849, while the Loreto Sisters came in 1878.

2.3 THE EARLY MISSIONARY EFFORTS

The purpose of examining the efforts of missionaries is to analyse how multiculturalism was seen and lived in the early years of Christianity in South Africa. We will look at how the settlers and the missionaries worked together in the new culture in which they found themselves. The emphasis will fall mainly on the missionaries: what did they do to promote the Gospel values of respecting the indigenous people in a foreign culture? What challenges faced them as they came into contact with a strange culture? How did they respond to the challenges, and how did they exhibit the prophetic role in the midst of those challenges? The role, attitude and purpose of the missionaries assist in providing a background to this dissertation, as the FIC who came to South Africa from Europe were products of their history and the context of the time.

2.3.1 HISTORY

We now explore how multicultural society came into existence in South Africa. We remember from our definition that multiculturalism includes ethnicity, tribal features, race and nationality within the different cultures originating from and coming into South Africa. The arrival of the Portuguese mariners in early 1488 “led by Bartholomew Diaz” (*Catholic Directory* 1996-997:24) signified the beginning of South Africa’s long history of multiculturalism. With the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in 1652, a settlement was formed which in turn was governed by the Dutch. As each group of settlers arrived, they brought missionaries with them to take care of their spiritual needs:

This missionary expansion has one important limitation: very little attention was given to the African population. The priority was to provide for the needs of the European settlers (*Catholic Directory* 1996-1997:24).

However, we know that some missionary work was undertaken among the indigenous people of the time:

In the period between 1652 and 1750 the amount of missionary work undertaken among the indigenous peoples in Southern Africa was insignificant. Nevertheless, the pioneers were men of great courage, working alone and with very little support from the colonists (Brain 1991:15).

And again the *Catholic Directory* tells us that:

So far very little had been done for the indigenous people in South Africa at least. The Protestants' missionary societies, active in the region since the beginning of the century, were far ahead of the Catholic counterparts. The first significant results came with the Trappists of Marianhill in the 1880's. Under the leadership of Abbot Francis Pfanner, they developed innovative missionary methods, combining farming, schooling and preaching (Catholic Directory 1996-1997:25).

It needs to be remembered that the Dutch and British governed South Africa at different times. In 1814, South Africa reverted to becoming a British colony. Brain (1991:16) writes that:

After 1814 when the Cape came under permanent British control, it was realised that a working relationship, a practical *modus vivendi*, was essential between the missionaries of all denominations and the colonial government. This was particularly important when the majority of the Christians were Dutch speaking, members of the Dutch Reformed Church and had little sympathy with the new administration.

This in turn led to more colonisation and a further influx of other cultures. The French Revolution, and the general upheaval of the various nations of the world, also led to different cultures settling in South Africa. In *A Newspaper History of South Africa* we read that:

About 5 000 British settlers, encouraged by the unemployment rampant in Britain after the Napoleonic Wars, had arrived in the Cape in 1820. Their impact was profound and immediate. They achieved freedom of the Press, established an independent judiciary, instituted trial by jury and abolished slavery (1976:10).

With the arrival of the British settlers, who brought with them a liberal attitude to the indigenous people and, amongst other things, abolished slavery, the Dutch found themselves longing to form their own self-ruled territories and thus trekked into the interior. Owing to the Great Trek numerous black tribes and black kingdoms were forcibly dislodged from their lands. Prior (1982: vii) argues that:

The black kingdoms resisted the threat to their lands and bloody wars ensued. The Boers dismembered the black kingdoms, took possession of their lands, and black society became a dependent adjunct to the white society.

More and more, the blacks were dependent on the whites of the country. This became entrenched after certain laws were promulgated. Nolan in Prior (1982:5) maintains that:

The first strategy of the mine-owners was to get the government to tax the black people on the land and to demand that the tax be paid in cash. This would force them to seek employment. A series of tax laws (hut tax, poll tax, labour tax) brought a fair number of blacks to the mines —

but not enough. The next step was the Land Act of 1913. This Act divided all the land into land that could only be owned or rented by whites and land that could only be owned by blacks. The latter amounted to less than ten per cent of the land and the result was that tens of thousands of blacks lost the land they had previously owned or rented. They flocked to the mines to find employment. Racial discrimination had thus helped the capitalists to create a cheap, unskilled labour force.

Racial discrimination regarding ownership of the land spilled over to the mines, where black and white workers competed for jobs. The above-mentioned events forced different cultures and ethnic groups to work together, although, owing to apartheid they certainly did not live side by side. A wedge had been placed between black and white workers. This led, not only to the impoverishment of the blacks, but to apartheid legislation which was intent upon giving whites an advantage over their black counterparts. With the advent of the gold and diamond mines, different ethnic groups arrived not only from Europe, but also from the various corners of Africa. Those from overseas came together to take part in the Gold Rush, the diamond diggings and the search for alluvial diamonds:

In the meantime a Premonstratensian missionary, Jacobus Hoerervangers, had begun work in Bloemfontein. When diamonds were found on the banks of the Vaal River, Fr. Hidiën, an Oblate, went to visit the camps, say Mass and administer the Sacraments. In 1875, a church was built at Pilgrim's Rest in the Transvaal for the Catholic diggers. Other mission stations were opened as new gold fields were discovered and in 1886 the Holy See erected the diamond fields and Lesotho into a new Vicariate and the Transvaal into Prefecture. In 1887, the Prefect Apostolic, Odilon Monginoux, took up residence in the newly-erected town of Johannesburg (*Catholic Directory* 1996-1997:24).

The South African indigenous ethnic groups were now in contact with a European population. Flanagan, in Prior (1982: 84) tells us of some of the European nationalities that were living in South Africa:

The formal history of the Catholic Church in South Africa began in 1837 with the appointment of Bishop R. Griffith O.P. as Vicar Apostolic of the newly created Vicariate of the Cape of Good Hope. On his arrival he found a small catholic population composed of Dutch, German, French and Irish elements.

We have already mentioned the British settlers and we also know that the Portuguese as explorers had already been in the country. All these brought about what one may call a "melting pot" of cultural nationalities. Gradually, the missionaries turned their attention to educating the indigenous people:

... the church in South Africa turned its attention to the evangelisation of blacks. It gradually began to establish schools of the black, 'Coloured' and Indian population as part of its programme of evangelisation (Prior 1982:84).

As a result, blacks became educated and began to resist the government. Unfortunately, in 1948, the National Party came into power and apartheid became entrenched in the laws of the country. The government tried to push the blacks out of the cities and towns when the influx of blacks into the gold mines and diamond cities took place. This influx created a problem for "the Afrikaner middle and working classes, both of whom were economically worse off than their English-speaking counterparts" (Prior 1982:6). The "homelands" and the TBVC states were formed. The TBVC states were "homelands" such as Transkei, Bophutha-Tswana, Venda and Ciskei that were granted independence by the central government of the apartheid era in order to promote their separate development. However, the blacks resisted this move. By now, the political conscientization was at its peak, and blacks looked beyond ethnicity in the growth of their political awareness:

Black Consciousness seems to be such a movement. Blacks have begged, petitioned and demanded to be accepted as full persons and citizens. This has been refused.... Humiliating laws impose a separate, secondary and inferior position on them (Prior 1982:185).

The fact that some African Black political parties colluded with the government while others resisted it caused tension and bloodshed among blacks in the form of black-on-black political violence. Events such as Sharpeville and the Soweto June 16th uprising focused the world media attention and drew many journalists to South Africa from all parts of the globe. Blacks united among themselves and, together with white activists, made the country ungovernable.

The legislation of apartheid had riveted the attention of the world on the injustices carried out upon some of the citizens of the country. This in turn led to anti-apartheid activists arriving in South Africa from many different countries. Those South Africans who went into exile brought together a further mingling of cultures when they returned. The different political parties realised that some sort of political "leeway" needed to be granted and, after many meetings and talks within the government itself, the South Africa referendum took place 1990 without any form of black input. This referendum plumbed the heart of those citizens allowed to vote, and they gave an overwhelming mandate for a change in the political direction South Africa had been following. This led, of course to the first democratic elections in 1994. Many South Africans came back to the land of their birth, bringing with them even more multiculturalism

in the form of the effects which the various countries had had upon these exiled South Africans. Today, in this democratic country of South Africa, we experience a variety of nations and cultures.

2.3.2 WHY MISSIONARIES CAME

With this historical background in mind we need to pay some attention to why the missionaries came to Africa. There are several reasons for this. First, they came to take care of the spiritual lives of the colonists: “The priority was to provide for the needs of the European settlers” (*Catholic Directory* 1996-1997:24). Unfortunately they were influenced by the shortcomings of the colonists, and of the missionaries some settled down when the colonists had conquered the colony. They continued to evangelise the people in Africa, as they saw the need. Secondly, other missionaries came with the prime aim of evangelizing the African people, having heard of this need from their predecessors. The third category came to mission countries as mission helpers and did not intend to stay forever. The fourth category were those who came because of the different wars in their own countries, and these missionaries, amongst whom are some of the FIC Sisters who took the opportunity of coming to the missions so as to escape from these devastating wars. Some did not intend staying for long after the war, but ultimately they became so busy and liked the country so much that they did not mind staying on. Others came because they felt this was God’s call for them. Fowler (1995:7) emphasises this when he writes:

Whether Catholic, Protestant or secular, then, the common view in Europe and America was that the political subjugation of Africa was a legitimate, even a righteous, endeavour. For Christians, it was seen as a God-given calling for the upliftment of the African.

Lastly, some missionaries came to South Africa to take care of the spiritual and physical needs of the prisoners of war. It is essential to know of these reasons, as these people reacted differently to the context in which they found themselves. Most missionaries who came to the African continent were full of great concern for the people. The FIC came when missionary work was a common phenomenon. Like all missionaries, they came because they felt “called by God to plant the Church in Africa”(Kalilombe 1989:187).

2.3.3 POSITIVE ROLE PLAYED BY MISSIONARIES

Before we look at how the missionaries reacted to the situation they faced, we need to give credit to all these men and women for the work they did under very difficult circumstances. Some of them lost their

lives through disease, others through the brutality of the people they came to help, while still others suffered under the colonists because they stood for what was right and challenged them; while others still gave their best energy and their whole lives unconditionally to the people. Bosch (1991:294) cites Smith who summarises some of the great works done by missionaries:

The missionary movement made a prime contribution to the abolition of slavery; spread better methods of agriculture; established and maintained unnumbered schools; gave medical care to millions; elevated the status of women; created bonds between people of different countries, which war could not sever; trained a significant segment of the leadership of the nations now newly independent.

While Fowler (1995:25) argues that:

There is no doubt that the Christian missionary endeavour in the modern times in Africa has brought personal transformation for good to millions of individuals who have cause to be thankful for the coming of the missionaries. Missionaries also played a significant, and on the whole, positive role in opposing excesses of colonial administrators and calling for humane colonial practice.

Missionaries need to be given credit for what they did for our African people, and such credit can never be taken from them. Today, their good works are evident in our countries and in the people they have touched through their example. By means of their education and care they have improved the status of people's lives. If we criticise them, it is because we feel they would have done better had they identified themselves with the Africans, analysed the situation more carefully and reflected upon it with the help of the Gospel and Ubuntu values. It is not that what they have done is not appreciated. They improved the means of travelling, communications, education and printing, and these means facilitated the Christian Faith (Evangelization). When Angola celebrated the five hundredth anniversary of the advent of its first apostles of faith, Leraro Dias, the Minister of Justice said: "What would have been our sad fate if only the soldiers and merchants had come?" (SEDOS Bulletin 1992:4).

2.3.4 THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE MISSIONARY ENDEAVOUR

Unfortunately, during the process of the missionary movements from Europe and America to Africa, most missionaries failed to acknowledge the different cultures they found there.

Instead of acknowledging the African culture as different, "They became blind to their ethnocentrism" (Bosch 1991:294). They equated western civilisation with Christianity. Fowler (1995:26) gives this example:

As American missionaries entered the field in increasing numbers they also commonly came with the easy assumption that American civilisation represented the ultimate in Christian civilisation.

Fowler quotes Roger Lundin an American Christian writer, to reinforce his statement: “American civilisation from an early stage in its development was seen as closely identified with the kingdom of God”(:26). The missionaries also thought that their culture was above other cultures; therefore they assumed a superior position over those cultures. This resulted in the formation of dominant and non dominant cultures. The dominant and superior culture wanted to redeem African people from the slavery of their own tradition and culture which the missionaries considered inferior:

Thus, from the very beginning of European entry into sub-Sahara Africa, Africans, being pagans, were deemed to have no political rights and their subjugation to European authority was regarded as “pious and noble work”. Even subjecting their persons to slavery was legitimised (Fowler 1995:6).

Fowler continues to argue that:

This attitude to Africans was not confined to those Europeans who acknowledged the spiritual authority of the Pope. In substance, it was widely shared both by Christians of Protestant persuasion and by secular advocates of liberal democracy (Fowler 1995:6).

Africa was seen as a “Dark Continent”, the “Land of Misfortune”, that needed light and redemption from the West. The pioneers of the FIC congregation here in South Africa expressed their alarm when they arrived in 1939:

On Easter morning we travelled per boat via Port Elizabeth, East London to Durban. We arrived on the 13th April ... Per train we went to Johannesburg. We did not imagine Africa like this: a beautiful coach. It was like a dream. We could only think: Here are the rich ones living, the gold diggers and the searchers for diamonds. Tired of the unexpected impression we returned to the train station (FIC chronicles 1939).

The sisters remember their arrival at Lydenburg in this way: “We were quite surprised by the nice rooms; to find such in the mission where we expected just straw huts” (FIC chronicles 1939). Much of the improvements were made by their predecessors. Just like “the ancient Greeks called other nations barbaroi” (Bosch 1991:291), so did the Western world call Africans, uncivilized, barbaric, primitive and pagan:

... it seemed self-evident to them that Africans could experience full human dignity and worth only if, in their social relations, they advanced to the civilised level of European society (Fowler 1995:7).

Therefore the missionaries came to Africa to evangelize the people of this continent because they thought “the people, Africans, did not know anything about God”. Fowler (1995:28) cites P.D. Snelson as saying that: “There could be no question of grafting the Christian message on to the traditional culture. The whole culture was rotten in their view and had to be replaced, root and branch”. The missionaries forgot to look at the beautiful ubuntu values the people upheld and respected. They ignored the fact that these people had their own religion and knew God long before they came. The EA (Simplified Text 42) reminds us that

Africans have a profound religious sense, a sense of the sacred, of the existence of God the Creator and of a spiritual world. They are very much aware of the reality of sin, both individual sin and communal sin, and know the need for rites of purification and expiation.

And yet, the Europeans felt that their culture was superior to others. Bosch (1991:291) puts it this way:

It was only logical that the feeling of superiority would also rub off on the “religion of the West”, Christianity. As a matter of fact, in most cases there was no attempt to distinguish between religious and cultural supremacy — what applied to the one, applied equally axiomatically to the other.

While Kalilombe (1989:187) maintains that:

There was, for instance, a lot that the colonial powers could do in their African dependencies, without necessarily consulting the people concerned. The developed nations maintained that they knew best, and that they had the necessary resources in expertise, and the sheer power to realize their plans, without feeling really accountable to their subject people in the colonies, protectorates or mandates. After all, their very entry into Africa had not depended on any free invitation from the Africans: the Western powers had simply “invited” themselves.

Kalilombe gives another argument to emphasise this attitude of taking the Africans for granted when deciding programmes for them, when he says:

... it has been conceivable that a missionary body could attribute to itself the capacity of determining in advance and unilaterally where it wants to go, what it wants to do, and under what conditions it wishes to offer its services ... We can finalize our plans and programmes for the benefit of the Africans, without necessarily asking them how they feel about the whole thing (Kalilombe 1989:185).

Africans were not to be involved in their own development: instead, others had to think for them because it was felt that they did not know their own needs, but the Europeans did. Bosch points out that:

It was the gospel which had made the Western nations strong and great; it would do the same for other nations. The missionaries' concern therefore was the upliftment of peoples deprived of the privileges they themselves enjoyed (Bosch 1991:293).

From the latter statement we see that they meant well, but unfortunately they did not insert themselves sufficiently into the culture and traditions of the people. Added to this, they, together with the colonists, had another shortcoming whereby they drew conclusions about the Africans without verifying what they saw with the indigenous people themselves: "We know what is good for them, and we know best how to go about it" (Kalilombe 1989:185). When coming to Africa, the missionaries, like the colonists, had similar challenges or problems that they did not even realise. One problem was that they were prejudiced about Africans and Africa. Bosch (1991:292) cites G.W.F. Hegel who argues that:

... the world history moved from East to West, from "childhood" in China via India, Persia, Greece, and Rome to Adulthood in Western Europe. Hegel concluded, "Europe is the absolute end of history, just as Asia is the beginning".

Bosch continues to quote other scholars like Christopher Dawson and Arnold Toynbee who voiced their prejudices in a more subtle manner:

Scholars of a later era ... would voice their prejudices in a more guarded fashion, but would nevertheless give pride of place to Western culture in the scheme of world development (Bosch 1991:292).

One other statement that Bosch makes is that:

The famous Laymen's Foreign Missions Enquiry, published in 1932 under the title *Re-Thinking Missions*, has little doubt not only that every nation was en route to one world culture and that this culture would be essentially Western, but also that this was a development all should applaud. Like all other Westerners in the Third World, missionaries were to be conscious propagandists of this culture (Bosch 1991:292).

Bosch (1991:292) takes this thinking further by saying: "Just as the West's religion was predestined to be spread around the globe, the west's culture was to be victorious over all others". That is why missionaries thought of Africans as barbaric — people who were primitive and uncultured — and they

believed that their way of doing things was the only way that was right. Everything that prevailed in African society was regarded as heathen. Some thought that by reading books they would understand the indigenous people, but those books were written from the missionaries' perspective. Culture is caught not taught. To learn someone's culture means living side by side with those people so that their culture becomes second nature to you (Downey 1999:120). The same author writes that:

... culture refers to various forms by which meanings, purposes, and values are expressed and impressed. Culture is a language. Language here is much more than verbal communication; it is expressivity, and human beings express themselves in manifold ways. Human beings are necessarily always expressing themselves, "speechifying" — and, when they do, they do so in culture (Downey 1999:120).

It is a pity that some of the Westerners, who spoke only a few words of the local people's language, thought that they knew the culture of the people. Culture is deeper than the language that is spoken. However, most missionaries failed to realise that Africans had a different culture by which they expressed themselves.

It could have been that the prime aim of the missionaries was to convert people to God, as they thought there was no salvation outside the church. It could also be that because they had barely escaped with their lives from the turmoil of war and stress in their own countries, they felt a great need to introduce Christianity to a people whom they presumed did not know God in the way they knew him. Consequently, this enterprise was undertaken with haste and in a haphazard fashion, so that the faith which the missionaries attempted to inculcate was not incarnated in the culture of the people. It was this culture which the missionaries disregarded. The Bishops at the African Synod remarked that:

When Missionaries came to Africa about a hundred years ago, they did not know the African languages. They also did not understand many of the traditional ways of Africans. Some even presumed that African ways were inferior to theirs and never realised that there is an African as well as European way of being a Christian EA (Simplified Text 59&78).

People felt that their culture was diluted without any concern being shown for their traditions, and therefore they felt dehumanised. People continued to practise their own religion at times when they were not obliged to go to the Christian Church. This is often called "Christianity by day and tradition by night". EA notes this by observing that:

The Bishops at the Synod remarked that African Christians, because the faith has not been received into their culture, often live in two separate worlds: the world of the traditional religion and customs and the world of Christian faith. Often they feel tension between their culture and their faith and move from one to the other ... they are like frogs who have two legs on the land and two in the water — when there is a disturbance in the water they jump on to dry land and when there is trouble on the land they rush into the water. Or again, some Christians pray the rosary in the morning and take to witchcraft in the afternoon (EA Simplified Text 59&78).

This came about because their culture was not accepted. Africans have been given the impression that to be a Christian one must become civilized, as Christianity has often been associated with education in Africa. Thus, anyone who is not a Christian has is **iqaba**, a Zulu word meaning “barbaric”. (This word may refer to a person who is still living a traditional way of life and is therefore deemed to be uncivilized and uneducated, or to one who is not a Christian). This came about because matters that were very important to the African people were discarded without their permission. These issues were perceived as being barbaric and sinful: ancestors, traditional healers and traditional medicines were disapproved of and not respected by the missionaries. People were not given a chance to ascertain what in their culture were compatible with Christianity and what was not. Even today, after four centuries of Christianity in South Africa, people who have grown up in Christian homes and who enter consecrated life still feel that they owe it to their ancestors to practise certain rituals and ceremonies, some of which are not compatible with Gospel values. Some of these practices came about because people’s culture was not respected, and they were not treated as human beings. Bosch argues that:

The problem was that advocates of mission were blind to their own ethnocentrism. They confused their middle-class ideas and values with the tenets of Christianity. Their views about morality, respectability, order, efficiency, individualism, professionalism, work, and technological progress, having been baptized long before, were without compunction exported to the ends of the earth. They were, therefore, predisposed not to appreciate the cultures of the people to whom they went — the unity of living and learning; the interdependence between individual and community, culture and industry; ... all these were swept aside by a mentality shaped by the Enlightenment which tended to turn people into objects, reshaping the entire world into the image of the West, separating humans from nature and from one another, and “developing” them according to Western standards and suppositions (1991:294).

Africans simply became “obedient”, politely accepted what was offered to them by the missionaries and continued with what was deep within themselves whenever they were free from the church’s obligation. Another reason that made the Africans docile even when their culture was violated, was that some of the structures that reinforced the lack of respect for the African culture came from the church anti-

slavery movements. Fowler (1995:7) points out that “even the anti-slavery campaigners still saw the political subjugation of Africa by Europe as righteous endeavour”.

During the time of apartheid here in South Africa the Bible was often used to support the oppression of the poor and the blacks of this country in the name of the authority that comes from God, especially as found in the Letter of St Paul to the Colossians (3:22): “Slaves be obedient to your masters”. This was one of the famous verses in the time of apartheid that angered many people and also made them think that the Gospel itself was oppressive. Julian Müller (2000:13) in his paper on *Intercultural Pastoral Care and Counselling*, read at an International seminar in London, shares with the participants his view of apartheid:

In later years during my university years and the early years of my ministry, I became involved in the ideological thinking which formed the basis of the apartheid policy. For many years I was convinced that the policy of “Separate Development, as it was called, could be defended theologically.

In one of her chapters Chittister warns us read the signs of the times and become enlightened as to what is happening. She says that we are to be careful what we support, because we might find ourselves unknowingly supporting what we are supposed to be condemning. She puts it this way:

Without knowing it, for instance, we ourselves can become unwitting supporters of an oppressive system. We may nurse in hospitals that refuse care to the destitute, we may teach in schools that discriminate against women employees, we may invest in companies that make plutonium trigger-fingers, we may farm huge tracts of land with fertilisers that destroy that land for generations to come, we may pray prayers that enslave half the human race simply by rendering them invisible (Chittister 1996:138).

Fowler brings this to our attention very clearly when he says that the missionaries opposed what they saw as unjust and inhuman in colonial practice, but generally supported the basic principle of colonialism, including the erosion of traditional African social authority and its replacement with the imposed political authority of the colonial administration. He writes:

While they protested against abuses in the colonial system, they supported the system itself. Missionaries presented the Gospel in such a way that it reinforced the colonial way (Fowler 1995:26).

This was not done just by one denomination. We know that others felt that South Africa was their dream land given to them by God, just as he gave land to the children of Israel. Thus, they could argue that their occupation of South Africa was theologically sanctioned:

With the help of Calvinism, and especially the Calvinist doctrines of predestination and election, racialism, developed in an ideology with a strong religious backing. Calvinist itself was not the origin of the racial ideology. [This was the origin of the particular form of racialism we find in South Africa]. It was in the economic and social circumstances of the Great Trek that the Old Testament idea of a chosen people came to be applied to the white aristocracy while the black serfs were seen as the cursed sons of Ham or simply as the biblical heathens. And it was only in these same circumstances that divine predestination could be interpreted as God's will to separate the races and to give one race the authority of guardianship over another (Nolan in Prior 1982:4).

Nolan explains that this was an abuse of Calvinism as Calvin does not expand upon this racial ideology, and Calvinists in other parts of the world did not concur with this interpretation which was fostered in South Africa. Fowler reports on the General Assembly held in 1861 by the Presbyterian Church. It is recorded that:

Slavery, and specifically the enslaving of Africa by the white races, was defended as recently as 1861 by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. In an official statement adopted unanimously by that Assembly, it was asserted that, without the institution of slavery, "the African races in the midst of us can never be elevated in the scale of being. As long as that race, in its comparative degradation, co-exists side by side with the white, bondage is its normal condition" (Fowler 1995:6).

Unfortunately, this was the understanding of the very people who came to teach God's message that everyone is equal in His sight and has favourites. They had no help through orientation courses, seminars on missiology, or anything else that would have prepared them for missionary work in a foreign culture. They came just as they were, full of unqualified zeal. They established structures along the same lines as those they had left behind in Europe or the United States of America. This was true for political and church structures. Some denominations spoke of this practice openly, others acted silently, while yet others supported the status quo because they felt it was the right thing to do. One priest shared with me his discussion with a bishop who had said to him: "There is nothing wrong with apartheid, but its application is what is not quite right" (Interview:23/01/2003). These are words from a Shepherd of Christ's Church. Indeed, some people thought that this was the proper way of thinking. Fowler says that:

Subjugation was seen as being in the best interest of Africans themselves, a necessary discipline for the advancement from barbarism to civilisation. It was seen as a righteous endeavour in the righteous goals of civilising and evangelising the primitive people of Africa (1995:7).

We recall that this endeavour was seen by missionaries as a God-given call. The same priests I have spoken about in the earlier paragraph shared other concerns:

When I first came to South Africa on a mission, I used to visit people and spent a long time with them as I was eager to know them and learn the language. Coming back to the community I would share some of the things, but the rector of the mission said to me, “Do not listen or involve yourself in these discussions. They are all devil’s work”. I was not surprised because I have heard of a very respectable priest who started a mission and an Order here in South Africa and has been quoted to have said: “We are to make humans out of these wild people” (Interview:23/01/2003).

These are frightening and unbelievable stories, and yet they have happened. Müller (2000:6) contends that: “The stories of the past, although gruesome and shameful, must be told and told again until the new dream can take form”. This is how the Africans have been thought about and seen by the Europeans. These things have humiliated black people, especially those in South Africa, where their people have been vilified and called all sorts of names. Most missionaries failed to accept that African culture was different. Today, we see that this is humiliating to those who have behaved in such a way, and they might wish for these events not to be mentioned or in any way remembered. But, for healing to take its course, they have to be mentioned. Thus, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had to happen. Müller (2000:5) explains that:

Some people in South Africa feel that the past has been told efficiently and sufficiently enough. Perhaps the majority of white people were sceptical about the process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and they feel that they have heard enough of the shameful stories of apartheid. Even one of the leading feminist theologians, Christina Landman, professor at the University of South Africa, said in a lecture at the Afrikaans Art Festival that the time has come for the Dutch Reformed Church to end confessions about apartheid and move on. According to her, the church should now start to take a more active role in the discourses about morality. In this she verbalizes the feeling of many white South Africans.

Some of these effects could have been avoided if the process of Social Analysis was used. It seems that people saw things, drew conclusions and acted, without analysing the situation and reflecting on it. This

made missionaries to fail to see and accept the African culture as different from Western model, and these actions made them fail to be the prophets they were called to be.

2.3.5 IMPLICATIONS OF THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE MISSIONARY ENDEAVOUR

2.3.5.1 Lack of trust

The way some missionaries acted had various implications for them and the people they came to evangelize. **No trust** existed between the missionaries and the Africans. The missionaries felt that the Africans were not to be trusted, while the blacks were wary because their culture and traditions were seen as inferior. However, Baur (1994:282) makes a valuable observation concerning how both parties reacted to the whole process in the end: “Africans became progressively more critical and rebellious over colonial rule, missionaries became less critical and more comfortable in it”. This rebelliousness came about because the blacks were treated as if they were people with no minds to think or reason. It was thought that they had no conscience, and that they were unable to discriminate between what was right or wrong. They lived aimlessly with no purpose, no values, and, above all, they did not know God, or so the missionaries thought. Therefore, people had to come from elsewhere and make choices for them.

2.3.5.2 Paternalism

This lack of **respect and trust** made the missionaries paternalistic towards Africans. Bosch (1993:295) refers to “the pervasive attitude of benevolent paternalism” which created dependency on the part of the Africans. Baur (1994:281) cites a Zairian Priest as saying: “They had not enough trust in us. This lack of trust made them do so much ‘for the people’ and so little ‘with the people’ and the missionaries ‘assumed the superiority idealism of indirect rule’. Among the Africans, this created lack of trust and confidence in each other, and we talk of “**Setlhare sa mosotho ke lekgowa**⁹”. An African would not easily accept the authority of another African. Today, in South, Africa we hear people saying: “It was much better when we were under the rule of the white person”, or “What could you expect from a black person?”

People were left to feel inferior, pagan, infidels, atheists, de-christianised and underdeveloped by the Christian evangelizers (Kalilombe 1989:184), and this made them continually depend upon the

⁹ This is a popular Sesotho saying and means that a black person is only obedient to the white person or the solution for a black person is the white person. Literally, it means: “A medicine cure for a black person is a white person”. Often this saying is not completed when actually spoken: “Setlhare sa Mosotho ...”.

benevolence of the outsiders in all areas of their lives. This was the case for many years, in fact, for several centuries. While the colonists plundered the country materially, leaving it impoverished (Fowler 1995:43), the missionaries stripped the culture of the people, abandoning them to a feeling of inferiority, a state of uncertainty and a loss of dignity.

In the pastoral statement on Inculturation, the SACBC (1995:1) states: “To destroy people’s culture is to destroy their identity. To dilute their culture without their co-operation is to weaken their sense of being, or who they are”. This statement confirms what happens when people who do not have confidence in themselves always compare themselves to Westerners or to Americans, because they have been made to believe that these cultures are best. What is valuable in their own culture is taken for granted or even despised by them.

2.3.5.3 Confusion

This has also brought **confusion to their religion:** people no longer know what is right or wrong. They are scared to leave their traditional ways of worshipping, even if they know that these are not compatible with the Gospel values; yet on the other hand, they do not wish to embrace the Gospel to the full because of the scepticism that they have within themselves. They are neither one thing nor the other, torn apart in their beliefs. The Bishops have put the ideal clearly in the EA:

Becoming Christians does not mean that Africans must abandon what is good and of value in the culture. On the contrary, these are precious gifts for the person and for developing the community. They enrich humankind (EA Simplified Text 42).

2.3.5.4 Effects on the Gospel message

Another implication is that this kind of behaviour from the missionaries made the **Gospel lose credit** in the eyes of those whom the missionaries came to evangelize. The Africans started to question and to challenge the Word of God itself, instead of the missionaries’ systems and structures. The Africans were unable to distinguish between the colonisers and the missionaries. The latter failed to play their role as **prophets** against the evil that existed. Instead of criticising openly, it was done in a more diplomatic manner, “best at the colonial club over a glass of beer” (Baur 1994:282). The *Catholic Directory* of (1996-1997: 25) when it notes that:

Like most Christian Churches, the Catholic Church was relatively slow in opposing apartheid. It laboured at the cost of the heritage of segregation that it had shared with the rest of the church in most pre-liberation colonial situations... During the first decades of the Nationalist rule, the hierarchy often adopted a conciliatory stance towards the government in the hope of maintaining the church's network of schools, hospitals and welfare institutions.

Due to this kind of behaviour on the part of some of the missionaries in South Africa, there were people who equated a missionary, a volunteer or a religious sister or brother with the “**Baas** ¹⁰”, and a “**Missies**¹¹” in a household where Africans worked. It has also been difficult to draw a line between missionary and coloniser. This is because “The West could ... establish itself as master of all others in virtually every field” (Bosch 1991:291). One of the fundamental problems which Bosch spelt out was the policy that was in situ during the time of the missionaries:

... a policy makes the missionary an employer and the Indian and African Christian an employee, and easily destroys awareness of that fact that they are, first and foremost, sisters and brothers to each other (Bosch 1991:295).

All these problems were brought about because people failed to understand culture, and failed to remember that cultures differ so much; because people “perceive and pursue the gift and task of self expression in different ways”, “sometimes so much so that they appear irreconcilable” (Downey 1999:20). What people do not know or understand, they reject, speculate upon or make their own hasty conclusions about.

I would like to end this section on missionary efforts with Kalilombe's (1989:186) words:

Today, after independence, this power has passed over to the national governments and to the local people. It will be less and less possible for the missionaries (indeed for the churches as such) to go their independent way. The missionaries will not be able to invite themselves anymore into the countries of Africa; they will depend on being welcomed by the powers that be. The conditions for entry into the countries and residence there, the conditions governing missionary programmes and the modalities of accomplishing them — all this will henceforth be subject to the good will of the Africans themselves.

¹⁰ An Afrikaans name which is used for Boss but it has a negative connotation, as it was used mainly at the time of apartheid to address the white employers, especially farmers. The farmers enjoyed this, and forced blacks to address them in this way.

¹¹ An Afrikaans name meaning “madam” used during apartheid to address white female employers. Blacks were forced to use this term.

It is hoped that Africans will not make it difficult for other nations to enrich this country with their cultures. And it is also to be hoped that those coming to Africa will have learnt from the mistakes of the past and be better orientated for their role.

2.4 THE COMING OF THE FIC TO SOUTH AFRICA

At the beginning of Chapter One, we saw how the congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception had dispersed to different provinces, dioceses and towns in its original country, Austria. Bishops, priests, lords, princes, ladies, mayors and other influential people of different communities requested the sisters' services and entered into contracts with them (Petz 1993). As a result of such requests, many mission homes and branches were opened. Some of the requests were declined if they were not in accordance with the charism. We looked at the different wars and revolutions that had occurred in Europe which the Congregation, like many others had lived through. The FIC experienced two World wars, and two Vatican Councils had also taken place during the time of the congregation's existence. All these events had an effect on the FIC.

Historically the first invitation to South Africa received by these religious sisters was given in the 1940's, although the FIC had been too recently founded to respond at that time:

In 1847, the Eastern Cape Vicariate was erected. Aidan Devereux, one of the best missionaries of the time, became its first vicar apostolic. It is he who invited the first religious sisters to South Africa (*Catholic Directory* 1996-1997:24).

Just before the beginning of World War II, the sisters in the Motherhouse were threatened by what was looming ahead. Many of the sisters had known the effects of World War I, and some had lost their immediate relatives and friends. Due to this appalling state of affairs, the sisters were offered permission to go to the missions, because "Hitler had made the work of the sisters at home impossible and the invitation was accepted" (Nefzger 1994:43). Some of the schools where the sisters taught were to be closed. They had to go to the Motherhouse in Graz from the different satellite missions in the provinces and towns of Austria. Some sisters opted to go to Brazil. It just so happened that at that time a bishop-to-be in the Witbank Diocese went to Austria and asked for the sisters on behalf of his missionary priests. The priests needed assistance in the various mission stations in the Witbank Diocese in South Africa, as the Precious Blood Sisters were withdrawing from the diocese. On the 9th of March 1939, ten sisters embarked from Hamburg on the "Uben" (Nefzger 1994:43). They arrived in South

Africa on April 27, 1939, just before the Second World War broke out. It is said that more could sisters have come out, but, due to financial constraints, only the ten were sent. Some of the sisters who came had never thought of becoming missionaries in other countries, while others had always desired to have this opportunity. Some could have gone to Brazil if the opportunity to come to South Africa had not presented itself. Like other missionaries, the sisters had certain preconceived ideas about Africa and its people. The sisters expected South Africa to be a dark, black country. To their surprise, they found a different picture. They were taken aback by the big cities and well-developed towns they went through. They thought they were going to live in huts with the people. Later they were dispersed to different mission stations. Some went to the remotest rural areas. One Sister shared this experience:

It was hard there, we slept in mud huts and at times, four of us shared one room. We used cow-dung to contain dust from our floors. And in those days we wore black clothes which absorbed all the smell. We then decided just to wet the floors with water. We were troubled by rats, mosquitoes; and some suffered from malaria, typhoid and cholera
(Interview:27/02/2003).

Some of the sisters worked in boarding schools for Black children. They supervised them as they did the work around the missions, like washing clothes for the sisters, fathers and brothers. Some children worked in the fields, while others cleaned the houses in the missions. Some of the sisters worked in small clinics, while others cooked in the kitchen for themselves, as well as for the priests and brothers. Others taught in schools. By this time, things had changed slightly, in that the indigenous people were also cared for, although differently. This is what the FIC Sisters inherited. To remind ourselves, we need to look at what we mean by this. The *Catholic Directory* (1996-1997:25) shed some light on this:

So far very little had been done for the indigenous people, in South Africa at least. The Protestant missionary societies, active in the region since the beginning of the century, were far ahead of their Catholic counterparts.

Some of the sisters worked in boarding schools for white children. The sisters cooked, sewed, and washed the boys' clothing. One sister shared the observation with me that: "It was a tiring job to sort the socks of those boys, as the African ladies mixed them up" (Interview:27/02/2003). Another sister noted that:

The Bishop never failed to preach about the humble services the sisters rendered in the Boys' Hostels in Middelburg and Pretoria, washing and darning their socks. He never mentioned,

however, the other services the sisters rendered in the missions. The professional work the sisters did. Some of them were artists and contributed greatly by their church paintings (story written by one of the sisters:14/ 01/2003).

In another interview, one sister said:

I worked as a nurse and doctor, pharmacist and dentist, and cooked in between; yet I was a teacher. I made altar breads, another time I did gardening. I was also sent to the cattle and horse stable to prepare the horses for the priest who was to go for a trip in mission stations (Interview:27/02/2003).

Nefzger (1994:43) confirms that the sisters were needed everywhere, and did everything wherever they were sent:

The sisters were needed everywhere, ... In Maria Trost the hospital needed the sisters, the boarders, the kitchen and the household. The sisters were essential in developing the boarding and the Secondary School (Nefzger 1994:43).

And yet the sisters depended solely on the good will of the priests in the missions for almost everything. They said that when they needed money, transport, medical care, clothes, toiletries and even postage they would ask the priests. They said that this was hard and embarrassing. However, one sister confided that: “It was due to the Fathers that I was sent for further studies”. When the sisters were asked why they did not teach in the public schools or nurse in the government hospitals, one sister said: “We were ‘**Die Roomse gevaar**¹²’! They did not trust us.”

Later more sisters were sent to join the ten pioneers. This confirms what the *Catholic directory* (25) says: “the Catholic Church still relied heavily on the expatriate...”. One of the sisters was asked to open a hospital at a Mission Station. The priest who asked for this project wanted to attract people to the Mission station as it was far from the people. During its construction, this hospital was built in such a way that it was divided into sections along racial lines — one for the blacks and the other for the whites. When I tried to find out why there were such divisions, a Sister replied:

It was the norm to divide the people. We could not do otherwise as some priests were sent home for speaking against the apartheid regime especially against forced removals (Interview:04/ 03/2003).

¹²This is a phrase which was commonly used by Afrikaans people when talking about the Catholics as they suspected them to be a danger to the government and as taking the side of the blacks. Literally, it means “The Roman Danger”

This has been experienced by many missionaries in the country who spoke against the apartheid regime. Brain (1991:259) tells us about this situation: “On a number of occasions, individual priests have been detained or deported, while others have been refused visas to enter or remain in South Africa”.

In another interview, one sister was asked why they did not stand up against the evils of apartheid. She simply said: “We never thought about it”. I raised the question of the white sisters learning the local language. Their response went something like this:

When we came we did not have time to learn the language. We learnt English and we picked up words of Zulu here and there. Some of us started, but felt discouraged by some members in the group, as tapes that we used were taken away because Fr. so and so needed them. Some went to learn Afrikaans in the Old Lumko Institute down in the Transkei (Interview:04/03/2003).

About the language one sister said:

Two interpreters were needed: Patients told a black lady assistant in Zulu what their problem was, she told Father who in turn translated the problem into German for the sake of the sisters (Interview:04/03/2003).

In another interview a sister admitted: “I don’t know why I did not learn the local language”. It is the same with the culture of the people amongst whom the sisters worked:

I visited the people, and I knew them and loved them. We did not bother about the culture as long as we were able to help the black people. I even visited the witch doctors. The traditional doctors trusted me and told me that we could exchange knowledge. But I was frustrated when the traditional healers kept the children with them for a long time and then the children came to us almost dying. This gave the hospital a bad name when they died in our hospital. I found it difficult to tell the mother that her baby had died. But we were friendly with the traditional healers and took our relatives and friends there to visit them. I had reverence for their Chief (Interview:04/03/2003)

There are some sisters who say they regret that they never learnt any of the local languages. The sisters spoke German among themselves. It seems that they were very close, and this might be one reason that made them not feel a necessity to learn the language of the people, or it could also be the reason that their aim was to help the people and disregard their culture. When asked how they perceived the

religion of the local people they felt it was not the same as what they were used to. So often they wanted to convert them to Catholicism. “We found many religions here. And I felt Austria was more religious than South Africa” (Interview:04/03/2003).

When analysing the work of the sisters in South Africa, we see three elements that stand out clearly. First, the black and white boarders were treated differently. Black students had to provide the work force because they did not have enough money to pay for their lodgings, while everything was done for the white boarders so that they only had to concentrate on their studies. Second, the sisters were treated as children and servants by the males in the same church. Although the pioneer sisters say that they were not treated badly, remarks such as this are often heard from some of the first sisters: “It was hard and it was not nice to ask for everything, even personal toiletries”. Later on, the sisters report that when they were able to be independent from the priests, sarcastic remarks were passed: “The rich Franciscans! No more the humble Franciscans”. Thirdly, the element of apartheid in the country had a great effect on the sisters.

During their stay in South Africa, many laws concerning the separate development of whites and blacks were passed by the government of the time. These amongst others, were the Group Areas Act of 1950, the Influx Control Act, the Separate Development Act, the TBVC states and the ‘homelands’. De Beer (1998: 52) tells us that: “ In the era between 1980 and 1985 the flow of population was to the ‘homelands’”. The sisters were afraid to go against the laws of the country. One Sister said that if they asked for permission to settle in and work among the blacks, or mix white and black children in schools, or patients in hospitals, they would not have been allowed to do so. In an interview, another sister said: “It was the norm to divide the people”. This norm was carried out by the government of the day felt that it which had a duty to protect all the whites in the country by means of the Group Areas Act. Although the sisters were “protected”, the government did not like or trust the Catholic Church and called it “Die Roomse Gevaar” as we have seen previously. Perhaps the sisters did not consciously think of their role of being prophetic witness in a country that was being torn apart by divisions of race and colour as we read about their uncertainty as to why they did or did not do some of the things they did. The fact remains that, out of fear that they might be sent back to Europe, the sisters acquiesced to the status quo.

Having had such an experience, it is to be hoped that, in the future, the sisters will analyse the various situations and act out of conviction rather than out of fear. Hopefully, they will also treat all members of the different cultures with respect and dignity, and promote the unity they are called to witness.

2.4.1 THE CHALLENGES THAT FACED THE FIC COMMUNITY

The sisters were missionaries and, as such, faced the same challenges as any other missionaries. The foremost challenge that confronted the sisters was that of cultural shock and adaptation. They were not able to identify with the people because they had to go straight to work. Those who had asked for them felt that there was no need for them to identify with the locals. Work was more important, and they simply had to come from a capitalist country, where production was more important. One can understand that this made them think that Africans were lazy and that time was not important to the blacks. Along with culture, language was another challenge. For many reasons, such as time constraints, heavy work loads or having to transfer from one place to another, they did not face up to the challenge of learning the local languages. They needed interpreters when they worked with the blacks, or else they used fanakalo language. In an interview (27/02/2003), one sister said: "I could not speak the language. I used an interpreter. My nurse helped me with interpreting, although she was not paid much. I am very sorry that I did not learn the language". The FIC Chronicles (1939) tell us that:

Some Zulu was acquired only from hearing or phrases written down. The sisters asked to have Zulu lessons but they were often transferred and did not continue (when one got sick somewhere and another was moved to take her place).

Without knowing the culture and the language of the people, the sisters were unable to understand the richness and depth of the African culture, spirituality and ubuntu values. This led to a failure to respect or to see the culture as different. Perhaps it is for this reason that they did not identify with the people, as they saw the indigenous culture as being inferior and no one wanted to be identified with an inferior culture. No wonder they did all in their power to uplift the standard of living of the people and ignored their culture and values. This could be another reason that the sisters did not live among the indigenous people, opting instead to live in the towns. Yet, their wish was to live among the poor in their rudimentary huts. This wish was an ideal, but one that was never realised. It remained simply an empty value. The FIC charism calls its members to live among the people striving for constant union with God.

The founder was aware that this would involve living, not in a place of quiet, but one of noise and pressing need. The question is: did the sisters heed this call?

Another challenge that faced the sisters was: How would they integrate the indigenous sisters into their ranks? Would they take them seriously, and were they open to learn from and be influenced by them as they were ones who knew the culture better than anyone else. Did the white sisters teach the indigenous ones how to live in their own country? Was there openness, involving a spirit of mutual sharing, so that both groups are enriched by each other's culture, or was one culture suppressed while the other dominated and was elevated to the heights? One cannot say that everything in the African culture was perfect, but one needs to ask whether the sisters who came to work among the blacks in their huts were open to learn from and be enriched by these indigenous people. This could only happen if they took the trouble to learn from the people amongst whom they had come to live. Only then would they receive clarification regarding what they did not understand and challenge what was not in accordance with the Gospel or Ubuntu values. For them to be able to do this, they needed to realise that they were in a foreign country with a different culture. For their part, they needed to let go of their preconceived ideas and imperialism: "It was considered enough to transplant the European model in Africa" (Fowler 1995:26). It was difficult for the sisters to relinquish what they had learnt and what they knew from their homes and from the Motherhouse. This is part of the imperialism that the Westerners who came to Africa wanted to flourish to transport European values into Africa. Bosch sees this as one of the problems of the missionaries. He says:

... the difficulty lay in the fact that the churches on the "mission field" were structured on exactly the same lines as those on the missionaries' home front, where a completely different socio-economic system obtained. The results were often disastrous (1991:295).

This was the case even inside the convents in relation to community structures, prayer and spiritual life. The symbols and rituals used, as well as the administration and leadership structures used to govern were exactly the same as those of the Motherhouse. Perhaps this was the result of the ethnocentrism that exists in all cultures. Yet this could, and often did, lead to a clash with of the cultural values of the people in Africa.

When accepting indigenous candidates, the sisters were faced with the challenge of rising above the petty treatment which they themselves experienced from the priests, thereby learning that people need to

be treated with dignity and respect. Moreover these were their sisters in Christ, and the people with whom they worked had received the same baptism and shared the same table of the Lord. They had to guard against repeating the same mistakes made by their predecessors who acted in a superior way towards the blacks and felt that they knew “what [was] good for them, and ... how best to go about it” (Kalilombe 1989:1850). Any decision regarding the ministry or dealing with the indigenous people should have been a mutual decision between the Austrian sisters and the African sisters, as these latter knew both the people and their needs as opposed to the Austrian sisters who did not know either their culture or their language:

... it has been inconceivable that a missionary body could attribute to itself the capacity of determining in advance and unilaterally where it wants to go, what it wants to do, and under what conditions it wishes to offer its services. Implied in this type of decision-making is the [wrong] conviction that the other side of the relationship, the receiving end, does not really count. We can finalise our plans and programmes for the benefit of the Africans, without necessarily asking how they feel about the whole thing (Kalilombe 1989:185).

This was, and still is, a challenge which not only the missionaries, but which all of us still face today in our communities and in our ministries. We think we “know” what people need, and are then surprised when things do not work out as planned. The fact could be that we are violating the indigenous culture in our “benevolence”, and degrading them, as we implement our supposed “knowledge” of their situation.

Another challenge was that of reading the signs of the times. The sisters needed to analyse the situation and reflect on what God was calling them to do in this new culture in which they found themselves. The FIC charism calls the sisters to “be available, as much as possible, for any ministries in the Church” (Constitution no.5). By taking the first step, the FIC, as members of the church, have an obligation to point out to the church what needs to be done. In this situation, the need was to witness the power of unity to the diverse cultures as a multicultural community.

A further hurdle which the sisters had to overcome was that of bearing witness to the unity among themselves and their ministries by working in the schools and hospitals and undertaking pastoral duties. When the sisters came to South Africa, apartheid was already in force, and it was presumed that they had already learnt about this situation. They were called upon to fight this evil, rather than colluding with it or tolerating the unjust laws of the country. This would of course, have happened if they had been convinced that all the people were equal in God’s eyes, that all had been created in the image of God,

and that therefore all needed to be treated with respect. But was this the case? The process had to start within their own communities where they needed to have accepted people from different cultures, living as true sisters in Christ.

In addition to these challenges, the sisters came from the background of a hierarchical church, where males, especially priests, were considered to be superior, and therefore had to be automatically obeyed. Some of the sisters resented this kind of life. One sister, who wrote part of the history for me, said: “Some saw this as an ideal and pious life” (Interview:2003/02/18). One of the hardships they faced was to try and gain their independence from the dictatorial behaviour of males and priests. This is important, although it is not directly connected with culture per se. Later, we will notice that it affected the sisters’ initial dream of living with the people, which, in fact, is the core of the FIC charism. This prevented them from identifying with the people and becoming the witnesses they ought to have become. This idea of living as one with the people and sharing their lives might have been simply an ideal and not something that was consciously reflected upon. However, some of the sisters had come to South Africa with a genuine desire to work closely among the local people.

All these obstacles were needed to be conquered if the sisters were to insert themselves into the culture of the people, learning their languages, consulting the indigenous sisters, analysing the situation together and reflecting seriously upon what the FIC charism called them to do. The FIC Constitution (no.148) says that: “The Sisters in a Mission Territory adapt themselves to the culture of the people to whom they minister and become one with the local Church”. Unfortunately, however, they failed to rise to the challenges, thereby merely continuing in their European way of thinking and dealing with the indigenous people, something which, in Africa, was totally unacceptable. Having said this we, need to realise that the sisters were no different from other missionaries. This attitude to indigenous culture was thought to be the ideal and they were simply products of their own history.

2.4.2 PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

2.4.2.1 The Austrian sisters in South Africa

Now we ask: how did the sisters settle in South Africa? We see a pattern of coming and going, as some sisters were called back to the Motherhouse after the war, while others volunteered to come to South Africa:

The sisters were visited by the Superior General in 1947. When she returned to Europe, she left the sisters with two options — either to return to Austria or establish themselves here and admit candidates. In order to admit candidates they had to own property, have a house and earn an income (This is a Canon Law requisite for all religious). (Notes from one Sister:18/02/2003).

This was in line with what Nefzger (1994:6) writes:

In 1921 the first Apostolic Delegate arrived in South Africa: he was B.J. Gijswijk. He stayed in Bloemfontein. The church defined a new mission policy expressed in the Enzyclica Maximum illud by Pope Benedict XV. Two points were stressed: The missionary is an ambassador of Christ and not of his government of origin, and local vocations had to be fostered.

After the visit of the Superior General the sisters' search for a place of their own was started. In 1957, they opened a kindergarten school for white children in Nelspruit in order to be financially independent from the priests. This school grew from strength to strength, in spite of the fact that on their arrival some ministers of other church denominations spread the word against the sisters that parents must not send their children the sisters' school.

Fr. Morscher built the foundation for three class rooms because children came soon in big numbers. The sisters didn't know why the parents had such confidence in them (they only knew that a pastor had announced that no one may send the children to the Roman Catholic Nuns (FICs chronicles 1958).

Nefzger confirms this kind of thinking and reaction among some of the white people of South Africa to the Catholic Church, something which goes back many years. In 1890, the following occurred in Lydenburg when the Loreto Sisters arrived:

Die Burgers did not like the arrival of the sisters: in the same year they sent a petition to the Kruger government demanding the closure of the convent they wrote: "The Roman Catholic Church is making rapid strides and advancing altogether too quickly for the comfort of the Lydenburg Protestants, who are convinced that much ungodliness is practised in Roman Catholic Churches. The Memorialists pray that the Raad instruct the government to appoint a commission to inspect and lay bare all the unholy evils rampant in the cloisters. These scandalous things are not to be tolerated in a godly land, and the Catholics should be compelled to throw open their cloisters for inspection". There was no reaction from the government (Nefzger 1994:5).

The sisters were not discouraged by this kind of thinking. The increase the numbers of pupils necessitated the finding a bigger place. Eventually they found one, and built a school and a boarding

house. They managed this through the help of the Bishop, who lent them money and supervised the building. In the FIC chronicles (1973) it is written that:

Years and years of saving every penny began in order to pay off the debt to the Diocese. Help was also received from other Provinces of the FIC. Great was the joy when the last instalment was paid to the Diocese.

The school flourished in Nelspruit, and was known far and wide: white children from as far away as Johannesburg attended it. Other countries such as Swaziland and Mozambique also took advantage of the care the sisters gave and sent their children to the school in Nelspruit. The school took a lot of the sisters' energy, and they forgot what was happening in the political arena. The political situation in the country was getting worse, especially after 1961, when it was declared a Republic under the Boers. Blacks were not lying low. One uprising after another erupted as they demanded equality in every sphere of life. In 1976, the youth made it clear to the authorities that they would no longer study in the oppressive regime's language of the day, namely Afrikaans. They also demanded the scrapping of Bantu Education:

In 1976 the bishops announced that in principle all Catholic schools would in future be open to pupils of all races. In this they were supported by the Church of the Province of South Africa and the Methodist Church (Brain 1991:259).

From 1957 to 1984, the school in Nelspruit remained opened to the whites only. Only white teachers and white sisters taught in this school until 2003 when a Black Principal was approved.. Five years later, in 1981, after the bishops had announced that all Catholic schools would be open to all races, the sisters took a risk and accepted black children. The sisters probably had taken so long to open the school because they feared that all that they had worked for might be lost if they accepted children of other races. When they did accept these children they were immediately ostracised. Another contributing factor to their initial reluctance stemmed from the fear of being expelled from South Africa in the same way as they had been expelled from Austria by Hitler before they came to South Africa. When they arrived, some of them taught in a mission school that was closed, as the area was declared a white Area under the Group Areas Act: "Some of the sisters did not wish to experience the sadness and heartbreak of closing the school a second time" (Notes from one Sister:2003/02/18). Once bitten twice shy. In Zulu, we say: "**Ukubona kanye ukubona kabili**". Thus, they did not want to take the risk. One sister expresses the prevailing fears in this way:

Nelspruit having been an Afrikaner National Party stronghold, could close a school overnight that would not comply with its policies; fear from the side of some of the sisters was the reason for reluctance; fear to lose what was gained under such hardship and sacrifices; fear of losing the independence of running their own institute; fear of losing the respect of the population for the good education the school offered. Fear of what was to come if such a step was made. Indeed, the risk was too great (Notes from one Sister:2003/02/18).

Another sister said the laws of that time did not allow them to accept black children in their school. In an interview (27/02/2003) she commented that: “It was not allowed. The school would probably have been closed. Besides the value of a Catholic school, the school was also needed as sisters had to pay off the debt”. In addition to the risk of accepting pupils of colour into this school, there was also no African sisters taught at this school. The reason for not making the school multi-racial stemmed from a fear of violating the laws of the country and a fear that parents would withdraw their children from the school. In this situation, we observe one fear feeding off another. This led to an exclusivity amongst the sisters themselves. Although some of the Black sisters wished to teach at this school their standard of education was deemed unsuitable for this upper-class school. Notes written in the chronicle provide the following insight:

Local Black Teachers (Sisters): Earlier not allowed. When a post became free after the sisters had taken the risk of opening the school to all colours, Sr. Regional was informed, but local teaching sisters felt that their presence in the villages had become well established and more important (FIC chronicle:1986).

On the other hand, some Austrian sisters wanted to teach and work among the black community, but they could not, because other sisters felt that this all-white school was a venture which was very important for the congregation, and that if one left and went to work in the black community, it would smack of disloyalty. One sister said: “I always wished to teach in an African School” (Interview:18/02/2003).

By now we realise that the congregation had slowly become multicultural. The first Black women who joined them were received in 1962. It seems that this was not intentional; it so happened that a young black woman working for the sisters decided that she wished to become parts of a religious order. As there was no recruitment from the FIC, she looked towards other orders, thereupon the Austrian sisters and the young black woman looked at one another and asked: “why not? Why should she not join us,

the Franciscan Sisters?”, so she duly did. This is how, almost by chance and by the hand of God, was how black sisters came to be part of the FIC. More black women joined them. They came from different ethnic groups of South Africa: Swati, Zulu, Northern Sesotho, Tswana, Tsonga, Xhosa, and even Shona who had migrated from Zimbabwe. All these sisters came from diverse backgrounds: rural, semi-urban and urban. This move in accepting indigenous sisters meant that the Austrian sisters had to open up to a multicultural life, with all its challenges.

At this time, the Austrian sisters had not yet adapted to the African way of living. The African sisters who joined were taught the consecrated life according to the Austrian model. The African sisters had to adapt to this Austrian mode of living in the way they prayed, celebrated, worked, kept time, dressed, and the kind of food and the way in which they ate. The mentality and values of the West were insisted upon. The African sisters also found it proper to follow this lifestyle. Everything that was Western was considered by the Africans to be civilized, and no questions were allowed to be asked. Anything that was African was seen by the Africans themselves as primitive, barbaric and uncivilized. We need to remember that the sisters from both groups were products and children of their times, as we are of ours. How did the sisters live together as a multicultural community? One sister writes notes concerning this issue:

Looking philosophically at our multi-cultural region, South Africa, our greatest problem is that we never try to get to know one another at a deep level and appreciate what we find there. Most of the time we are overly critical of each other. Franciscan compassion or Christian compassion is missing. We work at head level, which only sees with the physical eyes, not with the heart. As the little Prince says: “One can only see with the heart rightly what is invisible to the eyes”. **Our Prophetic witness**, unfortunately, is not very visible when we try to outdo one another, when we are afraid of one another, when we try to control one another. People are very sensitive and see how we deal with one another. Is our love visible, like the love of the first Christians?: “... see how they love one another”. I think that GENUINE LOVE IS THE ONLY PROPHETIC WITNESS (Notes from one Sister:18/02/2003).

Again, the same sister makes an observation as to why we do not bear the prophetic witness we ought to — that is, the prophetic witness of living together in a multicultural diverse community, exhibiting the love and the unity of Christ in the way in which we treat one another and our neighbours as family. She writes:

If only the WE and THEY could be done away with altogether, the witness we give could become prophetic. At this stage our witness is very thin on the ground and barely visible. This is the opinion of one person (Notes from one Sister:18/02/2003).

Another unfortunate issue is that neither group learned the language of the other. The common language was English. Their particular languages were used among each group when they were alone, or when they wanted to conceal certain issues from one another. Language is very important, as it expresses the most deeply-held values of a culture. Downey tells us how important language is:

Culture is a language. Language here is much more than verbal communication; it is expressivity, and human beings express themselves in manifold ways. Human beings are of necessity always expressing themselves, “speechifying” — and when they do, they do so in culture (1999:120).

One sister said: “Some Zulu was acquired only from hearing the language or having phrases written down” (Notes written from chronicles:1939). Culture was not something that was important. The African sisters had to forfeit some of their values, such as hospitality, and the way of living a community life whereby they related closely to their own family members. The African sisters “needed benevolent control and guidance, like children not yet come of age” (Bosch 1991:295). Each group used their culture as a shield to avoid challenges, and this was easy because neither knew the other’s culture.

2.4.2.2 Indigenous sisters in the FIC community

Up until now, we have been concentrating on the expatriate missionaries who came to evangelize South Africans. So far in this dissertation, I have looked mainly at the sisters who were pioneers in the FIC. However, we know that multicultural living in a community of the FIC includes the Austrians, Tyrolians and South Africans, with their various ethnic and tribal groups. This therefore involves a mutual sharing of the charism.

Religious life came at a price for the indigenous people of South Africa. The European tradition, civilization, religion and culture of the Austrian sisters were equated with Christianity and the consecrated life. Therefore, the many wonderful values and traditions of the indigenous people, such as spontaneity in worship and life in general, hospitality, the concept of the extended family, community life and the interconnectedness with their ancestors, were lost.

2.4.2.3 The role the indigenous sisters played in building community life

All the aspects of life and culture the indigenous sisters lost through having fully to accept the values of nineteenth century. European religious life may be distinguished by the following characteristics: productivity, which meant that people were valued simply for what they produced; blind obedience, where no questions were asked, as that could mean that one did not have a vocation; conformity to the norms, to show that one did have a vocation and that one was loyal to this life at all costs. Routine was also valued, because it brought order and stability, but it also led to conformity and a lack of creativity and spontaneity. There was a concomitant failure of interconnectedness of mind, heart and soul. The spirit was looked upon as supremely important, and the body seen as something to be shunned. Some of these values clashed with the African ubuntu values.

One may ask: how did the African sisters face up to these challenges? Did they acquiesce with the status quo, so as to secure their vocations, in the same way the Austrian sisters did in relation to the injustices of the country? It could be that they accepted all these values innocently, thinking that this was the best way of living their lives, or else they conformed because they saw themselves as being more privileged if they lived with white sisters. Perhaps they took the issue forsaking the things of the world too literally. This might have made them forget about the sufferings of their brothers and sisters, instead of seeing the greater challenge they were called to face — that of being prophets and witnesses to their brothers and sisters. What measures did they take to remedy the situation of inequality in the country and in the community of Austrian sisters in which they lived? Did the indigenous sisters take their role seriously in reading the signs of the times, in challenging and assisting the foreign sisters of their congregation, or did they instead succumb to childish behaviour and wait for others to deliver them? Did they make an effort to ensure that the Austrian sisters recognised their “pervasive attitude of benevolent paternalism” when they might have been tempted to refer to them and other African people as “cute” and “innocent”, with “so much to learn” (Malone 1996:368)? Did they rather accept such remarks as compliments, or even take offence but not have courage to be assertive and show disapproval? Malone calls this type of behaviour a stage of being “on the fence”:

... although individuals or groups in an international congregation now see unequivocally the injustices within the congregation towards certain groups, they still do not have the courage to “walk their talk”. They still try to curry favor with both sides. Being “on the fence,” they maneuver between the two sides without taking a firm stand on the side of the oppressed (1996:368).

When such things happened, did the local sisters prefer to criticise their members outside the community? It could be that the indigenous sisters took consecrated life as a “privilege” and an “elevation”, forgetting about the world around them and the needs of the people. Malone makes an observation about minority groups in multicultural communities. She says that: “If I am a member of the minority group, I may not speak out on an injustice for fear of being rejected and labelled a troublemaker” (:368). In her book, *A change of tongues*, Krog details it even more carefully, when she talks of some of the consequences of racism in this country:

The ... consequence of racism is the ‘psychological double bind’. This happens when it is expected of the dominated group to be ‘agreeable’ — agreeable in the work place or neighbourhood, and in the larger arena of nation-building. ‘As part of a new dispensation, a white group appoints a black person. But they have carefully selected him. He is not aggressive, he knows his place, he will not make waves, he is more like them than the other applicants. They make sure that the appointee knows this. Now he is in a double bind. He must be “agreeable” even — and especially — when confronted by incidents of racism. The moment he is “agreeable”, however, he knows that they think he is subservient, docile, and acquiescent in his own oppression. This he desperately wants to avoid. On the other hand, if he is not “agreeable”, he will be labelled problematic, angry, aggressive, dangerous and even racist, which again feeds into the stereotypical representations of the dominated, as part of the racist message (Krog 2003:151).

What Krog argues about is not uncommon, even in religious life where dominant and minority groups live together. The minority wants to please the dominant group and the dominant group, wants to feel secure by controlling the other group.

On the issue of peace, reconciliation and healing, what role did the indigenous sisters play? Did they bring about peace and unity in their community, or did they perpetuate camps on the lines of tribalism and ethnicity, and even call each other names such as *makwerekwere*, *magrigamba*, *ilwanyana*, *mapono* and *makwapa*? During apartheid, what role did they play in order to show that this was evil and not to be tolerated, or did they close themselves in the cloisters for their own sake? How did they treat the people who worked in their convents and the new members who came to join them? Did they show them that they were all children of the same Father? Malone warns us that we:

... should notice, too, that it is very easy for the oppressed to become the oppressors in other circumstances. Unless there is a conscious intention to break the cycle of oppression, it is likely to continue (1996:371).

We have said that the Austrian sisters needed to ask their African counterparts about the needs and the situation of the people because:

The native religious, members of the host culture, know the nation and its culture much better than do the foreigners. They have definite ideas on what should be done in their own country but are afraid to offend the foreigners who have given them the faith in the first place (McGinn 1996:376).

Did the African sisters know the situation in South Africa, or did they fail to involve themselves with the social and political issues as they had embraced a life that was holy? The African sisters had and still have, a major role to play in assisting the sisters in their own community to respect other peoples' cultures and dignity, and, together, to preserve the unity in their community in order to bear the witness they are called to provide? African values are at their disposal to guide them, and most of these values are compatible with those preached in the Gospel. Together, they have to heal one another by reconciling with the past. Malone gives the following advice:

Corporate conversion requires changes within the organizational structures of the congregation so that the sense of mutuality and equality will exist both in word and in the lived praxis (1996:371).

It also seems that the charism was compromised because of the great need of the sisters to experience a form of security, where they could feel safe enough to put down roots and not live with the constant fear of being expelled from the country. There was also a fear of the system, both within the community and in society at large, and a fear of government policies. Both groups were, and still are, faced with challenges, and each needs to look at these very seriously in order to be a strong community that is able to provide a prophetic witness in the context of multiculturalism.

2.5 CONCLUSION

As I was writing this chapter on consecrated life, I began to understand more clearly how our sisters came out of war-torn Europe into a very uncertain situation in South Africa. For far too long, they were so dependent on bishops and priests. Analysing this situation has helped me to appreciate why their approach to mission-work was not more creative, more open to the new culture. I also began to see why the indigenous sisters tend to be as they are. They, too, are the products of their history, and have

not found it easy to inculturate the religious life in South Africa, and to live it in a vibrant, outgoing manner. The type of consecrated life which the Austrian sister handed on was also closely imbricated with its time. It did not allow people to voice their feelings and convictions. What the Superior said had to be followed, as it was thought that she knew the Will of God better than the rest, as she was the representative of God in the community. Even those who wanted to change the situation became passive and were “ambivalent and protective of the status quo” (Malone 1996:368). As one sister shared with me in an interview: “ It needed great persuasion and diplomacy from the side of some of us to take the step and finally relent to persuasions from outside, and from within” (Interview:18/02/2003). The difficulties the sisters encountered made them turn inwards as a group and become homogenous:

When the difficulties became too much for some sisters it was often said: it is all your fault. You ruined the school. You wanted black pupils to be admitted. You see what is happening now! Many ill-disguised resentments were expressed. Difficulties from parents and teachers were manifold but it brought us closer together because we often stood alone (Interview:18/02/2003).

It can be realised that taking a stand and being a prophet needs courage and patience:

Patience and waiting are also critically important ... planting the seeds of change and waiting for them to blossom is what being a prophet is all about. It is a process of going from “mine” to “ours” (Malone 1996:370).

Fear was dominant in the sisters’ situation. One fear fed another. The Austrian sisters feared being deported back to their country if they spoke up against the injustices, or deviated from the norm set by the government. African sisters, on the other hand, feared being seen as people who had no calling to this life if they kept on living their African values. Both the African and the Austrian sisters did not know each other. Therefore, both groups need to overcome these fears if they are to live their rightful place in society and become prophetic witnesses.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CHALLENGES OF OPENING UP

3. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to reflect on the way in which the vision found in Scripture, Catholic Church teaching, Franciscan writings and FIC's call and encourages the FIC to live their multicultural life in the midst of the world at large, without losing their vision of the prophetic dimension. We may ask, why multicultural living? It could be that this topic is taken for granted, especially now after the democratic elections in South Africa. We might even ask at this time what all the fuss is about? We need, though, to see multiculturalism in context. We can see how globalization has turned the world into a "village". Our country is still struggling to make the dream of multiculturalism come true after the abolition of apartheid. The church encourages its members to respect each and every culture and all people. Many religious congregations are international and have been for years. However, they realise that they need to seek ways of ensuring that the lived reality in their communities today is truly multicultural. The context in which we live is multicultural, but it is still divided on racial, ethnic and tribal lines. It is therefore necessary to seek possibilities and take certain concrete steps in seeking how best we can witness to unity in a multicultural context. For FIC this is urgent, as their charism urges them to live among people. The community of the FIC today is itself multicultural, on both a local and international level, so this is a concept that FIC cannot take lightly. As Franciscans we need to examine the Gospels as Francis of

Assisi always did. We also need to explore what the church says about this multicultural living and to analyse the visions of Francis of Assisi and of our Foundress in relation to this phenomenon.

3.1 BIBLICAL VISION

Christ uses the symbol of the vine and the branches (John:15) to emphasis the concept of unity between himself and his people. Christ's vision is that all his followers may be one in love, and may witness this oneness to those who do not believe in him. He prays and pleads with his Father to keep them united:

Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be completely one that the world will realise that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me (John 17:21-23).

In 1 Corinthians Chapter 12:4-11, Paul writes to this community of Corinth where there is conflict, competition and jealousy. The community is in disunity: they use the gifts given to them by God, who is the source of all being, for personal advantage and recognition. Kugelman (1970:271) points out that this abuse caused factions to exist among the church members in Corinth. Kugelman tells us that Paul used his words carefully when admonishing the members of this church. Paul said that these gifts were to be used for “ the common good”, which meant that they should be utilised to the advantage and upliftment of the community. According to Paul, these gifts were to be used to serve and complement one another. Later in the same chapter (1Corinthians 12:12-30) Paul talks of unity and he uses the symbol of the body of Christ to emphasise this unity among the Christians. This is the unity Christ expects from his followers.

In the Jerome commentary on the Johannine Gospel, Vawter (1970:457) points out that this unity Christ prayed for was to be the defining characteristic of the church, and unless this unity was preserved by the church, she would be unable to perform the essential work willed by the Father. The witness that the church has to give will not be visible if the unity of the Father and the Son is not visible among the members of Christ's Body. This unity was not only vital for the apostles. In verse 20 of the same chapter in John, Christ prays for those who will follow: “I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me”. All are included in this prayer and in the mission of preserving unity. The FIC need to enshrine this unity among themselves as they live the multicultural life which they

are called to follow. If they do this, people will know that they are Christians and that Christ lives among them. People will then believe in the Christ who sent them.

Christ's mission was to establish a new kingdom, a new 'qahal', a new people of God. He came because the family of God was torn apart. In his prayer, we recognise the elements that are needed for us to become this family of God. Those he had chosen had to be one among themselves. They were to witness through the love they had for one another. In John (13:34-35), Christ says:

I give you a new commandment: love one another; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples.

Vawter (1970:452) says that this commandment of Christ is different and new from that of the Old Testament, because it extends to all people without distinction. It is not only the model, but the motive and cause behind Christian charity. This love is a sign of Christ's true Church waiting for him. Vawter emphasises the importance of this unity which is reflected in the Trinity, as well as the love the Trinity has for the church. This commandment concerning love and unity was to go out to all nations after Jesus had ascended into heaven. He commissioned them as follows:

Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commandments I gave you. And know that I am with you always yes to the end of time (Mt. 28:18-20).

Viviano (1993:674) comments that this commandment was meant to encompass "all nations: This universal call applies to all peoples including their cultures, and even Jewish people who are not yet disciples". In the early church this unity was very important to them as a community. They strove to live this unity in the love which they had for each other. In the Acts of the Apostles, we learn that when they later dispersed throughout the other countries, this unity was not lived as Christ meant it to be. There were factions among them: Jews who had become Christians wanted to remain a group among themselves. They expected Gentiles to become Jews in order to become Christians. We know how this caused the apostles problem after problem. Others even thought that Christ was meant for the Jews only. Yet, again and again, we see how their eyes were opened. They accepted anyone who believed in the Name of Jesus, and they embraced them regardless of their colour or nationality. Paul was emphatic that other nationalities had to be accepted unconditionally. He recognised this problem of resistance

from his brothers, and challenged those who did not want to accept people whom they regarded as pagans. He writes:

... for all of you are the children of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus, since every one of you has been baptised has been clothed in Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female — for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:25-29).

McKenzie (1969:75-76) gives some insight into what Paul meant in writing these words to the Galatians. He says that once one is baptised in Christ, all distinctions created by the status of the person are eliminated, abolished and wiped out. His words are:

The religious distinctions of former times are eliminated. It no longer matters whether the baptised is a Jew or a gentile; his social standing no longer counts. Women too have access to salvation and to the promised inheritance. All distinctions have been wiped out by the waters of baptism; they are the things of the past once Christ has been put on as a garment. The Christian is a new man(sic) in Christ. The new humanity formed by the baptised is no longer rent by division.

Paul used words like “the body of Christ” to symbolise this unity among the members of Christian communities. Paul’s letters to the different churches urge the people to preserve this communion among themselves. When Paul speaks of the body of Christ, he refers to the members who share in the Communion. When the early Christians gathered together to celebrate the Lord’s Supper and there were separate factions amongst them, he said that if they ate the body and drank the blood of Christ, they were unworthy, because they were divided as a community. To the community of the Corinthians he writes:

The blessing-cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ, and the bread that we break is a communion with the body of Christ. The fact that there is only one loaf means that, though there are many of us, we form a single body because we all have a share in this one loaf (1Cor.10:15-17).

Paul seems to be surprised that people who are intimately united with Christ through the Communion can still be separated from each other, because each one who has received Christ, has received him in an intimate fellowship. In turn Christ assimilates and transforms each one, making everyone parts of his body, so that one mystical body is formed (Kugelman 1970:269). To the Ephesians, he says:

Bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience. Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as you were called all into one and the same hope when you were called. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of all, through all, and within all (Eph.4: 2-6).

Joseph & Grassi (1970:346) see this epistle to the Ephesians as a letter of Christian unity, and the source of this unity is the Holy Spirit: “The Spirit is the single inner source of the Christian life and as such is continually moving all members toward what promotes peace and harmony”.

In Paul’s letters, we hear how often he pleads again and again for this unity among the communities. For Paul, this was very important, so that those who were not Christians would not be scandalised by those who were Christians, and this was Christ’s command to his disciples: “By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples”. This is the vision that the followers of Christ need to have if they profess one faith, share at the same table, are led by the same Spirit, serve the one Lord and have only one Father. There should be no division between those who have been created in the image of the One God and have been baptised in the same baptism. It should be unheard of that there are those who are looked down upon, or those who are above others in this family of God. As FIC, our first responsibility is to live as Christians. Moreover, as a community, we share the same charism, the same and have professed the same evangelical counsels: therefore, the unity and love of Christ need to be even more visible in us as FIC.

3.2 ECCLESIAL VISION

The Catholic Church exhorts its members to live this multicultural life wherever they are, by encouraging them to be faithful to the Gospels. The church does this through the writings of the Vatican II documents, through the African Synod and, in Southern Africa, through the Pastoral Plan “Community Serving Humanity”, the Pastoral Letters on Inculturation, and by preaching to the faithful concerning these issues. In all these documents, unity, oneness, and community living are stressed in order to bear witness to those with whom the Christians come into contact. The church derives its mandate and vision from Christ’s words already quoted earlier in 3.1:

I give you a new commandment: love one another; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples (John 13:34-35).

The church exhorts the faithful to heed the call of Christ's prayer for unity given before his death: "May they all be one. Father, may they all be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me" (John 17:21). Therefore the church gives its members a mandate to preach the Good News to the whole world. Before he ascended to heaven, Christ said: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28 16-20). The church not only has the obligation to evangelize, but also to ensure that its members bear witness among other nations and cultures. Through their charism, the FIC need to be ready to respond to whatever the church's needs might be. Therefore, they are to preserve unity, respect other people's cultures and, by so doing, bear witness wherever they live. The document of *Ad gentes divinitus* (AGD11) serves as a reminder, when it says:

The church must be present to these groups through those members who live among them or have been sent to them. All Christians, by the example of their lives and the witness of the word, wherever they live, have an obligation to manifest the new man which they put on in baptism and to reveal the power of the Holy Spirit by whom they were strengthened at confirmation, so that others, seeing their good works, might glorify the father (cf. Matt. 5:16) and more perfectly perceive the true meaning of human life and the universal solidarity of mankind. In order to bear witness to Christ fruitfully, they should establish relationships of respect and love with those men, they should acknowledge themselves as members of the group in which they live and through the various undertakings and affairs of human life they should share in their social and cultural life.

The AGD document acknowledges one of the most important elements of a disciple — that of living among people in order to give witness. It also emphasises that all people need to be treated with respect, regardless of their culture. When Christ came to tell us about the Father and his Kingdom, he took upon himself our human nature. After this example by Christ, we, too, cannot ignore the fact that we should embody the cultures of those to whom we are sent, in order that the Gospel may bear fruit. In evangelization, culture cannot be ignored. This dissertation aims to remind us of the obligation we have in order to be effective in witnessing to the unity and love of Christ. As we do so, we cannot take culture for granted and enter into it haphazardly. We need to have all that it takes to be witnesses in the different cultures, and one of the main requirements a congregation needs is conversion of mind, heart and attitude. Malone (1996:366) argues that:

... if a congregation purposefully decides to become or remain an international one, it most likely must go through, both personally and corporately, an actual step-by-step process of conversion. This involves consciousness raising.

Malone goes on to spell out what kind of conversion a congregation needs to undergo: “Personal conversion may take many different shapes including intellectual, moral, and spiritual conversion” (Malone 1996:370). This may imply a willingness to change our attitudes towards other peoples’ cultures that we do not understand. This conversion needs deep faith, an aspect which is essential when dealing with culture, because it brings with it deeper values as to why we need to live in unity together.

The aim of this dissertation is to raise the consciousness of the members of the FIC, which will hopefully lead to conversion, so that at the end each member takes up the challenge to respect and accommodate other cultures, each member does her share to uphold human dignity and to value all human life, regardless of culture, race, nationality and other characteristics. It is important that members of the congregation are constantly aware that:

The Gospel is not tied to any culture, but the reign of God which it makes known is lived within the cultural realities of the people’s lives. As women and men of every culture respond to God in faith the Gospel gradually and mysteriously transforms people and acting in faith, in turn, transforms their cultures (Karecki 2000:26).

How wonderful it would be if religious would heed their Christian values! Indeed, if all Christians did this, they would change the world into a better one, through fostering the values of Christianity and Ubuntu, because this would mean that Christians had not forgotten that: “Christianity has endeavoured to challenge those elements of culture which militate against the realisation of true development” (Karecki 2000:26).

Another appropriate statement to reinforce the relationship between culture and faith was made by John Paul II. He said: “A faith that does not affect a person’s culture, is a faith not fully embraced, not entirely thought out and not fully lived” (EA Simplified Text 78). Having said this about faith and culture one also needs to look at the other side of the coin, which may seem contradictory, and yet is not. I use the words of the SACBC in their Statement on Inculturation (1995:3). Whereby the bishops maintain that: “To destroy people’s culture is to destroy their dignity. To dilute their culture without their co-operation is to weaken their sense of being or who they are”. This attitude spoken about by the bishops can easily

be reflected in a community that is multicultural, when one culture assumes a position of dominance or supremacy over one that is non-dominant, subservient and even passive. Karecki (2000:25) gives two statements which, for me, seem to support what the bishops have warned us to guard against. She says:

Since culture is intimately linked with the dignity of the human person, Christianity, from its beginnings, has sought to imbue culture with values that will support the person's quest for self-transcendence.

Again, she makes the point that:

Culture needs to shape us in a way that will make us appreciative of the positive values of our own culture, but realistic enough to know its limitations so that they can be viewed with the eyes of faith (Karecki 2000:27).

The Pastoral Plan for the Catholic Church in Southern Africa urges the members of the church to be "A community which serves humanity". This document stresses that a community that lives in unity, lives out a the Trinitarian awareness:

The call to build community is not a mere human urge. It comes to us from the divine community of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in whose image we are made (1989:Par.6).

The SACBC recently issued a statement entitled " A Message to the Catholics in Southern Africa", read on June 15th 2003, in preparation for the tenth anniversary of our Country's democracy. Here, the Bishops acknowledge the problems that still exist in our church, where people do not worship together due to ethnic and language problems, as already discussed in 1.3.1. The Bishops urge the faithful to take multicultural life seriously in all dimensions of their lives and, as already stated in section 1.3.1, they exhort all the people of God in the following manner:

We urge you all to look for ways to bring people of different cultural and ethnic traditions into greater fruitful contact with each other. The call is to go further than casual and superficial acquaintance, to work together and to build a real family relationship in one family of the Church. In particular we, as Bishops, feel challenged to assist people in overcoming the uneasiness they feel with each other. This uneasiness often results in their not participating in church or civic activities when there is a difference in cultural and ethnic expressions (SACBC:2003).

As we have already seen, the church in South Africa is influenced by Western culture as the first evangelizers originally came from Europe. The consecrated life that came to Africa also derived from Europe. Christianity is based on Judaism. Other religions are already practised by many South Africans especially the Islamic faith. All these are cultures that affect our country and also many other nations, and the members of the church need to take up the challenges, not only of acknowledging, but also of working hand in hand in this multicultural context. In NA documents, the Church acknowledges and emphasises the multiculturalism of the world:

In this age of ours, when men are drawing more closely together and the bonds of friendship between different peoples are being strengthened, the Church examines with great care the relation which she has to the non-Christian religions (NA1).

Through the Vatican II documents, the church explicitly expresses its view on how human beings are to live with each other, by stressing the dignity of each human being, and how each person ought to be respected because of this dignity which comes from the Creator. All people are created in the image of God. Therefore, this means that all people are equal before God, irrespective of colour, race, sex, religion or nationality. The church asks its members, this through dialogue and communication, to respect each other as equals because we all have one God who is the Father of us all. This follows that all people are equal, irrespective of their cultures, and all people must be respected within their own cultures. No one has the right to disrespect or violate another culture. The definition of the SACBC (1995), given in its “Statement on Inculturation Paper” in chapter one above, will be repeated here in order to stress this point: “To destroy people’s culture is to destroy their dignity. To dilute their culture without their co-operation is to weaken their sense of being or who they are”. The bishops recognise the dignity of the person as a whole. Where this has been violated, it needs to be restored. The Bishops stress that the culture needs to be challenged if it does not uphold the dignity of a person.

The African Synod brings up another aspect of the church in Africa, and this one relating to unity. The bishops in this Synod emphasise that the church is larger than one community, one tribe or country. They provide an image of the church as a Family, and maintain that:

God’s family is always larger than our Christian community, our parish or diocese. The Church is catholic, i.e., world-wide, a communion of all local Churches. It can never be a national or tribal Church. If a Christian community or a local Church cuts itself off from the rest, it becomes a sect and is no longer Catholic (EA Simplified Text 137).

One other aspect that the Bishops emphasise in this Synod is that: "... they made the church as God's family the guiding idea for the evangelization of Africa" (EA Simplified Text 63). They describe what it takes to be a family and, more particularly, God's family. This involves showing solidarity, warmth in human relationships, care for others, trust, dialogue and acceptance (EA Simplified Text 63). Community living in consecrated life needs to be a sign to a world that is divided and torn apart in its family system and structures, that even in marriage it is possible for people of diverse nationalities, races, cultures, ethnicity, tribes, status and so on. to live in harmony as long as love reigns. Communities and the world at large need to show tolerance, respect and acceptance. Should there be a problem, people need to engage themselves in dialogue, instead of retaliating and seeking revenge or having one party impose its ideologies, culture and civilisation on the cultures of other nations. On the other hand, those cultures that think of themselves as minority groups, are to engage in dialogue with those groups which are seen as being dominant, so as to communicate their feelings about issues that pertain to their culture. Such communication is much better than one group accepting everything that what is thought to be good for them, and rejecting what is valuable in their own culture in the name of civilisation.

Unfortunately, it happened that while the church in South Africa was actively involved in dealing with apartheid and the evils thereof, it forgot to look at its own structures and traditions. Prior (1982:vii) argues that: "If the Catholic Church played any part in the process it was that of a distant observer, concerned with ministering to the spiritual educational needs". This caused the Catholic Church to fail in upholding to the tenets of Christianity. South Africa has become progressively and definitively multicultural. This state of affairs is set to remain for a long time to come. The challenge for South Africans revolves around how to live this multicultural life, and how to live unity in diversity. This depends upon each individual, each community, each ethnic and cultural group to see that this unity is preserved and, at the same time, that each group does not extinguish the other. Ortiz (1991:11) conveys the following message to the Christian community:

The Christian body is not to be uniform. It is to be united in its desire to accomplish a common task and in its bond of love. We are not to conform to each other's image but to the image of Christ, and in so doing we may discover how very different this process makes us from one another. Christ's mind in the believer renders that man to truly be the individual he was created to be, with thoughts, initiative, and drives originating from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit — not from the conformity of the group.

EA confirms what Ortiz had said in the above statement:

... niversality is not uniformity, but rather communion in a diversity compatible with the Gospel. Because of this catholicity, each local Church contributes its particular gifts to others and to the whole Church (EA Simplified Text 19&20).

From this statement one may conclude that the bishops recognise the culture of each local church and how each culture can contribute to the larger church. Therefore, each individual church has a great responsibility to display the example of this unity to the universal church. The church, along with her sub-structures, is to be a model of unity and reconciliation where there has been violation of harmony among the people.

3.3 FRANCISCAN VISION

Our Father in the Franciscan family, Francis of Assisi, already envisaged a multicultural family. He not only had a vision in his dream, where he saw different nationalities coming to join them. As I outlined in Chapter One, where Francis shared his vision with his brothers about Frenchmen coming, Spaniards hastening, Germans and English running and a great multitude of others speaking various tongues hurrying to join the Order (1C27), today we might speak of Sothos, Zulus, Zimbabweans, Austrians, Tyrolians, Irish and many other nationalities living together in one congregation.

From the beginning of the Franciscan family, multiculturalism has been part of its vision, and this brought joy to Francis of Assisi, as he encouraged his followers not to be dejected when they seemed so few in numbers. Francis also went to other countries to preach the word of God. He showed great sensitivity to those he met, respecting their religions and cultures. This came about because Francis of Assisi saw every person and every creature as God's creation. He respected and related to nature and human beings in the same way. St Francis's vision came to him because he was rooted in the Gospel, respecting the authority of church, yet also challenging it through his way of life. He made the gospel values his own. Celano tells us how Francis of Assisi treated those who joined him:

These, since Francis was a most noble and discreet man in spirit, he treated with honour and dignity and he most generously gave each one his due. In truth, since he was prudently endowed with outstanding discretion, he prudently considered in all the dignity of each one's station (1C57).

The followers of St Francis were men who were from the noble and educated classes of his time. Although he scorned riches, he did not treat the rich with ridicule. St Francis of Assisi was able to differentiate between the person and the issue. In the same passage, Celano narrates how Francis went to the Saracens in Syria:

For before he gained access to the sultan, though he was captured by the sultan's soldiers, was insulted and beaten, still he was not frightened: he did not fear the threats of torture and, when death was threatened, he did not grow pale. But though he was treated shamefully by many who were quite hostile and hateful toward him, he was nevertheless received very honourably by the sultan (IC57).

Celano shows us how Francis went with respect to the sultan of the Saracens, although the soldiers had beaten and insulted him. The sultan was deeply moved by the manner in which Francis approached life and people of other religions and cultures. Three elements or values can be seen here on the part of Francis of Assisi: first, respect for human dignity, as he did not impose his beliefs, but spoke his truth without imposing it on others. Second, he bore prophetic witness in the midst of trial. Third, he went as a man of peace to the Saracens. These elements were visible throughout his life.

Nevertheless, can we say that this vision of St Francis's life is constantly before the FIC, so much so that they reach out to other nationalities and cultures and strive for peace and unity as one family? Our Foundress, Franziska Antonia Lampel, did this in the beginning by ensuring that the FIC spread to neighbouring countries, and by accepting candidates of different languages and cultures into the community. Notwithstanding this "Mother Frances was totally against establishing homes far from the Motherhouse; she feared the loss of the religious spirit if the houses were not properly supervised by higher superiors. Still, she preferred to lend older sisters to the new institutes" (Petz 1993:67). We also read that the superior who succeeded her was from Tyrol. These incidents show that she was open-minded towards other cultures. As mentioned earlier, Franziska Antonia Lampel sought peace and unity in her own life, even to the extent of leaving the community she had founded because an element of disunity was threatening the peace and stability of the congregation. Franziska Antonia Lampel "died" to the congregation in order to achieve unity. Her leaving the congregation could be symbolised by Christ's words: "Unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest" (John 12:24). The FIC spread to other countries throughout the following years.

For St Francis and Franziska Antonia Lampel, multicultural living was not an issue of their times, but we see that they were open to any foreign culture. What we learn from both of them is that they read the signs of the times, they responded to the needs generously and became prophets within their contexts. They took this prophetic dimension seriously. The challenge they pose to the FIC in South Africa is: are we reading the signs of our times and responding in a prophetic way to the context in which we find ourselves? Do we witness that living together in a multicultural context? This is not an easy task, as it will require the awareness and conversion of each member and of the entire congregation (Malone 1996:336).

3.4 FICS AND MULTICULTURALISM

In South Africa, the context is multicultural and the members are also multicultural because they come from different nationalities, tribes and ethnic groups. As a sub-system of the church, the FIC are invited to witness to this unity in a world with many divisions.

3.4.1 MOTIVATION

The FIC needs to find its motivation within itself, through its charism where it is called to live among people, no matter how diverse, and to be ready to go “where the needs of the church call them”. It has to derive its impetus from the Franciscan Family charism. We have already noted that Francis of Assisi was a man for all people, who respected them and wanted peace for all. As Franciscans, we are challenged, despite our diversity, to live a life of unity and peace among ourselves. The ideal is that others will recognise this unity and peace and follow our example. There is so much discrimination in our world. People are marginalised because of their culture, race, ethnicity, sex, religion, colour of their skin and status. The list is endless. We are called to narrow the gap between these differences. The church itself acknowledges the diversity, encourages and even challenges its members to treat every person with dignity, as set out in the Gospels. In GS (27) the church maintains that:

Today there is an inescapable duty to make ourselves the neighbor of every man, no matter who he is, and if we meet him, to come to his aid in a positive way, whether he is an aged person abandoned by all, a foreign worker despised without reason, a refugee, an illegitimate child wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a starving human being who awakens our conscience by calling to mind the words of Christ: “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt.25:40).

VC80 also contribute to this thought of unity in diversity by exhorting the consecrated people to “offer concrete and effective cultural proposals when they bear witness to the evangelical manner of practising mutual acceptance in diversity ...” The church leaves it up to consecrated people to find ways and means of giving witness in our unity through diversity.

3.4.2 COMMUNITY LIFE

In the FIC’s Constitution on community life, the first sentence reads:

A religious congregation is an expression of the mystical Body of Christ. It is composed of many members with various gifts and experiences of growth in the unity of the Spirit through love (no.48).

This statement is in accordance with the Gospel and the church’s vision that a Christian community is the body of Christ and, as such, it needs to live in unity and peace. When the church talks of different gifts and experiences of growth in the unity of the Spirit, it also acknowledges the diversity of a community and the work of the Holy Spirit in uniting it in its diversity. The Constitution goes on to express why this unity ought to exist among members of the community. Its purpose is to bear witness and combine the efforts of the community in serving the people: “Unity among sisters manifests the coming of Christ and it is a source of great apostolic power” (Constitution no.49). This was the motivation our foundress put before the Bishop when applying to start the congregation:

It has been proven by experience that concerted efforts produce greater results, especially when they are united in God, in whose service they are dedicated for the good of mankind — with the sacrifice of one’s will, with the renunciation of earthly interests and of worldly affairs and relationships which so often hinder or destroy the noblest of undertakings (Petz 1993:19).

Using the following words, the Constitution expresses the need for respect and equality which each member should enjoy: “Sisters who love one another, treat one another with respect and consideration, mutually inspiring each other in love, peace and joy” (no.50), and again:

As members of one Community we share, according to our Constitution, the same rights and duties. We are sisters to one another and are also called that way (no.54).

It then follows that no member of this congregation needs to feel superior or inferior, greater or lesser than other for any reason. We are all sisters, and we are to serve one another, inspired by Christ’s example at the Last Supper when he washed the feet of his disciples and commanded them to do the

same for each other. As St Francis followed the example of Christ very closely, in the Third Order Rule, he exhorted his followers by saying:

Because God loves us, the brothers and sisters should love each other, for the Lord says, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (Jn.15:12). Let them manifest their love in deeds (cf. Jn.8:18). Also, whenever they meet each other, they should show that they are members of the same family. Let them make known their needs to one another. Blessed are they who love another who is sick and seemingly useless, as much as when that brother or sister is well and of service to them. Whether in sickness or in health, they should only want what God wishes for them (Third Order Rule:23).

It is clear that Francis of Assisi followed the Gospel when he wrote this Rule. He found unity to be essential among his followers. Respect and love for one another were paramount, especially in order to give witness to non-believers and those outside the community. However, St Francis was also aware that in a community there will also be conflicts, especially where there are diverse cultures. Addressing this issue, he writes:

If discord caused by word or deed should occur among them, they should immediately (Mt.18:35) and humbly ask forgiveness of one another even before offering their gift of prayer before the Lord (cf.Mt.5:24) (Third Order Rule:24).

St Francis was not naive; he was a truthful and down-to-earth kind of person, knowing that where people are together, conflict is inevitable. Conflict in community life will always arise. This is not wrong, but a source of challenge and growth. It is not something to be avoided at all cost. There is a saying: “Where there are two or three gathered together there will be conflict”. How much more true is this when people who from different cultures who live together try to express their values differently? It means that each has to accommodate the other, just as different personalities accommodate one another in any community. As long as the norms are laid down together, and these norms and cultural values are in accordance with the gospel and ubuntu values, there is no need for one to feel rejected or embarrassed by his/her culture. EA (Simplified Text 42&43) concurs with to this belief when it argues that: “Becoming Christian does not mean that Africans must abandon what is good and of value in their culture”. The Synod mentions the Africans, but also refers to all people of any culture. Cultural diversity is a source of enrichment for any community. Many communities shun conflict like a plague, instead of seeing it as a of challenge and a means of growth. Inter-Community Consultants(ICC) talk of conflict outcomes as being positive. They describe the situation this way:

Attempts to work through conflict issues may result in a variety of resolutions. Some will lead to deepening of relationships and a release of positive energy which often results in a decision to do something about the issue and /or an agreement about how conflicts might be handled in future. Some dialogues will uncover deeper problems and plans will be made to deal with these at a future time. Occasionally a conflict points out that different values are operating and results in an “agreement to disagree” (1995:4).

The above statement can shed light upon a multicultural community. Communication is one of the fundamental means for dealing with or managing these conflicts in a community. Conflict is not something to be pushed aside: it is uncomfortable, but it brings growth. The same paper on conflict from the Inter-Community Consultants describes conflict as “the interaction of differences, an essential process of life experienced in acts of creation” (1995:1). A community that does not experience conflict will not grow. In any family’s life, conflict is part of everyday interaction. Consecrated life is a family too. Conflict is not the only element in a family or consecrated community life; many other dynamics also play a role. Ubuntu values, such as caring for each other, love, forgiveness, the sense of belonging, the unconditional acceptance of all members in health and in sickness, hospitality, celebrations and rituals are of great value in keeping the family united. Consecrated life is another type of family with its own culture. When the African Synod described the Church-as-family, among other things it also acknowledged diversity, together with the other problems that exist in this family. All the same, the Synod expressed its expectations of the true family in the church, describing the attributes of a family in this way:

The family is the place where the deep African value of life comes to be, is protected and nourished, a place of belonging where sharing and solidarity are at the heart of a daily life and where each one feels himself or herself to be truly at home (EA Simplified Text 63).

If the community members are serious about the need to live out the Gospel values, then it is imperative that they do so themselves before they can preach to others. The African Synod says:

To bring the Gospel to others, Christians must first of all accept Jesus and his message into their own lives. Without personal conversion we are not credible messengers of God (EA Simplified Text 47).

This is the message for any disciple or prophet called to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom. This need for conversion is also expressed by Heschel when he argues that anyone who is to give witness, needs to face people as though “being faced by God” (1962: xiii). No one who wants to be a servant of

Christ can escape this metanoia of the Gospel. Malone, in her article, *Personal Conversion*, also concurs with what the African Synod expects from the image of the Church-as-family, She says:

Spiritual conversion must call all members to live the Gospel in a radical way, so that there is true love, forgiveness and reconciliation as the different ways of oppressing come to light. Such conversion is countercultural when there is reconciliation and not revenge (EA1996 371).

Therefore, the FIC need to be imbued, not only with a love of Christ and his teachings, but also with a love and caring for one another in a multicultural community. We, as religious communities that are multicultural in nature, need to be aware of the sources that have not yet been tapped in order to enrich ourselves.

3.4.3 PROPHETIC WITNESS

This aspect of the dissertation on prophetic witness is vital, in that the prophetic dimension attempts to answer the research question posed at the beginning of the thesis. This problem which has been stated before, centres on the question; is the prophetic witness in the multicultural community of the FIC a visible sign in the contemporary situation?

In Jesus's discourse to his disciples at the end of his life here on earth, he said:

When the Advocate comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father, he will be my witness. And you too will be my witnesses". (John 15:26-26).

This is a call that Jesus puts before his followers. In the Old Testament, we read how most of the prophets were called. The prophets answered their call while living among people in their own culture. When Yahweh called the prophets, there was a specific task they had to fulfil.

This witness is the cornerstone of the work of Christ's early disciples. When they had received the light, nothing could block them from witnessing to Christ. They were persecuted left, right and centre, but never stopped doing what they were convinced was right. Therefore, a religious community needs to follow in the steps of the early disciples of Christ, witnessing without fail to the unity of the Trinity, and the love of Christ.

In the definition of prophetic witness in chapter one, I dealt mainly with who the prophet is, and what qualities are needed for such a person, as well as the challenges the prophet encounters in this calling. One other thing I would like to deal with here is the context in which the prophet works. The Vatican II document acknowledges the prophetic character of religious life in these words:

Today more than ever, the world needs to see in you men and women who have believed in the Word of the Lord, in his resurrection and in eternal life, even to the point of dedicating their lives to witnessing to the reality of that love, which is offered to all men. In the course of her history, the Church has ever been quickened and gladdened by many holy religious who, in the diversity of their vocations, have been living witnesses to love without limit and to the Lord Jesus (PC53).

Jesus and the prophets of the Bible lived in a particular time and took their culture seriously. They were fully present to their specific culture. They did not work in a vacuum, but instead inserted themselves into their situation and analysed it. We repeatedly, we hear how the prophets and Jesus consulted with God. Their close contact with God made them act. VC84 has already been quoted above, but is worth repeating in order to emphasise the relationship with God and the responsibility of those called to a religious life as prophets:

True prophecy is born of God, from friendship with him, from attentive listening to his word in the different circumstances of history. Prophets feel in their hearts a burning desire for the holiness of God and, having heard his word in the dialogue of prayer, they proclaim that word with their lives, with their lips and with their actions, becoming people who speak for God against evil and sin.

Today in the twenty-century, we live in a different time. Culture, as stated earlier, is dynamic and constantly evolving, so our culture is different from the culture of biblical times. When the prophets the biblical times prophesied, it was on the issues of their times. They did not prophesy about the past or the future which had nothing to do with the people of their age. They knew that God raised prophets in the past to deal with those issues, and that God would raise prophets in the future to deal with the issues of the future. They were prophets of their day. Today's culture is also different from the culture of seventy years ago when the FICs' pioneers first came to South Africa. Culture is created by the people of the day. Today's religious are the prophets of the present. What are we called to do in our time at this age of multiculturalism in our country? The church gives this answer to religious people:

Institutes should see to it that their members have a proper understanding of men, of the conditions of the times and of the needs of the Church, this to the end that, making wise

judgements about the contemporary world in the light of faith, and burning with apostolic zeal, they may be able to help men more effectively (PC2).

In another part, the same document encourages consecrated people to take up the challenge of being witnesses to the world:

Dear religious, according to the different ways in which the call of God makes demands upon your spiritual families, you must give your full attention to the needs of men, their problems and their searching; you must give witness in their midst, through your prayers and action, to the Good News of love, justice and peace (PC52).

The church acknowledges that religious have means the within them to offer this witness to certain areas of society. Multiculturalism is something beautiful, because its wealth of values and diverse cultures are enriching. It is something positive because it brings variety to our lives. This is what consecrated people are called to give witness to. Archbishop Tutu said has:

God's gift of racial and cultural diversity should be seen as a source of strength and enrichment. It is a vision that may yet help us to embrace and perceive our cultural diversity as a blessing rather than a curse — a blessing which could be tapped to provide our young democratic nation with a firmer and enduring foundation (Hulley, Kretzschmar et al, 1996:90).

Multiculturalism is a gift of our time, but we may be blind to this gift or we may abuse it for our own ends. Archbishop Tutu makes the point that says, "Culture could be misused for one's own needs". What we are called to do as religious is to acknowledge what is good and what is life-giving as Christ said, "I came that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Jesus prayed for unity. We, too, must look for that which unites, that which transforms, and that which is inclusive in our community. We also need to look at what kind of life we live and what kind of prayers we pray daily in our multicultural communities. Archbishop Tutu stresses that say we are to look for:

A spirituality that is God centred and is rooted in the unshakeable truth that God is in control. A spirituality that is rooted in a deep sense of community, as Africans by their very nature have a deep sense of belonging. A spirituality that has been purified by the experience of pain and suffering that is rooted in the Cross of Jesus Christ which exhibits forgiveness, compassion, tenderness and a loving and caring disposition towards the other. For Africans are people whose identity is founded on ubuntu (Hulley, Kretzschmar et al, 1996:79).

In our world today, we have had people who have fought and died for freedom in different countries. What they fought and died for were human rights, democracy and equality for all. These people have considered and have taken seriously the call that everyone:

... is valuable in the sight of God and, therefore, has intrinsic worth and dignity. That human beings share a common identity. Humanity that is created in the likeness of the Godhead shares that quality of unity, which is a unity of diversity (Hulley, Kretzschmar et al, 1996:79).

Therefore they found it necessary to take the challenge and died for a good cause, because the people in their country were worth it. People who have fought and died for freedom have also given us courage to follow in their footsteps. These are the prophets of our times. We also have to do our part, even more so because we have been called to unite our efforts for this very purpose of being prophets. This kind of prophetic witness needs to start with us and in our communities. Our vision should be that of the Gospel, the Church and the Franciscan vision. Nelson Mandela in his inauguration speech challenged and encouraged us this way:

Your playing small doesn't save the world.
There's nothing enlightened about shrinking
so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are born to make manifest the glory of God
that is within us.
It's not just in some of us it's in EVERYONE.
And as we let our own light shine
We unconsciously give other people
permission to do the same.
As we are liberated from our own fear
Our presence automatically liberates others (Mandela 1994).

This excerpt from Mandela's poem makes us realise that we have an enormous task to accomplish, one which has been given to us by virtue of our baptism. Mandela says it is not just some who are to accomplish this task, but everyone. We have been called to be prophets, kings and priests (1 Peter 2:9). From this calling, we are all to bring healing to our troubled world, divided by tribalism, ethnicity, race and nationality. If each one of us brightens the corner where we are, together our light will shine brightly. Archbishop Tutu is known for his belief that: "the truth is that God reigns and that evil will not have the last word in his world, but goodness prevails in the end" (Hulley & Kretzschmar 1996). We need not be overwhelmed by the complexity of our situation and the task that awaits us. If we are, we

will find ourselves conforming, for example, policies which violate the rights of refugees, work-seekers and those hoping for political asylum, as well as those principles which encourages people's individual development. Thus, we will start protecting our various tribes, ethnic groups and nationalities. We will become blind to the cry of those who are discriminated against on account of their nationality, and we will accept xenophobia on our streets as something normal even violating the dignity of others by calling them names. Instead of calling evil, "evil", in the way that Thabo Mbeki has called Tribalism "the demon" because it divides people and set up walls between them we ignore evil, condone it, or even sometimes become totally oblivious to it. If we continue to do this, there will be war and perpetual hatred such as that reflected in the genocide in Burundi between Hutus and Tutsis. Because evil reminds us of our past, we tend to be condescending to one to another because of the way in which we have treated one another in the past. We want to appear as if we understand one another's culture and in the process, we sometimes permit what is contrary to the Gospel and Ubuntu values because we are scared to be called racists. We find ourselves condoning behaviour or practices that divide, instil fear, and exclude others when we know that we would never do some of the things ourselves. For reasons known best to ourselves, we "romanticise" and settle for "cosmetic" change in our communities for the sake of peace, becoming mere spectators in the process. We are scared to be yeast in the flour. Van Breemen, in his book *As the Bread that is broken*, tells us how Christ acted in such situations:

He (Christ) really was love enfleshed in a hardened world. His call exacted a great amount of loneliness because, when a man accepts everybody, then he belongs to nobody. Since Christ never rejected anybody, he did not belong to any of the groups and factions of his society (1974:68).

This loneliness is one of the characteristics of being a prophet: the power of this prophetic witness means that we need not be fearful if we are rejected because of it. If we truly believe in the equality and the dignity of each person and that each of us is made in the image of God, then we will treat each other with sincerity and respect. Yes, we need to be sensitive when we challenge other but keeping quiet makes us guilty too. We need to realise that no one person has it all: we are part of each other, and each person has a piece of the whole. If we fully believe this in our communities, then we will listen to each other and take each other seriously by being fully present to one another, not only when someone's ideas seem good or match our own, but even if she is different from us. We will not hide behind "our culture or their culture". "We need to glorify and praise God with our cultures", Saint Irenaus once said. This will only be proper when our cultures are compatible with the Gospel values.

No one is called upon to renounce or reject his/her culture if it is compatible with Ubuntu or Gospel values, but if it is not, then a process of conversion needs to begin. This conversion is in accordance with what John Paul II said, as quoted earlier in section 3.2: “a faith that does not affect a person’s culture is a faith not fully embraced, not entirely thought out and not fully lived”.

If we believe that all people have the same Spirit of God dwelling and working within them, then surely it is strange that they should be despised because of their status or their colour. We are called to honour the divine in each person. We see the effects of multiculturalism in our own communities and in our own societies — one nationality imposing itself on others, some people thinking of themselves as being “less-than” and inferior, while others think themselves to be “higher-than” others and superior. Some nationalities abandon their cultures and the beautiful values they embody, because they have learnt that they are supposedly barbaric. This causes value confusion in the younger generation in particular. Anything that is Western is “cool” and important. Anything that is African is bad and primitive. This is because there is so much “emotional, intellectual and informational onslaught on radio, in films, television, reading and advertising” (ICC Module on *Values and Culture* 1996:3). No one is brave enough to challenge our media. Yet, day by day we complain about the good values that have been watered down and the bad values that are promoted. The adults remonstrate with the youth for being unruly and for having lost direction. Our societies are being destroyed, and yet we keep quiet, adopting a pretence of praying prayers and doing penance, while forgetting that there is neither prayer nor penance that is passive. We let the powers, policies, structures and systems of this world shape our cultures according to the way the world feels best. Such systems often violate the dignity of our people. We allow them to live an unstable, insecure life without identity, a sense of belonging and a feeling of dignity, because of the interference with their culture and values. We are then called on as FICs to be prophetic witnesses, restoring all aspects of that which has been damaged or culturally changed, and healing the dignity of each person and the unity of all.

Prophets were convinced about what they were sent to do. However, we also realise that the prophetic witness requires a conversion of those who are witnessing, before they can ask it from those to whom they intend to witness. In a multicultural community, one realises that conflict exists or will exist because of differing values. The members within a community cannot escape the process of conversion in their lives. Malone puts it this way:

Spiritual conversion must call members to live the Gospel in a radical way, so that there is true love, forgiveness and reconciliation. Such conversion is counter cultural when there is reconciliation and not revenge (1996:371).

Prophecy does not need to use words; it must be proclaimed by our very lives. St Francis of Assisi is known to have said: “Preach always, at times use words”. He is the best example of this in his own life. We live in a world that is divided by faction-fighting and genocide due to tribalism and racism. There are wars in many countries because people are seeking revenge. People are dying in our streets due to xenophobia and intolerance. Divorces in the family structures are the order of the day. People in religious orders need to offer a sign of hope that can inspire and challenge the different cultures they live among.

A number of church documents acknowledge the role, and urge that the prime duty of religious life is to give a prophetic stance regarding who they are and what they do. VC80 says:

For its part, the consecrated life itself is the bearer of Gospel values and, where it is authentically lived, it can make an innovative contribution in meeting the challenges of inculturation. As a sign of the primacy of God and his Kingdom, it can, through dialogue, elicit a positive reaction in people’s consciences. If the consecrated life maintains its prophetic impact, it serves as a Gospel leaven within a culture, purifying and perfecting it.

Many people might find that we as religious are out of step in terms of the effect of multiculturalism which is now a reality in the new democratic South Africa. We as prophets cannot allow ourselves to be complacent, seeing only the positive changes that our fledgling democracy has achieved, and ignoring the problems that exist below the surface. Our media tells us daily of the racially-motivated squabbles and fights in our streets, schools, in our work place, and we know, through the example of our own communities, how subtle these issues are.

3.5 RELEVANCE AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOUTH AFRICA

3.5.1 THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE FIC WORK

We know the reality and the issues of our country and our world. We are aware of the context in which we are called to serve. We realise that the world has become small and people of different nationalities and their cultures have made their way to South Africa from various countries and for diverse reasons. Investment opportunities play a large part in the diversity of people who now come to South Africa.

Also because of the advancement of technology, many students also come here. Different ethnic groups from the former TBVC states and “homelands” flocked back to the cities and towns from which they had been forcibly removed during the era of separate development. These people have made their way to the towns, townships, slums and informal settlements of the cities seeking work and a better way of life. This, the country may be seen to be multicultural from many different angles. Since 1962, the FIC have been a multicultural community. Their schools have also been multiracial for more than a decade now. So, for us, multiculturalism is no longer an option, but a pressing reality in this part of the world.

Many countries are striving to be democratic in their leadership and those which are already democratic are helping those which are not. In our communities, have we tried to live in a democratic way? Have we empowered or challenged our church and society to be democratic? We have lived and still live in rural, urban and semi-urban societies in which we share our lives. Have the realities of our surroundings touched us? If they have, what have we done? Whom have we served? What kind of change have we settled for? Have we been content “first order” change which merely touches the surface and which we could not really be bothered about because we see it as being transient? Have we joined many other people who have settled for cosmetic change, for example, in terms of inculturation. The EA mentions some of the superficial changes we make in the name of inculturation: “Some people take inculturation to mean: singing local hymns and beating drums during Mass. The Synod wants us to rethink the whole of our life” (EA Simplified Text 57). Chittister talks of such change when she maintains that:

Old ministries, old prayer forms, old community structures have all undergone cosmetic change — a guitar here, a committee there, a bevy of new clothes here, a panorama of new works there. But underneath the flurry, little or nothing has really changed, except, of course, that people who ceased to see religious life as effective before the changes now cannot recognize it at all (Chittister 1996:157).

None of these changes fulfils the “letter of the law”. We have accepted and practised top-down change as an attempt to comply with the law. Having looked at “first-order change” which could not bring about the transformation required, we now turn our attention to “Second-order change”. Second-order change is defined as “changing the way in which an organisation changes” (ICC Planning module 1995:3). This involves a deeper change that aims at finding a process to help an organisation to change so that its very lifestyle is transformed. We, too, as FIC, need to look at the different ways of transforming ourselves so that we can be more effective both for ourselves and for the society around

us. One question we might ask in order to measure our transformation is: have we been open to the contemporary issues that affect our society? For example, when the government was formulating the, did we take part in the process to make sure that racism was eradicated in our country? At what level have we been active in promoting peace in our communities and in the country? As Franciscans, we are expected to follow in the footsteps of St

Francis who strove for peace at all times and did everything in his power to preserve unity. The world will not reach its full potential until we as the FIC play our role. Our “playing small” does not save the world, and yet our contribution as part of the whole, no matter how insignificant, will make all the difference

3.5.2 THE CHALLENGE THAT FACES THE FIC

The question is: how effective have we been? Perhaps the most important questions to ask ourselves are: why in the past we opted to have we opted in the past to be multicultural and multiracial? Have our options borne the fruits that we wanted? What role did we play during the apartheid time to bring about peace, or did it elude us as if we did not exist? Furthermore, did we enjoy its privileges like the rest of the white community? This, however, is now history and to the past. We now need to look to the present and to the future. We know that we have become open to multiculturalism because, between 1993 and 1994, we as a community were challenged either to live or die. In this context, the word “die” meant that we as a congregation would become static and no longer seek to recruit young members. We chose to live. At that stage, the choices before us were merely to survive, to live minimally or to live fully. We chose to live our lives to the full. We now look to the present, but, in doing so, we must also examine the past, examine what happened, what we can build upon, and what challenging. We need to reflect upon the mistakes we made and the chances we have missed and attempt to ensure that we do not repeat these mistakes of our past. A life not reflected upon is not worth living.

3.5.3 STARTING ANEW

We need to begin the pastoral process anew. We must identify ourselves anew and analyse the situation again, but this time we should reflect together before we act. Everyone needs to be part of the process, no matter how insignificant the decision is, because ultimately all will be affected by that decision. The ICC Method puts forward ways of reaching a deeper change in our Church and communities. It suggests that we need to acknowledge three kinds of authority: the authority of the individual, of the

group(s) and of the designated leadership (Notes on the Basis of Authority 1995:1). After this, we need to make sure that we act in the best interests of the congregation. Each person has to be acknowledged as having authority given to her by God, and therefore needs to be consulted at a certain level. The people with whom we interact need to realise that they are respected and are part of the bigger decision. We to read the signs of the times from the perspective of all people. Only then will we be able to give the prophetic witness we are called to give by our foundress Franziska Antonia Lampel, St Francis of Assisi, the Church, and the Gospels. We realise that we can no longer live in a closed circuit, when the world around us has moved from compartmentalising to interconnectedness, from segregation to integration. We need to see each part as part of the whole. We must acknowledge that the world will not be at peace as long as the poor are still poor, the hungry are still hungry and the women and children are still abused and treated as second class-citizens; in other word, as long as there is inequality in our world. No peace will prevail until as the oppressed are free. Sobukwe is

known to have said: “World civilization will not be complete until Africa has made its full contribution”, because it is part of the whole. The various systems found in our society need to share resources in order to improve the quality of the lives of their people.

3.5.4 OUR PROPHETIC WITNESS

As FIC, we are prophets of our time. We heard the call from the Bible, the Church, the Franciscan vision and the FIC charism, challenging us to be relevant to our times. These aspects have offered us guidelines so that we can play our prophetic dimension without fear of failure. We have seen the context in which we are called to work, and have recognised that South African culture is interconnected with the cultures of other countries though globalization. South African culture comprises different systems that are also connected. It is no longer fragmented nation of the nineteenth century, but is now made up of systems which all affect one another. Therefore, if we want to be true prophets we need to go beyond our communities and our country, acknowledging the interconnectedness of these systems. For example, democracy is something which many people are seeking and longing to see in many parts of the world. Some countries, for example, try to ignore democracy and they pay the price for this. As Franciscans of the Immaculate Conception, we need to analyse the situation of the world in which we live, ask ourselves: are we being the prophets we are called to be? Is the gap between the rich and poor narrowing? Are women and children respected by our cultures? As Franciscans, do we see that the environment is respected? Is peace our the focus in our communities and in the world around us or

does the culture in which we live ignore the dignity and equality of the people? If this has been the case, what are we doing about such oppressive cultures? Do we realise that HIV/AIDS is a pandemic, and that the high rate of unemployment, wars and violence, as well as the trade in women and children across our borders are all part of our multiculturalism? These issues do not exist in isolation. I have mentioned only a few, but the list is endless. We need to address these issues as a community of multicultural women. Until we do something, nothing will change. No matter how much we talk about these issues, and no matter how much we repudiate them, they will continue to exist. If we want our world to change, let us ensure that we foster positive, life giving values.

As prophets of this era, we are faced with all these challenges of human society. We are unable to ignore or escape them. Therefore, we need to do something about our cultures which perpetuate many of these problems. We cannot afford to sit back and be comfortable in our communities and hope that we will be saved when the world around us crumbles in chaos and confusion. Our foundress analysed and reflected on the situation of her time, and did something about it. Francis of Assisi was the prophet of his age, and the church calls on us to take our prophetic stand now. The situation looks gloomy and complex. It requires women of faith and courage. Heschel tells us that what we need for this kind of prophetic life is “a skull of stone to remain callous to such blows” (Heschel 1962:xvi), or else we will never succeed. We need to know that “Our God reigns”: we are not alone.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The vision from the Bible and the church, from our Rules and are there as guides. They might not be clear about how to go about reaching our goals: our function is to study them and reflect upon what they mean for our times. The vision set by these structures is not meant to encompass every detail, but it is for us as FICs to acquaint ourselves with them and find the best way to express them in our times. These visions are broad, and meant for long-term goals. We need to search for processes that will assist us in reaching them. The Vatican Council II documents again and again point to necessity for dialogue in the case of problems but do not suggest a process for facilitating such a dialogue. The Catholic South African Pastoral Plan suggests the Social Analysis/Pastoral Cycle as one of the processes to be used. This provides an umbrella for many other processes. The ICC (1995) suggests the Corporate Reflection Process. There are many others that we could use as we carry on trying to find out we are called to do. No one method is better than the other or sufficient on its own.

CHAPTER FOUR

FORMATION

4. INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One, I indicated how I had inserted myself into the research for this dissertation. Then, in Chapter Two, I analysed the context, history and structures that have influenced the life of the FIC. In Chapter Three, I tried to reflect the ways in which theology can shed light on this study of multiculturalism, namely by means of the Scriptures, Catholic Church teaching, the Franciscan tradition and the FIC's constitutions. These have shown us that dignity, unity, and prophetic witness are essential when considering a multicultural community. We now turn to the formation of local communities. How do we initiate people who join such a community? What is the ultimate role of the community?

4.1 FORMING MULTICULTURAL LOCAL COMMUNITIES

In the above chapters, we have looked at the nature of community life. We might just have to remind ourselves by looking at other definitions that help to further a deeper understanding of community living. Gottemoeller (1999:140) emphasizes that community living involves:

... two or more people in a significant, stable, mutually growthful relationship” does not include busy professionals who only cohabit for the sake of convenience and economic efficiency. It does not include “boarding houses” where anonymity and independence are the chief values. Instead, we are talking about good-faith efforts to live a principal value of religious life. With few exceptions it will include a common residence.

Although communities are not simply comprised of norms and structures, these could be helpful if they are used well in order to enhance community living. Structures that are merely to serve their own ends and to fulfil the law can hinder growth in the community. We now examine the structures which exist in the FIC community.

4.1.1 ALREADY EXISTING STRUCTURES IN THE FIC COMMUNITY

Before the FICs talk of forming multicultural local communities, they need to know what already exists, what happened in the past and what is happening at present in this regard, and how these structures have been used. The South African FIC Region has six communities. The largest community has eight members and the smallest only one. There are three nationalities: namely, Austrians, South Africans and South Tyrolians. South Africans come from five ethnic groups. The communities are composed of different cultures, but some are homogenous. In the homogeneous groups, they communicate in their own languages among themselves. The main language that is used in these communities is English. On account of this, the FIC would prefer to accept candidates who have passed English at matriculation level, because prayers, meetings, and the education of young people are all conducted in English. These communities are found in rural, semi-rural and urban areas.

The Congregation regularly holds gatherings at different levels, one at an international and the other at provincial or regional level. Canon Law (631§1&2) describes some of the aims of such gatherings. First, they need to be composed in such a way that they represent the whole institute and become a true sign of its unity in implementing a true sign of unity and charity measures. Second, they need to guard the Congregation’s charism and promote renewal that is in keeping with it.

4.1.1.1 General Chapter

The FIC congregation holds a **General Chapter** every six years to discuss matters of the institute. It is in this chapter that the multiculturalism of the FIC is realised, as all provinces and regions are represented. Sisters from Albania, Austria, Brazil, France, the Ivory Coast, Montenegro, Slovenia and South Africa come together. In this chapter, a problem that is often encountered relates to language. Most of the time spent at this gathering is used interpreting from one language to another, and yet everyone wants to participate fully in the discussions, and everyone wants to be part of and to own the decisions that are taken. Canon Law (631§3) encourages all members to freely submit their wishes and suggestions to the general chapter, but language often hinders and limits such opportunities. Canon Law (633§1) further states that:

Participatory and consultative bodies are faithfully to carry out the task entrusted to them. In their own way they are to express the care and participation of all the members of the good for the whole institute or community.

If the FIC takes multiculturalism seriously, no one need feel excluded. Each person present needs to take the decisions of such gatherings seriously in order to implement them. Language is one of the challenges the FIC faces because in these groups most of the important matters pertaining to the life of the congregation are discussed.

4.1.1.2 Regional Chapter

“The ordinary Provincial/Regional Chapter is called by the Provincial Superior every three years” (FIC Constitution no.256). At these **Regional Chapters**, the FICs deal with significant matters, look at themselves closely, evaluate their ministries and plan their future. It is at this time that the sisters make a **Vision Statement**. They then elect the leadership for the next three years. The leadership is responsible for ensuring that this Vision Statement is implemented. At the last Regional Chapter of the FIC, part of their Vision Statement read: “Led by the Spirit we strive together to build a family, sharing the combined charism of St Francis of Assisi and Mother Franziska ...” (extract from FIC Vision Statement of 2000-2004). This Vision Statement is in line with the vision of the *Ecclesia* in Africa. The EA (Simplified Text 63) statement says:

Church-as-family is about loving and trusting relationships between all members of the Church. This cannot be realised in large parishes. It can only happen in communities where people really know each other. Living Christian communities are the building stones of a Church-as- family.

This statement of the Synod says clearly that small communities are ideal for people getting to know one another. FIC communities are part of the larger church, and they are exhorted to take the idea of small communities seriously. The FIC Constitution (no.207c) acknowledges the need for local customs, norms and culture, by stating that the aim of this Chapter is “to adapt the regulations of the Constitutions to local customs and compile Provincial/Regional Statutes ”.

4.1.1.3 Regional Assembly

Since the number of FICs in South Africa is small, they have decided to meet at least twice a year to discuss matters that affect them. They call this meeting a general assembly. It is in this assembly that they prepare for the chapters already mentioned above. The vision statement quoted earlier came from such meetings, after many workshops in preparation for the Chapter. The Sisters had meetings where they reflected upon how they related to each other. They had open discussions, where each had an opportunity to express herself with regard to how she felt they were living their community life in diversity. These discussions were influenced by what was happening in our country. And at that time, the main focus of our nation was on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In 1999, the sisters held a reconciliation ritual amongst themselves. Another issue that came up was that the sisters realised that they did not really know one another or one another’s cultures. The resolution, after many discussions, was that they go back to their areas and meet regularly in order to share more about their cultures. (This dividing of the region into areas was done because distances were often a problem). It was thought that these meetings would be a means of bringing the sisters closer to one another, but nothing came of them as they were never followed up.

The sisters talked of sharing their cultures in their small communities but they did not implement this idea. One may ask: If they wanted to share their cultures why was it not a priority? They seem to have failed to realise that their misunderstandings of each other came about because they did not understand one another’s values. They did not have a grasp of the particular values that were important to each nationality and ethnic group, tending instead to draw conclusions and sweeping statements about one another’s cultures and values. They did not know how each group expressed their values. Instead, each community seemed to believe that theirs was the best way, forgetting that every group has its own **ubuntu/botho** values. They fell into the trap of attributing this ubuntu phenomenon only to Africans,

forgetting that these values are Christian values too. They have forgotten that **ubuntu** values and the example of Christ are there to remind us that we are human beings and belong to the same Father.

4.1.1.4 Constitution

Besides the above structures, the sisters have a **Constitution** that expect them to be united and to be sisters to each other. The constitutions exhort them in many paragraphs, but I will extract only a few to illustrate the point I wish to make:

A religious congregation is an expression of the mystical Body of Christ. It is composed of many members with various gifts and experiences of growth in the unity of the Spirit through love. ... the Religious Community, united as a true family in the name of the Lord, rejoices in his presence (FIC Constitution no.48).

This statement emphasises that the sisters are to see themselves as part of one body — that of Christ, and that therefore they need to be dependent on one another, using their gifts to serve the community and to be united. In another article it says:

Unity among the sisters manifests the coming of Christ and it is a source of great apostolic power. Our call to the Consecrated life, our common profession and rule, and our common way of life unites us as a Community. We live not only for ourselves but are orientated to serve all people (FIC Constitution no.49).

We observe in the above quote quotation that unity among the sisters becomes the direct demonstration of the coming of Christ, which in turn gives those who recognise this unity among the sisters hope in the risen Lord. Lastly, (no.54) states: “As members of one Community we share, according to our Constitution, the same rights and duties. We are sisters to one another and are also called that way”.

4.1.1.5 The Third Order Rule, as a document, serves to reinforce the structures by admonishing the members of the Franciscan family to be united as sisters. St Francis called all his followers brothers and sisters. He wanted all of them to see themselves as such because they shared one Father:

Because God loves us, the brothers and sisters should love each other, for the Lord says, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (Jn.15:12). Let them manifest their love in deeds (cf. Jn. 8:18). Also whenever they meet each other, they should show that they are members of the same family. Let them make known their needs to one another ... (Third Order Regular Rule23).

4.1.1.6 Celebrations and liturgies

Celebrations, liturgies, rituals and symbols could be ways of expressing some of the cultural values. Rituals cannot be taken for granted in a multicultural community, because they express in-depth what words fail to express. Symbols are also part of the rituals and should not be under-valued. We need to share these together and use them to enrich each other in our spiritual life.

In sharing some of our culture's values, rituals and symbols, we will not only be able to appreciate one another's cultures and enrich each other, but we will also challenge one another by clarifying and questioning those rituals that are not compatible with the Gospel and our way of life. We will not be frightened to do this, because we are sisters in community, and each person wants the best for the whole. Statements that are improper will be discarded. One sister said at a profession ceremony of another sister who was dancing during the celebration, "That is primitive; they will never be one with us". Instead of taking an opportunity to learn about the culture of the local people she dismissed it with these words, even though she had been living for many years in the country. This type of attitude needs to be overcome.

On the other hand, practices that bring fear, suspicion and exclusion in the name of culture and inculturation cannot be accepted by any group. Everyone will need to be included, as **ubuntu/botho** values and Gospel values go hand in hand and are not meant solely for the Africans. All groups will want to be part of what is happening, since we are one family. When such issues about culture are discussed, genuine fears and suspicions should be eradicated. People will be happy to be themselves, and there will be trust in the community.

4.1.2 COMMUNITY LIFE

Community life is an essential and integral element of consecrated life. The document on Religious and Secular Institutes (SCRSI8) tells us that:

Community life, which is one of the marks of a religious institute (can.607, par.2), is proper to each religious family. It gathers all the members together in Christ and should be so defined that it becomes a source of mutual aid to all, while helping to fulfil the religious vocation of each (can.602). It should offer an example of reconciliation in Christ, and of the communion that is rooted and founded in his love (SCRSI30).

Gottmoeller maintains that: “Community living is not an accidental dimension of the way of life we have chosen, but a determinant of the way in which we realise every other dimension” (1999:141). It is in community life that each person becomes what she was meant to be. Her personality is groomed and developed in the community. One realises her talents as she interacts with her sisters. Her full potential is revealed the help of other members of the community:

In community life, the power of the Holy Spirit at work in one individual passes at the same time to all. Here not only does each enjoy his own gift, but makes it abound by sharing it with others; and each one enjoys the fruits of the other’s gift as if they were his own (VC42).

A sister professes the evangelical counsels and lives the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in the community with the help of other members. Her cultural values will also be lived fully in the community that will be enriched by the cultural values of each of its members. It is the community that will challenge any cultural values that are not compatible with those found in the Gospel, and require that those values be purified. In communities, the mystery of communion with Christ is lived out, so as to achieve:

“... a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”. The fraternal life seeks to reflect the depth and richness of this mystery, taking shape as a human community in which the Trinity dwells, in order to extend in history the gifts of communion proper to the three divine Persons (VC41).

Community is a group of people who, because of their common call, feels at home. The word “sister” is not used as a title, but implies such as that which exists in one family of sisters: “We are sisters to one another and are also called that way” (FIC constitutions:54). The element of community is essential to religious life. This is portrayed by Jesus himself who gathered a group of people around him and lived a community life with them. He shared his love, his ideas, his faith and beliefs with them. Thus, he called his followers brothers because God was the Father of them all. After his resurrection, Christ said to Mary of Magdala:

Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go and find the brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your father to my God and your God (John 20:17).

Whenever Francis of Assisi talked about his followers, he also called them brothers. Although they lived an itinerant life, they still managed to live as a community. In the Third Order Rule, the following is

written in relation to community life: “Let them manifest their love in deeds” (cf. Jn. 8:18); and, “whenever they meet each other, they should show that they are members of the same family” (Rule:23)

4.1.3 UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Diversity in a community can be brought about by various factors such as people’s personalities, backgrounds, professions, and also by means of a variety of cultures and nationalities. Unity in diversity is one important element of multicultural living in a community. This concept should not be confused with uniformity, through. Ortiz makes this distinction clear when he maintains that:

The Christian body is not to be uniform. It is to be united in its desire to accomplish a common task and in its bond of love. We are not to conform to each other’s image but to the image of Christ, and in so doing we may discover how very different this process makes us from one another. Christ’s mind in the believer renders that man to truly be the individual he was created to be, with thoughts, initiatives, and drives originating from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit — not from the conformity of the group (Ortiz 1991:19).

VC4 says: “Communion in the Church is not uniformity, but a gift of the Spirit who is present in the variety of charisms and states of life”. This is also true among the different members of one community. VC80 continues to say that consecrated people are able to practise mutual acceptance in their diversity, but still bear witness to unity:

Communities of Religious Institutes and of Societies of Apostolic Life can, in fact, offer concrete and effective cultural proposals when they bear witness to the evangelical manner of practising mutual acceptance in diversity and of authority, and when they give an example of sharing material and spiritual goods, of being truly international, of co-operating with other Institutes, and of listening to men and women of our time (VC80).

In my experience, I have found that it is hard for many of the sisters to accept that we are from different backgrounds and have different cultures. We tend to believe that only one way of life, one way of doing things and one way of thinking is correct. For example, the indigenous sisters who have lived a consecrated life for many years find it hard to tolerate the actions and thinking of those who have lived in the rural areas, because the sisters feel that they are now “elevated” to a Western style of living that is considered to be higher. At times, black sisters even become ashamed of their own relatives with their simple faith and behaviour. They can even make jokes about their own people concerning the way they talk or act. Referring to these kinds of jokes, Arbuckle maintains that:

... use of ethnic jokes illustrates their lack of sensitivity. Ethnic jokes are common in most societies, but examination shows that the object of such jokes is to “put down” [others]. Ethnic jokes are unjust and can be most painful ... (1995:334).

The indigenous sisters expect all their relatives to act in the way that they themselves act. The black sisters feel uneasy with their own customs and beliefs, making fun of their own people for the way in which they do things. Should someone act in the usual African way, but in a manner which is not accepted in Western culture, those present will whisper to each other and say: “**Ba tla re tsegisa ka makgowa (Sotho)/ Bazosihlekisa ngabelungu (Zulu)**”. (They will embarrass us in front of the whites). These are familiar phrases among Black South Africans. There is a danger that the indigenous sisters could lose their beautiful values of simplicity and spontaneity, on account of not being proud of their own culture, resulting in them compromising such values. It has also been noted that blacks have become so inured to their own suffering, that the suffering of their own black members is accepted as being normal. They therefore expect to see the poor and suffering in their streets. However, when a black person sees a white beggar, he/she feels sorry for her/him and wishes to do everything to help this white person. On the other hand, the Westerners in the communities make fun of what the indigenous sisters do, or they romanticise the indigenous sisters’ actions as “simple and innocent”, feeling that they who still have a lot to learn from the Western style of living. Pertaining to this attitude, we have already cited Malone (1996:368) in section 2.4.2.3 how the majority group refer to a minority group from developing nations as “cute” and “innocent”, with “so much to learn”.

In our communities, I have observed how difficult it is for white sisters to be dependent on the black sisters for their needs, and to submit to their authority when required to do so. This could be one of the reasons why some whites find it hard to hand over leadership. We have experienced this difficulty throughout the political arena in South Africa. This mentality does not build a community. Each person needs to be dependent on the others in a community. If this mind-set continues, a selfish individualism will prevail instead of a community spirit. On this issue of interdependence the Catholic Bishop’s Conference of the Philippines in its Pastoral Plan reminds us that: “In the Church, nobody is so poor as to have nothing to give, and nobody is so rich as to have nothing to receive” (in Prior 1997:79). Prior goes on to say that such a spirit of “sharing and mutual interaction of the different members also characterises the Church. It is through this sharing and interaction that everybody’s need is supplied”

(:79). This is in accordance with what St Francis of Assisi said: “. Let them make known their needs to one another” (Third Order Rule:23). We all need one another in a spirit of humility and love.

On our streets, we have seen how white people who live on the streets as beggars have been treated by some of the whites. They are looked upon with scorn, disgust and often shunned. This is the legacy our society has inherited. No poor whites were meant to be seen on the streets. This is because riches obviously denote a higher status, and being poor meant that one would not work or that one was too lazy to be educated. We have seen how white people living with disabilities — the hobos, the tramps and the young girls who fell pregnant out of wedlock, have been institutionalised. The black communities have concluded that these acts were embarrassing for the whites in their communities and therefore they (the whites) wished to hide these people away. Similarly, in the convents, we have seen sisters from overseas who became mentally ill or old being sent back to the Motherhouse secretly, without the indigenous sisters knowing the reason. Only after a long time did one then hear why this or that sister went back to the Motherhouse. Yet, in African culture it is not a common phenomenon that a person is hidden away because of her sickness, age or “defect”. **Umuntu umuntu** no matter what. Unfortunately, this concept is now slowly creeping into the African culture as well. This kinds of behaviour and these attitudes do not acknowledge the other person as an equal with dignity, but rather involve seeing him or her as someone who is inferior. On the other hand, someone in authority who is deliberately hiding facts from certain members of her community might very well be seen to be the one who is “poor” in spirit. However, such behaviour might imply that “I have it all correct, and I am better”. Kalilombe discusses what missionaries have always thought of the people they came to evangelize:

We know what is good for them, and we know best how to go about it. We assume, too, that, by and large, the beneficiaries will want to welcome our initiative, or at least that they will not put insuperable obstacles to the fulfillment of our objective, as we see it, even when they themselves may view our enterprise in a different light (1989:185).

In the above paragraph we have seen that this kind of mentality may not only be found in one group but in all groups. We do not need this kind of mentality in our communities, whether manifested by Africans, Coloureds, Indians or Whites. All are to be treated with respect. VC31 reminds us that: “diversity is also the work of the Spirit”, while Ortiz (1991:17) tells us that: “We must remember, at the same time, the ability of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the task of unity in diversity”. Therefore we are not to be

afraid of differences among us: our task is rather to be open vessels or instruments in the hands of God, who wants to use us to bring this unity to a diverse world.

When looking at the above examples of how communities should be, those living consecrated life in communities need to pioneer these values among themselves. They need to be an open community. Ortiz gives us a definition of an open church, which applies to our communities in this instance:

Open Church also means that the church not only says welcome to other ethnic groups; it encourages multi-ethnicity and makes necessary changes in the congregation to provide an open opportunity to express their cultural dynamic in all aspects of the church (1991:9).

If this is visible to all members, and if everyone feels at home, others will see the unity and love that governs the life of such a community, and will be able to say: “Look how they love one another”.

4.1.4 CULTURE AND LANGUAGES OF THE MINORITY CULTURES

Another aspect of community that needs to be taken into consideration is that the language of the minority should be considered., Their perspective needs to be taken seriously, but this will mean that the minority is required to be assertive and open to the community. In Chapter One, section 1.3.1.4, this issue of language has been mentioned. The emphasis here is on community building. McGinn calls this kind of sharing “reciprocity”, and argues that:

It demands that those who have lived in the host country all their lives and have been in the religious community for many years must begin to listen to the new ones and look at the goals and mission of the congregation from their perspective. It requires a change of attitude. In a non-judgmental manner, one can begin to act as an ethnographer and discover new realities and appreciate the vibrant faith and the beauty in approaches to the sacred which have not been part of one’s own history (1996:384).

Further on, McGinn points out that:

The melting pot paradigm has stressed a subtractive aspect: “Acquire English and lose your native language! Assimilate into US society and forget your own culture; it’s a deficit.” Ethnographers and multiculturalists, on the other hand, speak of English-plus and acculturation to the host culture. “Appreciate your own language and learn English too. Take on the good US cultural values, but don’t lose your own culture in the process” (McGinn 1996:374).

McGinn uses the example of people in the United States of America but we know that this attitude has been practised by other dominant cultures over ethnic minority groups. A subservient attitude on the part of the minority culture which causes them to abandon their culture and language does not build a community, as it is often done out of blind conformity. Some members of ethnic minorities are comfortable speaking of themselves as belonging to a bicultural and bilingual culture. This is to their advantage, but it does not build community, because the people of dominant cultures tend to take the easy way out by not making an effort to learn the local language. Yet, each individual in a multicultural community must make every effort to learn the language of the culture where he or she lives. FIC Constitution says: “The Sisters in a Mission Territory should adapt themselves to the culture of the people to whom they minister and become one with the local Church” (no.148).

4.1.5 COMMUNICATION AND DIALOGUE

For dialogue to be effective, it is essential that communities are small enough to enable members to know each other. EA effectively points out that: “The Church as a Family cannot reach all her possibilities as a Church unless she is divided into communities small enough to foster close human relationships” (EA Simplified Text 88). This example from the EA is fitting for any community, especially if this community has to go through a process of reflecting upon how best its members can live together. This kind of community may use the Pastoral Cycle/Social Analysis process to achieve this goal. In our situation as FIC, we are fortunate, because our communities are already small, so dialogue and communication should be easy. Trust, openness, love and acceptance need to be part of this community, so that each person knows that she is accepted and understood.

These values need to be lived by each member, without a fear of being misunderstood or without anyone feeling superior or inferior in relation to the others. The community members need to guard against compromising for the sake of peace at all costs and instead challenge one another if there is a need to do so. If there are values that are lived by any other member from another culture that are not clear, communication and dialogue need to be open, so that these values are fully understood. Concerning these issues relating to community life, VC maintains that:

The Church entrusts to communities of consecrated life the particular task of spreading the spirituality of communion, first of all in their internal life and then in the ecclesial community, and even beyond its boundaries, by opening or continuing a dialogue in charity, especially where today's world is torn apart by ethnic hatred or senseless violence. Placed as they are within the world's different societies — societies frequently marked by conflicting passions and interests, seeking unity but uncertain about the ways to attain it — communities of consecrated life, where persons of different ages, languages and cultures meet as brothers and sisters, are signs that dialogue is always possible and that communion can bring differences into harmony (VC51).

This process of dialogue will require of each member commitment, openness, determination and a willingness to go through the journey of conversion, a willingness to be challenged and a willingness to allow the Holy Spirit to change their hearts, minds and attitudes. Gottmoeller (1999:143) maintains that: “community is nourished by dialogue, prayer, ritual and celebrations”.

Conflict in a community is inevitable, especially where people come from diverse cultures and backgrounds. Dialogue and communication can diminish some of the unnecessary conflict. Conflict is not something to be avoided at all cost as we have said in the last chapter. It is something that communities must expect and know how to deal with. When people are serious about their growth and the values they hold, and when they want to be transformed, they will often clash, but this will eventually bring them closer to each other. It is also to be remembered that some cultures do not want conflict. If it happens, they run away from the issues that cause it. We know what happens: when conflict is not faced squarely, it becomes worse. Perhaps the FIC communities maybe need to learn skills in order to deal with conflict.

4.1.6 SHARING AND CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

Some other aspects of community life involve the sharing of resources, and the building up and strengthening of unity. It is essential for people to support and encourage each other in good times and in bad, just as families do. Gottmoeller (1999:140) maintains that: “In essence, community members say to one another, ‘I will be there for you, you can count on me,’ whatever the circumstance or need”. When Antonia Lampel composed the “Magna Charta” of the Congregation and presented it to Bishop Roman Sebastian Zangerle (Petz 1993:16) for approval at the beginning of the institute, she did so with the consent of the other four women who had already been living together as Secular Franciscans for some years. The first reason she gave for this endeavour was:

It has been proven by experience that concerted efforts produce greater results, especially when they are united in God, in whose service they are dedicated for the good of mankind(sic) — with the sacrifice of one's will, with the renunciation of earthly interests and of worldly affairs and relationships which so often hinder or destroy the noblest of undertakings. Therefore, in every age, religious communities with a common goal have achieved great, even astonishing results, for example, in the care of the sick, and in education. Worldly power has never denied these accomplishments their deserved recognition, while to this very day, the education of girls in many cities is entrusted with great success to Ursulines, the Benedictines, or the Institute of English Mesdames, etc. (Petz 1993:19).

The other reasons Franziska Antonia Lampel gives for the need to live a community life also stress this unity. Petz writes:

The more difficult the profession, the more necessary is unity; ... The considerable physical hardship, the intellectual strain, the many cares and annoyances involved make it especially desirable for the teachers to stand together in a bond of sisterly love made sacred and firm in religion, so that they may mutually support one another, strengthen and comfort one another, and can expect loving care in the event of infirmity or old age. Truly, many young women (as example shows) have given up the teaching profession, for which they had a love and capacity, because of remaining alone, they had little hope of a bearable future (Petz 1993:17).

Franziska Antonia Lampel realised that community life is necessary. In the end, Franziska Antonia Lampel the foundress, left the congregation in order to preserve unity, when she felt that she might be the one contributing to the two camps that existed. Community living is essential for consecrated life.

4.1.7 LIVING CONSECRATED LIFE TO THE FULL

It could happen that we have been working hard at efficiency and neglecting the aspect of relationships with one another. Perhaps it is time for us to take our living together seriously, so that we may know each other more deeply and appreciate one another more fully. Through dialogue and communication we need to search together for the ways and means of how best to become one family, as our vision statement which we have formulated together suggests. Then the evangelical counsels will have an effect on the people among whom we live. The vow of poverty will indeed be a vow of justice, our vow of obedience will truly be a vow of freedom and the vow of chastity will be a vow of true love that excludes no one. Maloney (1996) argues that, through our vows we will speak for God. The vows will set us free. Regarding the vow of poverty, he says:

Be free to go wherever in the world the needs of the poor call you, rather than to hold on tightly to the security of your own home or a job you like. Be free to share material possessions with

the poor rather than to store them up for your own comfort. Be free to stand with the poor in their struggle for justice, rather than to stand with the “powers that be” who often insulate themselves from the problems of the poor. Be free to speak the truth in the face of the social problems of our times, rather than to be concerned about your own image or tranquillity (Maloney 1996:435).

Concerning the vow of chastity and community, Maloney says that it allows us to:

Be free to live together in community as friends who love one another, rather than to isolate those who are different because of nationality, class, sex, or other factors that create prejudices. Be free to spend time in prayer, rather than to feel you must always be “doing something” (Maloney 1996:435).

Maloney emphasises that the vow of obedience enables us to:

Be free to discern the will of God with others, to listen well, rather than to dominate or claim a personal monopoly on knowing God’s will. Be free to renounce immediate gratification for the sake of more important goals, rather than to seek solely what pleases you in the here and now (Maloney 1996:435).

He argues that if we genuinely true to our vow, then these will represent “a prophetic word in the world” (Maloney 1996:435).

We realise that the resolutions made in the Chapters of the congregation that we have discussed have not always been implemented. Perhaps one could suggest could be that these resolutions be reviewed on a regular basis.

To build a community, the FIC will need to set clear **norms** for all members concerning their community living, so that the sisters can encourage each other to renew their commitment. If the norms are not made clear from the outset, then there will be confusion and conflict will inevitably result. Other values will also fall apart. Sisters will not be accountable to one another, and expectations may not be met. Norms need not be rigid, but if they need to be changed, all members must be involved in the process.

4.1.8 LEADERSHIP IN A MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY

The most important dimension of any congregation in the multicultural community context is its leadership. The role played by the leadership is crucial, because leaders will have to ensure that all the structures, norms, visions, discussions and resolutions taken are realised. The leadership needs to

ascertain that all members are aware of the decisions arrived at by the community as a whole. Therefore, information needs to be disseminated. The leadership needs to be open to new developments concerning inculturation, as well as the changes that occur in the society and at the political level relation to culture. This leadership will have to motivate, encourage and challenge the community to honour all the decisions. When the community chooses its the leaders, it needs to choose people who will be honest about their struggles concerning their own cultural values and those of others. The leadership must be representative of all the different cultures. Affirmative action need not apply to a religious community but people need to be given chances to make mistakes as this is a community that needs to show tolerance and acceptance of each other's gifts. No one is perfect. No group and no individual is indispensable in a congregation. What is at stake in this multicultural congregation is transformation as opposed to mere change. Therefore, administrators are needed, although not necessarily at leadership level. People at leadership level are people who have a vision and are able to "dream dreams". They are those who seek to facilitate "internal change", as Krog calls it. Krog (2003) maintains that: "Change and transformation are not the same thing". She gives an example from the South African context, and details the situation in the following way:

You may appoint a new manager, or get a new name for your firm or your country, without changing direction, without changing 'the firmament'. Things have been changed but not transformed. Transformation means that the same unit undergoes an internal change. Replacing white people with black people is therefore not transformation in itself. If the newly appointed black people bring another vision with them, or white people already employed by the firm develop a new vision or attitude because of the name change, then transformation is taking place. If the black people replace white people but the same structures, systems, visions and attitudes are retained, you merely have change.

This kind of change is one which Malone calls corporate conversion:

Corporate conversion requires changes within the organizational structures of the congregation so that the sense of mutuality and equality will exist both in word and in the lived praxis (1996:371).

We have already discussed similar change in relation to the ICC who talked of "First order change" which may be akin to what Krog calls "change", and "Second order change" which is similar to what Krog calls "transformation". Chittister (1995:157) calls this superficial change "cosmetic change". In a multicultural community, it is essential to ensure that transformation happens at all levels and in all aspects of the community, or else the community will settle for superficial change and no real

transformation will actually have taken place. Krog cites Prof. Guy Smith, who runs an NGO that assists businesses in their efforts to transform as:

Black people are appointed in positions, and then everybody assumes that the firm has been transformed. See! We have a black face here, and two white women. These new appointees often find themselves caught up in the existing structures and ways of thinking, which causes them to behave not very differently to the whites. That's why you often hear black people saying that those at the top have sold out. In order to deal with the lack of transformation, the newly appointed blacks often say that they have no power: the whites who appointed them took away power of these positions, or the previous incumbents somehow took the power with them (Krog 2003:127).

Prof. Guy Smith develops this issue of change and transformation by giving us another perspective of the whites in this situation. He says:

The whites, on the other hand, see that they are being replaced by blacks. They do not have the same convenient access as before, because they do not have the connections with the black officials that they used to have with the white ones. For them, everything has therefore changed. But they also confuse change with transformation. They are convinced that because everything has changed, it has also been transformed — and look what a big mess it is. Blacks are incompetent, they say. They have all the power, but they can't get anything done with it (Krog 2003:127).

The two scenarios detailed above are common when leadership is handed over from whites to blacks even in the religious communities. Yet, this should not be the case, because the leadership in religious life is that of service, not of power and “outdoing” one another. However, we have seen that when the time comes to hand over leadership in a multicultural community it becomes a struggle as to “Who will manage such a complex task now that the indigenous people are to take over?” When the white sisters were in charge, it was not seen as a complex task. Unfortunately, this attitude of not trusting blacks is often found in both blacks and whites. The saying that is commonly used by blacks when they realise that other blacks prefer white domination to black domination becomes applicable here: “**Setlhare sa mosotho ke lekgowa**” (A solution for a black person is a white person). Blacks do not trust their own people. They would rather suffer under white oppression than accept black leadership. After the democratic elections here in South Africa, we often heard people say: “It was better when we were under the white government. Even when we were oppressed, we had jobs, and had money. Even though it was insufficient, it was better than nothing”. This kind of statement shows that people would prefer to settle for what is not life-giving than to be governed by their own. We see that history repeats itself. We know of a similar situation in the Bible, when the children of Israel met with difficulties, they

said they preferred to be in slavery in Egypt than to face the challenges: “Why did we not die at Yahweh’s hand in the land of Egypt, when we were able to sit down to pans of meat and could eat bread to our heart’s content. As it is, you have brought us to the wilderness to starve this whole company to death” (Exodus 16:3). Again: “Why did you bring us out of Egypt? Was it so that I should die of thirst, my children too, and my cattle” (Exodus 17:3). It can also happen that when indigenous people take over leadership, they do not have the necessary qualities. If this happens it is a pity, because they should have been prepared long ago. When blacks take over leadership, they do not become oppressors. Malone gives us an example of such a situation:

Sometimes the dominant culture is replaced by another group’s culture with the result that the oppressed become the oppressor. When that happens, a congregation-- using power in a way that creates scarcity, and marginalization plays the game of musical chairs. Whether the oppression is conscious or not, those with power marginalize others and continue the injustice (1996:366).

It is the role of the leadership to ensure that they facilitate change in their members so that together they evaluate the structures and systems that exist in a congregation. Together they need to change the structures that are not life-giving or which do not further the change that is needed, especially that pertaining to the cultural dimension of the congregation. The leaders need to complement each other by virtue of their experience, talents, qualities and capabilities. Ensuring this complementarity is the role of the whole community, because it is the members who have the influence in the election of their leadership.

4.1.9 INTERPERSONAL DIALOGUE WITH OTHER RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

Learning from others who are striving for unity in a multicultural context is always would be helpful. We are not to expect that they are perfect or ahead of us, but together we are on the same journey. We can influence and help one another.

4.2 INITIAL FORMATION TOWARDS MULTICULTURAL LIVING

It is during the period of initial formation in religious life that Gospel values are reinforced. The congregational values and the spirit of the founder (charism) are imparted to the new members by the older members of the congregation. In this period, it is essential that the elements of multiculturalism are

conveyed to the new members so that they learn from the outset that they are called to give witness to the world.

At this stage, it is of great importance that the new member is assisted to delve deeper into her own cultural values, customs, norms and rituals in order to appreciate, accept and own them. When she is able to accept them as her own, she will find it easier to be critical about them without feeling as though she is being robbed of her identity. This will help her to be grounded in her own culture. The new member will not be embarrassed to share with her new community, whether or not they agree with her. She will find it easy to discard those values or habits that are not in accordance with the Gospel and Ubuntu values and the new existence she is embracing by pursuing consecrated life. When this sharing is done openly and she is accepted by her new family, this new family will in turn be enriched.

Culture needs to be an integral part of the programme of initial formation, where the new member is able to learn the cultures of the older members of the congregation, their history and their languages. The candidate who is embracing a consecrated life needs to grow in all spheres of life, and she needs to see her development holistically. VC confirms this:

For formation to be complete, it must include every aspect of Christian life. It must therefore provide a human, cultural, spiritual and pastoral preparation which pays special attention to the harmonious integration of all its various aspects (VC65).

This is emphasised by (SCRSI45):

There is a constant maturing in it, and this reaches not only to spiritual values but also those which contribute psychologically, culturally and socially to the fullness of the human person.

The new member needs not only to learn the culture and language of her own congregation, but also those of the society around her:

... because it is important for consecrated persons gradually to develop a critical judgement, based on the Gospel, regarding the positive and negative values of their own culture and of the culture in which they will eventually work (VC67).

It is often easier to learn the languages and adapt to the customs of other people while one is still young, because one is still open-minded and full of fervour for a new way of life. At this stage one is not involved in ministries. Some young people who come from the dominant ethnic groups of South Africa such as Swati and Zulu find it hard to learn other people's languages with the exception of English. This is what they have inherited from their tradition. Those from minor ethnic groups have an advantage, because they have learnt other people's languages easily, maybe even unconsciously, because they had to survive among other ethnic groups who were considered dominant. It is unfortunate that dominant groups seem not to wish to learn the languages of the minor groups, while the minor groups seem to find it hard to be assertive about themselves, often looking down on their own culture. When invited to share some of the things that could contribute to the enrichment of the culture in the community, the answer is: "We have always done things with reference to the dominant ethnic cultures in our social communities". There is a challenge for the community to make room for all cultures to share without fear. Newton & Peklo (1995:74), in their article entitled *Cross-Cultural Issues in Vocation and Formation Ministry* give some advice:

Vocation directors and formators are keyed into looking for indicators of flexibility and ability to adapt. Candidates who do not have these adaptation skills or the facility and desire to acquire them will not be successful or happy in our community.

In my experience, this issue regarding a lack of adaptation is very true. The people who find it hard to adapt become irritable when others speak their languages and they feel excluded, especially if they have tried to determine for the group which language must be used and have failed. This may lead to the formation of factions. One group feels superior and the other group feels inferior, just as has been the case between blacks and whites, between Africans and Europeans. This is an evil that must be eradicated in the early stages of its formation, and this needs conversion and a change of mind and attitude, or else it will be impossible to deal with in later life.

Other community members need to be involved in every sphere concerning the formation of this young person. They need to provide a good example of living this unity:

Since formation must also have a communal dimension, the community is the chief place of formation in Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Initiation into the hardships and joys of community takes place in the community itself (VC67).

The community needs to encourage and affirm the new member. If there is a problem all the sisters in the community need to correct and challenge the new member, irrespective of the members their age, race or culture:

Through the fraternal life each one learns to live with those whom God has put at his or her side, accepting their positive traits along with their differences and limitations (VC67).

The sisters in a community are to understand that the formator is affecting his/her work on their behalf. It is not the formator's project, but the congregation's. Regarding this issue, Gottemoeller (1999:138) poses this question: "When we are ambiguous about this significant dimension of consecrated life, can we invite potential new members to explore this life?"

Both the new member and the older members of the congregation need to realise that the process of formation is one of ongoing conversion, of metanoia. Carney and Horgan (1982:19) commenting on (Third Order Regular:5) argues that, this issue of ongoing conversion is the fundamental element of Franciscan living. Patience needs to be shown towards the new member by those in formation and by those living in the community. They need to give her time to sort out those values from her background which she should keep, which are compatible with the gospel values, those which she should "baptise" because they need purification, and those which are to be discarded because they are totally incompatible with the gospel values. On the issue of challenging our culture, EA says:

Jesus challenged his culture where it was wrong and unjust. In the same way as a 'grain of wheat has to die to bear much fruit,' some parts of our cultures have to die to come to new life (Simplified Text 60&61).

Karecki (2000:5) gives advice on the patience needed during the process of determining out what needs to be done concerning our culture:

"We need to move slowly and patiently so that we do not see ourselves or others as problems which need to be solved, but as living mysteries which are unfolding before us".

What Karecki points out is very appropriate in any community, but more especially in a formation one. Another aspect that needs to be looked at by multicultural communities is the availability of books for

the minority languages. Art and music also need to be encouraged in the celebrations. McGinn gives advice concerning the issue of sources in a multicultural community:

Advocacy involves seeing that house libraries have sufficient current books and periodicals in the mother tongue and insisting upon minority representation at various levels of formation and administration even to the actual selection of superiors who are open, tolerant and appreciative of other cultures represented in the community (McGinn 1996:384-385).

He cites Benjamin Schwarz who states: “Dissatisfied minorities want, at a minimum, a real voice in determining their future — but a real voice for the minority means real sacrifice for the majority (:385). This statement by Schwarz reminds us of the conversion that needs to happen in a community in order for it to be transformed.

4.3 FIC COMMUNITY: A GIFT TO THE CHURCH

Going back to our definition of charism and prophetic witness, we can recall what was said about the two aspects of consecrated life, that both are gifts of the Holy Spirit to the church and the people of a particular time. Lumen Gentium (LG43), when talking about religious, life affirms that is a gift to the church when it stresses that the church safeguards the gift which it has received from the Lord. Further on the document maintains that:

From the God-given seed of the counsels a wonderful and wide-spreading tree has grown up in the field of the Lord, branching out into various forms of religious life lived in solitude or in community. Different religious families have come into existence in which spiritual resources are multiplied for the progress in holiness of the members and for the good of the entire body of Christ (LG43).

Again, VC also confirms that religious life is a gift to the church:

At the Synod it was stated on several occasions that the consecrated life has not only proved a help and support for the Church in the past, but is also a precious and necessary gift for the present and future of the people of God, since it is an intimate part of her life, her holiness and her mission (VC3).

The Church has approved consecrated life because she has seen that it is God’s gift to the church. The Church gives reasons for approving consecrated life (PC1):

From the very beginning of the Church there were men and women who set out to follow Christ with greater liberty and to imitate him more closely, by practising the evangelical counsels. They led lives dedicated to God each in his own way. Many of them, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, became hermits or founded religious families. These the Church, by virtue of her authority, gladly accepted and approved. Thus, in keeping with the divine purpose, a wonderful variety of religious communities came into existence. This has considerably contributed towards enabling the Church not merely to be equipped for every good work (cf. 2 Tim.3:17) and to be prepared for the work of the ministry unto the building-up of the body of Christ (cf. 4:12), but also to appear adorned with the manifold gifts of her children, like a bride adorned for her husband (cf. Apoc.21:2), and to manifest in herself the multiform wisdom of God (cf. Eph.3:10).

Again, the church realises that through the contribution of consecrated people she will be enriched:

The more fervently, therefore, they join themselves to Christ by this gift of their whole life, the fuller does the Church's life become and more the vigorous and fruitful its apostolate (PC1).

In the same document the church maintains that:

The holy synod holds it in high esteem, for it is so useful to the Church in the exercise of its pastoral duty of educating the young, caring for the sick, and in its other ministries. It confirms the members in their vocations and urges them to adapt their life to modern requirements (PC10).

VC98 confirms that religious life has played an important role in cultural matters among various peoples and nations and the church is enriched in this way:

Institutes of Consecrated Life have always had great influence in the formation and transmission of culture. This was true in the Middle Ages, when monasteries became places for study of the cultural riches of the past, and for the development of a new humanistic and Christian culture. The same has happened every time the light of the Gospel has spread to new nations and peoples. Many consecrated persons have been promoters of cultures, and frequently have studied and defended indigenous cultures.

These are just a few examples to point out how the church acknowledges consecrated life as a gift. We know that the church also acknowledges that the very being of the religious is a gift. The witness they give is by their very lives. VC20 says:

The first duty of the consecrated life is to make visible the marvels wrought by God in the frail humanity of those who are called. They bear witness to these marvels not so much in words as by the eloquent language of a transfigured life, capable of amazing the world.

Francis of Assisi would say: "Preach always and at times use words". The FIC have received a charism and the Church has approved its constitutions. This means that the church has acknowledged the wealth and the depth and the help the FIC is able to give to the church. The FIC has existed for one hundred and sixty years. This congregation has spread to many countries where its presence has made a difference to the lives of many people. In South Africa, it has existed for more than sixty years. The sisters have worked in different parts of the Witbank diocese, and have contributed to the health, education, development and spiritual life of the people there. In 1989, the FIC celebrated fifty years in South Africa and the bishop of the diocese wrote:

Through their pastoral involvement, the Franciscan Sisters have promoted the physical, spiritual, intellectual and psychological upliftment of our people. They complemented in a wonderful way the pastoral work of the Comboni Missionaries, and vividly concretised the liberating presence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the local Church of Witbank (Nkhumishe 1989:1).

Concerning multicultural living in South Africa, the local Ordinary has noted that the FIC have been the only congregation in the Witbank diocese that has been open to local vocations. And in his letter of congratulations to the FIC sisters for their sterling work, the Bishop invited the faithful of the church in the Witbank Diocese to pray with the sisters. He pointed out that:

Possibly, one of their most striking and positive initiatives has been their openness for local vocations. Unlike many other missionaries at that time, right from the beginning they welcomed into their own congregation local candidates wishing to join them in their apostolate. As a result of this prophetic and praise-worthy initiative, nearly half of the Franciscan Sisters today belong to the local Church (Nkhumishe 1989:1).

Further on, in another paragraph, the Bishop maintained that:

Such prophetic initiatives demand that we constantly re-evaluate and re-adjust our lives and our faith in terms of the gospel of Christ as it should be lived in our South African situation. It is my hope that all in the diocese will remain open to God's Spirit in order to face the challenges of the implementation of the forthcoming Pastoral Plan in our local Church and in many other challenges that lie ahead (Nkhumishe 1989:1).

Prior to the celebration of their golden jubilee in South Africa, the sisters had already started opening their school to other races. This school had only admitted white students from 1957, but that changed in 1984. This was a brave act, and they paid a price for it. Some white parents withdrew their children from the school because of this. In the FIC chronicles it is written:

Percy Xaba was the first Black pupil admitted to St Peter's School. The mother of the child ("Perseverance") just did not go away. She wanted her black child to attend our (the sisters') school. "What shall I do?" The principal said to one of the sisters, who replied: "Take him; it means that this is God's will". Later, they said, the name "Perseverance" would have been fitting for the mother. More children followed but it didn't work well with the older girls as their existing standard of education was poor. A policy was made that the black pupils would start at grade one. White parents agreed and accepted the decision. Only later, when we (the sisters) made double classes to accommodate as many pupils as possible, a few parents withdrew their children from the school. Our white children were no longer allowed onto "whites only" school buses because they came to a multiracial school. Our school was not allowed to compete with other white schools.

The FIC have met their challenges with great audacity; but with the benefit of hindsight we can now day that more could have been done. Fortunately this is normal for Franciscans, for, in a Chapter, Francis of Assisi said to his brothers: "Up to now we have done little or nothing, let us start anew" (1C103). This is a challenge for us to use the existing structures to live our lives to the full. As Franciscans we cannot say we have done enough and give in to complacency. We have to carry on "fighting the good fight," as St Paul says. We have to continue converting and striving to do better. Instead of giving into smugness, we must continue living positively. In section 3.5.3 it can be noted that the FIC opted to live rather than "die" as a congregation, when the facilitator asked them what they wanted, to live or to die? The facilitator put the next question to them: "How do you want to live, minimally or fully" The answer was loud and clear: "We want to live to the full". Since then they have been striving to find ways and means to live fully. The process has been hard, painful, full of "push and pull" but they are still in the process. When their time comes to die as a congregation, Chittister (1996) asks: "What will they die doing?"

The community of FIC is a gift to the church as any other community is by virtue of its members who are baptised and who are part of the body of Christ. This community needs to show its unity as believers and as a family of God. Gottemoeller argues that:

People in the world today hunger for an experience of community, for evidence that is possible... If we find ways to share this experience with others, it can make the church more visible and be a gift to the world (1999:142).

4.4 MISSIOLOGICAL DIMENSION

“We are not only called, but also sent”. This is a statement often used by Prior and Lobinger (1983:15) when they try to create awareness to the community of believers who continually forget that they are called, not only for themselves, but for the entire community. In the introduction to this dissertation, we opened with the text of St Matthew, where Christ was sending his disciples to all nations. We as FIC are also called to go to all nations. Each of us in the congregation has been baptised, and therefore has the responsibility to be missionary. Our constitution reminds us of the wish of our Foundress. She wished for the Congregation to be available, as much as possible, for any ministry in the Church. We realise that, as times have changed, so the needs and the context have changed as well. There was a time when education and care of the sick were a priority for many congregations. Today, these ministries are undertaken by the government. The HIV/AIDS pandemic in our country has challenged lay people to care for the infected and affected people. We as religious in this context then need to ask: what is our role?

As a multicultural community, we as FIC are called to bear witness to a world which is torn apart by hatred and division. This is the mission of a multicultural congregation. Its role is to witness in a united way. It needs to give hope to others that a multicultural life is possible by living a life of unity themselves. The people will then be able to say: “Look how much they love each other”. Maloney maintains that we are called to be prophets, and “prophets speak for God” (1996:345). This is our mission at this time. We need to pause, through and decide what we mean by “mission”. Bosch (1991:1) explains that:

... the term “mission” presupposes a sender, a person or persons sent by the sender, those to whom one is sent, and an assignment. The entire terminology presumes that the one who sends has the authority to do so. Often it is argued that the real sender was God who had indisputable authority to decree that people be sent to execute his will. In practice, however, the authority was understood to be vested in the church or in a mission society or even in a Christian potentate.

We observe that some of the elements about which Bosch writes about are already manifested in the FIC religious community for example, the notion of being sent. Our foundress said “be available”

wherever the needs of the church are to be found. We have just mentioned that consecrated life is a gift to the church, and that the church acknowledges the spirit with which each congregation has been endowed. The church also feels that she cannot do all the work without the help of the different congregations. Therefore, the church sends its members to join forces in a process of evangelization. As FIC, we are encouraged by our Foundress to be available wherever the church needs us. This is in accordance with (PC2) when it maintains that: “All institutes should share in the life of the Church”. It is to be hoped that the church is open to God’s Spirit. Bosch (1991) leads us through the different paradigm shifts the mission endeavour has gone through over the years since Christianity started. He mentions how missionary work has developed. Mission work meant one thing in one era and something different in another. This change of meaning from one period of time to another is due to the needs of the different eras.

In the Catholic Church, such changes have taken place due to what has been happening around it. For example, in the Reformation era, the church called the Council of Trent to counteract the reformation.

When democracy was inevitable in the society, especially in the African countries, the church had to act fast. Prior argues that:

At the time of Vatican II there was a movement towards greater democracy in the world; people wanted to have more say in the running of their lives. This democratic spirit affected members of the church also (1997:14).

Laity had to be recognised and given their legitimate place in the church:

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) encouraged the laity to take an active part in the church. It taught that all the baptized together — clergy and laity — form the one People of God (Prior 1997:14).

The Vatican produced sixteen documents on different issues that affected and which still affect the society and the church itself. One such document was that of PC. This document urges that consecrated life to be renewed by being true to its charism. Each institution had to go back to the founder’s/foundress’s spirit:

It is for the good of the Church that institutes have their own proper characters and functions. Therefore the spirit and aims of each founder should be faithfully accepted and retained, as

indeed each institute's sound traditions, for all these constitute the patrimony of an institute (PC2).

A similar pattern to that of mission-developing can be observed in the FIC history. The FIC mission has changed over the years since the congregation started. At the foundation of the FIC, the emphasis was on the education of young women. In different countries where the FIC have worked, I believe the emphasis has changed slightly from that of the original motivation because the needs of each country we are in are different. What has not changed is the charism. We have also seen how the emphasis of the FIC mission in South Africa has changed over the years. When the FIC pioneers came to South Africa in 1939, the need was to assist the priests in the different mission stations. They took care of the priests and the pupils in various boarding schools of different cultures with the emphasis being placed on the white community. Later in, 1954, they saw a need to establish themselves and start a school. This school was only for a certain section of the population. Although other races needed help, for different reasons that have already been mentioned, they deliberately chose to open a white school. The needs of the black community in the rural areas made them answer the call by opening a hospital. Today, the hospital has been taken over by the government, and the schools are now run under the auspices of a governing body. This continues to happen as the socio-political situation of the country changes. The congregation also needs to adapt to these changes or else as a community it will become irrelevant, ineffective and stagnant.

Gottmoeller (1999:143) argues that: "An apostolic community responds to the concerns and priorities of the larger community". This statement is similar to the Southern African Catholic Pastoral Plan vision which invites the faithful to take care of the larger community. The bishops summed up their intention in this motto: "A community serving humanity". They wished that this would encourage people to care for each other, plan and act together in all forms of undertakings in the church and in society at large (SACBC Pastoral Plan 1989:7). In the past, it has often been thought that whenever we talked of evangelization and missionary work we meant people coming out from other countries. Kalilombe (1989:183) says: "Mission, for many people, meant (and continues to mean) simply 'foreign missions'". With this statement, the church tries to erase such thinking in the minds of many people, by encouraging them to care for one another and become self-reliant. This is in line with the theme of this diocese (Witbank) that calls all people to be self-reliant as the human and financial resources from overseas are drying up. The Witbank Diocese's motto is: "Towards a self-reliant local church".

Today South Africa is experiencing dwindling numbers of expatriates from Europe because the church there does not have as many vocations as it used to. South Africa therefore needs to evangelize its own people. The indigenous people are now challenged to take up their responsibilities concerning faith and religion. The faith of the indigenous people should have grown by now, because the seed of faith was planted long ago by missionaries from other countries. The church in Africa needs to be a missionary church. For their part, perhaps the foreign missionaries need to let go and guard against the temptation of feeling indispensable, thereby making Africans feel continuously dependent. Kalilombe, as a member of a missionary congregation, tries to bring awareness to his brothers when he maintains that:

Perhaps we have not yet begun really to experience this shift of our role. This is because the local churches, including their leaders (bishops, priests, catechists, etc.) are still dependent on us in many ways. And our temptation, as missionaries today, is perhaps unconsciously, to make sure that we continue to be 'needed', or to exploit the dependence of the local churches on us so as to continue enjoying a measure of domination. As time goes on, this feeling of dependence will tend to annoy the local churches, and they will become more and more sensitive to any sign on our part that we wish to perpetuate our position of upper hand (Kalilombe 1989:188).

This is true in any situation. People become tired of experiencing this perpetual dependency upon others. However, this is not only experienced by Western missionaries, but also by the indigenous religious towards their own people. Indigenous people might say that this is what they have inherited, but this does not mean they cannot break the habit. Africans need to break this chain of dependency, as this dependency syndrome is unfortunate for many of us in consecrated life. We tend to impose ourselves on the people to whom we minister. They need to accept us as we bring them the help they need, but we sometimes take them for granted, forgetting that we are not called to impose our own charism on others. Again, Kalilombe says:

We missionaries have taken for granted our chances of working in Africa, and considered the chances of our programmes of missionary apostolate, as being acceptable in the form determined by our constitutions and tradition (1989:185).

We as religious forget that these constitutions and traditions are meant for us, not for the people who are not religious or who do not belong to our congregations. The people on whom we impose our ideas, visions, ministries and our expectations do not know anything about our charisms. As religious, we often

tend to impose upon others because of the need within ourselves. This becomes difficult as those we try to help sometimes fail to respond to our expectations.

As Franciscans we need a different approach to evangelization. Francis of Assisi went to Syria and met the Sultan and did not impose himself. We have realised that much of the work that was started by religious congregations is now done by lay people and that is what Vatican II envisioned. As Franciscans, we need to acknowledge that there are many avenues where we are needed although perhaps not actively as in the past, but merely by lending our presence. Kalilombe brings to our attention that:

...our numbers are fast dwindling. However much we may wish to stretch ourselves thinly, in a bid to cover more and more ground, it is only a matter of some years, before we have to accept the painful truth: that we are no longer capable of assuming the same type and volume of missionary work, as we were privileged to do in the happy old days. It would be irresponsible of us to want to open new fields, when we are not sure we shall be able to continue the work in a meaningful way (1989:188).

This may sound gloomy and discouraging, yet it is the truth. We need to find other ways of making our religious life effective. Chittister says that:

What religious life needs at this present time, then, is a *spirituality of diminishment*, the understanding that the function of religious life is to be voice and call, presence and prophet to the world, not a labour force. Not even for the church (1996:71).

Chittister cites Margaret Mead, the noted anthropologist, who wrote: "Never doubt that a small group of people can change the world". Chittister continues to say that:

There was only one Gandhi and a meager band of disciples, one Martin Luther King and a few personal advisors, one Thomas Merton and a handful of like-minded friends, but in every case the influence of these few far outranked their numbers. Quality, not quantity marked their presence. Substance, not the size of the group, brought attention to their message and their message to the forefront of society. They were voices speaking to the hearts of the world around them about the questions few others were willing to address. They talked truth in a world that lied to itself, called itself free and enslaved millions, called itself just and imposed injustices on the world, called itself peace-loving and treated the defenseless with ruthless force. Their power was not in numbers or they would never have begun their separate works, let alone succeeded. But they were an unusual breed in a society that counts security in megatons, riches in wealth, and success in numerical ratings. In this world, smallness and failure are synonyms (1996:71-72).

This kind of witness which Chittister puts before of us requires courage. As FIC, we need to be brave and take risks, and taking risks involves insecurity, and this is faith unbounded by reason. Chittister reminds us that:

The first thing to remember about risk is that risk is not a virtue unless there is a high possibility of failure. Risk, in other words, does not really exist until it requires something of us that seems at first sight, at least, to be almost certainly doomed to ruin but absolutely essential to begin (Chittister 1996:64).

Our task is to keep continuously challenging society and the church, and also to continue to call the church to play its role as a prophet in the world. For us to be effective, we need to become united within our own communities, as only then can we witness unity to the people around us. EA states:

They should be communities which are engaged in *evangelising themselves* so that afterwards they can bring the Good News to others. Pray and listen to God's Word (Simplified Text:90).

4.5 CONCLUSION

When considering multicultural living it must not be understood as an independent aspect of religious life. Instead it must be seen as being interconnected with other aspects of religious and social life. The members of FIC must be open to all spheres of existence for them to be effective in their own community living and in their ministry and mission. They need to insert themselves into the surrounding context with all its dimensions, analyse the situation and reflect how best they can respond to the various spheres of life, taking advantage of the guidance of the Gospels, the church teachings, the Franciscan writings and the FIC constitutions. As citizens of the country, FICs are also to be guided by the constitution of the land and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights. They cannot ignore the culture of the people with whom they work, with or else these people will feel that their dignity has been infringed upon and their rights have been violated. This holistic approach to life needs to be shared in the community using the different structures that are available. This broad perspective on life also needs to be encouraged in the young members of the community so that they are ready to respond to any situation they may come across. This attitude of being ready and open-minded will help the members of

the FIC to adapt easily to any situation, be it racial, cultural, socio-political or even dealing with other faiths or religions.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

As this is a dissertation of limited scope, it is impossible to deal with all the aspects of multicultural living. Anything that deals with culture is vast and complex; therefore one cannot exhaust this concept, but can only attempt to deal with certain issues. Hopefully, after such an endeavour, one may hope to have raised awareness, or to have initiated a process leading to further analysis and further reflection on the subject matter. In this dissertation, I hope that the FIC members are able to work with this issue of multiculturalism in their communities. And perhaps other scholars will be in a position to explore this theme in depth for those who may be interested in this topic. Therefore, I am going to make two recommendations, one to the FIC community and the other to the researchers.

5.1 RECOMMENDATION TO THE FICS

5.1.1 The aim of this dissertation was one of **consciousness-raising** (cf Section 1.2.5), and how to do this on an ongoing basis in order to change prevailing attitudes.

5.1.2 **Change of heart, mind and attitude**, as stated in section 3.2, is the basis of going forward, after people are aware of the need for this unity in multiculturalism. Prophetic witness is something that will come spontaneously when people live their lives to the full. This conversion of heart, mind and attitude is the responsibility of each individual. If each member makes this her responsibility, then the whole congregation will be transformed, as each forms part of the Mystical Body of Christ.

5.1.3 **Dialogue and communication** are essential elements in a community, for these will assist people in putting fear behind them, as members listen to each other in a spirit of open-mindedness.

5.1.4 Dialogue and communication need to be followed by **theological reflection** in order to bring forth the Biblical, Franciscan and ubuntu values:

Theological reflection in common can be a powerful tool for accountability that intends to go beyond carping and complaining. Regular times and places are needed for this to really work. Accountability is not the same as chewing someone out over breakfast or in the middle of the night. It is asking one another to be true to the realities of mission and community (Harmer 1998:427).

5.1.5 The **effective use of available structures**, as mentioned in section 4.1.1, will enhance unity in the multicultural FIC communities which can then serve as witness to the society that longs for this unity in family life. As Gottemoeller (1999:142) states: “People in the world today hunger for an experience of community, for evidence that is possible”. At another stage, she continues to emphasise this point relating to witness. She states that:

Moreover, in a world torn by division and conflicting interests, “the presence of communities where people of different ages, languages and cultures meet as brothers and sisters and which remain united despite the inevitable conflicts and difficulties inherent in common life, is in itself a sign that bears witness to a bigger reality (Gottemoeller 1999:148).

5.1.6 **Developing the African culture** wherever we work needs to be taken seriously. For example in our schools, it is important to ensure that we do not turn African children into Western children. Yet, the challenge on this issue is that we do not, on the other hand, deprive the people we work with, like these children, from taking their place internationally.

5.1.7 This issue of developing African culture brings us closer to our own **Formation** houses where we are to ensure that the minority cultures and languages dealt with in section 1.3.1 and 4.1.4 are developed from the initial formation and into each local community. The indigenous members need to take a leading role in this matter.

5.1.8 **Liturgies, symbols and celebrations** must not be undermined, as these can be a source of enrichment and reconciliation where pain and injuries have become entrenched. If these are used effectively, members can learn more about each others’ cultures. On the other hand people could express their feelings through these liturgies, symbols and celebrations without fear of being judged. Clarifications could be sought without referring to an individual directly, so that no one feels threatened during these celebrations.

5.1.9 Lastly, **interpersonal dialogue, and networking** with other congregations that are struggling with the issue of multiculturalism could be enriching. **In-depth studies** of the subject, processes and sources like Franciscanism and our own charism can be of value in understanding this phenomenon.

5.2 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

An emphasis which is lacking in this dissertation and of which I am aware is the scant attention I have paid to the indigenous sisters of the FIC. I have scrutinised the white sisters and the missionaries carefully and critically and failed to look at the indigenous sisters with the same attention. It needs to be remembered that, at the beginning of this dissertation, I mentioned that, as part of this Congregation, I was struggling with biases and loyalty; thus, I chose methods that allowed me to be subjective. It is only towards the end of chapter three that I started dealing with the role the indigenous sisters played in the whole process of multicultural living in their community. Perhaps the next person doing research on multicultural living would find it useful to use some of the background given on this topic.

5.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This dissertation was attempted in order to analyse the salient points of the FIC charism. It was also written in order to comment on whether or not the FIC have honoured the precepts of the foundress, Franziska Antonia Lampel, and the Franciscan Family charism. Furthermore, I looked at whether or not the FIC have given witness as a multicultural congregation in a multicultural society. What I have wanted to trace is the progression of world influences and ideas upon this emerging part of Africa. I also examined the influence the missionaries have had and their contribution which although it might have left scars in some areas. Yet, in others it beamed a ray of light and encouragement upon what was considered the dark continent, the primitive place. This may have been so in the eyes of the Westerners, but, slowly, as I have attempted to show in this dissertation, the indigenous people began to enter religious life and yet, unfortunately, also to leave their own culture behind them. They did so in order to embrace what they felt and what they had been told was a better culture, a culture connected to Christianity and civilization.

With the advent of so many peoples, cultures and languages for so many different reasons, it became plain that no one culture should be seen as being subservient to another. Each culture has a role to play. Each must become part of the whole and by their input, create something greater than what was there before. This dissertation does not mean to criticise what, after all, is historical fact, nor does it wish to chastise those religious people who sought to bring the indigenous inhabitants round their way (the old world way) of acting, thinking and behaving. Rather it seeks to resolve this issue of “us” and “them”. It attempts to find a pathway where religious members of whatever congregation, culture and language may come together and share their culture. Art, music, dance, literature, poetry or ritual could be used

to achieve this goal of integration “wholeness”, where each member will experience love, forgiveness, care and sharing. This integrated community will then, indeed bear witness to its foundress, Franziska Antonia Lampel, and to those precepts of love, unity, peace and acceptance so dear to St Francis of Assisi; “whenever they meet each other, they should show that they are members of the same family” (Third Order Rule 23). This dissertation also seeks to point forward towards new directions which the next researcher might choose to explore; for example, that of the indigenous sisters and how they have moved on, but yet also perhaps still clung to, those old, much-loved and cherished ways of ethnic life.

May we come to understand one another in the fullness of the Gospel with the help of the various processes such as the Pastoral Cycle/Social Analysis and the Corporate Reflection Process. And may we as a community serving the church and humanity develop each sister to her full potential, enabling them to shine brightly, not only, ultimately in the firmament, but also in the community in which we are called to give witness.

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