

A spiritual and theological-ethical analysis of the reasons for the decline of vocations among the Dominican sisters of Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

Theological Ethics

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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I declare that:

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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. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

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## **Abstract**

In 1896, Mother Rose Niland founded the Newcastle Dominicans in Newcastle, KwaZuluNatal, South Africa. Their motto is *Veritas* (Truth), and their charism is to bless, preach, teach and praise. They live a consecrated life in community, and they vow obedience, chastity and poverty. Niland's formation methods attracted many vocations.

Later, their responses to the *Arum Indigenarum* document, Vatican II and the intensification of Apartheid caused a decline in vocations. Without a vocations promoter and appropriate formation programmes focused on spirituality, ethics and cultural awareness, they failed to attract and mentor local black women.

As their numbers decreased, the sisters no longer had a strong ministry in schools and hospitals. They diversified their ministry, and abandoned their veils and habits; this made them less visible.

However, the growth of vocations in the Zimbabwean and Montebello congregations suggests strategies that the Newcastle Dominicans could employ to attract vocations.

## **Isethulo**

Izizathu zokuncipha kwamabizelo obundela njengoba kuhlaziye ngokwezomoya, ubulungiswa nokuziphatha ngobubuntu

Ngonyaka ka 1896 uNkosazana Rose Niland waqamba inhlangotho yamaDominikana ase Newcastle Natal eMzansi ne Afrika. Isiqubulo sabo VERIRAS/QINISO, inqubomgomo yabo ukubusisa, ukushumayela, ukufundisa nokudumisa. Baphila impilo yobundela behlala ndawonye. Bafunga izifungo zokulalela, nobumpofu nobubumsulwa. Izimfundiso zika Niland zadonsa izintombi eziningi.

Ekuhambeni kwesikhathi, indlela abathatha ngayo imiyalelo yomqulu *Arum Indigenarum*, neVatican II kanye nengcindezi yobandlululo kwanciphisa isibalo sabaznikelayo ekubeni izindela. Ngenxa yokuthi wayengekho omelene nezokudonsa amabizelo, kungekho nezinhlalelo zokufundisa ngempilo yobu Dominikana, kungekho nokunakekela ezamasiko nokuvuleleka ngezokuhlaisana nobuntu, abakwaznga ukudonsa amabizelo nokufundisa abaesifazane abasha.

Ukuncipha kwesibalo, kwasho ukuphuma kwabo ezikoleni nasezibhedlela. Bacaza izindlela ababezosenza ngazo, baqugula nendlela yokugqoka, bagcina bengasabonakali. Kodwa ke ukwanda kwesibalo sezindela eZimbabwe nase Montebello kukhomba ukuthi izindela zase Newcastle zingacobela amaqhinga okudonsa amabizelo kozakwabo base Zimbabwe nase Montebello.

## **Setsopolwa**

Tshekatsheko ya semoya le maitshwaro a tša boruti mabapi le mabaka a go phuhlama ga dipitšo tša sedumedi magareng ga basadi ba go latela Tumelo ya Setominiki ba ka Newcastle ka Natala, Afrika Borwa

Ka 1896, Mme Rose Niland o hlamile tumelo ya Newcastle Dominicans ka Newcastle, ka Natal, Afrika Borwa. Moeno wa bona ke Bonnete/Nnete, gomme tlhohleletšo ya bona ke go šegofatša, go ruta lentšu la Modimo, go ruta le go roriša. Ba phela bophelo bjo bokgethwa ka setšhabeng, gomme ba ikemišeditše go obamela, go se tsenele thobalano le go fediša bohloki.

Mekgwa ya tlhamo ya Niland o bile le tumelo ye ntši.

Ka morago ga fao, dikarabo tša bona go sengwalwa sa Arum Indigenarum, Vatican II le go maatlafatšwa ga Kgethologanyo, go bakile go phuhlama ga dipitšo tša sedumedi. Ka ntle le motho yo a tšwetšago pele dipitšo tša sedumedi le mananeo a maleba a go di hloma ao a lebeletšego kudu semoya, maitshwaro le temogo ya setšo, ba paletšwe ke go goketša le go hlahlala basadi ba bathobaso ba tikologo.

Ge palo ya maloko a bona e fokotšega, basadi ba ba sedumedi ga ba sa na le thuto ya sedumedi ye e tiilego ye ba e rutago ka dikolong le ka dipetleleng. Ba arogantše thuto ya bona ya setšhabeng le go tlogela dibeile tša bona le tšeo ba bego ba tlwaetše go di dira; se se ba dirile gore ba bonale gannyane.

Le ge go le bjale, kgolo ya dipitšo tša sedumedi ka diphuthegong tša Zimbabwe le tša ka Montebello e šišinya mekgwa yeo Newcastle Dominicans ba ka e šomišago go goketša dipitšo tša sedumedi.

**Key Words**

Call, Charism, Consecrated life, Community life, Dominican, Dominican spirituality, Newcastle Dominican, Veritas, Vocation, Vocation Scarcity, Vows.

## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to express my gratitude and appreciation to all the people who provided the support and encouragement needed to help me complete this dissertation. I thank Sr Charity Dlamini OP with whom I first shared this idea to write about the scarcity of vocations in the Newcastle Dominican congregation.

I also thank the Newcastle Dominican congregation in South Africa, particularly the Sherwood community, for their support and the time allocated to me to complete this research. I am thankful to the University of South Africa for the bursary allocated to me. I thank Professor Louise Kretzschmar for her invaluable advice and insight as my supervisor. Her knowledge and dedication to promoting the study of Theological Ethics in South Africa is inspiring. I also thank Professor Jennifer Slater, who acted as my co-supervisor, and assisted me greatly through her knowledge of religious life.

Gratitude is also due to the parishioners and the young people of the Newcastle Dominican schools in South Africa, the Newcastle Dominican sisters, Montebello Dominicans, Zimbabwe Dominicans and those that left the congregation, particularly those who agreed to be interviewed. Their insights and stories inspired me to complete this research.

Thanks are also due to my language editor, Rhonda Crouse. I am very grateful for her contribution to the dissertation.

Finally, I thank my late mother and father, who introduced me to faith in God. I thank God, who has given me the energy and the inquiring mind to continue asking questions in order to know God better.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY**

The number of vocations among the Newcastle Dominican sisters has fallen sharply from the mid-1970s to today. This decline has continued despite the sisters' faithful ministry among people of all ages and different cultures. This dissertation explores the reasons and causes of the decline, and makes suggestions and recommendations as to how vocations can be attracted to the congregation.

No history of education for South Africans, particularly black South Africans, would be complete without acknowledging the contribution of Christian missionaries (Loram 1917:17). The main leaders in the field of education and care are the religious sisters – particularly the Dominicans, whose main ministry is teaching and preaching in different spheres of life. But in recent years, the unmistakable fact that has emerged is that the number of religious sisters is continually declining, even though their ministry benefits people, especially the young. For example, the sisters work in schools and hospitals in the country, and they run youth programmes like retreats and youth camps. They lead catechetical programmes and workshops to educate young people about religious life and they work at universities as lecturers and chaplains. However, their ministry and lifestyle do not seem to attract new members.

Some research has been done to understand the scarcity of vocations to the priesthood and religious life in South Africa and globally. (In chapter 4 of this dissertation, I will discuss vocations in Ireland, Germany, Zimbabwe and South Africa.) However, insufficient research has been done about the lack of vocations to the Dominicans in South Africa, particularly the Newcastle Dominicans. There are five groups of Dominican women in South Africa, the groups being called congregations. However, none of them has done a thorough study of the reasons for the decline of vocations, even though the problem has persisted for some time. In the last five years, three of the five groups have received no new members. Two of the five groups have received a total of ten new members, who are in a preliminary stage of their religious life. This research will analyse the reasons for the scarcity of vocations, using the available literature, my own experience as a member of the Dominican sisters of Newcastle, and an empirical study. The empirical (qualitative) study is used to supplement the theoretical study because of the lack of published information on the topic under study.

## **1.1 The aims of the dissertation**

The aims of this dissertation are to:

- Describe and evaluate the spiritual and moral dimensions of Dominican life, particularly as they relate to the Dominican sisters of Newcastle.
- Identify and analyse the reasons for the scarcity of vocations to the Dominican sisters of Newcastle.
- Explore the effects of ministry diversification on the life of the congregation and their vocations.
- Explore how vocations can be increased.

The number of vocations to the Newcastle Dominican congregation has been very low in recent years. The reasons for this will be the focal point of this research. The Dominican sisters make their vows and their way of living a witness to the reality of God and the good news of Jesus Christ. They state (see the Acts of the Chapter 2010:6): ‘We make the preaching of the Gospel our life’s work.’ They also state on the same page that they do this by educating themselves and challenging injustices in their society. The question that needs asking is: Why are women not interested in joining this way of life?

## **1.2 My hypothesis and research questions**

My hypothesis is that a variety of external and internal factors have had a negative effect on vocation attraction to the Newcastle congregation. This hypothesis will be tested in the research process.

The main research question is: *What are the reasons for the scarcity of vocations among the Newcastle Dominicans?* This question is broken down into a number of subsidiary questions:

- Who are the Dominicans, what is a vocation, and what is vocation scarcity (chapter 2)?
- What has the situation been in relation to ministry and vocation attraction in the Newcastle congregation from 1896 and 2019 (chapter 3)?
- What is the current state of vocations in the Dominican congregations in Ireland, Germany, Zimbabwe and Montebello (chapter 4)?

- What can an empirical study reveal about the reasons for vocation scarcity among the Newcastle sisters, and what strategies to promote vocations do the participants suggest (chapter 5)?

In chapter 6, conclusions are drawn and strategies for vocations attraction recommended.

### **1.3 The value of the research**

The value of this research is three-fold. Firstly, it seeks to create knowledge in the fields of Theological Ethics and Christian Spirituality, especially with respect to the ethical witness and spirituality of the Newcastle Dominicans in South Africa. This dissertation is a theoretical and empirical investigation of the reasons for the scarcity of vocations to the Newcastle Dominicans.

Secondly, the research aims to be of value to the Dominicans, because an investigation of vocation scarcity has not yet been undertaken among the Newcastle Dominicans. Its findings will help these Dominicans to plan for the future of their congregation. The study could lead to a re-evaluation of their spiritual and ethical mission, which is to give others the fruit of their contemplation and thus attract new members to the congregation.

Thirdly, it is valuable for the researcher. As a Dominican sister, I believe the Dominican way of life is good and contributes to society; hence I am puzzled by the fact that women are not attracted to it. This investigation will challenge me to reflect on my own Dominican life, and that of others, which may have contributed to the problem of vocation scarcity.



## 1.4 Key terms used in the dissertation

### 1.4.1. Who are the Dominicans?

A Dominican promises obedience to God and therefore to Jesus Christ and his teachings. The passage in John 14:6: ‘I am the Way, I am Truth and Life, no one can come to the Father except through me’ is at the core of the Dominican motto: *Veritas* (truth).<sup>1</sup> Truth takes us to the person of Jesus Christ, who is truth himself. The Dominicans claim truth as a goal. This therefore puts them in dialogue with all those who are uncertain about their places in the world. The message of salvation, incarnation and redemption answers deep questions of identity and purpose, and offers us the truth that sets us free (Jn 8:32). The Dominicans come to the ‘truth’ through contemplation (*contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere* – to contemplate and to give to others the fruit of contemplation).

The charism of the Dominicans is ‘To praise, to bless, and to preach’ (*laudare, benedicere, et praedicare*). The official name of the Dominicans is the Order of Preachers (Rm 10:13–15). Jesus Christ was not only a teacher and a preacher, but also a prophet; therefore the Dominicans are called to live a prophetic life. For a Dominican, this means to study the Word, to read the signs of the times, and to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. *The Constitutions of the Dominican Congregation of St Catherine of Siena of Newcastle* (2000:17), which is based on the Basic Constitution of the Order of Preachers, allude to the fact that Dominicans are people consecrated to God, dedicated to the whole church and totally engaged in spreading His Word. Radcliffe (in Verboven 2011:1) states that: ‘Preachers must discover their own voice and their own way of being, otherwise they will not speak authentically ... God’s joy and beauty must reverberate through their particular flesh and blood humanity.’ Hence the Dominicans are called to preach and to be authentic. Dominicans such as Murray (2006:47–76) suggest that, in addition to prayer, preaching and study, happiness is another dimension of Dominican spirituality.

This research intends to investigate how the Dominicans, as people of contemplation, preachers of truth and prophets respond to the question of vocation scarcity.

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<sup>1</sup> All biblical quotations are taken from the New Jerusalem translation of the Bible.

### **1.4.2 What is a vocation and what is vocation scarcity?**

The meaning of ‘vocation’ has developed through the centuries. It could mean a priestly ministry, a contemplative life, something one is expected to fulfil as God’s appointed task or a call to serve God. In this dissertation, a vocation means a call/vow and a choice one freely makes in her/his life to serve God as a religious. One responds to the call and serves as a religious sister, priest or brother.

In this study, vocation scarcity means that women are either not joining religious life or they join, but very few stay. This dissertation will try to analyse the reasons for the scarcity of vocations, particularly to the Newcastle Dominican congregation.

### **1.5 Theoretical framework and literature review**

This research seeks to identify reasons for vocation scarcity (or plenitude) in Europe (Germany and Ireland) and Africa – particularly Zimbabwe and South Africa. This is done by using the available literature and a small empirical study.

#### **1.5.1 Theoretical framework**

I will draw mainly from Catholic and Dominican sources, but I will also draw from a variety of other ecclesiastical and theological traditions, where these are relevant to this study.

The main academic disciplines on which I will draw in my reading will be Christian spirituality, including Dominican spirituality, and Theological Ethics. This is because a vocation or call to live a Christian life is a spiritual and ethical matter. A vocation to religious life is understood to be a call to imitate Christ in words and deeds: ‘... if you would be perfect sell all that you own and come follow me’ (Mt 19:21).

Christian spirituality is our relationship to God and the expression of our faith in the living of it, both with other people and with the whole of creation. McAinsh (2014:9) states that ‘... a genuine spirituality integrates the whole of our lives and takes away any false divisions of time, work and people. A true spirituality unifies the whole of our lives, bringing into harmony one’s relationship with God, with others and with creation.’ However, inconsistency in the living out of the religious life (which includes unethical witness) would not attract vocations.

Christian Ethics is our ethical reflection as to who we are and who we want to become. Our moral behaviour is rooted in Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. If there were unethical attitudes and actions among the Newcastle Dominicans, for instance in their witnessing, identity, spiritual life, behaviour and actions, it would be difficult to attract women to our way of life. According to Jersild (2000:65):

Christian ethics claims a continuity with biblical ethics but has its eye on the challenges to discipleship in the contemporary world. Its purpose is to present a biblically inspired ethics with the necessary coherence and cogency that effectively brings it into conversation with the culture of our time.

Religious life is thus both spiritual and ethical, and it is lived in the following of Jesus Christ in our daily lives. Rolheiser (1998:11) alludes to this when he defines Christian spirituality as ‘the way we are related to God, others and the cosmic world’.

### **1.5.2 Literature review**

Books on Christian spirituality used in this dissertation include Rolheiser (1998), Hindsley (1984), and Dorr (2006). Articles and books on Christian spirituality include Kretzschmar (1996), Schneiders (1993) and Rakoczy (2006), as such writers on spirituality supplement the sources on Dominican spirituality. Their input in Christian ethics is also valuable in providing a broader outlook on how one’s spirituality ought to affect one’s moral life. A South African approach is particularly relevant to this dissertation, as the study deals with the South African context.

Several books on Dominican spirituality and ministry are used, such as Borgman (2001), Radcliffe (2006), Boner (1998), Compagnoni and Alford (2007), Cleary (1997) and Townsend (1934). These renowned Dominican scholars have written on Dominican spirituality in general and Dominicans in South Africa.

Some of the literature on Christian ethics consulted for this study are texts by Jersild (2000), Hollinger (2002), Richardson (1996). The value of these sources for this study is that they discuss Scripture in relation to modern contexts and cultures. They ask relevant moral questions for our current society.

A range of sources were consulted on the subject of vocation scarcity, both from Europe (especially Germany and Ireland, from where many vocations were drawn to Newcastle) and South Africa. For example, Stark (2000) in his report, ‘Catholic religious vocations: decline and revival’, identifies possible reasons for recent vocation scarcity. These include smaller families, the abuse of ecclesiastical power, a lack of discipleship, overly strict rules and regulations in the church, and the revision of religious roles. Similar conclusions have been reached by Hardon (2014), in his article, ‘Analysis of the problems in religious life today and some proposed solutions’, and by Ference (2011) in his article, ‘Why vocation programs don’t work’. Curtis (1996), in his paper, ‘Crisis in vocations? What crisis?’, cites the following reasons for the decline of vocations: religious compromising with society and the world, the blurring of identity, and religion imposing sacrifice, and even stigma, on its members and others.

Although not much has been written on the subject of vocation scarcity in South Africa, Nolan (2014:6–8), among others, seems to suggest that a lack of prophetic witnessing and selfish individualism would be some of the reasons for it. Slater (2014:49) suggests that if ‘liminality’ is lacking from leadership, it could lead to the end of religious life as it is known today. Ngubane and Wigley (2014:54) suggest that religious no longer being identifiable, the vanishing of the sense of mystery of religious life and a change in the role of religious may have led to the scarcity of vocations today. Other writers consulted on the subject are Arbuckle (1986), Leddy and Ormrod (2010), Okure (2006), and Simmonds (2012).

The following primary material on the Newcastle Dominican vocation history will be used as key sources:

- Newcastle Dominican archival documents (annals, letters, minutes of community meetings); and
- Books and unpublished documents on Rose Niland, the foundress of the Newcastle Dominican sisters. These include: Cleary (1997), Cunningham (1987), Dlamini (2008), *The Constitutions of the Dominican Congregation of St Catherine of Siena of Newcastle* (2000), and the Acts of the General Chapter (2010).

Authors that I have consulted on empirical research methods include: Maree (2010), Leedy and Ormrod (2010), Mason (2002), Hofstee (2006) and Babbie and Mouton (2001). They are among the leading authors on the subject of empirical research.

### **1.5.3 Empirical research**

In addition to the literature study, a qualitative empirical study used a structured questionnaire to investigate the experience that several groups had had of the Dominican sisters in Newcastle. This research sought to find out what the participants understood by call, vocation, vocation scarcity, faith and Dominican life. It also explored the experiences that participants had of working with or being taught by the Dominican sisters.

As a Dominican sister and a black South African woman, I also investigated the role of culture with respect to the matter of vocation. Black local vocations struggled to settle within the white dominant culture of the congregation because other cultures within the country were not accommodated – for reasons that are discussed in later sections of the dissertation. Consequently, few black women joined the Newcastle congregation. In this regard, my own experience was an important element of the study – it was reflexive research.

Reflexivity refers to the fact that researchers who are studying a particular institution or group as ‘insiders’ need to be conscious of two issues. Firstly, as they are ‘reflecting on their own experience’, they need to ensure that their own experience does not distort the content and findings of their research. Secondly, the research conducted also has an influence on the researcher. Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas and Caricativo (2017:426) in their Article ‘Reflexivity in Qualitative Research’ state ‘through reflexivity researchers acknowledge the changes in themselves due to the process of research.’ I acknowledge that this research also changed me in that my perceptions were deepened or altered. As a member of the Dominican sisters, it was impossible to detach myself from the topic under study. I am aware that I could be emotionally involved as an African sister in the congregation. My research could be influenced by my social and political background as a black South Africa. As participants were of different races, my objectivity in evaluating their responses was tested. As a Dominican, my research could also be influenced by the temptation to be over-critical or overprotective of the congregation, thus rendering the outcomes inaccurate.

Two steps were taken during the research process to seek to ensure that the findings were not distorted. The first was to ensure that my experience of and reflections on the matter of the scarcity of vocations was tested against both the literature study and the empirical findings.

The second was to value what I have experienced as an African sister and as a Dominican in the congregation. Given that few black sisters have joined the Newcastle congregation, not only the theological and historical reasons for this were noted, but also the socio-cultural reasons as to why black sisters did not join (or left before their final vows) could be explained.

Why is an empirical study necessary for this dissertation? Empirical research is necessary because not enough has been written on the reasons for the scarcity of vocations to the Newcastle Dominicans and in South Africa generally. Some historical documents were destroyed before the construction of the Archives and Heritage rooms for the Newcastle Dominican sisters, and the sisters did not catalogue their history in the earlier years. In addition, most of the literature dealing with the issue is European and American, whereas I am dealing with the South African context.

‘Qualitative research gives the opportunity for new knowledge, not previously researched, to be produced and can be based on the multiple meanings of individual experiences with the intent of developing a new theory’ (Creswell 2003:181). If entirely new theory is not developed, existing theories on vocation scarcity may be amended or expanded. This is done through collecting open-ended data and developing themes from this data. This research could contribute new knowledge to the study of vocation scarcity, especially in the South African context.

An important objective for the study was thus to draw information from the experiences of the people who minister/ed and live/d with the sisters. A structured questionnaire was therefore administered and completed in six months by several groups familiar with the Newcastle sisters. In addition, a single meeting was held with the Montebello Dominicans Formation Team, because they are able to continue attracting vocations while all the other South African Dominicans struggle to do so. To obtain information on their views about vocations to religious life, they were asked to respond to a questionnaire similar to that administered to Group B (current sisters), as discussed in chapter 5. This approach was also used to source information on vocations to religious life from the Zimbabwean Formator. The experiences and insights of these Dominicans are discussed in chapter 4.

A qualitative empirical research method was used because, according to Fossey et al (2000:717), this is a study which derives knowledge from actual experience. It is an approach that explores, describes and explains a person's experiences, behaviour, interaction and social contexts, without the use of statistical procedures or quantifications. Babbie and Mouton (2006:272) suggest that qualitative empirical research also ensures the 'thick descriptions' of participants' opinions and meanings. The research seeks to gather information from the experiences of people who have lived and worked with the Dominican sisters. As a qualitative study, it seeks 'to collect data and to learn about the ideas, belief, views and opinion of the participants' (Maree 2010:87). It aims to accumulate additional knowledge and specific insights to seek to confirm, enrich or amend the theoretical findings of chapters 2, 3 and 4.

The research further includes content analysis. 'Content analysis is a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis that identifies and summarises message content ... content analysis refers to the analysis of books, written documents ...' (Maree 2010:101). It is used in this research because it is a method 'used to identify patterns, themes, or biases' (Leedy & Ormrod 2010:144) in a body of material. The empirical research will analyse themes on vocation scarcity and the causes thereof, based on the views of the participants. This research intends to conduct in-depth investigation with twenty-two people of different ages and cultural background. Interviews will be conducted through the means of a structured questionnaire.

A qualitative empirical method collects data, analyses it and interprets it. It is a way of gaining knowledge about vocational scarcity by obtaining insights from the thoughts and experiences of the interviewees. This dissertation intends to gain a deeper understanding of the scarcity of vocations to the Newcastle Dominican sisters. A questionnaire is used to collect data (i.e. views, opinions, beliefs and specific insights about the scarcity of vocations) from the participants. Population sampling will be used. This means that a process will be used to select an appropriate portion of the population for the study. Thereafter the data will be collected, analysed and interpreted. A particular effort will be made to conduct this research in an ethical manner. (Additional details about how the empirical research was conducted will be supplied at the beginning of chapter 5.)

## **1.6. Ethical considerations**

Ethics in research is very important to ensure that nothing and no one is harmed. Twenty-two people participated in this research. The researcher endeavoured at all times to respect their dignity and insights. Another element of ethical research is that the research should be of benefit either directly to the participants or indirectly to the larger community or other researchers.

In addition, to ensure that ethical procedures were sound and credible (as for any research), the following considerations were adhered to: Written sources were appropriately used; the views of authors were accurately and fairly presented; and plagiarism was avoided. Participants were appropriately chosen, while data was accurately collected. As far as possible, findings were not distorted, interpretations were based on the evidence accumulated, and the information was not misused. The researcher described her empirical findings as fairly as possible and, where relevant, provided the actual words of the participants. However, the names of the participants are not revealed in the dissertation.

## **1.7. Limitations of the research**

This researcher encountered problems with the sources, because vocation scarcity did not exist in the time of St Dominic or, much later, of Rose Niland. Hence, not much was written on the subject of vocation scarcity during their time.

It was also difficult to access some of the Dominican archives and, if one did gain access, not many records of the sisters' earlier history had been preserved. Therefore, there may be some inconsistencies in reliability due to lost information.

This dissertation confines its focus to the Dominican sisters of Newcastle Natal (now KwaZulu Natal) and will therefore not give a complete picture of the problem of vocation scarcity in religious life as a whole. It is hoped that this research will partly remedy this lack of data and supplement the written resources by providing the information from the actual experiences and information of the people who lived and ministered with these Dominican sisters.



## **1.8. Outline of chapters**

This first chapter outlines the aim of the dissertation and the main research question. The methodology used in the research is explained and reference is made to the literature from which the theoretical information was drawn. Empirical research formed part of the means to gather information about vocation scarcity. This had to be employed since written information about this particular topic was inadequate.

The second chapter analyses what a vocation is, especially as understood by Dominicans. The story of St Dominic and the formation of the Dominican Order are then discussed to clarify Dominican charism and spirituality. Thereafter the development of Dominican spirituality is outlined, together with the establishment of five Dominican groups in South Africa.

Chapter 3 deals with the vocations and ministry of the Newcastle Dominicans in South Africa. This historical chapter focuses on their life and growth. It highlights Rose Niland's contribution to the establishment and the vocations of the Newcastle Sisters from 1896 to 1947. Then it examines the impact of the Apartheid laws and other factors on the vocations and the ministry of the Dominican sisters between 1948 and 1980. That was a negative era in the life of the congregation as it led to the curtailing of the sisters' mission and ministry among the black community and access to possible vocations to the congregation. The congregation struggled to recover from the vocational decline of this period. They lost their visibility and ministry in schools, colleges and universities. From about 1981 to 2019, the sisters' ministry was diversified, and a few local vocations came to the congregation.

Chapter 4 investigates the state of Dominican vocations in the German, Irish, Zimbabwean and the Montebello congregations. The growth and the decline of vocations in these European countries is contrasted with the establishment and growth of the two African groups. The chapter investigates what the Newcastle sisters can learn from these examples of other Dominican congregations.

Chapter 5 outlines how data was collected and the findings of the questionnaire. It further explains how the data was analysed and interpreted, and the results of this study. The views of the interviewees were also compared to the theoretical findings in order to identify whether

they confirm, amend or refute the reasons for vocation scarcity propounded by the writers consulted.

Chapter 6 is the final chapter. In it the preceding chapters are summarised and recommendations are made of strategies for vocation attraction to be used in future by the Newcastle Dominicans.

## **CHAPTER 2: WHAT ARE RELIGIOUS AND DOMINICAN VOCATIONS?**

The focal point of the dissertation is to determine the reasons for the decline of vocations to religious life, particularly to the Dominicans of Newcastle Natal (now Kwa-Zulu Natal). The theoretical approach used focuses on Christian spirituality and ethics, because a vocation is an attempt to bear witness to a Christ-like life. Such a life seeks to understand God as revealed in the Bible, and to bear witness that God wants us to know, glorify, love and obey her. A vocation is both a spiritual and ethical matter, because it can only be a reality if it is lived out in the context of our identity as God's created children. As God's children, we have no licence to live as we choose, with no consideration for how our lives are connected to God and others. Our morality needs to flow from an ever-maturing spirituality.

Whereas the reasons for vocation scarcity are discussed in detail in chapter 4, in this second chapter, the nature of vocations is explained and a few examples of vocations from the Bible are provided. This is followed by a discussion of religious vocations and a Dominican vocation. First, the call to all the baptised, religious vocations and the consecrated life are discussed.

Second, the Dominican vocation, Dominican spirituality and St Dominic's life are discussed. Third, the Dominican groups in South Africa are discussed.

### **2.1 Vocation**

In this dissertation, a vocation does not mean a career or call to a particular job, profession or type of work, but a call to a way of life. In this chapter, a vocation means a call to live a religious life as a Newcastle Dominican, just as many people in the Old and New Testaments were called to follow a certain way of life.

#### **2.1.1 Examples of vocation in the Bible**

In the Bible, people are called to become united with God and God's will in every aspect of life. In the Old Testament, God called Abraham (Gn 12ff) to work with him to fulfil the divine plan of redeeming God's people. Abraham responded to Yahweh's call to change his

way of life and be blessed by God. Abraham, moved by the same Spirit that hovered over the immense waters to create the dry land (Gn 1:2), began to see things differently. He was ready to move from his land to a place to which Yahweh led him. His response did not only impact his own life, but also that of his entire generation. Through Abraham's vocation, God was later able to fulfil her promise to eventually save her people by sending her son Jesus, through whom God revealed herself. In Jesus, the world learnt how to live and love both God and neighbour.

There were other callings in the Old Testament, like that of Moses (Ex 3:1–6). When God called Moses, God directed him as to how he should present himself: 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy' (Ex 3:5). Moses' response was 'at this, Moses covered his face ...' (Ex 3:6). At this point, Moses realised he had to humble himself before God and fulfil his calling. The book of Esther shows how she was called through the plight of her people to be their voice to save them from the destruction planned by King Ahasuerus. Esther, assisted by her uncle, responded to the social crisis her community faced. Another example is the call of Jeremiah, who was 'appointed ... as a prophet to the nations' (Jer 1:4–10). His response shows a new awareness of himself; he realises that he does not know how to speak, but Yahweh promised to be with him all the time.

In the New Testament, Mary is called to be the mother of Christ. Luke 1:26–38 is the story of the annunciation in which Mary responds to the call that brought about the salvation of humanity. Jesus called the first four disciples (Mk 1:16): 'As he was walking along by the Lake of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net in the lake, for they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, come follow me, I will make you fishers of people.' Their responses brought change to their lives. Once they discovered who Jesus was, they developed a different outlook on life. They were no longer fishermen, but walked with Jesus and experienced his healing and teaching. The experiences of Jesus' disciples have been shared through the four Gospel narratives. In Mark 3:13–19, Jesus calls the twelve as 'they were to be his companions and to be sent out to proclaim the message ...' A final example is from Acts 16:11–15, where we find the call of Lydia. Through the preaching of Paul, her eyes were opened to receive and honour God in her heart.

It is from the Scriptures that the teaching and experiences are learnt about the call God makes to his people to participate in the work of saving all people and the whole of creation. God continues to call his people to participate in his plan all the time, till today.

### **2.1.2 The call to all the baptised**

The baptised (Christians) have a given way to live out their lives, that is, to observe the commands set as an example by Jesus Christ, to love God, to make him known, and be attentive to the needs of others. They do this through their belief, word, being, character, and action.

Hauerwas states in his writings that,

To be a Christian is to have one's character determined following God's action in Jesus Christ. This determination gives one's life an orientation which otherwise it would not have. (Hauerwas 1975:227)

This is to say that the teachings and the example of Christ are a compass that give direction to the way to be a Christian by ordering what the baptised does and does not do. The baptised, who are loyal to God's act in Jesus, think positively of the way they act and the kind of people they become. Their vocation is to love and proclaim Christ in all the circumstances in which they find themselves.

The view of (CCC:1253) is that the consecration takes place as an act of faith; therefore, it is a matter of God, the individual person and the community of believers. In this way, the faith community has some say regarding how a vocation is to be lived out. It is not lived out in isolation or by the person only; it is shared. We read in the (CCC:1269)

Having become a member of the church, the person baptised belongs no longer to himself, but to him who died and rose for us. From now on he is called to serve him and his people.

The baptised are called to be aware of Christ's love for all, and the invitation to grow to know him better as his creation. Belonging to Jesus Christ means depending on him and following in his footsteps of justice, faith, charity and love. This happens in and through the community. To belong to Christ is to be fully human and fully moral like him. Hollinger (2002:46) writes: 'Morality is not about autonomous individuals attempting to discern the

right thing to do; it is essentially a particular way of seeing the world, informed by the narratives that have long sustained and inspired a community's citizens.'

Hollinger's words suggest that Christians must have a certain way of seeing the world, just as Jesus sees it. They are called to faith in Jesus Christ, to learn from him and those who have gone before them, who have been an inspiration to others. This means therefore that, as moral beings, all the baptised are to inspire others and be inspired by others.

All the baptised are called to holiness. By its nature, baptism makes us holy. The teaching of the Catholic faith states that: 'The baptised put on Christ, through the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a bath that purifies, justifies and sanctifies' (*The Catechism of the Catholic Faith* 1995:284). To be holy is to be good, therefore the baptised are called to be morally good. According to O'Keefe:

Although we commonly distinguish between a Christian moral life and Christian spiritual life, in the daily existence of Christians, these lives are actually one. There is no moral life separate from a spiritual life; efforts to avoid sin, to grow in prayer, to make good moral decisions, and to grow in virtue are intimately intertwined ... there can be no sustained growth in habit and disposition of prayer without the overcoming of serious sin and a growth in good moral living. (1995:9)

A way of life that reflects Christian values and actions attracts people to that particular way of living. This dissertation aims to determine what actions, behaviour or way of life would attract young women to religious life, particularly to the Dominicans of Newcastle. It is through their spiritual and ethical life that the Dominicans should be recognised.

The baptised are called to continue working to establish a right relationship with God and with other people, loving in action and from the heart, forming a spirit always open to God's prompting. By so doing, they grow in holiness, as it is stated in Micah 6:8: 'This is what the Lord asks of you, only this, that you act justly, that you love tenderly, that you walk humbly with your God.' Being faithful to all this means growing in holiness.

A vocation for all the baptised can be defined as the faithful individual and community being awakened to the love of God for them, the readiness to accept and be changed by it, and then

become his witnesses among people, in society and all situations. Kretzschmar (1994:3) alludes to this when she defines Christian theological ethics as:

an understanding of what ought to be, a willingness on the part of the individual believer to be saved and to become disciples of Jesus Christ, and a commitment on the part of both individual believers and communities to preach and practise their faith with reference to human, social and physical reality.

### **2.1.3 Religious vocation**

There are similarities between a vocation to religious life and a general religious vocation for ministry, as both vocations are prompted by the Holy Spirit. Catholics believe that all authentic vocations come from the Spirit, and are received at baptism. All individuals are supported and guided through the discernment process for them to stay faithful to the footsteps of Christ in their lifestyle and ministry. According to *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC:407)

‘the fruitfulness of the vocations depends on their living union with Christ’.

The difference between a vocation to religious life and a lay vocation for ministry is that the religious life is a particular way of life or lifestyle. To enter religious life, the individual nun or priest chooses to make vows of chastity, obedience and poverty for life. Various other ministries, such as permanent deacons, diocesan priests and lay ministers, do not take these three vows. Some lay individuals can be commissioned to liturgical ministries that are undertaken for a short time, for example, catechists and those who assist at the Eucharist and funerals.

Prompted by the love that comes from God, they do good to everyone ... in this way attract people to Christ ... the Holy Spirit in them enables them to express concretely in their lives the spirit of the beatitude. (CCC:407)

Religious vocation is necessarily a call to live a moral life, and to be good to one’s neighbour. Jersild supports this statement when he says that:

The moral lesson to be learned in human relationships is our responsibility to others in seeking their welfare, expressed in the Christian context as loving one’s neighbour. (Jersild 2000:21)





#### **2.1.4 Consecrated life as a vocation**

What is a consecrated life? McAinsh (2014:10) describes a consecrated life as ‘a living more deeply and radically the baptismal consecration within a given context’. Although consecrated life is a call to live life as proposed in the gospel and as a baptismal call, a distinguishing factor here is relational: the individual, through profession and the vow of celibacy, gives her/himself totally to Christ and the community of her/his congregation. It is never a life apart from Christ, and it is lived in community, shaped by the Constitutions and statutes of that congregation. Through the vows of obedience and poverty, the consecrated individual bears her/himself to the service of others in her/his community and in missions where s/he is sent. Flannery (1996:386) supports this statement:

All those who are called by God to the practice of the evangelical counsels, and who make a faithful profession of them, bind themselves to the Lord in a special way. They follow Christ virginal and poor who, by obedience unto death on the cross, redeemed humanity and made it holy ... they live more and more for Christ ... and for the Church. (PC:1)

Consecrated life is a way of life dedicated to Christ and others. The Holy Spirit, received at baptism and deepened at profession, gives them the character and strength they need to act out their calling. McAinsh describes it as a life ‘passed on through the lived experience of the members in mission, prayer, community and dedication to Jesus the Redeemer’ (2014:10). It is a specific way of living out the gospel. It is revealed gradually through discernment. The one called needs the support of prayer from the members of the church to guide them and, eventually, to discover this call.

To summarise, a vocation is a call to respond to God’s invitation to participate in God’s redemptive work, to love God and one’s neighbour, and to acknowledge God’s love and God’s presence. An individual can live their vocation as a married person, a consecrated religious, a priest, a lay minister or in a career vocation. All vocations come from the Holy Spirit, and are given to all the baptised. However, religious vocations are specific, that is, to a certain spirituality, for example, to a Franciscan spirituality or a Carmelite spirituality. There can also be a vocation within a vocation, for example, a religious priest. A vocation can be contained within a charism, for example, a religious sister called to be an educator. As

Dominican spirituality can be traced back to St Dominic, his early life and vocation are discussed next.

## **2.2. St Dominic's early life**

St Dominic was born in Caleruega, Spain, probably in 1172, but this date is uncertain. Vicaire (1964:19) states that 'the third child would have been Dominic, who if the compiler is to be believed, would thus be born in 1172 at the earliest'. According to Vicaire (1964:8), the areas around Caleruega gained stability in the first quarter of the twelfth century, when the strife between Castile and Aragon ended with the coming to the throne of Emperor Alfonso VII in 1126.

St Dominic grew up during the period of monasticism when monastic seclusion was common. In reaction to feudal and structured ways of monastic life, people began looking for something more simply evangelical, penitential, and expressive of the notion that we are pilgrims on the earth. In particular, the active, ministerial model of the apostolic life as found in the Gospel of

Luke 10 appealed to many people and this idea probably influenced Dominic's way of thinking.

### **2.2.1 The call of St Dominic**

According to Lehner (1964:8), Dominic was born of devout and generous parents. He showed early signs of his solidarity with the poor, and his interest in the welfare of his neighbours. Study was always very important to him. His generous character impacted the lives of his fellow students, who began to imitate Dominic. Because of the leadership qualities he displayed, he was invited by Bishop Diego to join the Church of Osma and become a canon regular. Lehner (1964:12) points out that 'they marvelled at his rapid progress in the religious observance of prayer and compassion, and made him sub-prior so that from this pinnacle, he might shine before the eyes of all and influence them by his good example'.

During his travels between Spain and France, Dominic became aware of the challenges posed by the Albigensians to church members. They taught that whatever concerns the body was essentially evil. It was at this point that Dominic was inspired to change his lifestyle from strictly contemplative to evangelical preaching of the truth. He became an itinerant in order to counter the Albigensians' teaching. This was also his call to an apostolic way of life. This

lifestyle was to be characterised by prayer and contemplative study, community living, mission and ministry.

However, the Albigensian spirit had grown. People were disillusioned with the institutional Catholic Church and the Gregorian reforms (which concentrated on power and wealth in the hands of the clergy, rather than preaching the gospel). This gave opportunity for serious opposition to the institutional church. The Albigensians gained many followers, albeit with ‘counterfeit examples of evangelical poverty and austerity’ (Lehner 1964:15). Nonetheless,

Dominic matched false holiness with true, genuine humility.

Dominic travelled and preached with Bishop Diego. During this period, he was called to form a community of preachers to fight against heresy. To be able to do that, the members had to be well-informed; hence the emphasis on study that leads to the truth. Prayer and reflection formed an integral part of study; study was the preparation for preaching, to preach with confidence. Living in the community, Dominic realised that it formed a source of support for the ministry of the preaching brothers. These would be the features of a Dominican lifestyle when he founded the Order.

### **2.2.2 Dominic, the founder of the Order**

In 1206, Dominic established the first community of nuns named Prouille in the diocese of Toulouse. Later, Dominic founded more communities of nuns in Madrid and Rome. Later in the history of the Order, many women became lay Dominicans. Catherine of Siena was one of them. Dominic did this at the request of Pope Honorius III. He then established communities of contemplative preachers who lived an apostolic life in Toulouse, following the Rule of St

Augustine, supported by the rules and customs of the canons regular, which was apostolic and liturgical.

In 1212, Dominic was invited by Pope Innocent III to establish himself in Toulouse, where he formed a diocesan community. Moved by the power of the Holy Spirit and challenged by circumstances of his time, Dominic decided to commit himself to a life of prayer, study community and preaching the truth. He started a new Order and a way of living out the

gospel that would bring a new and different way of witnessing to the presence of God among his people. Tugwell (1982:13) says that ‘from the very first, it is the whole doctrinal mission of the church that was entrusted to the incipient Order of Preachers’. Dominic adopted the Rule of St Augustine, and the Order of Preachers developed it as their own.

Dominic obtained a Bull from Pope Honorius III to establish a proper theological faculty at the University of Paris. Dominic and Diego realised that adopting Luke 10 in their mission and ministry was a positive way forward. They began to gain both an audience and followers. This was the origin of the Order of Preachers.

### **2.2.3 St Dominic’s life of ministry**

How did Dominic live out his vocation? Between the years 1205 and 1214, there was general unrest in France and Europe. Finn says:

Dominic met ... people who had rejected Catholicism. Some embraced what was called Catharism, others favoured itinerant lay preachers, Waldensians who preached radical poverty and in many cases rejected the Catholic clergy as irredeemably corrupt and venal. Dominic was able to engage the opposition. From these encounters, Dominic gained a newfound dedication to preach. (2016:5)

From then on, Dominic decided to be a missionary and was able to debate with the Cathars. Although more violence occurred during 1207 to 1209, Dominic never gave up. Instead, he tried to learn from the Waldensians and Albigensians (including the Catharists), and from his own life experiences:

His teaching won credence by his understanding of the Scriptures ... a manifestation of humility, visible poverty, engaging individuals in conversation, compassionate listening and visible dependency on God’s providence. (Finn 2016:9)

He eventually attracted many followers because he transformed religious life from being monastic to apostolic. The Dominicans were open to different ideas. They lived an active community life and were ready to preach even in the public squares. This was to become a Dominican way of life, to preach the Truth for the salvation of souls. Preaching in the

Dominican Order meant that the clergy would be properly formed intellectually. Preachers would not be localised in one place, but they would go to the whole world to preach the gospel.

According to Tugwell, Dominic was interested in winning the Waldensians back to the church: He needed to have a sympathetic understanding of what makes a heretic. Only someone who genuinely shared the evangelical aspirations of those who were dissatisfied with the official church could have hoped to make much impression on them. (1982:16)

For Dominic, it was important to identify with those who held different views, in order to engage and perhaps learn from and share with them.

Dominic's followers were fired by the ideal of the apostolic task, defining the apostolic life in pragmatic terms, justifying the way of life by reference to the apostolate. The Dominican Order exists to be useful to other people, and it has always had to be prepared to adapt its style and behaviour to fit the requirements of those it seeks to serve (see Vicaire [sa]:154–204).

The Order first spread to Spain and Paris and then to other parts of Europe. In about 1211, Dominic introduced and encouraged preaching and the development of the intellectual life in his communities. As Tugwell (1982:24) states:

[T]here is however one observance that is a matter of life and death for the preacher; study ... it is vital that the preacher should be concerned to give of his/her very best, in the service of his charism if s/he fails to train his/her mind in the discipline of study s/he will be less than generous in his/her pursuit of his/her call.

Dominic decided to identify with the heretics by becoming poor as they were. He began to study diligently, gaining scriptural knowledge and understanding Christian theology. Through his way of life and study, he counteracted the heretics.

By 1215, the Dominicans had established a house of study near a university centre in Bologna in Europe. It grew and benefited many people who were not clerics or religious. Long after Dominic's death in about 1229, the Dominicans held a chair of theology in Paris. Teachers like Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great contributed to the development of theology as a discipline. The Dominican contribution was a response to the need, at the time, of better education for the clergy and the formation of the Catholics (see Hinnebusch 1973b:117–138).

Dominic was a man of prayer and contemplation. In his writings about him, Quilici (2001:xv) says: 'St Dominic who took his strength and wisdom from his intense prayer life ... [he] was a disciplined student both scholastically and spiritually.'

Dominic was also a charismatic leader, who was open to being influenced positively by the events of his time. He believed God to be present in his brothers, people around him, and events of the time. This enabled him to learn from the Waldensians. It is important for Dominicans that, like Dominic, they should be open to challenges, know the right course of action, and possess the courage and determination to see it through.

Dominic seemed to have a keen mind for study, and the ability to evaluate situations. He was not shy to act or to encourage others to act. Hence he promoted study, adopted an apostolic preaching ministry, and instilled these values in his brothers. This is clear from the strides they made in the fields of theology and education between the 12th and 15th centuries. This is also evident in the emergence of spiritual and theological writers such as Albert the Great, and Bartholomew of Vicenza, Catherine of Siena, Jordan of Saxony, Meister Eckhart, and Thomas Aquinas.

Prayer, study, community life and ministry formed a very important part of Dominic's life. Having started as a canon and living a monastic life, he learned, developed and initiated these pillars as values of the Dominican life. His mind was sharpened by study, prayer and reflection. As a leader, he was always careful to combine study and the apostolate. Regarding his relationship within the community and his apostolate, his charity towards his brethren and all people was remarkable. He made it obvious that he cared for them. According to Quilici (2001:23), Dominic was a man of God, whose life was devoted fully to him. When Dominic spoke, he either spoke to God in prayer, or spoke of God to listeners.



#### **2.2.4 Dominic was a constitutional designer**

Dominic's talents also lay in his style of governance. He drew up the Constitutions, which were life-giving to the members. He was faithful to his commitment to the truth, but 'flexible in allowing for freedom of members of his order to express their gifts and talent given them by God' (Quilici 2001:49). As a leader in government of the Order, he was an organiser, able to make decisions, inspirational, prophetic and visionary, remaining obedient to God and his brothers.

Dominic insisted on avoiding details in the Dominican Constitutions, rather inserting the Dominican principle of the dispensation. It would be used to allow more time for members to study, if needs be. The Dominican Constitutions are only human laws and are therefore enforced only by human sanctions. Tugwell (1982:22) supports this when he states explicitly that breaking their laws does not constitute sin. He continues to suggest that it was Aquinas' idea that every act of obedience must always be a free, deliberate, rational act, and that no superior can claim authority over his/her subject's conscience. The Dominicans are aware that God calls preachers who are mandated by the church, but ultimately the preacher is answerable to God.

Democracy and freedom are principles and key characteristics of the Dominican tradition (*Constitutions* 2000:11–13). They free members to share a common responsibility for their lives and that of the mission. The mission is the focus of all government. Their democracy is to discover what the will of God is through listening to each member. It is a commitment to seek the truth, to listen to what can be agreed upon and what is disagreed with, and to save what is true in what other people think. Voting is used to discover what the building of the community and the mission of the Order require, not to determine whether the will of a person or persons will triumph.

In Dominican government, the supreme authority is the General Chapter. The Dominican government is the exercise of the shared responsibility for the life and the mission of the Order. Its foundation is the confidence that they should have in one another. Dominic set the example by trusting the young novices with the preaching and making it an individual's responsibility to care for their formation. The vows form the basis of community life.



### **2.2.5 A Dominican vocation**

From Dominic's call and vocation there developed a spirituality which can never be separate from Christian spirituality. But as a spirituality of consecrated life, it takes the shape of the experiences of those who live and are witnesses to the Dominican charism. Kretzschmar, in Speckman and Kaufmann (2001:282), says that spirituality is concerned with the wholeness and integration of life and that spiritual life leads to the development of integrated persons who can love God and each other and that ethics is 'a reflection on what ought to be and how we can be liberated and motivated to bring it about'.

It could be said that spiritual life and ethical life are parts of a whole. Spirituality as a way of life can only develop to wholeness if there is self-reflection, commitment, a readiness to live out one's moral convictions and be outward-looking for the benefit of all.

Those who follow the Dominican vocation are called to a consecrated religious life. Their Christian spirituality is shaped in a way that is appropriate to St Dominic, the founder of this particular way of living out the gospel. A Dominican vocation could also be considered a life that adheres to a set of values and attitudes which give a particular flavour to who Dominicans are.

Dominicans live out and grow in their Dominican vocation in the following four forms. The Contemplative Order is made up of vowed women (nuns) who live in community and whose ministry is mainly prayer. The Order of ordained Priests, is a group of religious men founded by Dominic. They are religious who make the vow of obedience with chastity and poverty being assumed within the vow of obedience. They live in community and they are partly monastic and partly apostolic. They celebrate mass and explain and share the Word. Priests can baptize, hear confessions and administer the sacraments. The Apostolic congregations are women who live a vowed life of prayer in community. Their ministry is among the people. The Lay Dominicans do not take vows. These Associates or Affiliates are attracted by the Dominican spirituality, but also take no vows.

As noted under Consecrated life above, vocation is also shaped by and passed on through the lived experiences of other Dominican members. In this case, a Dominican vocation is a call to live a life of celibacy, obedience and poverty in the community. The vow of obedience is the

main focus, in that the other two are assumed in the vow of obedience. Dominican life, as it emerged from St Dominic's inspiration and experiences as its founder, is articulated in the tradition and Constitutions as the life of prayer, contemplative study, community, mission and preaching the truth. This is the Dominican vocation, a gift to be a reflection of the gospel they proclaim.

To conclude, God calls and grants wisdom and courage to follow him to the precise place he has designed for one (1 Th 5:24). By fidelity to the Holy Spirit's promptings, one's desires are refined and strengthened. In God's time, one finds oneself ready to take a step towards realising one's vocation to a particular way.

### **2.3 The charism of the Dominicans**

The distinct spirit that animates the Dominicans is that of a life committed to communion with Jesus Christ in prayer and study, a life given for the salvation of others through intelligent and loving preaching and being faithful to the end to one's own deepest calling, and being ready to go where the need is greatest.

*Veritas*, the Dominican motto, means Truth. This emphasis on truth is also found in the Scriptures. Living by the Spirit is to follow Christ, 'the Spirit of truth' (Jn 14:17; 16:13). In addition, prayer leads to the Truth. O'Keefe (1995:121) says: 'Prayer draws the Christian to God's illuminating presence.' This means that prayer leads one to the truth. Therefore, those who live in this light see better and are more able to make authentic choices and decisions. This is the theological-ethical and spiritual foundation for all Dominican actions.

The ideal of *Veritas* has inspired many through the ages. For example, what Thomas Aquinas shared on truth through his massive *Summa Theologia* influenced many. Dominic looked to the truth as found in Christ to fight against what he saw as heresy in his time in southern France and Italy in the late-12th and early-13th centuries. For all Dominicans through the ages, it has meant: 'The whole range of divine, physical, and human reality ... the chief exemplar remains

Eternal Truth expressed substantially and historically in Jesus Christ ... But Christ is Truth itself' (Woods 1998:25).

At the core of a Dominican vocation and way of life is preaching the Truth – the Dominican identity and heritage. It has been set as a challenge and task for Dominicans through the ages. For example, Savonarola criticised the church and its leaders for their laxity and luxury and was burnt to death by Borgia, Pope Alexander VI, in 1497. Catherine of Siena called Pope Gregory XI to return the papacy to Rome from its displacement in France and to establish peace among the city-states. Las Casas challenged his contemporaries to live social justice in his society. He is often believed to be one of the first advocates for a concept of universal human rights. In our own time, Albert Nolan called South Africa to practise justice.

A feature of this charism of truth is *Contemplare et Contemplata et allis Tradere* – to give to others the fruits of one’s contemplation. ‘Prayer as an ongoing relationship with God yields a connatural knowledge of the will of God’ (O’Keefe 1995:120). As studying Scripture is the Dominican way of life, the assumption is that they understand better the will of God and making Him better known. In all this, the chief model for Dominicans is the Blessed Virgin Mary. She heard the Word of God and obeyed it (Lk 1:38, 45).

The consecrated freely choose this life. Schneiders (2000:117) defines it as ‘the freely chosen response to a personally discerned vocation to charismatically grounded, religiously motivated, sexually abstinent, lifelong commitment to Christ that is externally symbolised by remaining unmarried. ‘It is a global declaration of embracing the kind of detachment, insecurity, vulnerability and dependence that Jesus asked of his itinerant disciples’ (Schneiders 2001:260).

In short, the Dominican charism is characterised mainly by preaching the Truth as it is found in the teachings of Christ. This charism was the main focus of Dominic’s ministry.

## **2.4 Dominican spirituality**

At the centre of Dominican spirituality is ‘preaching the good news’. The Spirit is alive in the four elements on which this preaching stands. These four elements are: prayer and meditation; contemplative study of the Word; community living; and mission, ministry and a readiness to serve. The basic structure of the Dominican lifestyle does not change, but circumstances may call for flexibility to allow the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to guide

Dominican men and women to preach the Word of God to the best of their ability in changing contexts.

#### **2.4.1 Prayer and meditation**

Dominicans pray the Divine Office together as a community and individually spend time meditating on the Scriptures. Meditation on the Word aims to discover the mission of God through the Dominican way of life. Prayer is expressed bodily in the Dominican life, meaning that Dominic used his whole body to pray: he cried out with a loud voice to God, he knelt, he stretched and he subjected himself to pain as a way of penance for his and the sins of others.

Tugwell (1982:94) describes it as:

... the way of praying in which the soul uses the members of the body to rise more devoutly to God ... until sometimes it comes to be in ecstasy like Paul, sometimes in agony like our Saviour and rapture like the prophet David.

Prayer is Eucharistic; members gather to celebrate and to share in the mystical body of Christ. Dominicans are encouraged to pray and meditate. This is a simple prayer in which one talks and listens to God in the Scriptures and each other. Nintemann suggests that ‘in the Dominican way of life prayer is a meeting around the table of the Eucharist to listen to God and each other, to share in communion and to be missioned’ (1983:159–164).

#### **2.4.2 Contemplative study**

Dominicans study to discover God’s presence among God’s people and in their own lives. In the Dominican tradition, contemplative study must lead to prayer, and it is in prayer and listening to God that one discovers the challenges and tasks to which God calls each Dominican. Dominicans believe that study is for the sharing of wisdom gathered and for growth in love and holiness of mind. Boland (2006:115) supports this: ‘The centrality of study is clear in the Dominican way of life ... all in the service of the Order’s mission of preaching for the salvation of souls.’ Elsewhere he emphasises that ‘study is for the preacher to learn the language of the neighbours in the sense of understanding their lives, their ways of finding meaning and seeking fulfilment’ (Boland 2006:117). The preacher must do this for the Word to continue to become flesh in the hearts and lives of people. It is a Dominican trait to seek the truth wherever it may be found by engaging even with those who are opposed to

the Dominican outlook on life and with disciplines of study other than Scripture and theology.

### **2.4.3 Community life**

All those who take vows of celibacy, poverty and obedience live in community, as has been stated. While they are apostolic, they live a life of regular prayer and contemplation in a designated house, a convent or a priory. The location of the house is determined by the mission or apostolate. Each house has an elected leader. In a community, members learn to share as members of one body. Members depend on the community for their personal growth and becoming what God wants them to be. Though not perfect, they seek to mirror what they preach. Members are challenged to be aware of sin and grace in the community. It is through each other, in the community, that one recognises one's limitations and strives to be good and to do good. The individual is saved through community, because God lives in the community. Members relate in community and can love God through others when, through their actions and behaviour, they change other people's lives. It is in a community that members can be hurt, but also healed. Dominican communities further facilitate study and preaching.

### **2.4.4 Mission and ministry**

The Dominican mission and ministry are to communicate the love and the truth of God through preaching. They are called to preach by word and example; a balance of word and action. *Veritas* is a search for the truth as it is taught by Christ, through his life, death and resurrection. Dominicans are called to search for and preach the truth in word and deed. Studying the Word of God and human realities is important in the Dominican spirituality. It continues the Dominican tradition of dialogue with the cultures of the time, even if the teachings and cultures may be opposed to positive theology, the *via positiva*, the rational proof that God exists and her attributes can be understood. Boland invites all to appreciate negative theology, the *via negativa*, the approach that God is beyond all finite comprehension and is the nameless One, because this 'frees one from the tyranny of a single vision' (Boland 2006:124).

The Dominican ministry of preaching has assumed many forms in different cultures. Though preaching through Christian theological teaching has played a major role in Dominican history, preaching in the fields of health, social justice, literature and other areas has also been part of the Dominican way of preaching. In conclusion, I agree with Ashely when he says:

Dominican spirituality is a share in Jesus Christ the Word in his mission of announcing the Good News of salvation which he is. This calling is fulfilled by a community out of its experience of living for God and neighbour. (Ashely in Wood 1998:24)

#### **2.4.5 Authentic and false forms of Dominican spirituality**

In later history, the principles of Dominican spirituality were not always adhered to by those who followed Dominic. Some of his followers faltered under pressure.

The Dominicans initially focused on Scripture, theology and tradition. They later included other disciplines, like philosophy and languages, to reach other religions and cultures. They remained steadfast in prayer and meditation, contemplative study, community living and mission. This kind of openness became the feature of their charism. Nevertheless, this zeal and perseverance did not last forever.

From 1220 onwards, crises developed because of the privileges attributed to religious priests by Pope Gregory IX at the Council of Trent. The Dominicans were so challenged by the Waldensians that their spirituality was weakened, that is, their prayer life, study, community living and preaching ministry were heavily challenged. After Dominic's death and during the ensuing crisis, the Order lacked vision and leadership.

According to Hinnebusch (1973a:1309–1311), the impact of the crumbling society, wars, famine and natural disasters was reflected within the Order by a sharp decline in scholasticism.

Dominicans no longer applied their minds to study and reflection, and there was a decline of morality. These signs of deterioration peaked between about 1290 and 1350. Dedication to Dominican spirituality grew weaker until it broke down completely. Priors began to acquire property, a fixed income and powerful positions. Some friars behaved completely materialistically. It was during this time (about 1233), that Pope Gregory IX placed the task of the Inquisition into the hands of the Dominicans, because of their learned status. While Dominic had used the power of persuasion and a holy life, his followers used forms of torture and even execution of those perceived as a danger to the faith. They became extremely cruel and brutal in their actions. The core of their spirituality was neglected and greatly distorted.

According to Hinnebusch (1973a:1312–1315), the period between 1650 and 1765 again saw a decline in the Order, brought about by Absolutism (a belief in unlimited power by a ruler) and the Enlightenment (an intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries emphasising reason and individualism rather than faith and the communal tradition). The Masters of the Order became powerful and self-centred, Chapters of the Order were not held, the ministry was neglected, and exploitation of foreign nationals was practised in their missions in South America. They were also influenced by the secular governments of the day. During this period, religious fervour had cooled, and there was a decline in vocations. The effects were very harmful to the Order.

The French Revolution and its aftermath weakened the Order to near extinction in the period from 1789 to 1872. However, when the Order reformed, it again produced saints, preachers and writers. For example, major reforms came with Lacordaire, an inspired leader who emerged and re-introduced and re-ordered the Order in post-revolutionary France. He revised the liturgy, visited provinces, held Chapters, revised the constitutions, opened mission fields, and revised Thomistic studies. He also took over the theology faculties at Freiburg University,

An emphasis on God's grace, personal initiative and fidelity created a revival in the Order. During this period and beyond, the Order developed work in many fields. Former provinces were restored throughout the world, while membership increased. They continued the work of foreign missions and by 1922, Dominicans worked in twenty countries.

In short, throughout the history of the Dominicans, the number of vocations grew during the periods when the members kept to the pillars of the Dominican spirituality: prayer and meditation, contemplative study, community life, preaching the Truth and proclaiming it, and keeping faithful to their vows. The hard work of preaching and teaching through literature, speaking in public squares, ministering to others and living a simple life attracted vocations. The opposite happened when they gave in to the trials and burdens of life, and departed from these key spiritual and ethical principles.

## **2.5 Current Dominican groups**

The Dominican Order is the umbrella body for all the groups of Dominicans. The different women's groups are called congregations. There are many groups of Dominican



congregations worldwide. While all were inspired by the same spirit of Dominic, the reasons for their foundation differ. These reasons include the need to avoid travelling long distances, difficulties in communication, the negative effects of both World Wars, both Anglo-Boer Wars in South Africa, and the diverse ministries that these women perform.

### **2.5.1 The Contemplative Order (the nuns)**

These are the successors of the first group of religious women founded by Dominic in Prouille, France. They follow a Dominican lifestyle but focus on the monastic, contemplative aspect. Their main ministry is prayer. They take solemn vows of obedience, celibacy and poverty for life, and they live in the community. They were founded before the Dominican Order of ordained priests.

### **2.5.2 The Dominican Order of ordained priests**

This is a group of religious men founded by Dominic. They are religious who make the vow of obedience, with chastity and poverty being assumed within the vow of obedience. They live in community and are partly monastic and partly apostolic. They celebrate mass and can preach to congregations and share the Word to the people with them. Priests can baptize (as can the laity, in cases of emergency), hear confessions, administer the sacrament of marriage, and they can confirm people with the bishop's consent. They are presumed to be of a higher religious order than women, though Dominic founded the women religious before he founded the men's Order.

### **2.5.3 The Apostolic religious Dominican women**

This is a group of religious who also live a vowed life of obedience with the other vows assumed in the one of obedience. They live in community and have a regular prayer life, but they are also actively involved in ministry outside their communities, as consecrated women.

These groups started in different parts of the world because of the influence of St Dominic's spirituality and charism. They live a Dominican life passed down by those who have gone before them. While there are five different groups of Dominican Apostolic religious in South Africa, this dissertation is concerned mainly with the Newcastle Dominicans.

#### **2.5.4 The Lay Dominicans (men and women)**

The Lay Dominicans, originally known as the Third Order of St Dominic, consist of lay associates of the Friars of the Order of Preachers. From the Order's earliest foundation, laypeople were associated with its life and preaching mission. St Catherine of Siena (c.1347–1380) was one of the most prominent members of the lay movement. She inspired many women to follow in her footsteps. A rule was developed for the Third Order, also known as Tertiaries, Affiliates or Associates. The Tertiaries were primarily a pious or devotional society of Associates of priests, solitary members or members of the Chapter. They carry out different ministries in the church. They could be catechists, communion givers or leaders of communion services, but their emphasis is the importance of the spiritual life. They do not take vows, nor do they live in community.

#### **2.6 The South Africa congregations of Dominican women**

There are no contemplative religious Dominican women in South Africa, therefore they are not directly relevant to this dissertation.<sup>2</sup> The Dominican Order of men are not discussed in this dissertation either, because they have very little or no connection with the Dominican women, except that all the Dominican religious share the same spirituality. The connection between the Dominican men and the Newcastle Dominican women will be dealt with briefly in the next chapter.

The following section will examine briefly the vocations of the Apostolic religious congregations: the Cabra Dominicans, King William's Town Dominicans, Oakford Dominicans and Montebello Dominicans, because they are connected to Newcastle to varying degrees. The Newcastle Dominicans are discussed in detail in chapters 3 and 5 as they are the main focus of this dissertation.

##### **2.6.1 The Cabra Dominicans**

The Cabra sisters originally came to the Western Cape from Ireland in 1863 to educate and evangelise the European settlers. They live their vocation through preaching and teaching in schools. Although they expanded to other parts of South Africa, they are based mainly in the Cape. For a time, they attracted some new vocations but many women did not remain within the congregation. In recent years, they have had no vocations entering their convents.

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<sup>2</sup> There was a group in Senekal in the Free State (in the Diocese of Bethlehem), however they later returned to Spain and Zambia.

### **2.6.2 The King William's Town Dominicans**

In 1868, the King William's Town sisters came to the Eastern Cape from Germany to evangelise the children of the immigrants. Their main ministry was to preach and educate people who had come from European countries. They later ministered in hospitals and clinics in different parts of South Africa. Like many South African religious, they currently also suffer from the problem of vocation scarcity.

### **2.6.3 The Oakford Dominicans**

The Oakford sisters branched off from the King William's Town sisters to settle in Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal) to educate and evangelise the Zulu-speaking people in the area. They eventually spread to other areas of South Africa. Although their ministry later included health care and counselling, their main call is to preach. They have also had no new vocations in recent years.

### **2.6.4 The Montebello Dominicans**

The Montebello sisters were founded in 1925 as an appendix to the Oakford sisters. They started as a group of women who had been inspired by the ministry of the Oakford sisters. Due to the Apartheid laws of the time, they could not be part of the original group of Oakford sisters. They are a local Dominican group of African sisters whose language is Zulu, established near Dalton, KwaZulu-Natal, where they minister. They also live out their vocation through preaching and education. For several years, they have had some new vocations, though not many.

### **2.6.5 The Newcastle Dominicans**

In 1891, the Newcastle Dominicans branched off from the King William's Town sisters to settle in Newcastle in KwaZulu-Natal, to educate and evangelise the children of the railway workers there. Although their foundress was a South African, the majority of sisters in the congregation came from Ireland. They still live out their vocation through education and preaching, though they have branched off into health, counselling and social work.

## **2.7 Summary**

This chapter discusses vocations as a way of life. Many examples of God calling people are provided in the Bible. God still calls people today. All the baptised are called to continue the mission of Christ, while a religious is called to a certain lifestyle.

Dominic and all the Dominicans live a lifestyle of prayer, contemplative study, community living and ministry. As a founder of the Dominican order, Dominic developed this spirituality through his experience and response to the challenges of his time. Dominic remained faithful and humble. This was acknowledged by those to whom he preached, in that they began to join him in his preaching, thus increasing the number of vocations to the Order. However, his followers faltered as time progressed and deviated from his charism and spirituality of preaching. This led to the abuse of their charism and the near-extinction of the Order. It only revived when another faithful leader, Lacordaire, emerged and went back to the original call of the Dominicans, the Truth. This was his call to minister as a preacher of the truth for the salvation of all souls.

St Dominic, the founder of the Order, set the tone for who and how his follower should live out the Dominican life as Christians: It would be humility, community life, the search for the Truth in contemplation to share it with those who most needed it. Prayer, freedom of study for the life of the mission, community life for the mission, searching for truth and being challenged by the signs of the time were important features of the Dominican charism. Where these were not adhered to, one saw the decline of the Dominican life. Zeal for prayer, community life, faith and integrity among the members waned and the vocations to the male Dominican groups largely dried up, for example, during the Spanish Inquisition and the French Revolution.

Today, the Dominicans in South Africa live out and preach this lifestyle as ordained priests, Apostolic religious, Lay Dominicans and consecrated sisters or brothers. Currently, there are five groups of Dominican women in South Africa, but the focus of this dissertation is on the Newcastle Dominicans. All the female groups, except for the Montebello congregation, are struggling to attract vocations.

It is important to state that a vocation is a call from God. God calls his people all the time. At baptism, all are called to share in God's plan of salvation. A Dominican vocation is a response to this very call. It is apparent, though, that the call to minister as a Dominican has not been heeded to in recent times, as the Dominicans have not had vocations in many years. Hence, this dissertation investigates the reasons for the scarcity of vocations and how vocations may again be attracted. Dominican men are doing slightly better in South Africa in terms of vocations, and women are faring better in other countries.

## **CHAPTER 3: THE VOCATIONS AND MINISTRY OF THE NEWCASTLE DOMINICANS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Chapter 2 explained what a vocation, a Dominican vocation and Dominican spirituality are. This chapter will draw a fuller picture of how the Dominican vocation has been lived out by the Newcastle Dominican sisters in South Africa, from the time of Mother Rose Niland to the present day. The emphasis will be on the scarcity of vocations and its effects on the Newcastle Dominican sisters.

### **3.1 The founding and early years of the Newcastle Dominicans (1896–1947)**

The Newcastle Dominican sisters were founded in 1896 by Rose Niland, a South African, in Newcastle Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal), South Africa. Niland established many convent houses and schools in South Africa, but she moved the Newcastle Motherhouse to England in 1930 as part of her ministry there. Schools and convent houses were also built in England; therefore some reference will be made to the life of the sisters there. Niland died in 1947. All the houses established by Rose Niland in England and South Africa are called Newcastle Dominican convent houses, and the sisters are referred to as the Newcastle Dominicans, whether they minister in Cricklewood in England or Benoni, Boksburg, Newcastle or Durban in South Africa. This chapter focuses mainly on the life of the Newcastle Dominican sisters living in South Africa.

The life history of the Newcastle Dominican sisters can be divided into three main periods, although some elements of the latter two periods are discussed concurrently. Firstly, the period from 1896 to 1947 was when Mother Rose Niland founded and developed the Newcastle congregation. During this period, she was the sole decision-maker and guide. She saw to the approval of the first Constitutions, the development of the liturgy, ministry, spirituality and attracting vocations. The colonial influence of the 1820 Settlers in the Eastern Cape, where Niland grew up, impacted the social context of the country at the time. It therefore influenced how Mother Rose Niland thought, lived and led as a Dominican sister of Newcastle.

The second period is from 1948 to 1980. During this period, the sisters were affected by the policy of Apartheid, as introduced from 1948, and later by the 1976 Soweto Uprising. Their ministry was mainly among the white communities, in parishes and schools. However, they had no clear policy of vocation promotion, and very few young women joined them.

The third period is from 1981 to 2019. This era is characterised by an increasingly fragmented ministry, few vocations, an increased number of aged sisters, and smaller, more relaxed community structures. From about 1981, the Newcastle sisters slowly began to spread their ministry to other cultures, and a very small number of local black women joined the congregation in the last seven years.

### **3.1.1 Niland's vocation**

Rose Niland was born in Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Cape in 1860. This area was never peaceful because of the constant friction between the white farmers and the local people. Consecrated religious life was not common in the Eastern Cape, though her family were good, prayerful Catholics. Marriage was a norm for women. Niland's strong Catholic principles, the Dominican liturgy and the Eucharistic Presence in the school chapel attracted her mind and heart. She became interested in religious life while at school with the Sion Hill Dominicans (later known as Cabra Dominicans) in Port Elizabeth. There she witnessed a group of women whose actions seemed to reveal that God called people to serve him by their way of life, and she responded to that inspiration. Cleary (1997:4) says: 'The example and teaching of the sisters made a deep impression on her ... she saw the dedication, giftedness for the music as well as the human frailty of the sisters. She enjoyed a good relationship with the sisters.' The academic and liberal education of the Dominicans were also a great attraction to her. The sisters' life of dedication to prayer, education and to their pupils, evoked a vocation to religious life in Rose Niland. Nonetheless, Niland was never accepted by the Sion Hill Dominicans, because of her impetuous spirit and their perception that she would find it hard to live under obedience. She later contacted the King William's Town Dominicans, who accepted her in 1880, despite the limitations observed by the Sion Hill Dominicans.

As a very young sister, Niland showed good leadership qualities and communication skills and, as a result, she was sent to start new projects in different parts of the country. Her actions and her character pointed to a woman of courage, hope, faith and charity. She never shied away from challenging assignments and never flagged in zeal. Furthermore, she was a preacher and a woman of prayer, two central characteristics of Dominican spirituality. O'Keefe (1995:119) says this of such people:

They have a spirit attentive to God's promptings and direction ... giving them guidance and encouragement to the process of decision-making ... the person with a

prayerful spirit of attentive openness is more docile to the Spirit's guidance in the process of decision-making.

As a King William's Town Dominican, Niland was later assigned to the then new branch house in East London in 1888. Because of her abilities and gift with languages (Xhosa, English, Afrikaans and German), she could help the German sisters, who had not yet mastered the local languages. Later Niland was sent to Potchefstroom to lead the community there. She had to contend with many problems regarding the establishment of the house, the building of the community and the school. Resources were scarce and the opposition from other denominations very strong. Niland had imbibed the spirit of prayer and a positive outlook on life, making her hope and belief in God's providence her strong attributes. Niland and the sisters had made an impression on the local community of Potchefstroom because they had dared to introduce a school for children of all faiths in the area, but not everybody was in favour of the new establishment. The local priest, Fr Tresch, sent a message to Sr Mauritia in King William's Town:

Our school is advertised in the paper to be opened on the 16 July 1889. The various ministers busy themselves much to speak from their pulpits at the Sunday services about the new school, of course not in its favour ... The quiet manner of our coming to Potchefstroom made them wonder how we got to town without making a noise.  
(*Annals* 1889)

The mission work in Potchefstroom was short, but Niland managed to teach in a hostile environment without losing hope. She developed a relationship between different cultures (English and Afrikaans) by establishing a school which accommodated children from different cultures. This action made people aware of the social evils that separated them and changed their ways of living out their Christian lives. The Afrikaners, who first resisted the idea of sending their children to a Catholic school, later saw the benefits of education for their children.

Cleary (1997:17–22) states that in 1891, Rose Niland left Potchefstroom to join five Oakford sisters who were sent to Newcastle to start a new community. In 1891, a school was opened for the poor railway workers' children and to evangelise their families. Niland was later chosen as a leader of that community and the school, and both flourished quickly under her leadership. The school children came from different faith backgrounds, and she was able to facilitate interdenominational co-operation in the community.



When Northern Natal was in the grip of the recession of 1895, the mission in Newcastle experienced severe strain. This was later exacerbated by the Second Anglo-Boer War. Niland and the sisters were given a choice to leave Newcastle to go back to the convent in Oakford, but she chose to stay and help the poor. She saw this as her ethical responsibility. Niland was aware that God was always at work, but her ability to choose the right action at the right time had a lasting impact on the sisters and the communities she served. Niland and the sisters, by playing their part as preachers of truth, set an example of faith, prudence, courage and a spirit of charity at that time. Thereafter, she lived out her vocation through self-giving in teaching, building and uniting communities with faith and courage.

To conclude this section, Niland received her vocation in a situation of socio-political complexity and conflict, including friction over land. Religious life was not a norm at the time; young women were expected to marry and have children. Nonetheless, God called and, attracted by serving as an educator, she embraced her vocation. As a religious, she had to make important decisions, which she did with faith, courage, hope and prudence. She embraced the Dominican spirituality to preach the truth and the charism to study, to praise and to bless, especially those in need.

### **3.1.2 The foundation of the Newcastle congregation and their Constitutions**

It is important to deal with these Constitutions here, because they are a window through which to see the direction taken by the Newcastle Dominicans under Rome. The first step for Niland was to have Constitutions approved by Rome and appropriated to the Newcastle congregation. On 28 July 1911, a Plenary Session of the Sacred Congregation took place which: ‘Established and decreed that the *Decree of praise* and *Final Approbation of the Institute* can be granted to the sisters of the Order of St Dominic of Newcastle. Given at Rome on the 15 December 1911.’ The achievement meant the sisters were then directly under Rome.

According to Cleary (1997:17), Bishop Jolivet asked the Oakford sisters that Newcastle become independent and Rose Niland take charge. In 1896, Newcastle was separated from Oakford with Niland as its Prioress. Niland and five other sisters had chosen to stay and build the new congregation of Newcastle. The Congregation of St Catherine of Siena of Newcastle Natal was thus launched.

### **3.1.3 The growth in vocations in the congregation**

To attract vocations, Niland worked very closely with Bishop Jolivet and the parish priest, Fr

Thomas Ford (Cleary 1997:22). Through them, two white South African candidates and two postulants from Germany joined. Bishop Jolivet encouraged Rose Niland to go to Europe to recruit candidates.

Cleary (1997:22) explains that, in 1896, Niland travelled to Ireland, England, Germany and Italy. She aimed to look for candidates, learn about the Dominican Constitutions from the established Dominicans in Europe, and request donations of money. Nine women from Ireland and five from Germany volunteered to join religious life. Niland acquired copies of the Constitutions and directory from the Stone Dominicans in England, and in Rome she received advice on how to draft the Constitutions for the establishment of the congregation. She also received generous financial donations in Germany.

By 1897, the number of candidates and novices was eighteen in total. Serious formation in prayer, study, community life and ministry had started. The congregation was growing and 'life took a joyful optimistic turn' (Cleary 1997:23). In 1902, Sr Reginald Murphy became an enthusiastic vocations promoter, who made friends with the Irish Dominicans as well as many families in Ireland. For the next twenty years, she visited Ireland and found recruits there for the Newcastle congregation. In 1901, twelve recruits came to Newcastle, and in 1904, twenty-three of whom all except one persevered. In 1910, Sr Reginald Murphy travelled to their temporary house in Blerick, the Netherlands. She gathered recruits from Holland and Germany and taught them the rudiments of religious life. During their stay in Holland, they had the opportunity to imbibe the Dominican spirit and joined the Newcastle sisters.

By 1917, many sisters were trained in Dominican spirituality, as teachers in schools and catechists in Newcastle Natal. They reached people of diverse cultures. Through their dedication in education, evangelisation and their presence among the people, they inspired local young women to join them. Between 1918 and 1933, about seven local white candidates joined from Pietersburg, Benoni and Boksburg (in what was then the Transvaal) and Umzumbe and Port Shepstone (in Natal).

Between 1925 and 1930, the sisters had a big impact on the Zulu-speaking people. The following observation is made in Sr Crescentia Gogler's Memoirs: 'As soon as I grasped the intricacies of the Zulu language I started catechizing, baptizing and praying with groups of young and old, I must say though that they were very fervent' (1921–1956:9).

In 1932, the first group of fourteen local black women, from the schools and parishes where the sisters taught and evangelized, came to the Newcastle congregation as candidates. They were treated differently and were separated from the white candidates, having their own house, dormitory and refectory. Niland herself states the difference in her letter to the sisters, ‘... you fully understand this congregation is quite separated from us ... as far as I know, the habit is to be grey not white’ (*Niland’s letter Rome*, April 1934). She goes on to say this in her letter:

‘From 1933 to 1938 the Dominican sisters of Newcastle, Natal trained and supported [black local] women who wished to become religious, but it was clear that they would belong to a separate congregation.’

In Niland’s eyes, and in the eyes of many General Superiors of different congregations of the time, following the directives of the *Arum Indigenarum* Document of 1924,<sup>3</sup> the establishment of a ‘native Congregation’ was a positive action. The influence of the social context of that time, which stratified people according to race and colour, seemed to her to be a correct (ethical) practice. This is borne out by the fact that Niland trained and established a separate group of local black sisters who were later sent to Montebello to join other black local women in approximately 1938. It was hoped that the local sisters would be better evangelists. The Newcastle sisters applied a discriminatory rule which excluded black women. The Newcastle congregation has struggled to attract local black vocations to their way of life

With the benefit of hindsight, this decision had negative consequences. Firstly, in light of the stress on Dominican community, it could be argued that it was not an ethical decision for Niland to contribute to the separation of peoples in a land which already suffered the ills of colonialism. Secondly, the Dominicans are the preachers of Truth, but they failed to defend the truth they preached and ‘to bring the liberating message of the Gospel’ (*Constitutions* 2000:23) to a context of widespread racial discrimination.

Thirdly, from the experience of talking to those who were sent to Montebello, without their consent, Niland seemed to have created a ‘people in exile’. I quote Sr Margaret, who started as a Newcastle Dominican, but was then sent to Montebello: ‘Although I have learnt to be a

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<sup>3</sup> The *Arum Indigenarum* document sought to encourage the established religious congregations to train local vocations separately from their original white congregations, with the aim of making them independent diocesan congregations, which could engage in evangelism using local languages.

Montebello and will be eternally grateful for the preparations I received from Newcastle, I will always think of myself as a Newcastle.’ The Newcastle sisters applied an enforced discriminatory rule which excluded black women. Consequently, the Newcastle congregation has struggled to attract local black vocations to their way of life ever since.

Fourthly, the Newcastle Dominicans are called to be signs and instruments of multicultural communities and to denounce social ills such as colonialism and Apartheid. Kiaziku (2007:67) argues that,

The experience of multicultural encounter converts religious life into a sign and instrument of a new cultural model which, while respecting and assuming the values of every culture, contributes to their purification from the starting point of Christian faith. It makes a religious institute a sign and instrument, whereby one overcomes narrow nationalism, learns to pass on one’s own culture and to accept that of others, and learns to live in co-existence and collaboration. And thus it contributes to the achievement of justice and peace.

By their actions, the Newcastle Dominicans missed the opportunity to be prophetic and establish a new cultural model for their society as a mixed community of sisters. More importantly for this dissertation, they missed the opportunity to attract vocations to the Newcastle congregation, or to experience a broader development in character and wisdom which comes with encountering and interacting with various cultures.

In the following ten years, most vocations continued to come from Ireland and Germany, with a few white South Africans joining the Newcastle Dominicans. All they needed to qualify to join the Dominicans in South Africa was zeal for the missions, strong faith and good health.

Despite her short-sightedness concerning the ‘local’ black sisters, Niland and her sisters made a deliberate effort to look for vocations among white communities. ‘In about 1898, Sr Reginald Murphy wrote to the Dominican Editor of the magazine *The Irish Rosary* to invite young women to join the mission of evangelization in Newcastle South Africa’ (Cleary 1997:25). They designated a sister to work full-time on the ministry of vocation promotion. They collaborated with the local bishop, priests and families who, in turn, would be a source of support for vocation promotion for the sisters. They developed a programme called the

*Juniorate*.<sup>4</sup> This structure allowed the young women to continue their academic studies with the Dominicans while they were in the process of discerning their vocation with the Dominicans. This value of giving young women time with the sisters is confirmed in the findings in the empirical study in chapter 5.

### **3.1.4 How did the Constitutions express the life and the spirituality of the Dominicans?**

The Constitutions state that the sisters should live in community as vowed persons. In chapter 2, it is said that the Dominicans are contemplative and apostolic; they minister among people, and they must be continually formed through prayer and study.

The Newcastle sisters formed their own body of Government according to the Constitutions. The Constitutions of the congregation state that:

A general chapter is a call to the whole congregation and each member to maintain fidelity, unity, flexibility, effectiveness and to review and interpret the signs of our times ... (*Constitutions* 2000:31)

The Chapter, as the highest governing body, challenges all the members to live out their religious lives throughout the period stipulated until the next Chapter is convoked. The members are called to remain faithful to their vows, while being creative and sensitive to the needs of the community at large.

The second value of governance in Dominican life is the element of freedom, which stems from John 8:31–32: ‘If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’ As noted in chapter 2, governance should facilitate flexibility (*Constitutions* 2000:28).

While the spirit of the gospel is embraced in the Dominican Constitutions, it is important to assess how the leadership implemented this Constitution.

### **3.1.5 The expression of the Constitutions in the ministry of Niland and her sisters**

During the period from 1896 to 1947, Niland played the major role, as she was repeatedly elected by the sisters (contrary to the flexible features of Dominican Constitutions), but there were no written policies regarding vocations. Individual sisters were designated by Niland to

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<sup>4</sup> *Juniorate* was a structured programme and a period of time given to young women to discern their vocation to religious life while they lived with the sisters.

the ministry of vocation promotion, using personal methods they best knew, such as inviting enquirers to live among the sisters for a short period (weekends or a few days), answering their questions about convent life, and visiting families and parishes, witnessing by their presence. According to the Newcastle Dominican Constitutions:

It is God who calls and directs those who respond throughout their lives. By our personal, communal and apostolic witness as well as by our prayer we do all we can to encourage vocations. (*Constitutions* 2000:24)

Although Rose Niland and the sisters of the time had their limitations, such as giving in to discriminatory practices, they put structures in place to support their sisters with their spiritual and practical needs for the mission. Niland believed, from the very beginning, in acquiring the best information for the sisters for their regular life as Dominicans. She ensured that they had the best spiritual, academic and moral formation.

The ministry was clearly defined and Niland worked hard to establish it. Between the years of 1909 and 1938, Niland built many schools and convents. With the sisters, she made a great contribution to the education system of the country. She ensured that the sisters gave back to the community the fruit of their labour. Leadership was clear and organised. The sisters were developed, transformed and readied for the challenges of their mission. As a new congregation, Niland sought help from those who had experience of the Dominican life. This exposure allowed the sisters better possibilities to grow in their ministries, responsibility and their character. It appeared that the sisters' integrity, resilience and inner strength would be tested, therefore Niland tried to prepare them. It would seem from the above that Niland set good examples of establishing, implementing and monitoring the policies, albeit according to the values of her time.

Where she and the sisters could, Niland extended the education from the classroom to the greater society by advocating for unity and peace among different groups of people. This was in line with the Dominican constitutional call:

The Dominican way of life is a prophetic witness to the world. In fulfilment of our Dominican vocation, we share in the universal mission of the Church, to bring the liberating message of the Gospel where needs are greatest.' (*Constitutions* 2000:23)

Throughout Niland's active life, many vocations came to the congregation, because she worked for them. She was an example of humility, because she did not hesitate to ask for help when she needed it. She was hospitable and quick to share her gifts with other communities. She showed integrity, resilience, patience and love when dealing with challenges in both the Potchefstroom and Newcastle communities.

Niland created opportunities for other sisters to work for vocations. Through their ministry of education and evangelisation, young women were inspired to join the congregation. Music, art and a gift for languages were attributes she shared and encouraged in her sisters. But because the majority of sisters were English-speaking and Irish, the zeal for learning other languages, especially African languages, died out when she passed away. The sisters had no incentive to learn them because they would never use them in white schools, which they concentrated on during the Apartheid era.

When Niland died in 1947, the congregation was in a positive state as regards vocations, as there were more than two hundred and fifty sisters in the congregation. Of this number, an average of one hundred and seventy lived in different houses in the South African Region, about twenty-five of them being local white South Africans. The Newcastle house then held between twenty-seven and thirty sisters. A lesser number of sisters lived in England, eighty on average, because less missionary work was needed there.

Although many who had vocations stayed, others left because they were excluded: 'The prioress general, after consulting her council, can for just reasons exclude a member from making further profession on completion of the temporary profession' (*Constitutions* 2000:42).<sup>5</sup> The reasons for leaving during Niland's time are not clear, as the records were not available for research due to reasons of confidentiality. Cunningham, the Congregation Prioress, explained the reasons for confidentiality to me:

The first reason why particular sisters have left the congregation and religious life have been mainly because they felt that the way of life had lost meaning for them. Hence those who have left our congregation have either freely chosen to do so or due to grave reasons such as scandalous behaviour, have requested a dispensation from their vows ... regarding official documentation or the dispensation from vows of the particular sisters who have left the

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<sup>5</sup> Consult *Constitutions* (2000) for more reasons for dismissal of a member from the Newcastle Dominicans.

congregation, this is very personal information. To respect the confidentiality of the information provided by the particular sister and to respect her personally, this information will remain confidential and thus cannot be disclosed.

(Cunningham to Mazibuko, 18 February 2018)

In assessing Niland's era as the foundress and leader of the Newcastle Dominicans for 50 years, the following can be noted. On the positive side, Niland was a determined and strong leader, as can be seen from the way she built up the Newcastle congregation during hard times. During her time, the congregation was firmly established and the ministry was well defined. The sisters were teachers in different schools which she built. During Niland's time vocations flourished because she had a clear plan of going out to search for the vocations, albeit overseas. She had a sister designated to this ministry, and it brought results. Within the first ten years of her life as the foundress of the Newcastle congregation, she had attracted one hundred and ninety-three vocations, and the number grew to two hundred and fifty. The sisters were visible within the community.

Some negative elements can also be identified. Because she remained in charge until her death, other leaders were not developed, and this stifled the later progress of the congregation. Niland was also a woman of her time. Her conformity to the socio-political status quo and her failure to receive black members to the congregation deprived the congregation of the opportunity of breaking the socio-cultural divide between the African and the Western people. The idea of importing vocations from overseas later backfired, as local vocations, especially of black women, were never encouraged. Today the congregation still struggles to attract vocations.

### **3.2 The impact of the Apartheid laws on the vocations and the ministry of the Dominican sisters between 1948 and 2019**

The effects of the Apartheid laws were felt throughout the history of the Newcastle Dominicans. The aftermath still exists within the congregation. One main feature characterised the period from 1948 until about 1980: the diversification of ministries to counteract the Apartheid system. This is discussed after the social context of that time has been outlined.



### **3.2.1 The socio-political context and its impact on the sisters**

In 1948, the Apartheid system was introduced by the National Party government, which called for the separate development of different racial groups in South Africa. On paper, it was called equal development, and it promised freedom of cultural expression, but it was unethical in essence and the way it was implemented, as it encouraged division among people. The Apartheid laws forced the different racial groups to live separately and this created gross inequality. In its basic principles, Apartheid did not differ that much from the policy of segregation of the colonial or later South African governments, existing before the Afrikaner Nationalist Party came to power in 1948. For example, in 1903, British rule saw the introduction of the pass laws, which denied black people freedom of movement. The 1913 Native Land Act effectively meant that a person's racial classification denied them equal access to land and other resources.

Like Apartheid, the 1924 document, *Arum Indigenarum*, stressed separation. It ruled that: 'Each Congregation should set apart a house for such purpose to train native sisters' (Keane 2016:162). As we have seen, this resulted in the establishment of the Montebello congregation, separate from the Newcastle and Oakford congregations; the St Rose's congregation was separated from the Cabra Dominicans; and the St Martin de Porres from the congregation from King William's Town.

Apartheid was seen by the majority as an evil system because it had fearsome tools to punish those who contravened it. It came about when other countries were moving away from racist policies. Apartheid laws such as the Population Registration and the Group Areas Act of 1950 meant that people would be registered according to their race and compelled to live separately.

Many black people were later forced to move from areas designated as 'white', such as District Six in Cape Town and Sophiatown in Johannesburg. In 1959, the Promotion of Bantu Self-

Government Act meant that the majority of blacks were restricted to the 'homelands'. This history of South Africa impacted greatly on the ministry and lifestyle of the Newcastle Dominican sisters. There were significant changes in their ministries because of the drop in the number of vocations, and new strategies had to be developed. The 1976 Uprising and its aftermath challenged all discriminatory governments and institutions, including the Dominican sisters, to change their unjust policies.

Political oppression and resistance deepened in the 1980s, but in 1994 a new political dispensation brought about a different social context in South Africa. The African National Congress won the election and, under the Mandela government, the Apartheid laws were abolished. All could live, study or minister at places of their choice. Discrimination according to colour, race, religion or language was officially removed, and the sisters could live and minister anywhere in the country.

### **3.2.2 The responses of the Newcastle Dominicans to the social context and the policies between 1948 and 1980**

#### **3.2.2.1 The strategy of diversified ministries**

The sisters had to think of ways to continue preaching and evangelising in a segregated South Africa. The government policies forced them to abandon their ministries and close down the schools situated in black areas. The schools included the Sacred Heart Mission in Msinsini in 1953, St Xavier School in Dundee in 1961, St Bruno Teachers' College in Lennoxton,

Newcastle in 1963, St Albert's in Boksburg in 1963, and St Lewis Bertrand's High School in 1969. They did this to concentrate on the schools in white areas, as the system of Apartheid made it difficult for a group of white sisters to function in a black area.

They developed unwritten policies and strategies of ministering in black areas when all their schools were either closed or rezoned under the Group Areas Act of 1950. One of the strategies was to acquire land in a black area, build schools and register them under the name of a black congregation, but still supply all the required materials and teachers to run the schools. Another strategy was to penetrate the upper-class white areas and minister there. This went on for as long as the Apartheid system existed. The sisters adapted to a different system of doing ministry because of the Group Areas and other oppressive and discriminatory Acts. These strategies served a good purpose, because people benefited from them, and it was a way to continue their preaching ministry. However, this way of living the Dominican life did not give the Dominican sisters any chance to attract vocations among the local black women, because they did not interact with the local people.

Between the years of 1953 and 1970, the ministry grew in the white areas of South Africa and England. St Dominic's Academy in Newcastle and St Dominic's Convent School for Girls in Boksburg grew. Our Lady of Fatima School for Girls in Durban North was built. Ten white South African candidates joined the Newcastle congregation from the schools and parishes where the sisters ministered and seven came to South Africa from Ireland. According to the history of the Newcastle congregation, the period between approximately 1965 and 1977

seems to have been a lull in so far as the sisters' involvement in the ministry of the larger community in South Africa was concerned. There are no records in the archives of their activities among other race groups. They seem to have become closed in and concentrated on the classroom only with one race group, despite the fact that the Order of Preachers was founded for preaching to and the salvation of all souls. In Dominican spirituality, teaching is regarded as preaching, especially in the women's congregations.

Boner (1998:315) says this of other religious, particularly the Cabra Dominican Sisters:

For those born South Africans and the immigrant sisters, either silent observers or in the thick of the action, and committed to the maintenance of their educational institutions, the issues were not clear. In South Africa, religious communities, like families, were deeply divided on what was and what was not appropriate action in the face of escalating violence and increasing police brutality.

It could be argued that, along with the other congregations, fear, ignorance, confusion or a feeling of inability to face the overpowering forces of Apartheid may have engulfed the sisters. It would follow, then, that vocations during that period would be scarce, although there were individual sisters in the congregation who contributed to the lives of others in troubled South Africa, and abided by the teachings and ethics of Jesus Christ.

In the mid-1970s, the Dominicans in South Africa agreed to form a federation, which materialised in 1977, the Federation of Dominicans in South Africa (FEDOSA). They agreed to work together. Its aim and ideals reflect this:

As Dominican women and men in Southern Africa united in our witness into the liberating Word of God, rooted in the values of Contemplation, Truth, Justice to the whole creation and Compassionate Action as expressed in our respective mission statements, open to on-going growth and transformation, we commit ourselves to develop inter-Dominican collaboration in the formation of our members ... and in our prophetic role within a fragmented South Africa. (Boner 1998:360)

Influenced by the above, and with time, some prophetic signs emerged from the Newcastle congregation. They reflected on their attitude and actions, recognised the unethical features of Apartheid in their lives, and changed their responses. In 1976, they became a member of the

Open Schools Movement, and in 1978, black pupils were accepted in their schools. The first black woman joined the Newcastle sisters in the same year.

Later, as the pressures of Apartheid mounted and the shortage of sisters grew, the ministry gradually began to fragment.

### **3.3 The impact of the sisters' greater involvement with social and cultural needs between 1981 and 2019**

#### **3.3.1 Diversified ministries**

The sisters began to diversify the ministry in response to Apartheid pressures. Some sisters took up health and social work. Between the years of about 1978 and 1988, five convents and schools were built in strategic areas to facilitate new ministries for the sisters. In about 1978, a clinic was built in Blaauwbosch outside Newcastle, run by Sr Leo Hegarty OP, and in 1980, a high school was opened in the same area. The convents were St Dominic's in Cala, Transkei,

St Mary's in Blaauwbosch was started in 1980, St Rose's in Boksburg in 1986, Bongani INkosi in Madadeni in 1987, and Bethany in Sherwood, Durban in 1988. Some sisters ventured back to minister among other cultures, especially the African cultures. Streetwise, a home for the troubled young boys who otherwise would live on the streets of Durban, was founded in 1989 by Sr Helena Mc Kenna OP. The sisters also began to spread the ministry to heed the call of preaching where the good news was most needed. But this strategy impacted negatively on vocation attraction, because the sisters became more invisible as their work became fragmented. Working as a group in particular schools would have made them more noticeable.

As organisers in leadership positions, the sisters are not directly involved at a grassroots level; hence it is not easy for them to have direct contact with the masses or their parishioners. More and more sisters do social work: in hospices, prisons and on the city streets, in informal settlements, townships and rural areas. Many people in these areas are not interested in being sisters. They are anxious about their next meal.

Ministry has changed in that more sisters are working with vulnerable people. The content and emphasis of ministry have also changed, as many more sisters respond to the call to serve vulnerable people. For many sisters, the circumstances of their work do not give them enough opportunity to attract vocations. Their presence may be invisible to the youth.

### **3.3.2 The positive impact on vocations, albeit small**

During the period from 1980 onwards, the sisters had opened their congregation to other races. They accepted pupils and young women of different races in their schools and convents respectively. They had begun once more to minister among other cultures, particularly African cultures, albeit on a very small scale. Because they were still in their habit and veil, they were visible. Through ministry, they spread information about their lives among the youth. During this period, twenty-eight women joined the sisters. Of this group, twenty left and eight stayed, including one local black woman. However, within these years, the Dominicans had no proper vocations promotion policy, and they failed to place sufficient emphasis on spiritual formation that included an African perspective.

Although their ministry was curtailed and fragmented, the sisters managed to meet diverse kinds of people who helped them revive the spirituality, and their ministry began to grow. They were encouraged to collaborate with other Dominicans, which led to the opening of their schools to all races. New ministries were taken to other cultures, such as homes for the aged in the Coloured and Indian areas in Durban. The congregation opened to other races and some joined, although most subsequently left. Nonetheless, people began to know the sisters once more, particularly the black communities.

While the diversified ministries did not attract many vocations, many positives came from this idea. The sisters managed to reach out to people they would not have reached had they remained in schools. This helped the sisters to embrace the challenge of adopting new ways of doing ministry.

During the earlier part of this period, the sisters still had many schools in different parts of South Africa, particularly in the late-1970s. They ministered there and in parishes. They still wore their habit and veil, and they lived in big communities. In this way, they were more visible to young people. The sisters were involved in youth ministry outside schools. They further ran retreats, workshops and seminars on Dominican life. The ministry was clearly defined. Young people had enough information about the sisters and their way of life.

Vocations were attractive, albeit to the white section of the population, until the late-1970s to 1980s.

During this period, most sisters had a common Western culture. Many of those who joined were of a similar culture, therefore it could be argued that many of the women who joined

and stayed were encouraged by the familiar culture. However, many local black women left, as has been stated above.

### **3.4 Vocational decline from 1981 to 2019**

As noted under 3.2 above, the Apartheid laws introduced in South Africa in 1948 curtailed the movement and the sisters' ministry. The effects of the system were very much alive during the 1980s and beyond. Below, culture, language and formation practices are discussed as contributory factors to vocations scarcity.

#### **3.4.1 Culture, community and vocation**

Culture contains values, ideas, behaviour, a sense of right and wrong, beliefs, meaning, knowledge, a way of life, and how people interact and process meaning. However, cultures do change over time. In South Africa and Europe, many people have been influenced by secularism and materialism. This meant that many people became individualistic and lost the sense of *ubuntu*, of respect, sharing, sacrifice and community values. This kind of society would struggle to foster vocations to religious life. Therefore, this is the area that would challenge the Dominicans to work on new strategies to attract vocations, despite all the obstacles.

Furthermore, religious life is a challenge to the youth, because many believe in personal freedom and owning property. Religious life as a way of life presupposes that one will be celibate, accept vows of poverty and obedience, and live in the community chosen for you. The vows of poverty and celibacy would be very challenging and foreign to a society where the majority live in poverty – without choosing it – and where sexual activity is the norm, and adulterous behaviour is acceptable.

Not to recognise these facts would be a misconception by all religious, particularly the Newcastle sisters, as culture has negatively influenced local black vocations to the Dominicans. From the 1980s onwards, twenty-eight women joined the sisters, but twenty left and only eight stayed, only one of whom was black. These statistics show that white women have a greater chance of remaining in the congregation than black women. One of the reasons for this is the dominant Western culture of the congregation.

In South Africa, culture plays a very important role in the daily lives of people because of the history of the country. In the Newcastle congregation, the dominant cultures are Irish and white South African. All documents of the congregation are written in the English language. All who join the congregation are expected to speak the English language, and no English-

speaking sisters speak any of the African languages. The daily living in the communities (liturgy, food, value interpretation) lacks the openness to accommodate the multicultural nature of some of the communities. For example, the African cultural value of generosity means that one shares one's plate of food, even if no prior appointment was made for dinner. Sharing a plate of food is more than just satisfying one's hunger. It is an opportunity to 'see' the other person.

It is through one's culture that one learns to relate to one's neighbour and to God. And God calls people from their environment, where values such as being honest, hospitable and welcoming are imbibed. How people understand and interpret a vocation or a call to religious life – or any other life – happens within one's culture. Values one learns within one's culture will influence how one serves both one's community and the larger community as a religious sister. In South Africa, being open to learning about other people's cultures is primary to peace and cohesion. Culture can be a foundation on which to grow strong religious vocations. The Dominicans strive for this.

Since 2016, more black South Africans have joined the Newcastle congregation, but there are no adequate structures in place where all cultures can meet. It is a given that all will learn the Dominican culture whose knowledge and ideas are carried in Western culture. Many local vocations have been lost because of a misunderstanding of values, or a difference in the interpretation of cultural values, language misinterpretation and harmful attitudes. Chapter 5 of the empirical study will further investigate the role of cultural values in the Dominican communities.

Some of the objectives of the Newcastle Dominican Novitiate's Policy are to nurture freedom and personal independence in decision-making and to grow in self-understanding and the ability to relate to others in community and society, especially those different from her. For this to happen, it is necessary that the environment be conducive. Otherwise cultural exclusion or misunderstanding may add to the problems of attracting and maintaining vocations, especially of local black women.

Kiaziku (2007:86) suggests that an apostolic service according to the nature of one's charism and spiritual tradition can be provided by developing ways of life, apostolic action and communication that respond effectively to diverse cultures in communities. Inspiration can be drawn from these cultures to shape the ways of being and living. These can be passed on in

the formation process without demanding that the candidate uproot themselves from their own cultures to become members of religious institutions.

### **3.4.2 Culture, language and vocation attraction**

In this section, I argue that learning or not learning other people's languages is an ethical issue. Christian ethics is a key element of this dissertation, especially if one lives with people of other languages or in a country like South Africa where languages have been a source of controversy and division. A deliberate decision not to learn the language of one's neighbour is a decision not to communicate or to have a relationship with her/him. This decision is morally wrong. It encourages alienation, limited growth and mistrust between neighbours. In order to meet people, and to be able to share on a human level, it is imperative to understand their language, because language communicates more than just speech. It can reveal beliefs, customs, culture, faith, and how people think about God, others and themselves. For the Newcastle sisters, this remains a challenge.

One of the features particular to the Newcastle sisters is to facilitate communication among people using the local languages, so as to promote the unity among them for which Christ himself prayed. Niland did it by learning both the Dutch/Afrikaans and Xhosa languages. In that way she helped to facilitate communication between the sisters and the local people. In their Constitutions, the above point is highlighted when they state: 'In the Dominican tradition, the study is essentially a reflective pondering on the word of God and on the world we live in ...' (*Constitutions* 2000:23).

It is not possible for the Newcastle sisters to draw members of other cultures to their way of life when they cannot communicate in their language. As in Niland's time, it is imperative that different languages are learnt in their communities because the Newcastle Dominican communities are multicultural.

### **3.4.3 Initial formation and vocations**

Another reason for few vocations to the congregation was that, although Niland faithfully took steps to attract vocations, there were no formation policies in place to guide the sisters. The first policy document on formation was only introduced much later in the history of the congregation, in 1992 by the congregation in England. It was tailored for the English-speaking sisters, but was also used in South Africa (because England and South Africa are one congregation, named the Newcastle congregation). This impacted negatively on vocations in South Africa. It was difficult to relate and implement the values of the



Dominican lifestyle to the reality of life in South Africa, based on the aims and objectives of that policy.

In 2002, a formation policy was drawn up by three leaders of initial Formation, which included the South African context. It is obvious from some of the principles in the policy that the congregation is acknowledging the pluralistic nature of the cultures of the members. To state a few:

Formators and members of initial formation communities will ensure that they have knowledge and esteem for their own culture and the cultures from which the formees come. Thus formators and members of initial formation communities, will be attentive to the level of the general culture of the formees and assist them in inculturating their own faith within the culture of their origins. This will involve the formee in personal education in her faith and the internalising of the Dominican spirituality. (Congregation of St Catherine of Siena Newcastle Natal, Initial Formation Policy 2002:3)

Although, in most cases, ministry is the determining factor in choosing members to make a community, sometimes character, temperament, and the attitude of members should be considered in making a community, especially to create pre-novitiate and novitiate communities. The initial formation community should be chosen carefully, because ‘the formation community is such that the candidate sees and experiences the type of life which will afterwards be hers’ (*Constitutions* 2000:25).

A community plays a big role in the success or failure of the vocations that come to the congregation, because they have to set a good example and demonstrate by their lives how to live a consecrated life. As they have to assess and recommend the candidate, they are called to be able to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit, and they must be people of integrity and wisdom.

But they can err, and vocations can be lost.

Although formation and culture are mentioned in policy statements, in reality, the application thereof is minimal. The reality is that culture is never talked about. Formators have very little knowledge of the formees’ cultures, and there does not seem to be a desire to do so as none of the sisters speak any of the formees’ indigenous languages. In addition, all the documents and programs are in the English language. There has never been any deliberate effort from leadership to organise a platform where cultures could be discussed as contributing factors to

the daily living of the Dominican life or to encourage the sisters to converse freely about their cultures. A free conversation on cultures could help people understand their call better, and may be able maintain their vocations.

The Newcastle Formation Policy document (2002:4, 9) also states that:

Each community should regularly evaluate their community life so that those visiting them may find a group of women who are endeavouring to live as faithfully as possible the essential values of Dominican life. Each community needs to be open, welcoming and accepting, of those who are visiting them, to enquire about our Dominican way of life. The pre-novitiate programme depends on the needs of the individual.

Although these statements are in the policy, and are positive and good in themselves, the question lies with their actual application to real-life situations. The pre-novitiate and novitiate programmes could include the formation of communities who receive candidates and cater for the multicultural identity of those who wish to join the Newcastle Dominicans.

At times, communities have had to contend with undemocratic, uncreative and negative leaders, who suffocated the vibrant and joyful spirit that the Newcastle sisters are called to demonstrate in their lives. Sometimes individuals would seem to occupy positions of leadership indefinitely, retarding renewal and creativity. This was the case with Niland and also of others. All the above have been experienced within the Newcastle congregation. Therefore, the formation would readily be challenged by some conservative sisters in communities, who sometimes resisted changes.

The Newcastle Dominican Constitutions do make provision for members to be expelled from the congregation:

In the case of grave scandal, or of extremely grave and imminent harm to the institute, a member can be expelled forthwith from the house by the major superior. If there is a danger in delay this can be done by the local superior with the consent of her council. The major superior if need be, is to introduce a process of dismissal in accordance with the norms of law, or refer the matter to Apostolic See. (*Constitutions* 2000)

Some sisters are asked to leave if they are not suitable for religious life. They may love material things excessively, or they may find they cannot live a celibate life. A few may be

addicted to substances and not be willing to be helped, while a number do not believe in structure and the Dominican way of life. Others leave because they cannot break away from their original culture to adapt to the new one. Some depart because of a mixture of the issues mentioned above. If better mentoring and formation practices were in place, more young sisters might be able to resolve their struggles and remain in the congregation.

Religious life is a special gift from God, which can, like any other vocation, be taxing both physically and emotionally. Women who develop psychological or emotional disorders, cannot, according to Canon Law, take vows. However, vowed members stay if they discover the problems after their final vows, and are looked after by the congregation.

Another formation issue, for anyone to be admitted as a Newcastle Dominican, is that one has to be free of serious diseases such as TB or HIV and other life-threatening diseases. This has been a continuous challenge to the congregation, as the question is being asked: Is this a form of discrimination? What does it do to potential vocations? Canon Law contains prescriptions about the physical and mental health of candidates, and these questions are debated in the congregation.

A lack of information and formation prior to joining religious life could lead to loss of vocations. Women leave the convent for different reasons. Some would leave during the process of discernment when they discovered that religious life was not for them. The study confirmed that even today, young people do not have enough information about the Dominicans. The empirical research will further investigate this issue.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the years from 1896 to 1947 saw massive contributions from Niland. She built the congregation during difficult times, including wars. She was the first to have the Constitutions for her congregation in South Africa approved. She defined the spirituality and the ministry of the congregation, educated the sisters, found vocations, and collaborated with others. She built many schools throughout the country and set an example of hard work, hospitality and a joyful spirit within the congregation.

One aspect of Niland's short-sightedness was conforming to the rule of *Arum Indigenarum*. This has impacted negatively on the vocations to the congregation to this day, because she accepted only local white women and those from overseas. This situation was compounded by the segregation laws of the colonial and later political systems of her time.

During the period from 1948 to 1980, the leadership and the sisters suffered under and conformed to the Apartheid laws. That meant curtailing their ministry among the local black people and therefore not being able to promote vocations among them, though they continued to attract white vocations on a small scale. Like many other congregations, they tended to work individually instead of collaborating with other organisations to support the work of the church and to reach out to other cultures. As discussed in the next chapter, many religious left their congregations during this period, especially after Second Vatican Council. The sisters also had no policy for vocations attraction. Though they struggled to attract more sisters, the strategy of a diversified ministry was used to enable the sisters to meet the needs of a range of people. However, concentrating on schools, colleges, universities and parishes in white areas brought them a few vocations.

During this period (1981–2019) more of those who joined, left. Later in this period there were some changes as the leadership drew up a clear vocations' policy, which is bearing some fruit. Younger members were trusted with responsibility, and a designated vocation promoter is a young local black woman, who understands both the Western and the African cultures. Slowly, the vocations are beginning to come.

In the next chapter, vocation attraction from Ireland and Germany will be discussed, because the first vocations to the Newcastle congregation came from these two countries. The vocation situation in Zimbabwe and Montebello will also be discussed, in order to compare their vocations to those of the Newcastle Dominicans.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE STATE OF DOMINICAN VOCATIONS IN THE GERMAN, IRISH, ZIMBABWEAN AND MONTEBELLO CONGREGATIONS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to determine the reasons for the decline and increase of vocations among the Irish, German, Zimbabwean and the Montebello Dominicans compared to those of Newcastle. This analysis will determine whether the Newcastle congregation can learn from the experience of the other groups. These congregations were chosen because of their historical, geographical, and cultural relevance to the Newcastle Dominicans. Ninety-eight per cent of the members of the Newcastle congregation originally came from Ireland or Germany. Presently, the majority of members are still of Irish origin. Although all the German sisters have died, they formed the first group of the congregation's membership and their legacy still exists.

The first part of the chapter will refer to the document *Perfectae Caritatis*<sup>6</sup> of 1965, which dealt with the renewal of religious life. The second part will be a short background on Irish and German religious vocations, because they had an impact on the decline in vocations to Newcastle. The third section will discuss the reasons for the overall decline in vocations among the Dominicans in Ireland and Germany. The fourth part will discuss the state of vocations among the Zimbabwean Dominicans. The fifth part will investigate the decline and growth of vocations among the Montebello Dominican. The sixth part outlines what could be learned by Newcastle Dominicans from the Zimbabwean and Montabello congregations.

### **4.2 Perfectae Caritatis and Vatican II**

#### **4.2.1 The context of Vatican II**

Finigan (2013) states that when the Vatican II Council met from 1962-1965, nearly twenty years after World War II ended, people were still experiencing its negative effects. People were longing for peace and unity after the war, and also for freedom from oppressive structures. Many hoped for progress, believed in science and the evolution of peoples; society

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<sup>6</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis* is a document issued by Vatican II which deals specifically with institutes of consecrated life in the Catholic Church. It is a decree on the renewal of religious life and was promulgated by Pope Paul IV on 28 October 1965 (see Flannery 1996).

as a whole was changing. Liberal ideals were becoming established in society and there was a greater consciousness of the need to safeguard individual human rights. The *Perfectae Caritatis* document was seen as one of the ways the church could meet the world's needs, particularly in the adaptation and the revival of religious life, for better interaction and ministry to the people of God, especially in mission areas.

#### **4.2.2 The content and intentions of Perfectae Caritatis**

This decree intended to revise the way religious life was lived out. It challenged religious to return to the sources of Christian life in general and to the primitive inspiration of the institutes, and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time ... as it is put before us in the Gospel. They should promote to the best of their ability ... the church's initiatives in biblical, liturgical, dogmatic, pastoral, ecumenical, missionary and social matters ... see to it that their members have a proper understanding of people, of the contemporary situation ... The manner of life, prayer and work should be suited to the requirements of culture and with the social and economic climate especially in mission territories (PC 2, 3).

The above quotation implies that religious who responded positively to these challenges would, among other things, focus on being the good news to the people among whom they minister, just as Christ became like us, 'who being in the form of God, did not count equality with God ... but he emptied himself ... becoming as humans are' (Phil 2:6–11). Religious are challenged to be open to the new conditions they meet in their life and ministry. In ministry and prayer life, the religious are expected to be conversant with the conditions and cultures of their communities in order to attract vocations.

*Perfectae Caritatis* states that:

Chastity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven ... must be esteemed an exceptional gift of grace, it frees the hearts ... for God and all humanity. Voluntary poverty, in Christ's footsteps, is a symbol of Christ who for our sake became poor. By their vow of obedience, religious offer the full surrender of their wills ... The religious dress is a symbol of consecration ... the example of their own lives is the best commendation of their institutes and is an invitation to others to take on religious life. (PC 12)

It was stated in chapter 2 that vows free one to give oneself to God and humanity. The examples of ethical behaviour, love, humility, sacrifice and community sharing by religious

challenge and invite others to join religious life. That can only happen with prayer and good formation.

The example of how the Newcastle Dominican sisters responded to the *Perfectae Caritatis* is discussed below.

#### **4.2.3 The challenge presented by *Perfectae Caritatis* to Dominican sisters**

All religious were challenged by *Perfectae Caritatis*. One challenge to the Dominicans in Newcastle was making sure that their members had a proper understanding of people in their contemporary situation, and that they assessed the present world wisely in the light of faith and apostolic zeal. As a group of people, they had remained largely isolated from some of the local cultures and people of South Africa due to the Apartheid system, which divided people according to race and culture. As the Newcastle sisters could not work closely with the local African people, a relationship with them never developed. As the sisters were never indigenised, they remained European and Irish, and did not adapt to the changed conditions of the time.

*Perfectae Caritatis* also called for the manner of life, prayer, and work of the religious to change to suit the conditions of the time, and to accord with the demands of the apostolate within the requirements of the culture and social conditions of the mission territories. In the previous chapter, it was mentioned that the local languages and cultures of African people were not included their liturgy, programmes of initiation, leadership, or their way of life. For the above reasons, the Newcastle sisters struggled to attract local vocations.

### **4.3 How did Dominicans in Germany and Ireland respond to *Perfectae Caritatis* and Vatican II challenges?**

#### **4.3.1 The German response to Vatican II challenges**

According to Stark (2000:125–127), Germany suffered a similar loss of vocations for not being able to implement the challenges of Vatican II. Arbuckle (1986:3–21) supports Stark, stating that in Europe, including Germany, most probably many left religious life during this period, and that the average decline was constant in many of the European countries. It was also during the early years after Vatican II that the number of vocations from overseas coming to the congregations in Zimbabwe and Newcastle dropped and, eventually, stopped.

#### **4.3.2 The Irish response to Vatican II challenges**

According to Donnelly (2000: np), the Irish Catholic Church had difficulty in responding to the alterations in the liturgy, theology, church governance and ecumenism promoted by the

Second Vatican Council. It was Marian in its devotional emphasis and devoid of a Scriptural tradition in implied scholarship. Frustrated by the rigidity of the Irish Church, some men and women left religious life after 1965, and the numbers have continued to drop ever since (Donnelly 2000:np). The decline of vocations in Ireland affected vocations in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

#### **4.4 Reasons for the overall decline in vocations among Dominicans in Ireland and Germany**

##### **4.4.1 External (social) reasons for the decline**

###### **4.4.1.1 Ideological movements**

In the 1960s, women and young people demanded equal rights and freedom from authoritarianism. It could also be argued that the youth of the time saw the church as one of the authoritarian powers and thus shied away from religious life. They became independent and pursued secular careers by which they began to identify themselves. Thayil (2019:1) further argues that in developed countries, families have become smaller and thus decreasing chances of numbers joining religious life. This is still the case today.

Schneiders (2000:195) says that ‘feminism and other liberation movements have made people aware of oppression, for example, participation in political oppression, economic fraud and the discrimination against women and children’. These circumstances created doubt and suspicion about religious life in many people’s minds. By way of contrast, in the Middle Ages, women like St Catherine of Siena and St Hildegard were accorded respect and advised bishops, Popes and kings.

###### **4.4.1.2 Secularisation**

Casanova (1994:1–40) alludes to the idea that in general, contemporary and various secular theories observe that modernity tends to weaken religious plausibility ... Further, these theories tend to posit the contemporary retreat of the sacred institutions. The privatization of faith ... shrinkage and decline of religion in public space, have seen ... decline in people associating themselves with any religion; the same applies to Catholics in Europe.

This decline was experienced in Germany and Ireland. Donnelly (2000:np), in his article ‘A church in crisis’, says that it had already started in 1979, after two decades of rapid economic



growth, openness to the outside world and sweeping cultural change. Malaise was shown by the fall in religious vocations, a decline in Mass attendance ... loss of moral credibility of the church, due to the apparent damaging inroads of materialism and secularism (Donnelly 2000: np). With the growth in secularism, religious life was relegated to the background. This is evident in the sharp decline of vocations to religious life. As noted earlier, the last vocation to come to the Newcastle sisters from Ireland was in 1977.

#### **4.4.1.3 Materialism**

In developed countries like Ireland and Germany, consumer cultures have had an impact on religious life and vocations. It is a culture that has been shaped by the values of materialism. It is a way of life that has little to do with the truth and reality ... it rests on a fundamental inversion of the values of the Christian tradition, in consumerism things become more important than persons. Persons begin to serve things. In biblical terms, this is called idolatry. (Leddy 1990:53)

It is difficult, in a culture that values things more than persons, to discover a deep personal relationship with God. Without a personal relationship with God, religious life makes no sense. In such a culture, vocations to religious life are a distant hope unless people become disenchanted with materialism. In materialistic societies such as in Germany and Ireland, as Donnelly has suggested earlier, religious life would hardly be a choice for young people because materialism and consumerism are closely linked.

To conclude this section, an emphasis on freedom and liberation, growing secularism and materialism tended to deter people from choosing religious life.

#### **4.4.2 Internal (church-related) reasons for the decline**

##### **4.4.2.1 Church scandals**

Instances of unethical behaviour by Catholic priests and members of religious orders have led to numerous allegations, mainly in Europe and America. The abuse includes especially young boys and girls. The accusations emerged from 1980 onwards Donnelly (2000:np).

Kulish and Donadio (2010) say that scandals of sexual abuse of young people in Germany had been there before, but it was only in the 1980s that they were publicised. The church authorities had made mistakes by hiding information about abuse. They state that:

The archdiocese said that a priest accused of molesting boys was given therapy ... and later allowed to resume pastoral duties, before committing further abuses and being prosecuted. Pope Benedict, who at the time headed the archdiocese of Munich and Freising, approved the priest's transfer for therapy. (Kulish & Donadio 2010:np)

The scandals are not only located in Germany. Other countries, like Ireland, are also implicated.

Donnelly (2000), of the Irish Church, agrees with Kulish and Donadio (2010) that:

Among the scandals ... in the 1980s, and especially the 1990s, are those arising from the disclosure of the sexual and physical abuse of children and adolescents in institutions run by religious orders male and female ... besides sexual abuse, there was ... physical deprivation and outrageous corporal punishment. (Donnelly 2000:np)

Simmermacher (2018:6) reports that 'the new scandals implicate all the continents'. He adds that 'the Catholic church's institutional culture of secrecy, its patriarchal structure, clericalism ... and shame remain powerful'. If the problem is not faced honestly and fairly by the church authorities, its negative effects will spread further throughout the church community, and negatively affect vocations to religious life.

#### **4.4.2.2 Male clericalism**

The Catholic Church is permeated by clericalism. Men are leaders in the church, and women are side lined. Glitz (2018:4) states that 'women are to be given more leadership roles if their voices are ever to be heard or have any authority'. She continues on the same page, saying that women do not feel part of the church, because 'if they did feel they were a welcome part, then they would fight no matter what role with all the weapons they possess which are not trivial things, for the church to follow Christ'. In the Catholic Church, it is the men who make decisions, because this practice is embedded in the tradition of the church. Young women who are part of the church, and who may experience the pressure of authoritative, narrow-minded priests, would not be attracted to religious life.

#### **4.4.2.3 Poor strategies for vocations attraction**

Ireland, in particular, had many sodalities that were attracted to Marian devotion. The sodalities were used to encourage vocations to religious life. Since the changes brought about by Vatican II, which emphasised Scripture and dedication to Christ, many of the sodalities faded away, and nothing was replaced them to encourage vocations. Since the sodalities faded away, few or no vocations have been encouraged by other organisations.

#### **4.4.2.4 Lack of identity and clarity**

A group of young people (Simmonds 2013:92–115) give additional reasons for the scarcity of vocations in England and Ireland. From the results of Simmonds' interviews with several young people in these two countries, the lack of vocations arises from, among other things, the initial impression religious make on young people. Confidence, freedom, joy and a sense of prayerfulness were some of the features they found attractive in some religious and lacking in others.

To conclude, the scandals and how the church authorities have responded to them may develop a negative attitude in people toward religious life, particularly among the youth, who are still searching for a way of life they want to embrace. However, the essentials of religious life lived to the full may reduce the effects of the scandals in the church. Any organisation, religious or secular, needs good leaders with vision (contrary to clericalism), a clear self-identity, sound ministries and structures, and clear strategies to attract others to their fold.

#### **4.4.3 The effect of this decline on the Newcastle congregation**

Firstly, the decline of vocations in Ireland and Germany meant that the Newcastle congregation had very few or no new vocations joining them. In addition, the Apartheid system in South Africa made it difficult for the sisters to receive local vocations.

Secondly, the majority of the sisters today have become inactive because of their age. Their main ministries in the schools, universities, hospitals and clinics have come to an end, and they have become invisible. The youth no longer see or know of them, hence the vocations to the Newcastle sisters have become very scarce.

Thirdly, young people desire a sense of identity, but the shortage of vocations has led to the sisters' spiritual and moral identity and mission becoming fainter, even unidentifiable. The Newcastle sisters could attract vocations if they still had a number of sisters in these ministries.

Fourthly, as the congregation has depended on foreign vocations, their life reflected the European way of life in terms of culture and language. This did not attract local vocations, and the congregation declined.

#### **4.5 Reasons for the increase of vocations in Germany and Ireland**

In the previous section, reasons for the decline of vocations are discussed. However, the reasons for the growth of vocations can also be identified.

##### **4.5.1 Social circumstances**

Social circumstances can also encourage vocations to religious life. Connolly (2017:1) states that, in the medieval period, people joined religious life for economic reasons. It was one way to escape the dangers of famine, diseases, and warfare. He states:

Historically, the church had no problem filling its seminaries, cloisters, and abbeys with monks and nuns and other religious. It was a respected life and an attractive alternative to the drudgery and danger of the medieval world. (Connolly 2017:1)

Particularly after World Wars I and II, the suffering and turmoil experienced by the people of Europe (including Germany and Ireland) brought them to faith and a better understanding of a life of sacrifice, so that young people were prepared to join religious life. Nolan (1988:67) agrees with this argument. He states that 'suffering, makes God visible as the one who is sinned against ... it is a sign of God's presence as the crucified Christ, it is the sign of the cross'. Young people living at that time saw religious life as a chance to do good by giving their lives to the service of others.

As noted later in this chapter, similar circumstances can be observed today in some parts of the world where vocations are growing. On the African continent, some poor and troubled countries have experienced a vocation boom. Therefore, it could be argued that social problems could propel young people towards religious life. Those disenchanted with secularism and materialism, for example, have also been attracted to new forms of vibrant religious life.

## **4.5.2 Church-related reasons for the growth of vocations**

### **4.5.2.1 Updated ways of living the religious life**

Although the unintended results of Vatican II, feminism, secularism, materialism, scandals in the church and other factors may have had negative effects on the religious life, particularly on vocations, some of these factors facilitated opportunities for vocations and new projects to religious life, albeit on a small scale.

Liam Walshe (2002:259–271) takes a more positive approach to vocation scarcity. He suggests that the diminishing members in Europe could be a positive omen for the orders and the church at large. He believes that fewer numbers challenge the apostolic religious to adjust their lifestyle to bring an authentic gospel to all they do or say. He sees the Holy Spirit as communicating with the church and religious through the decline of vocations. He believes that the decline in vocations can push religious to another level of spiritual growth, that is, to let go of what was and see God's hand in this phenomenon. He suggests that vocations scarcity is the opportunity for all religious orders to rid themselves of the idea that 'some things were grand and should last forever'. Similarly, Maddix (2002:235) acknowledges that many congregations in Europe have aged members. Nonetheless, he does not believe the scarcity of vocations is a sign of death and dying, but a challenge to change focus to be open to what God is saying to religious life at this moment. It is a challenge to have a vision for new ways of being a religious.

Maya (2017), in her talk delivered at Boston College on 12 April 2017, also argues that religious could use the present situation positively. She suggests that religious focus on what is still present, by discarding the use of words such as 'diminishment', 'small numbers', 'ageing' and 'dying out', and instead, find what is emerging from the church and religious life today. The religious are called to search the horizons and look beyond to find the seeds of their future. Firstly, she suggests in her talk that the lack of vocations is the opportunity for religious to acknowledge and embrace what they have now which would take them through the impasse, because what they need is already there. Secondly, she suggests that the religious learn faith anew, to be silent and listen, to do God's work not their own. They would then be able to go beyond their charisms and learn to work together in collaboration.

Maya deals with the gift religious can be to themselves and the wider society. These include building bridges, being people of contemplation, being the leaven that brings plenty from the small and creating the connectedness that responds to the needs of today. The religious have insights that are greatly needed in today's society: the ability to let go of the life that was because the now is here; the openness to change and the wisdom to entrust the work to those who follow; the awareness that the religious' trademark is the 'willingness' to serve. She suggests that the religious who are open to diversity are likely to grow and reproduce. To them, God is the God of today, who always calls to the future.

#### **4.5.2.2 Tradition, identity, and community**

Similarly, community, witness, friendship and clarity of identity are the features that young people seek in religious life. Because many young people come from individualistic societies, community and friendship would attract them. If religious have lost these characteristics as part of their structures and daily living, young people would not see what difference it would make to join religious life. Religious, whose identity is not clear, will struggle to attract young members. Young people feel hopeful and positive if they know what their mission would be if they joined. It gives them a sense of identity, as does dressing in a habit. They are also attracted by the structured life of the community, such as vows and prayer. Gilbert (in Simmonds 2013:96), states that young people are attracted by:

Liminality, fidelity, prayer, structure, and discipline were highlighted by the young people as characteristics of the type of religious life they are looking for. Religious who are prepared to live the life of uncompromising discipleship of Christ are attractive to them ... a life with a marked contrast of values and way of life, highlighting the prophetic dimension of a life consecrated to Christ. The truly evangelical life is attractive.

Simmonds (2013:96) further suggests that young people's lives are unstructured and chaotic and therefore they look to religious life to find a structured life, but they are put off by communities who seem to maintain themselves without reaching out to the world. They are attracted to those with strong gospel values who respond to the needs of the poor of the world. Some religious institutions no longer emphasise the wearing of the habit and veil or community living. This has blurred their identity. Leddy (1990:73) says: 'These institutions

face the ambiguities of trying to operate in a time of decline in the absence of a vital and common sense of meaning and direction.’

Although North America is not a focus of this dissertation, in the last ten years, in the USA pockets of Orders have seen some significant increases in vocations. As indicated by Stevens (2013) in his report, ‘Springtime for an American Order of Preachers’, he states:

After Vatican II, the ‘Nashville Dominicans,’ as they are known, elected to continue to follow their charism closely, retaining their religious habits, living in big communities, keeping to structured times for liturgy and meals and teaching in schools in big numbers. The Order has grown 46% in the past 14 years, and currently stands, at 300. (Stevens 2013; np)

This stability and structure seems to have attracted young people to their congregation.

The findings of *The Report for the National Religious Vocation Conference* (2009) point out the reasons for this positive but isolated upturn of vocations. It states that ‘not only good sophisticated methods of vocation promotion but for example, prayer, community, and ministry are the attraction’ (2009:117). The report noted that many of the successful institutions are characterised by a culture of vocations within the institute. In these institutes, everyone, not just the vocation director, has a sense of responsibility for vocation promotion and is involved in and supportive of vocation efforts. (2009:118)

Findings from this survey of religious institutions revealed that there is a ‘positive correlation between having a vocation director or promoter, especially one who is full-time, and having candidates and new members in initial formation’ (2009:118). Although the relationship ‘is not strong, statistically targeting high school students also appears to have an impact on attracting and retaining new members’ (2009:121).

To conclude this section, it is important for the Newcastle Dominicans to learn from these examples of growth of vocations. They could adjust their ways of living the religious life, let go of what is no longer there, and develop confidence in God’s call to them in the present. A strong formation promoter and a renewed focus on the essence of the Dominican tradition, identity and strong sense of community can lead them on a path of spiritual and vocational renewal.

## **4.6 Vocations among the Zimbabwean Dominicans**

### **4.6.1 A short historical outline**

As stated in the introduction, the Zimbabwean congregation was started by the German and Irish sisters who came from the King William's Town congregation of sisters in 1891.

According to 'Our story' (Dominican Missionary Sisters sa), a Fr Daignault asked Mother Mauritia for sisters to go to the north of the Zambezi River. Five German and Irish sisters started the missionary work there as teachers and did fieldwork. They also worked as nurses, though they were not professionals. They received training from the doctors on their way to the northern part of Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia).

They started their missionary apostolate in a primitive hospital in Rhodesia. It is stated in 'Our story' (Dominican Missionary Sisters sa) that, between 1892 and 1897, they established schools and hospitals in Salisbury, Fort Victoria, and Bulawayo. The sisters' ministry in Rhodesia was indispensable because of their commitment and efficiency in the schools and hospitals. The sisters were then asked by Fr Daignault to stay in Rhodesia, because he was concerned that the church might not grow there if the sisters left. Their stay there helped them to adapt to the new conditions and to train their recruits. 'Our story' (Dominican Missionary Sisters sa) adds that nineteen sisters, German and Irish, were reluctantly separated from the King William's Town congregation in 1898 to form a new congregation in Rhodesia. They had to form a new group, which eventually became the present Zimbabwean congregation. This had to happen because of the difficulties of communicating with the motherhouse in King William's Town, and the different social and physical conditions in Rhodesia at the time, such as unfriendly tribes, insurmountable terrain, and a lack of transport.

In the same year, the sisters travelled to Europe to train as nurses and to recruit sisters for the new congregation. They started a school for black girls in Chishawasha and visited the sick in the villages to supply medicine. For the next decades, the sisters moved deep into the villages to further the mission work.

According to 'Our story' (Dominican Missionary Sisters sa), although the number of sisters increased, their responsibilities also increased, particularly in the villages. They continued to work among the people in extreme poverty and difficulties. From 1914 to 1924, the sisters founded a convent in Strahlfeld for the formation of the young sisters. The new congregation



became a congregation of the pontifical right, and it was called The Congregation of St Catherine of Siena of the Third Order of St Dominic. From 1924 to 1939, a school for Coloured girls was opened in Salisbury to provide education for the marginalised. After the Chapter of 1924, the congregation's name changed to the Congregation of St Catherine of Siena of the Sisters of the Third Order of St Dominic. In 1926, the first black local women, from what was then Rhodesia, were received into the congregation, and more came afterward. In response to a papal document (refer to footnote pg 40) all the local sisters had to separate from the original congregation to form an indigenous congregation, namely, the Little Children of our Blessed Lady. When World War II started, no new vocations came to Rhodesia from either Germany or Ireland.

In 1946, after the approval of their constitutions, the name of the congregation changed again to the Dominican Sisters of Salisbury in Southern Rhodesia. New communities were established in Wales and new vocations were re-established coming from Germany and Ireland. The novitiate house was moved to Salisbury, Rhodesia and a second novitiate house was founded in Greenwich, England. According to 'Our story' (Dominican Missionary Sisters sa), in 1964, Northern Rhodesia (later Zambia) became independent, but the southern part remained white-ruled under discriminatory laws. 'Our story' (Dominican Missionary Sisters sa) states that: '[I]t remains a thorn in the flesh and a moral conflict for many sisters that no measures can be taken against the unjust racial laws that forbade classes in common for black and white students that was an ethical question.' They were, however, courageous enough to enrol African students in the existing schools.

From 1965, contrary to what was happening in South Africa, indigenous vocations were accepted into the congregation. In 1970, they opened their first novitiate in Ndola, Zambia. By 1971, Europe had experienced a severe vocation shortage, as many sisters left after Vatican II and therefore no new vocations came to Rhodesia. In 1973, a community was established in Colombia, South America to work among the poorest and the marginalised, while in Rhodesia, the racial laws increased problems for the sisters so much that four sisters were killed for resisting them. 'Our story' (Dominican Missionary Sisters sa) shows that, in 1978, the governance of the congregation was restructured, and the power was decentralised by establishing the 'regions' of Germany, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. From 1981, after the granting of independence in Rhodesia, the sisters were officially asked by the government to work hand in hand with the local people, in schools, hospitals, and other missionary work.

As stated in 'Our story' (Dominican Missionary Sisters sa), in 1986, the congregation gave priority to the religious and professional formation of their sisters. The number of local vocations began to grow, because the sisters worked closely with the local people. At their centenary, the congregation expressed their hope in the following words:

We give joyful witness to God's compassionate love and proclaim a message of hope wherever we are sent and make it a priority to respond to the new and urgent needs of the church and people. Our Dominican apostolate comprises of many services that make Christ better known and loved, promotes the growth of the whole person in Christ, can help spread the kingdom of God ... as women of faith we meet the challenges of our time. (Dominican Missionary Sisters sa)

In 1996, their ministry was redirected to concentrate on the HIV/Aids pandemic, thus providing education, support and care to those who needed it. From 1998, young sisters in temporary vows were sent to other countries for a year's experience of other cultures. In 2002, the Generalate was moved from Zimbabwe to England to promote good communication between the regions in different continents and for financial reasons. Based on this short historical outline, the analysis of the reasons for the decrease and growth of vocations among the Zimbabwean Dominicans will be discussed.

#### **4.6.2 Their response to Vatican II challenges**

The Zimbabwean Dominicans, who originated from Germany and England, established themselves earlier and quickly than the Newcastle Dominicans. As a country, Zimbabwe gained its independence earlier than South Africa's first democratic elections, and were able to draw local Zimbabwean women to their congregation. While they were affected by the decline of vocations from Germany and elsewhere, it did not retard their progress, because the number of local sisters was growing, and they were well-formed and educated to lead the congregation. English as a medium was not a problem for them. Their education was always of a better quality, and mission schools opened earlier than those in South Africa under the Apartheid regime.

The sisters knew the culture and language, they understood how the local people lived, and they worked closely with the local people. They were involved in the growth of their faith and they took the lead in the development of their education. Their response to *Perfectae Caritatis* is stated in their vision in this section above. It is to proclaim the message of hope

wherever they are sent, to respond to the new and urgent needs of the church, and to meet the challenges of their time. Their positive response attracted local vocations earlier than the Newcastle Dominicans did.

#### **4.6.3 Socio-political reasons for a decline in vocations**

There were times in the history of the congregation when vocations decreased due to socio-political conditions. According to Sr Ferrera Weinzierl (Interviews 2018), during the two World Wars, Germany had no vocations to send to Zimbabwe, since women had to replace men in factories. From 1970, German society became more materialistic and secularised, and vocations decreased.

In Zimbabwe, no vocations were attracted during the liberation struggle from 1972 to 1980. During the liberation wars, members of the congregation were killed, and 62 members left this African region to return to Germany. Although vocations in this part of Africa are steady now, there is a decline in numbers from the towns because secularisation and materialism are slowly creeping into Zimbabwe.

Although the sisters were established in Rhodesia, according to 'Our Story' (Dominican Missionary Sisters sa) the racial laws of the white government of Rhodesia placed increasing pressure on the missionaries and their activities. Weinzierl (Interviews 2018) declares that 'between 1965 and 1975 the number of sisters decreased from 572 to 479 and 56 of these left the convent'. Despite these circumstances, the vocations arising from within Zimbabwe (and Zambia and Kenya) have remained relatively constant and are drawn from the schools and all the other projects in which the sisters are involved.

#### **4.6.4 Church-related reasons for a decline in vocations**

Some of the reasons for the decrease of vocations in Zimbabwe are linked to the challenges of Vatican II. According to Weinzierl (Interviews 2018) and the short history above, many German sisters and fewer local sisters left the congregation after Vatican II; they felt they could do the same apostolate without being part of a religious order. Others transferred to the Second Order contemplatives. These orders are more enclosed, their apostolates are less active, and their ministries are within the confines of the convents and monasteries. In Zimbabwe, these were mainly German sisters; they had ministered in the country for a long time before the local sisters joined them.

Another reason was the 1932 response to the Pope's Encyclical, *Arum Indigenarum* of 1924, to form an indigenous congregation rather than being part of the Rhodesian Dominicans. In this way, there was a lull from the local vocations to the international Zimbabwean Dominicans, because the local vocations could not be part of the international congregation. Vocations were again attracted from the 1960s, long before Newcastle accepted local vocations.

To conclude this section, the challenges of World War II, Vatican II and the socio-political conditions in Zimbabwe did have some negative effects on the attraction of vocations, especially from Europe. However, the Zimbabwean Dominicans seem to have responded creatively to the *Perfectae Caritatis* call, because this group of sisters is not dying out, but is growing by attracting local women.

## **4.7 Reasons for growth**

### **4.7.1 Growth and indigenisation**

All five Zimbabwean Dominican foundation sisters came from Germany and Ireland. They were later joined by four more German sisters from King William's Town because of the growing amount of work. As early as 1896, they concluded that the Dominicans in Rhodesia should become independent of the Motherhouse in King William's Town to enable themselves to adapt to the local conditions. They could look for and train their recruits and, in this way, ensure and promote the growth and development of the church in Rhodesia.

In this way, they recruited the sisters from Germany and England to Rhodesia for the following sixty-five years. According to 'Our story' (Dominican Missionary Sisters sa), the number had risen to six hundred by 1960. They worked in schools and hospitals all over Rhodesia. The Dominican sisters also established themselves in the newly independent country of Zambia, where they quickly received local vocations. When in 1980 Rhodesia gained independence and became Zimbabwe, the new government asked the Catholic missionaries to continue giving their valuable help to developing the country. They worked side by side with qualified indigenous staff and were entrusted with the running of and responsibilities for the establishments and thus attracting vocations. From 1981 onwards, the number of young women wanting to become Dominican Missionary Sisters in Zambia and Zimbabwe increased steadily.

### **4.7.2 The decentralised power of the congregation**

According to ‘Our story’ (Dominican Missionary Sisters sa), their numbers increased as the leadership restructured their governance structures. By 1984, they had *regions*<sup>7</sup> in Germany, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and *delegations*<sup>8</sup> in Colombia, England and later in Kenya. They gave priority to their religious and professional formation. Two more houses of formation were established in Germany and Colombia. Between 1998 and 2000, a decision was made that all the English-speaking nationalities would be formed in the same area, thus establishing an international formation house in Lusaka. The young women in formation are sent for a year’s experience to a different region. The Generalate House was moved to England in 2002 to facilitate communication and internationality. The support given by leadership, either materially or spiritually, to those who do vocations promotion helped to encourage and inspire the sisters. They were properly trained and had easy means to travel to different places for vocations promotion.

### **4.7.3 Personal contact**

In Germany, the sisters did vocations promotion through mission magazines and pamphlets, personal visits, and contacts. They had a full-time vocations promoter, who worked for some time in parishes and schools on a missionary apostolate. In Africa, different age groups of sisters and novices go frequently to youth meetings and other gatherings to promote vocations. Personal examples of living a religious life, like faithfulness, humble service, and resilience, young women seeing sisters active in their apostolate and prayer were effective in attracting vocations (Weinzierl 2018 Interview). (The Montebello sisters, as noted below, also practice vocation attraction by personal contact.)

As the Aids pandemic became a challenge to all societies, particularly in Africa, the sisters established more projects in the health system and ministered there. All these factors facilitated the possibilities of vocation attraction to the congregation, as the sisters were visible and their ministry was clear for all to see.

This section concludes that the Zimbabwean Dominicans took up the challenges of Vatican II’s *Perfectae Caritatis* and so they saw an increase of vocations. Where they worked side by side with the local people, they attracted vocations. Where the socio-political conditions were conducive for the sisters and the local people to interact, the results were positive. The

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<sup>7</sup> An area becomes a region if there are fifteen or more sisters.

<sup>8</sup> If the number of sisters in an area is not enough to form a region, the area does not have a resident leader, but a delegation of sisters, who form a small community of between three and five.

decentralisation of power and restructuring of their governance brought local leadership, flexibility and a positive result to their vocations. Working closely with people and personal examples of spiritual life and moral conduct were other elements that attracted vocations to their congregation.

#### **4.7.4 A comparison of these vocations and in those in Newcastle**

Firstly, as stated in chapter 3, the Newcastle Dominicans did not manage to attract local vocations or keep those who joined them due to the provisions of *Arum Indigenarum*, which declared that all local vocations be trained separately from the international congregations. In Zimbabwe, this document has less effect today because their involvement and interaction with the local communities. Also cultural sensitivity and the formation of local vocations started far earlier than in the South African congregations. The impact of this ruling did not affect the Zimbabweans in the same way it did the Newcastle Dominicans.

Secondly, they had very few new vocations because of the impact that Vatican II had in Germany and Ireland. In addition, the Apartheid system in South Africa impacted negatively on vocations locally. This differs greatly from their sisters to the north. As Zimbabwe received their independence earlier than South Africa and began to work closely with the local communities, they received many young women into their congregation.

Thirdly, the Zimbabwean Dominicans developed good strategies to promote vocations, such as the formation of well-functioning teams, personal contact with those who showed an interest in religious life, the decentralisation of power, the involvement of local young women who easily attracted other young women, and well-established formation programmes. The Newcastle sisters had very few local sisters who could understand the local language and culture, and they only developed their formation policies in the late-1990s. Education among the local Zimbabwean people was of a much higher quality than South Africa, as they followed the British system. In South Africa, the indigenous people were subjected to a poorer quality of education due to the Apartheid laws.

## **4.8 Vocations among the Montebello Dominicans**

### **4.8.1 A short historical outline**

According to Lembede (2015:1), the Montebello congregation near Greytown in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa started with three postulants, who had joined the Oakford sisters in about 1923. However, they could not be accepted as members because of their class and colour and therefore had to be trained separately by Mother Euphemia Ruf. Their formation house was in Montebello, which had previously been owned by Oakford, but had been purchased for the new congregation. Mother Euphemia and two other German sisters separated from the Oakford sisters to start the Montebello congregation, because more young local women had joined, and the number was growing. Their spirituality, charism and prayer had attracted many young women to the congregation.

Their novitiate was started in 1926. Since the number of the local sisters grew in Montebello, their presence and ministry became effective among the people. By 1939, there were twenty-five sisters of the new congregation. Fourteen members were added when a group from the Newcastle congregation joined them under the *Arum Indigenarum* ruling from Rome. The new congregation was affiliated with the Dominican Order in 1940. As Lembede (2015:4) stated:

[S]oon the Montebello Dominicans developed their spirituality and characteristics of compassion, hospitality, and generosity. Apart from teaching in schools, the apostolate of nursing the patients was immediately started to meet the needs of the local people.

The congregation spread to other areas of KwaZulu-Natal.

After the 1944 Visitation, which actually took place in 1946, the sisters received their constitutions from Rome with the approval of the Holy See. The sisters had grown and matured in the religious life and Dominican spirituality. The Montebello sisters grew in number. By 1960 there were fifty-eight finally professed sisters and five in temporary vows. At the 1960 Chapter, Mother Euphemia Ruf was elected the first prioress general of the Montebello Congregation, since she and two other German sisters had been transferred to Montebello from the Oakford sisters.

Mother Euphemia fostered the Dominican spirituality and charism at Montebello. This charism, while Dominican in its nature, focused on the local culture. The indigenous Zulu people related well to this charism and spirituality, that is, living in big communities, having regular common prayer and using indigenised liturgies. This was as a result of having a number of local sisters as their members.

According to Lembede (2015:5), their ministry focused on the education of young women who would normally have less opportunity for education, due to the unethical cultural reasons which discriminated against a girl child gaining formal education. That was a very positive way to relate to young women at the time, so they grew to know the sisters and their spirituality.

Lembede (2015:5) states that, in 1961, Mother Euphemia received permission and support from the government of South Africa to build a home for the physically challenged, which began operation in 1962. Patients came from all over South Africa to the Montebello hospice, where they were cared for by the sisters. A home for abandoned children was built through the help of the German organisation, Vianney-Gesellschaft in Uberlingen, Germany.

Mother Euphemia recruited young people from Germany for missionary work. One joined the congregation, while others remained missionary workers as volunteers for several years and returned to Germany in the 1970s. By 1966, there were seventy-eight sisters. Lembede (2015:6) noted that the period after Vatican II was a difficult time for the congregation. Though the ministry grew during this period, many sisters left the congregation.

Another issue that affected the congregation and vocations was the disunity which grew among the sisters, as a result of a subsequent power struggle among the leadership. An interim leader was elected for ten years (1975–1986), after which the first African General Prioress was elected in 1986. Since then, the leadership of African sisters has evolved.

The structure of leadership has since changed and the members are elected into positions for the stipulated number of six years. The Mother General has four councillors, who also have a stipulated number of years in the position. The sisters have a large pool from which to choose their leaders, because they have no pressure of vocation scarcity.

The vocations have continued to join the congregation, and collaboration with other Dominicans has been encouraged. These include cooperation with FEDOSA, the Australian



Dominicans, and the Blauvelt Dominican sisters of New York. From this collaboration, the Montebello sisters have expanded their scope as a congregation in that they share information and ideas from other parts of the world. Student sisters, who have had the experience of studying and ministering in America, plough that back into their local communities, albeit on a small scale. From 2011, new ministries of retreat services, homes for teenage mothers and farming have been established.

#### **4.8.2 Their response to Vatican II challenges**

The Montebello Dominicans originated as a local congregation. Their historical context made it easier for them to respond to the challenges of the *Perfectae Caritatis* as a congregation. All their members are local sisters with one isiZulu culture, nationality, tradition and language. They easily drew local vocations because of the easy interaction with them. They minister among them and they understand the local culture. They could easily collaborate with the local communities to share ideas and for the growth of their faith. This context worked positively for them. Their numbers grew faster; some sisters assumed the responsibilities of leadership early and could make suggestions on different structures of the congregation, i.e. liturgy, formation programmes, government and the ministry of the congregation. Nevertheless, there were times of both decline and growth in the congregation.

#### **4.8.3 Reasons for the decline**

##### **4.8.3.1 Socio-political reasons – the Apartheid policy**

The Montebello congregation emerged as a result of the provisions of the *Arum Indigenarum* document and the segregation policy of the Apartheid system, which classified people according to race. That meant that young black women could not be part of the Oakford Dominicans because it was a white congregation. The Montebello congregation was not able to attract white South African vocations because of the unethical laws that separated whites and blacks from living and working together.

##### **4.8.3.2 The decline of moral values and lack of parenting**

Lembede and the Montebello Formation Team (Interviews 2018) say that the decline of moral values in society has led to parentless families. The lack of firm and tender parenting has resulted in a generation of youth with very little spiritual formation. Many young

people are brought up by single parents, due to HIV/Aids. Some join the congregation, while deep down they are just looking for parents. Eventually, they leave the congregation. This has been their experience as a congregation.

In conclusion, the particular reasons for the decline of vocations among the Montebello congregation were mainly due to Apartheid policy. The decline in family life and moral values that have crept in among the youth and in society at large, have been a challenge to young people.

#### **4.8.3.3 Materialism**

Lembede and the Montebello Formation Team (Interviews 2018), felt that the desire to own money, things, status and the claim of personal rights have crept into the convent life. As some sisters work for the government, they had to open bank accounts. The temptation of handling money has cost them vocations, in that some were tempted to choose money over their vocation. Independence from structured life (community life), and losing interest in lifelong commitment has led to the decline of young women wanting to join the congregation.

#### **4.8.3.4 Disunity in the congregation**

In the Lembede and the Formation Team's response (Interviews 2018), the period between 1973 and 1980 saw a decrease in the vocations to the Montebello congregation because several of the sisters left and no new members came, as a result of the leadership crisis in the congregation. There was disunity caused by a power struggle among the leadership, which affected young members in the formation, who decided to leave the congregation.

#### **4.8.3.5 Church-related scandals**

According to Montebello Dominican Formation Team (Interviews 2018), people in their communities have lost interest in seeking information about what religious life means. The life of a religious is slowly disappearing from the minds of many people because of these scandals. This has been their experience from the conversation they have had with people they minister to and with whom they work.

#### **4.8.4 Reasons for growth**

##### **4.8.4.1 Contextual reasons for the increase**

The Lembede and Formation Team (Interviews 2018) view culture as playing an important role in vocation attraction. Montebello, as a Diocesan congregation and a congregation of one culture, seems to attract many women of similar culture, which is isiZulu. The sisters themselves cherish being of the same culture, and find it easy to settle. This situation has helped maintain the numbers that have joined them. Although being a single culture has worked for them so far, they are aware of its disadvantages. Hence the 2008 Chapter has changed this, and they now embrace other cultures.

The foundress's charism of compassion, visibility and embracing the culture of the local people (promoted in *Perfectae Caritatis*), attracted them to religious life. Inspirational leadership in the early and recent years of the congregation, a well-functioning vocation team and creative selection methods have helped to build the congregation with new members. Judging from the vocations they receive, the Montebello Dominicans responded much better to the challenges of *Perfectae Caritatis* than the Newcastle sisters did. Their change was gradual in that they discarded the wearing of the mantle first, then their veils no longer covered the whole head, but they still retained their habits.

##### **4.8.4.2 Selection methods**

According to Lembede and the Formation Team (Interviews 2018), from 1945 to 1970, the vocations increased because there was no emphasis on education and age. This method worked for a while, until it was changed for a better method of educating them before they joined the congregation. Another reason for the growth was the foundress's (Sr Euphemia) personal charism and ethical spirit of compassion for the poor African people around the area of Montebello, which attracted vocations to the congregation. Today their formation is even better in that the sisters are trained early and given responsibilities to gain experience and confidence in being a religious sister.

#### **4.8.4.3 An established Vocations Team**

Before 1980, a Vocations Team was formed. Members of the Team are sisters trained for the ministry of formation. They are of varied ages and experience in religious life. The Team's task is to hold vocation workshops in parishes and to invite young women to experience religious life for a short period with the sisters in their communities. They journey with them in different stages of initial formation. This helps young women to be grounded in religious life. For the professed sisters, regular workshops and seminars take place at least four times a year.

#### **4.8.4.4 Leadership**

Support of different kinds from the congregation's leadership has been of great importance; for example, all the finances and the activities of vocation promotion are supported by the leadership. They also help with interviews and communication with the families and communities of the aspirants. They organise the celebrations of different stages of formation and invite those who show interest in religious life to encourage them. They offer a witness of how the Dominicans experience their joys in celebrating the life they choose. Younger members of the congregation are given opportunities to take responsibilities at different levels of leadership, thus attracting other young people to give themselves to serve responsibly.

#### **4.8.5 A comparison of these vocations with those in Newcastle**

In chapter 3, it was established that the Newcastle sisters lost vocations due to the *Arum Indigenarum* ruling and after Vatican II. The Montebello congregation lost fewer sisters, as they responded better to the *Perfectae Caritatis* decree and were not affected by the Apartheid policies enforced in South Africa. They have kept to the tradition of big communities and working in schools and parishes. They also have sound methods of selection and vocation promotion, and they still wear their habits. The Newcastle sisters do not use their habit regularly and they have small communities and sometimes sisters minister individually, so they are not seen or well-known by the people. Therefore, have received very few or no vocations in recent years.

#### **4.9. A summary of the general reasons for the decline and growth of vocations in African congregations**

Generally, the reasons for the decline and growth of vocations in the African congregations of Zimbabwe, Montebello, and Newcastle have several commonalities. The differences are minimal.

The early history of all the congregations showed very little scarcity of vocations, but after Vatican II, vocations began to drop in the church and many congregations, particularly in Zimbabwe and Newcastle. In Zimbabwe, Vatican II impacted negatively on vocations at first because many sisters left the congregation. It was also during this time that some joined the enclosed, contemplative congregation and thus the number decreased. The earlier application of *Arum Indigenarum* affected the international congregations negatively.

The socio-political conditions in Zimbabwe in the 1970s caused many German sisters to return home, and some died in the wars, thus decreasing the vocations there. In the towns, secularisation and materialism crept in, therefore very few young women chose religious life.

However, the Zimbabwean sisters quickly re-established themselves, by working closely with the local people and attracting many young women. They decentralised power so that leadership and responsibilities included local, young and older sisters. This attracted vocations to them.

The Montebello Dominicans suffered from the Apartheid laws, which did not allow them to include other races as members of the congregation. The decline of moral values in society has created a large number of young people without families, spiritual faith or a sense of direction, making it difficult to foster vocations in such a context. For a time, the disunity in the congregation reduced the energy for vocations attraction.

There were other factors that attracted vocations to the congregation. The *Arum Indigenarum* ruling was a positive factor for them, as they received vocations from it. The congregation is situated among people of the same isiZulu culture and the sisters minister among them. The sisters have established strong vocation teams and local leadership. These make it easy for them to attract new vocations. They wear their habit as a witness of who they are, and they still have big communities with regular liturgy.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

This chapter analysed the reasons for the growth and decline of vocations in Ireland and Germany, because vocations in these countries impacted the vocations in Zimbabwe and Newcastle. Vatican II challenges were not implemented properly, therefore many congregations did not manage to attract vocations. Young people valued freedom, and women wanted to be liberated from male, authoritarian control. Secularism and materialism grew, which impacted negatively vocations to religious life. Religion became less important to young women and owning property became important, thus the vows of obedience and poverty became less attractive. Many young women have valued things rather than discovering deep relationship with God. In such cultural contexts, it would be difficult to inspire vocations.

The church scandals have repelled young people from joining religious life. The tendency for the church to hide the abuses has influenced how young women respond to the idea of religious life. Men in the church assume superior positions, thus women and their talents are relegated to the background. This influenced young women to avoid joining religious life.

Methods and strategies to attract vocations were poor. Before the two World Wars and Vatican II, the church was seen as providing opportunities for service, but later, when the larger society could provide many career opportunities for women, the chances of them joining religious life became very small.

In Germany and Ireland, religious life lost identity and clarity. Leddy (1990:73) suggests that religious were less visible; they seemed to show no clarity and confidence in who they are.

However, there were times when vocations were in abundance in Germany and Ireland. This was brought about by social circumstances, albeit negative, like wars, economic decline and suffering. Some young women did commit themselves to the life and served the people of God. The religious who responded to the call to adjust their lives in a context of diminishing vocations, did see growth in different ways, even though it was not in the number of vocations.

The religious who heeded the call to transform and see God's providence in the scarcity of vocations, adjusted their ways of being religious in the present. The religious who had the confidence in present and were able to let go of what no longer existed, were able to create space for God to guide them to the next steps they needed to take. In Germany and Ireland,

those who were ready to be the new salt or the small mustard seed from whom plenty could grow for today's needs became fruitful.

Those congregations which kept the tradition, identity and community structure and ministry seemed to attract vocations. These congregations are easily visible, and could attract attention and possibly vocations.

What, then, can the Newcastle Dominicans learn from this? The Newcastle Dominicans would do well to implement the call of Vatican II to 'adapt to the modern conditions, so that the preaching of the Gospel to all nations may be effective' (*Perfectae Caritatis* 1965:393–401). The Newcastle Dominicans could learn that religious life will compete with other ideologies, and they should develop strategies to challenge these ideologies in order to attract vocations.

Church scandals will always have a negative impact on the vocations to religious life. The call to the Dominican sisters is to take a stand and speak against them. In order to avoid floundering as a congregation, it is important to maintain a vibrant spirituality, sound traditions, a clear identity, including the use of the veil and/or habit, which have attracted vocations because the sisters were identifiable. A joyful, free and prayerful spirit is particularly attractive, as is the moral integrity and mission work of the sisters.

The Newcastle sisters could learn that vocations could come even from the conditions that would seem unlikely, that is, from the poor, the suffering or conditions of illness. Scarcity of vocations could be a call to adjust to new ways of being religious – it is a call for a transformation of mind, spirit and structures.

The current scarcity of vocations could be a call to the Newcastle Dominicans to renew their faith and have confidence in who they are as religious, because God is at work in the present. It is a call to let go of what is no longer there, and to focus on being joyful and grateful for what is there. This response is life-giving and could attract new vocations.

## **CHAPTER 5: THE FINDINGS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **5.1 Introduction**

It was stated previously that one of the tools to be used to investigate the reasons for the scarcity of vocations to the Dominican sisters of Newcastle was to employ qualitative empirical research by using a questionnaire administered to a relatively small group of people. This method is necessary since not enough has been written on the subject of vocation scarcity, particularly within the Newcastle congregation. The aim is to learn from the ideas, opinions, and experiences of the participants. The empirical study also tests the findings drawn from the theoretical research in the earlier chapters.

#### **5.1.1 Qualitative research**

Mason (2002:5–6) suggests that qualitative research does not use a single philosophical approach to its investigation, though it has common elements. It is research that collects data to interpret meaning from it in order to understand the social life of a particular population or place. It focuses on the micro-level of the daily interactions.

#### **5.1.2 Methodology of data collection**

In this research, the analysis of written material formed the greater part of the investigation. Theoretical data was collected from books, journals, church documents, reviews, newspapers, publications, and letters. The material was read and issues related to the scarcity of vocations were analysed. In addition to this theoretical research, an empirical study was also conducted by means of structured questionnaires.

The structured questionnaire was personally administered, either by myself or another sister. This method was chosen to uncover additional information from the participants on vocations scarcity. The qualitative method plays an important part in identifying people's perceptions of the sisters and their ministries and lifestyle. This method was firstly chosen because it can provide information which could clarify why vocations to the Newcastle Dominicans are so scarce, whereas the problem did not exist in Niland's time. Secondly, because the identity of the respondents is protected, it frees them to answer the questions, especially the open-ended questions, openly and honestly.



### **5.1.3 Choice of participants and questionnaire design**

Twenty-two people were asked to respond to the questionnaire. This relatively small number of participants is judged to be adequate because the dissertation is mainly based on theoretical research. The empirical research supplements the theoretical research to shed more light on the reasons for vocation scarcity to the Newcastle Dominicans.

How was the questionnaire designed? The structure of the questionnaire focused on certain areas. Firstly, questions addressed to the youth and parishioners focused on prayer life, family, and their understanding of vocation and call. They were also asked for their opinion about sisters' visibility among the people, their perceptions of the sisters and their ministry, the awareness they have of themselves and the communities around them, and their opinion about the reasons for the scarcity of vocations to the Newcastle Dominicans. Secondly, questions to the sisters centred around their calling, religious experiences, their perception of the youth who may be attracted to religious life, and their opinion about vocations. Thirdly, information was solicited about the experiences of the religious life of those who left the convent, their reasons for leaving religious life, their opinions about the attitudes to the religious life of the youth, and how vocations to the Dominicans can be attracted.

### **5.1.4 Method of conducting the questionnaire**

The population (or purposive) sampling method was used. 'Population sampling simply means that participants are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them holders of the data needed for the study' (Maree 2010:79). The participants were selected to represent the target population for the question under investigation. A total of twenty-two people were asked to respond to the questionnaire.

For Group A, two groups of participants from parishes in Durban and Newcastle, where the sisters ministered, were chosen: eight learners from Newcastle Dominican schools – of different races and cultural backgrounds (all eighteen years and above) were selected – both girls and boys (because at this stage young women's opinions and choices are influenced by their male peers and male Dominicans also struggle to attract South African vocations). The young participants (learners) represented the youth and their perception of Dominican vocations and vocation scarcity needed to be elicited. In addition, within this group, five adult parishioners in parishes where the sisters had worked, were interviewed.

For Group B, four Newcastle Dominican sisters of different ages, races and cultural backgrounds were asked to fill in the questionnaire.

For Group C, three ex-Dominicans (who left before they made final vows) were asked to fill in the questionnaire. These ex-Dominicans were chosen according to their age, race, cultural backgrounds, and the number of years in religious life, to present their insights of the period they had spent in religious life. Later, one Zimbabwean Dominican sister and one Montebello Dominican sister were also asked to respond to the questionnaire, as their congregations are still attracting vocations.

All the groups of participants filled in the questionnaire: older girls and boys in Dominican schools, adult parishioners, retired sisters (in South Africa and overseas, who had worked in South Africa), ex-Dominicans from Newcastle and two sisters from Zimbabwe and Montebello congregations. All the participants signed an informed consent form before they could participate in the research. The information did not need to be recorded by myself and then transcribed; it was available in written form on the questionnaire. The views of the interviewees and, where relevant, some of their actual answers appear in the dissertation itself.

All these participants are an appropriate choice because they were willing participants, who did not have to be persuaded to take part in the interview. They qualified to provide the required information, and they were credible and reliable. Data was established as sound and trustworthy by making sure that the questions were as clear as possible, and by comparing their answers to different questions.

### **5.1.5 Data collection**

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:143), 'qualitative research is by its nature, flexible and open-ended, so continues to evolve over the project'. To collect data for this research, a pilot study was first done to test the questionnaire. Some questions had to be rephrased to improve their clarity and a few new questions had to be added to provide more information in certain areas.

Three types of questions were used: closed questions, open-ended questions, and questions that offered several options from which to choose. Because the questions could be developed in advance, this method ensures consistency across that range of participants. Closed questions can be easily collected and compared. Open-ended questions are used because this study needs to explore views, experiences, ideas, attitudes, and insights of the participants about the scarcity of vocations to the Newcastle Dominicans. Some questions offer several options from which the interviewees could choose. These are investigative questions that aim

to obtain clarification. They are also used to corroborate the data emerging from other questions.

I divided the adult parishioners (who were part of Group A) into groups of two and three, according to their geographical location. I met with three parishioners first and the other two on another date. I explained all the procedures, what the research expected of them, what it meant for them to make an informed choice to participate voluntarily in the research, and decided with them on which dates it would be convenient for them to fill in the questionnaire.

To ensure that the sisters who helped me collect the required data from the learners who were competent to do so, I met with those helpers in advance to train them on the required procedures for administering the questionnaire. They organised the dates and times to meet with the youth in the Dominican schools. These sisters administered the questionnaire in three schools. One school was administered by me. All pupils in the schools could speak English, and for those who would need interpretation, the sister standing in for me speaks isiZulu, so she could provide clarification, where required.

I met with the current sisters to explain the purpose of the research and what would be expected from them. I assured them that participation was voluntary and explained the importance of making an informed choice. The questionnaire was administered by me. All the sisters speak the English language. As noted in chapter 1, I also met with the Montebello Formation Team to explain the purpose and expectations of the research. I e-mailed the explanation and purpose of the research and then the questionnaire to the Zimbabwean formator, Sr Weinzierl, to which she responded positively.

As far as the ex-Dominicans and the sisters who are overseas are concerned, a letter was sent in advance to ask them if they would be willing to respond to the questionnaire; all the necessary information about the research was stated together with the reasons for the study. I e-mailed the questions and asked them to respond and return the responses by e-mail. The questions were in English and, as all the sisters are English-speaking, no interpretation was needed. I provided a date for the return of the responses.

Before data was analysed and interpreted, it had to be collected. One hundred per cent responded to the questionnaire. The answered questionnaires from the participants were

collected either physically or by mail. The responses to the different questions from various groups were read several times and then collated.

### **5.1.6 Data analysis and interpretation**

According to Babbie (2007:378, in De Vos et al 2011:399), ‘qualitative analysis is the ... non numerical examination and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meaning and patterns of relationships’. However, it may never be possible to arrive at the absolute truth. ‘Data analysis is the process of establishing how participants make meaning of the phenomenon under study, including analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, and values’ (Niewehuis 2015:99).

The responses of the participants were read several times to gain insight into their views and I wrote down the ideas that came to mind as I read. A list of the themes that had emerged from different data was written down, and I noted if there was any duplication. Similar thematic data was put together and I compared what different people said concerning the same questions. I also compared the views of the interviewees to the information gathered in the theoretical research.

From Section A, the following information was required: What kind of family and prayer life the parishioners and the youth had, who Jesus Christ is for them, and what perception they had of the sisters. The questions also enquired about their awareness of themselves and the society around them, their opinion of the church and what they know about a call, especially a vocation, particularly to religious life, and their ideas about attracting young people to religious life. Their understanding of who the Dominicans, particularly the Newcastle Dominicans, are, their mission and ministry, why there is vocation scarcity to religious life today was solicited. They were also asked about the role played by the church, society, political situations, and culture in relation to the scarcity of vocations.

Section B of the questionnaire inquired about the amount of information the sisters had before they entered religious life, their own experiences of religious life, their opinions about the youth of today, vocation attraction, the church, and the role played by culture and race in community.

Section C sought information about the ex-sisters' experience of religious life while they were sisters, their opinion about vocation attraction, and the role played by the church in attracting or not attracting vocations to the Newcastle sisters. Questions were asked about the information they had of religious life before they joined the congregation and information about their reasons for leaving religious life was solicited.

As a researcher, I was aware of my personal interests in the process of data interpretation, namely that, as a religious sister in the Newcastle congregation, I would like to see more women being attracted to religious life. Therefore, my proposals and suggestions as to how vocation scarcity could be addressed were offered only after the theoretical and empirical research had been done diligently.

#### **5.1.7 Ethical considerations**

As noted in section 1.6, ethics in research is very important, particularly when human participants are involved. A researcher should ensure that the responses of the participants remain confidential. Therefore, their names are not provided in the discussion of the results, and care is taken that their identities cannot be recognised when their views are discussed.

Participants were appropriately chosen and the data was accurately collected. As far as possible, findings were not distorted, interpretations were based on the evidence accumulated and the information was not misused. I also described my empirical findings as fairly as possible.

In the following section, a description and analysis of the findings of the questionnaire will be provided. Each group will be discussed in separate sections A, B and C.

#### **5.2 Group A: Learners in Dominican schools and parishes**

This group includes eight older learners from the Newcastle Dominican schools and five parishioners from parishes where the sisters work. Thus, a total of thirteen people from this group were interviewed and they all responded to the questionnaire (100% response).

### 5.2.1. Theme: Prayer life, vocation and Jesus Christ and his teachings

The following questions were asked:

*‘How often does the family gather for prayer?’ ‘How often does the family gather to watch TV?’*

*‘How are Jesus’ teachings relevant to you today?’*

The responses were as follows:

Youth		Adults	
5	‘We gather for prayer every evening and watch TV whenever we find the time.’	3	‘We gather every evening for prayer and TV when we get time.’
2	‘We gather for prayer on Sunday and watch TV every day.’	1	‘We never gather to pray as a family but we often come together to watch TV.’
1	‘We never gather for prayer as a family we pray individually and watch TV anytime’	1	‘We never pray together as a family we sometimes gather to watch soccer together.’
3	‘His teachings are important, we even collect food parcels for the poor at school.’	1	‘I place Jesus’ teachings in all things I do because I believe he is my guide.’
2	‘I think Jesus teaches us to pray for ourselves and others, we do that at school.’	2	‘If I am under pressure Jesus comes to mind, and I hope He comes to rescue.’
1	‘Sometimes I think of what Jesus says in the Bible.’	1	‘Although I do not think of them always they are important.’
1	‘We don’t talk about Jesus’ teachings at home.’	1	‘I am not sure’

These responses suggest that more than 50% of both the youth and the adults do gather for prayer, but almost the same percentage of both groups gather to watch TV. Prayer is still important to young people, though more gather to watch TV. More than 50% of both the

youth and parents think Jesus’ teachings are important today. The school seems to have more influence on the youth to practice Jesus’ teachings, because five children learn to share and learn about Jesus’ teaching from school.

In chapter 2 it was stated that prayer is part of the four pillars of the Dominican charism. Niland grew up in a prayerful family, and she was attracted by the prayer life of the King William’s Town Dominican sisters, whom she eventually joined before she became a Newcastle Dominican. She also made it a priority as a leader that the sisters grew spiritually. This means that prayer is important for a vocation to grow.

These findings challenge Dominicans to make prayer a visible, positive and tangible value through their own lives, e.g. to take prayer and the results of prayer to the youth and also to make use of electronic means to stress the importance of prayer for all and life as a religious for some.

How could this be done? The sisters could design an informative Dominican website to show their ministries and common life which the youth could access in their own time to see the sisters at prayer and work. The sisters could have a programme, whether on TV or Facebook, where young people could share their own experiences of prayer with the sisters, or the sisters could use the social media to inform, guide, and share about each other’s vocations.

Next the participants were asked: ‘*How do you measure goodness and success in your life? Choose from the given answers.*’

Youth		Adults	
6	‘The work one does, success, freedom, property are a measurement for me.’	3	Possessions and Christ’s teachings measure how good one is.
1	Following Christ and his teachings will show how good I am.	1	Knowing Christ and his teaching measure how good one is.
1	Possessions and property are a measurement of how good one is.	1	Possessions are a measurement of goodness.

These responses show that almost all the youth think that to have possessions, freedom and success is the answer to the good life. Christ’s teachings do not seem to be the yardstick used to measure goodness and the importance of life. This seems to suggest that values for young people are different from those of adults. Young people who participated in this research

seemed to be more materialistic than adults. This expresses the culture of many young people in South Africa today. Long term commitments are simply not common.

In chapter 3, it was noted that vocations dried up in Germany and Ireland when those countries became richer and more materialistic. The Newcastle Dominicans received very few or no vocations from the white, richer and more materialistic communities in Germany, Ireland or South Africa. This means that the Newcastle sisters may not receive vocations from African communities today which are also influenced by materialistic values. Section 4.4.1.2 alluded to the idea that social circumstances could encourage or hinder vocations to religious life. Hence, Dominicans will need to challenge and question these materialistic values. Those who question and turn away from the materialistic world may choose religious life as a place for developing and growing in the knowledge of God.

This question was asked next: ‘*What do you think your call is? Choose from the given answers.*’

<b>Youth</b>		<b>Adults</b>	
6	To get married, have family and money come first not religious life	4	To be a good Christian and follow Christ’s teachings
1	To spread the Good News	1	To be more involved in the community
1	To join the Dominicans		

The responses show that young people are interested in marriage and family, but in recent times some families have become smaller, thus limiting the possibilities of vocations from big families as was the case previously. The adults are aware of Christ’s teaching and are willing to share with others. Among the youth, only one wants to join religious life. This suggests that, in their own lives, young people see and experience married life lived out more often than they see religious life lived out. Married life is attractive to them. Celibacy is also not strongly valued in African culture.

To conclude this section, young people from different backgrounds have similar ideas about religious life and the church. They have a positive attitude toward prayer, and appreciate who the sisters are and their service, but they are likely to choose marriage over religious life. Group A challenges Dominicans to reflect on their ministries and engage in asking how they could strengthen the faith of young people and draw some of the youth towards religious life.



### 5.2.2 Theme: Your perception of the sisters

Below, several questions and the responses of Group A are provided. This was the response to the question: *'Are there any sisters in your area?'*

Youth	Response	Adults	Response
8	All have sisters in their areas	5	All have sisters in their area

Next they were asked: *'How would you rate the sisters' service among the people in your area? Score them one to ten. Ten being the highest score.'*

Youth	Response	Adults	Response
7	7	4	6
1	3	1	No response

*'How have the sisters contributed to combating social ills through preaching and education?'*

Youth	Response	Adult	Response
8	They feed the poor	3	Simple lifestyle
		2	No response

*'What does not appeal to you about the sisters and their way of life? Choose from the given answers.'*

Youth	Response	Adult	Response
8	Home visits are limited. They do not own property. They do not marry. They can be sent anywhere to serve.	5	Home visits are limited. They do not marry. They do not own property. They can be sent anywhere to serve.

*'In your own experience of the sisters, how would you describe them?'*

Youth	Response	Adults	Response
7	'Approachable, happy, inspirational'	4	'They work among people'
1	No response	1	'Frustrated, bored'

The responses to the above questions express mainly positive attitudes towards the sisters and their way of life, particularly from the youth. However, it does not appear that they want to choose this life for themselves. The sisters' way of life does not appeal to them personally or translate to their own lives, in that the youth do not think they could choose to live the life themselves. This suggests that there is a gap between the way religious life is lived out and the life young people want to live. The values of the Gospel that stress love for God and others, and the African community-conscious values, have largely been replaced by those of individualism and consumerism. Many young people will not choose a religious life except for one.

### 5.2.3 Theme: Self and community awareness

To the question: *'What problems would you identify in your society and South Africa?'* the following responses were:

Youth	Response	Adults	Response
8	'Crime, corruption, poverty, poor education, unemployment, no leadership'	5	'Corruption, unemployment, violence, poverty, crime, drugs, poor education'

To the question: *'Are there any problems in your own life?'* they responded:

Youth	Response	Adults	Response
8	'Yes, I am aware of dishonesty, homelessness, drugs, lack of interest in church, stress, anxiety'	3	'Stress, uncertainty, crime, violence, drugs'
		2	'Lack of church commitment, divorce, poverty'

This suggests that both groups have similar problems in their lives. What affects the youth will also affect the adults in their areas. The two points that stand out are the lack of church commitment and anxiety. It appears they do not see a link between being part of a faith community as a means of dealing with the problems they face. It appears that there is a gap between their faith and their actual lives, a 'split' spirituality that separates faith from daily realities.

*'How would you describe young people's interests and frustrations?'* was the next question.

<b>Youth</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Response</b>
4	Interested in technology and modern lifestyle	3	'Interested in money'
3	'Frustrated by unemployment'	1	Described as lazy
1	No response	1	No response

These responses suggest that young people are aware of the problems in their own lives and society. They are aware of their frustrations of not being able to earn money, as they cannot find work. They do not see themselves as lazy. Their attitude reveals that they think positively of themselves and they could therefore be helped if help was available. The Newcastle sisters could, for example, invite them for community experience or work with them at youth groups as Niland did. The Zimbabwean Dominicans do invite young people to join them in the different community celebrations in order to grow their spiritual and moral life. The Newcastle sisters could encourage them always to invite the Lord before they start their day and encourage them to share, even in their poverty (1 Kgs 17:7–16). The Dominicans could invite the young people to join the sisters for a day in their different ministries, for example, to visit homes for the aged and homes for the children being rehabilitated from drugs and street life. They could also hold follow-up workshops after these visits. They could expose wealthier youths to poorer schools and challenge them to start projects to help other children of their age who are less fortunate. Finally, the Newcastle Dominicans could make information about religious life available and attractive to them, and show them how a life of faith is relevant to the solutions to the struggles they experience.

### 5.2.4 Theme: Church and community awareness

Two questions were used in this section, the first was: ‘*What problems do you see in the church?*’

Their responses were as follows:

<b>Youth</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Response</b>
4	‘Lack of commitment, and church being authoritative’	4	‘Church is too strict for the youth’
3	‘Too much emphasis on money’	1	‘Lack of committed leaders’
1	‘Church is a waste of time’	1	No response

The other question was: ‘*Would you like to join the church’s effort to solve the societal problems and how?*’

<b>Youth</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Response</b>
4	‘Yes to educate the youth about the effects of alcohol, drugs and sex.’	4	‘Yes, I would like to do the outreach with the members.’
1	‘Yes, I would join them to serve the community.’	1	Did not respond
1	‘Yes to approach the priest to ask questions for the youth.’		
1	‘Yes I would join because I am inspired by the sisters.’		
1	‘No I don’t think I have a calling for this.’		

The young people see the church as not ready to accommodate the youth; therefore, they lack commitment to attend Mass. The adults are also ready to work in the church and help in the community. The Dominican sisters, therefore, can use the opportunity to work with the youth to be closer to them and share with them the Dominican way of life. This is also the opportunity for the sisters to be the listening ear to frustrated young people. In chapter 4, a

call is made for the liberation from authoritarian mindsets in the church and society which discriminate against others, and from the abuse of women and children. Together with these comments from Group A, the Dominicans sisters have an opportunity to listen to and interact more with young people, helping them to see how faith in action can help them to better understand and address the problems they face.

The next two questions were: ‘How do you see the Newcastle Dominican sisters solving the problem in the church?’ And: ‘Would you like to serve as a Dominican or Lay Dominican? State why.’

<b>Youth</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Response</b>
5	The young sisters should be involved with the youth	4	Said the sisters should teach the faith and guide the youth.
2	The sisters should support the youth	1	‘Sisters should pray for them and their families’
1	‘The sisters should pray for the people.’	1	Did not respond
6	Said they would not serve as Dominican. They want to get married.		
1	Would not join because she is not called to the life		
1	‘I would join because the sisters’ lifestyle appeal to me.		

The responses suggest that young people wanted to work with the sisters, particularly the young sisters, but only one wanted to join their way of life. This shows that young people are aware of what the sisters do in their communities and they are ready to take on the ministry, but not to commit to religious life. This confirms that young people today are attracted to a life of faith, but with a view of doing more than just education and social work as ministries. However, this means that the sisters could have more opportunities to be with the youth and live lives that could attract them. The adults did not respond. I assume that they do not know of the other sections of Dominicans, i.e. Lay Dominicans. Hence, more information on Lay Dominicans needs to be provided to young people and adults in the various parishes.

The last question in this section is: *‘What do you think would attract young people to religious life?’*

<b>Youth</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Response</b>
8	Shorten the length of training, relax the rules.  Look at life from young person’s point of view.  Liturgy should be youth friendly	4	They said that the sisters should share their life story with the youth.
4	Security would be an attraction	1	‘The sisters co-ordinate catechesis.’
1	‘Sisters should welcome gays and lesbians.’		

The above responses suggest that half the number of young people think that security and peace is found in convents, and that openness, and liturgy would attract them. Liturgy and the young sisters working closely with the youth is important to them. They appreciate sisters working with them. Young people want to be accepted as they are; they want to have their voice and an identity. The adults also think that the exposure of the sisters to the youth would strengthen the relationship between them. This would be an opportunity for the sisters to make themselves attractive to the youth. They see convents as secure places, where they can be helped by the sisters, but they are silent about what and how they are willing to give of themselves or from what they have.

**5.2.5 Theme: Sisters’ visibility**

*‘Do you think the sisters’ uniform would make them more visible? If not, what would make them more visible?’* was the question asked in this section.

<b>Youth</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Response</b>
3	Religious life as lived out by the sisters is the most important witness	5	The uniform and the presence of the sisters in different parishes would make them visible, approachable and attractive
2	The uniform is important		
2	Uniform and the media would make the sisters visible		
1	Uniform and witnessing are important		

These results suggest that the presence of the sisters in their habit among the people would be a valuable experience for them. By wearing their habits, sisters would be more visible to members of the community and their ministries would be more obvious. As noted in chapter 4, this is an opportunity for the sisters to use to share information about their way of life and their ministry. This could attract young people to the Dominicans. In chapters 2, 3, and 4, it was stated that sisters worked in schools and parishes, where they always wore their habits; hence their ministry and habit were a witness to who they were. It was from such schools that they drew vocations to their congregations.

To conclude, prayer does not translate to their life situations. The solution to this could be to support and encourage the young people to continue the Dominican ministries as Lay Dominicans or friends of the Dominicans for those who wish.

In reference to the youth’s ‘lack of enthusiasm for church’, the young sisters could avail themselves to minister with young people and encourage and challenge them to share their talents in their parishes and communities. The sisters could be counsellors to the youth since some of them have these skills.

To the questions relating to the sisters’ visibility, vocation attraction, whether the young people would like to serve as Dominicans, only one would be a Dominican, though seven of

them would minister with the Dominicans, 100% prefer the use of media and more than 80% of young people and adults think the sisters do not use enough media to be accessible. The solution could be for the Dominicans to devise a way to use their uniform and media for better visibility.

### 5.3. Group B: Sisters presently in religious life

Four sisters in this group were interviewed. They were first asked: *‘Were you well informed about religious life before you joined?’* and *‘Why did you join religious life?’*

Sisters	Responses
4	All sisters had good information about religious life before entering.
2	They became aware of their vocation after reflection and discussion with other people.
1	She always knew she had a vocation.
1	The family always talked about vocations, and she found it good to be a sister.

This indicates that these sisters, who are still in religious life, were well prepared for their vocations.

#### 5.3.1. Theme: Novitiate experiences and religious life

When asked the following question: *‘How did you find your novitiate programme?’* the response was:

Sisters	Responses
4	All the sisters found the novitiate programme grounded and prepared them for a life of prayer and service.



The next question was: *‘How did you experience life in the community?’*

<b>Sisters</b>	<b>Responses</b>
2	They had it easy in different communities because of the good spirit of prayer, inspiring and encouraging sisters in community.
1	One sister found it difficult to live in one particular community because the ministry there did not suit her; she found herself unable to give of herself freely.
1	Another sister had mixed experiences: she had it easy in one community because of openness, unity, and inspiring ministries, but the difficulties came because of the age gap between members and, sometimes, disunity.

The following question was: *‘How did you experience leadership in community?’*

<b>Sisters</b>	<b>Response</b>
3	Sisters thought all sisters were mainly treated equally.
1	‘Depending on leadership all sisters were treated equally’

Then they were asked: *‘Do you think different cultures would interpret the Dominican vows differently?’*

<b>Sisters</b>	<b>Responses</b>
2	‘Yes, each culture naturally would have its features to explain or interpret the vows.’
1	‘Yes, because, for example, some cultures believe one must have, they do not believe in the vow of poverty, and others believe vows free them from all personal property and marriage for service.’
1	‘No I cannot stamp out our culture but in religious life, each sister learns to adjust to the culture of Jesus Christ, so all cultures should interpret the vows in the teachings of Christ.’

They were then asked: *'How has your culture been an advantage/disadvantage? Explain by giving an example.'*

Sisters	Responses
1	'Disadvantage, some cultures have been seen as limited and untrustworthy e.g. speaking to a person and not looking at them in the eye is interpreted as hiding the truth. If a young person goes into the door in front of an adult person, it is interpreted as a lack of respect.'
1	'Advantage, my culture is very biblical, so it was easy to fall in'
2	Gave no response

From these responses, it can be seen that the sisters had sufficient information about religious life before they entered. Although they had different experiences in the community, such as age gaps, disunity or leadership problems, they were able to stay as religious. Generally, the sisters did not freely respond to the question of cultural interpretation. The possible reasons could be fear of being misunderstood, not being ready to talk about culture, or a lack of information about culture. The conclusion could be drawn that there are differences in cultures that could lead to the misinterpretation and misunderstanding of values and beliefs. In the community, these could create problems.

### 5.3.2 Theme: Leadership: experience of leadership and internal challenges

The sisters were asked: *'Provide words that describe the leadership of the congregation as you experienced it.'*

Sister	Responses
2	They found those in leadership to be helpful, supportive, sensitive, and approachable.
1	She found them authoritative and not open to others' views.
1	She found them distant and absent.

It is clear that different sisters experienced leadership differently. The differences in the responses occurred according to age, background, and culture. Older white sisters experienced the leaders as mostly open and progressive, while younger South African members experienced the leaders as more conservative and slow to receive ideas from others.

This tells me that no leader or leadership is perfect. There will always be shortfalls with any leader or leadership, but to attract and retain vocations, it is important to have good leaders.

The sisters were then asked: *‘Have the challenges of culture, racism, language, and diversity been dealt with adequately in communities?’*

<b>Sisters</b>	<b>Responses</b>
2	‘They had been dealt with adequately.’
2	‘They have not been dealt with adequately.’

Again, certain age groups and backgrounds tended to respond similarly. The older sisters are of the same culture and live in homes for the aged, while the younger members live in communities of mixed cultures. While similar cultures do not face many challenges, those living in different cultures would challenge each other. This shows that all communities still need to be better informed and monitored on issues like culture, language, racism, and diversity.

### **5.3.3 Theme: Vocations**

The next question asked was: *‘What would prevent vocations to the Newcastle Dominican Sisters?’*

<b>Sisters</b>	<b>Responses</b>
2	Young people today are attracted to owning property, having a family, and having money. Also, there is a lack of information about religious life in parishes. These are seen as the main reasons for the vocation scarcity.
1	Young people have a fear that it might not work out for them or that they might fail. Others felt they had an obligation to support the families.
1	Young people are hooked on material things and consumerism and are a generation of technology and freedom.

The above responses reveal that half the number of sisters believe that young people do not have enough information about religious life in general and the Newcastle sisters in particular. One sister thinks they have a fear of failure. Several sisters said that young people are attracted to material things and freedom. Young people (5.2.1) also said that they like to own property and have freedom.

It can be concluded that more information about religious life is necessary. Young sisters could join or introduce the youth groups in their parishes and use the media to spread their information.

The sisters were asked: *'What would attract vocations?'*

<b>Sisters</b>	<b>Responses</b>
4	Good strategies and methods of selection
4	Diversified ministries
4	Welcoming communities
3	Young sisters to minister among the youth
3	Invite young people to experience community life
3	More involvement in parishes and be visible to society
2	Use the media to connect with young people
1	'Collaborate with other organisations'
1	'Invite individuals for weekends; if they are mature and want to join or need more information about the sisters, allow them to stay longer while they are guided and experience religious life.'

From the above responses, it is clear that the sisters are now aware of the necessity of open communities and the relaxation of some regulations. They state that people could be invited to experience community life to gain information about religious life. They have also become aware of the need to use media and technology to their advantage, and the importance of collaboration to attract vocations. Young people also advocate for the use of media for vocation attraction because it is their form of communication.

Religious life is about growing to know God better within oneself and in others, and being called to serve him and others. Unless one has good communication skills and is willing to be with other people, one would struggle to be a religious. Media and technology can be seen, especially by older people, as encouraging isolation from reality and other people. They can be seen as hindering the communication of persons. This is because some people tend to choose to watch TV or surf the internet on their phones rather than face-to-face communication and this can retard the growth of social skills. However, if the sisters wish to communicate with young people, they need to learn to use technology effectively and wisely,

while still making young people aware of its dangers and helping them to learn to know God and others more deeply.

In chapter 3, it was shown that the ‘diversified ministries’ of the Newcastle sisters meant that they became invisible, because they ministered as isolated individuals, thus making little or no impact on the youth. This response suggests the opposite. Diversified ministries could mean meeting people with different approaches to life, but only if there’s a relatively large group of sisters, and therefore more chance of attracting vocations from a strong group with a clear identity and mission.

In chapter 4 ‘good strategies and methods of selection’ were identified as a central means to attract vocations. This is confirmed by the sisters, who believe that good strategies and methods of selection are important to attract and maintain vocations. In chapter 3, Niland used the strategy of attracting vocations by giving young women opportunities to live with the sisters in the community while they discerned their vocations. Section 3.1.3 refers to the involvement of the sisters with the local people, learning their language and culture, which eventually brought vocations. The sisters worked in parishes and among the people when they still had a bigger number of sisters. They learned the local languages, particularly isiZulu, and they did attract women to the congregation, who eventually went to Montebello. This is confirmed by the empirical findings as one of the ways of vocation attraction, being able to communicate in a local language.

This confirms that when sisters were able to communicate in the local languages and learned the cultures of the local people, local sisters joined the Dominicans, as was the case in Niland’s time. This means that the current sisters must deal with the issues of culture, language, and racism in their communities to attract young people to communities. The solution to this could be that the sisters minister closely with the youth, personally and through the media, so that young people receive good information about religious life and thus make well-informed choices about religious life.

In relation to the strategies and methods of vocation promotion, for many years the sisters did not collaborate with others and failed to seek to attract vocations proactively to the Newcastle Dominicans. The solution to this would be to collaborate with others and design and implement working methods to attract vocations to the congregation.

## 5.4 Group C: Ex-Dominicans

### 5.4.1 Theme: Calling and vocation

Three ex-Dominicans were asked to respond to this question: *‘How much information did you have of the religious life before you joined?’*

Ex-Dom	Response
3	‘I knew enough about religious life before I joined.’

The next question was: *‘Do you think you were called by Jesus to join Religious life?’*

Ex-Dom	Response
1	‘Yes, at the time I did. In retrospect, I still think so, for I learned and experienced much that has been foundational for my life.’
1	‘Yes, I feel I was called for it at the time. During my stay, I was content and felt at peace and fulfilled.’
1	‘Maybe I was called but I am not sure.’

These responses of the ex-Dominicans reveal that they had enough information about religious life before they entered. Two out of three thought they were called, but later left the congregation. This suggests that initial information is not enough for one to be sure of one’s call. A call is also not a one-off event, but an ongoing process of growth in one’s spiritual life and a gift from God. This suggests that the Dominicans need to give young people the opportunity and space to find their vocations while they live with the Dominicans, and to provide ongoing support for those who have taken their vows.

They were also asked: *‘What was your main disappointment in the life of sisterhood?’*

Ex-Dom	Responses
1	‘In the time of need my sisters failed me. That resulted in me leaving the congregation.’
1	‘It was too predictable and ordinary.’
1	‘I just lost interest.’

A related question was: *‘What were your reasons for leaving?’*

<b>Ex-Dom</b>	<b>Responses</b>
1	'I fell in love and chose to marry.'
1	The second one was told to go back and correct her problems, since she had taken the responsibility for her brother's children, and to sort out the property which was under her name at that time, without the permission of her leadership.
1	'I had lost interest in the life of sisterhood.'

More specifically, they were asked: *'What did you discover about religious life or about yourself that caused you to abandon life with the Newcastle Dominicans?'*

<b>Ex-Dom</b>	<b>Responses</b>
1	The first one became aware that, though she was happy in life, she could see the path ahead if she stayed, and it did not have enough to offer her, so she fell in love and got married.
1	The second needed to support her brother's children since they were orphans.
1	The third discovered her interest had changed, and she needed to explore the world more.

A third question was: *'Do you think you had a genuine call to religious life? What changed your mind?'*

<b>Ex-Dom</b>	<b>Response</b>
1	'Yes, I did have a genuine call. Prayer, liturgy, reciting the office were fulfilling for me.'
1	'Yes, I am a Lay Dominican today.'
1	'Maybe I did not have a genuine call to religious life.'

The first woman discovered she had another call to marriage, to which she responded. The second woman seems to have been forced by family circumstances to leave, to minister outside her religious vocation. It seems for her this was a greater call to which to respond. For some, it may not be a permanent way of life. The third woman may not have been called to religious life or did not give herself enough time for discernment before she joined religious life. For her, it could have been a time to grow her spirituality, but not to live a religious life.

The last question was: *‘What do you still do today that you learned when you were with the Dominicans?’*

<b>Ex-Dom</b>	<b>Response</b>
1	‘Prayer, faith and knowing God better is my way of life.’
1	‘Many things, what stands out is the desire to be true to me and God. Seeking truth.’
1	‘Prayer, I live out the values I learned as a religious.’

This suggests that the ministry and the Dominican lifestyle can be lived out in many different ways without one being in the convent. The Dominican impact of ‘seeking the truth’ goes beyond the confines of the Order. When people leave religious life, they continue to spread the values of a Dominican way of living. Possibly, one or more of these women could have been helped to stay in their vocation, had they been better prepared for the life beforehand, or had better mentoring. These findings are a challenge to the Newcastle Dominicans as they seek to improve their ways of nurturing those currently in their convents.

#### **5.4.2 Theme: Your opinions about vocation attraction**

Under this theme, they were asked: *‘Why do you think the Newcastle Dominicans struggle to attract vocations in South Africa?’*

<b>Ex-Dom</b>	<b>Response</b>
1	‘The reputation of the church as a whole, is at an all-time low, people value freedom more than in the past, there are many opportunities to serve God and the common good. They do not require the structures of religious life. Dominicans tend to accommodate limited skills, teaching which could discourage some vocations to them.’
1	‘They need to reach out more. They need to be more involved with the youth and learn their language.’
1	‘They do not use the media and technology adequately.’

According to the first response, the church’s image impacts the possibility of vocations to religious life. It has been confirmed in chapter 4 that church scandals in Germany, Ireland and Africa have negatively impacted vocations in these countries. The second response indicates that the involvement of the sisters with the youth and learning the isiZulu language and local



other languages is important for vocation attraction. The third responses states that religious life is competing with many other possibilities from which young people can choose. The various forms of electronic media are an important source of information for young people, as they discover their heroes and models through the media. This calls for the sisters to start using technology better to spread their information and meet today's challenges of vocation scarcity.

In chapter 2, it was pointed out that St Dominic used many methods to reach people and to draw vocations to the Order, e.g. preaching in the market squares and trusting even novices to take on the responsibility of preaching. In chapter 3 of the theoretical research, it was noted that the vocations promoter at the beginning of the history of the Newcastle congregation travelled to Ireland for vocations, but also used the local magazine for vocation promotions. In chapter 4, we saw that Zimbabwean and Montebello Dominicans receive vocations because they are closely involved with the local people and they understand their language. Hence, there is a correlation between what the ex-sisters said and the findings of the earlier theoretical research.

The second question was: *'What would attract young people to the sisters' way of life?'*

<b>E-Dom</b>	<b>Response</b>
1	'Befriend young people and if possible use them as shadow workers while giving them stipends while they are deciding on their vocation.'
1	'Be visible and be with the young people at their level.'
1	The third one did not respond to this question.

These responses from Group C echo the statements of the previous two groups. Sisters need to be visible and work closely with young people. Group B indicated that people generally want to work with the sisters, but they do not have enough information about the sisters.

One of the three ex-sisters suggested that to attract vocations, a mentoring or internship strategy could be used so that a young person could experience community life while doing ministry with the sisters and be paid a stipend. During this period, she could be making her decision about religious life. Group B also had a similar idea, but the young women do not get a stipend while living in the community. A similar structure was present during and after Niland's era. It was called the *Juniorate*. It gave young women who were discerning their

vocation an opportunity to live in the community while they were deciding religious life. The structure worked positively for them then. A similar structure could be used today to attract vocations.

During Niland's time, it was a common activity that she worked closely with families and parishes. She believed in collaboration with others to attract vocations. She had a designated person for vocations promotion, who worked for vocations, and they did join the sisters.

To conclude, the three ex-sisters all responded positively to the question of whether they believed they were called, although they left. The solution to this could be to develop good mentoring and support programmes in the Dominican life.

The question relating to disappointment in life as a religious; the conclusion could be that, communities as well as individuals should be open to the fact that not all who join religious will make it to final commitment. Some will discover during the journey that their call is to other ways of living the Christian life.

Relating to the question of why they left and what they do presently, it can be concluded that people do discover themselves anew and grow into other calls.

Moral scandals in the church have meant that the Dominicans struggle to gain vocations. The solution to this is to challenge the church to work with the laity to tackle the problems leading to the scandals. Dominicans could also use the media adequately to access young people.

## **5.5 Conclusion and suggestions**

To conclude, this chapter has revealed several factors about how the Newcastle Dominicans could attract vocations today. Some of these insights are held in common among the three groups of people interviewed, and the theoretical findings in chapters 2, 3 and 4.

All the groups recommend that the sisters systematically and regularly connect with young women, to inform and educate them in their spirituality and attract them by their own spiritual and ethical lives as religious sisters. They all agree that the sisters' prophetic and caring ministries would be attractive to the young women. The theoretical research confirms these empirical findings. In chapter 2, it was noted that St Dominic attracted many because he ministered among the people, and in chapter 3, Niland and the sisters worked very closely with families, priests and parishioners, attracting many young men and women. In chapter 4, the Zimbabwean and Montebello Dominicans attracted young women because their

information was well spread and they worked closely with the young and the communities of people in their areas.

All the groups realise that religious life competes with many ideologies and other opportunities from which the young women can choose. In chapter 2, it was seen that after St Dominic's time, the Dominicans were caught in materialism and lost their adherence to the Dominican way of life. In chapter 3, it was stated that many young women opted for other new careers after World War II and Vatican II. Chapter 4 revealed that many young women have become secular and materialistic, or have been put off religion by unethical scandals in the church. Therefore the Newcastle Dominicans need to rediscover their spiritual passion, live joyful and morally attractive lives, and minister to others. They can also develop their skills and methods of communication to attract vocations, especially in the wise, creative and innovative use of the media.

Two groups, the youth and adults, appreciate the sisters and their ministry, while the parishioners recognise the value of the sisters and their lifestyle. However, they are not attracted to their vowed life, but they may wish to become Lay Dominicans. This adds to the theoretical findings in chapter 3, that the diminishing vocations are not all negative, because young people are interested in carrying on the sisters' ministry. This suggests that only some people will be attracted to the Dominican Order. Therefore, the Newcastle Dominicans are challenged to develop the Lay Dominican group of the Order, so that some can be drawn to this ministry.

One group, the youth, suggested that the sisters should wear their veil and habit, live in big communities, keep to their tradition and show the spirit of confidence, happiness and enthusiasm to attract young people. This confirms the theoretical findings in chapter 4. The Zimbabwean and Montebello Dominicans, who still keep to their tradition of wearing a veil and/or habit and minister in groups, seem to attract vocations. The suggestion therefore is to use the religious dress for visibility.

One person among the youth proposed that the sisters should consider accommodating lesbians to religious life. This recommendation was new; it had not appeared in the theoretical data. This suggests that the Dominicans can initiate a discussion on this issue.

One of the ex-Dominicans recommends diversified ministry as the answer to vocation scarcity, and that education, as the main ministry, could be limiting the chances of reaching diverse groups of people. This group also suggested mentoring young women who want to

join religious life, but have not made up their minds. They could be given time to experience life by living with the sisters for a time while they are guided to make their decision. They suggested that the Newcastle Dominicans 'shadow' and support working young women who want to know more about religious life and the Dominican ministries. They even suggest that they are given a stipend while they are with the Dominicans, before making their decisions.

A similar method was used by Niland in the history of the congregation to attract vocations. The Zimbabwean and Montebello Dominicans also worked closely with the local people, learned their culture and ways of doing things, and used different strategies, including encouraging prospective sisters to live in the community to discern their calling. In these ways, they attracted many vocations.

## **CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES FOR VOCATIONS ATTRACTION**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The question asked at the beginning of this study was: *What are the reasons for the scarcity of vocations among the Newcastle Dominicans sisters?* To respond to the question, different aspects of religious life were investigated using the works of many authors and a short empirical research investigation. One can never come to a complete answer to the question, because an individual is guided by the Holy Spirit to find her/his vocation. However, the research led to some conclusions about the reasons for the scarcity of vocations to the Newcastle Dominican sisters. This chapter will summarise the reasons for both the decline and growth of vocations and go on to propose strategies that the Newcastle Dominican sisters can apply to attract vocations to their congregation.

The Newcastle Dominicans have aged as a congregation because the vital exercise of promoting and continuing Niland's tradition to travel and look for vocations was neglected for a long time. This method is biblical. Jesus travelled, visited, and invited people to join him when he called his disciples, and many Christians since then have done the same. This dissertation surveys the theological ethics and spirituality of the Newcastle Dominicans in relation to the decline and increase of vocations to their congregation. The following section summarises the reasons for the growth and decline of vocations during and after St Dominic's time.

### **6.2 Dominic and the Dominicans up to the end of the 18th century**

#### **6.2.1 Dominic and vocation attraction**

As the founder, Dominic built the Order up through prayer and commitment. Dominic lived a vowed life as a priest. His commitment and faithfulness to his choice of life became the heart of Dominican spirituality. His way of life (simplicity) and how he lived it out (spirituality), and his humble character made others around him aware of the presence of God. He always

spoke of God and had the zeal and passion for the poor. His moral way of life became attractive to young men and they would join him in his ministry.

Good morals proceed from a strong faith or spirituality. In chapter 2, it is suggested that the Christian's response to social situations should be like that of Jesus. St Dominic's strong faith, as a man of prayer who was committed to the truth found in the Scriptures, spread his influence through his preaching ministry among the people. This attracted many vocations to the Dominicans. Sharing all he had with his own community and the larger community became another source of attraction for the vocations to the Dominican Order.

Community life formed a very important part of Dominic's life. Dominic's talents also lay in his style of governance. He drew up Constitutions which were life-giving to the members. He was faithful to his commitment to the truth, but flexible in providing freedom to members of his Order to express their gifts and talents given them by God. His good leadership style was attractive to young men of his time and so many joined the Dominican Order.

The study of the Scriptures and the signs of the times were his compass. These were tools he used to listen to God and to reach diverse people of his time. Through the study and reflection on current issues, he became sensitive to his social context. He could engage with those he met, particularly about the teaching of the Scriptures and how to live out the words of the Gospels. In this way, he attracted many young men to the Dominicans, some of whom became leading theologians, teachers and leaders in the church.

Mission and ministry formed St Dominic's life. After reflecting on the Word, he went out to share the fruits of his contemplation, both with those who agreed with him and those who had different views. This approach to mission and ministry attracted many young men and women to the Order.

### **6.2.2 The causes of decline of vocations to the Dominicans after St Dominic's death**

Social circumstances such as wars, poverty, corruption, power struggles and general decline in morality from the 12th century onwards had a negative influence on the Dominicans and their lifestyle. The impact was shown within the Order by a decline in scholastic endeavour; Dominicans no longer applied their minds to study and reflection, and there was a deterioration of morality.

After St Dominic's death, particularly between the years 1230 and 1350, the Dominicans behaved contrary to Dominican spirituality and ethics. They had become corrupt and materialistic. Their immorality brought a sharp decline of vocations in the Order, almost to the point of extinction.

The Dominican morality had been disintegrating for a long period of time. Dedication to prayer, community life, apostolate and study broke down completely; priors began to acquire property, fixed income and positions. Especially during the 14th and 15th centuries, they became enmeshed in the Inquisition and abused their powers in a brutal manner. Whereas Dominic used the power of persuasion and a holy life, his followers used force and torture against those perceived as a danger to the faith. During this period, the Dominicans lost direction and meaning as to who they were. No vocations joined them.

Between 1650 and 1765 a further decline took place in the Order due to Absolutism and the Enlightenment. The spirituality and ministry of the Dominicans was neglected, and they practised exploitation of foreign nationals in their missions in South America. During this period, religious fervour dropped, and they failed to attract vocations.

This situation only changed as a result of the Catholic Reformation of the 16th and early 17th centuries. New vocations were again attracted as a result of the Dominicans' commitment to prayer, reflection on the Word, academic revival, living in community, a preaching apostolate, mission work and the introduction of other disciplines along with modern theology. Later, in France, under the leadership of Lacordaire, a further revival of Dominican spirituality occurred.

## **6.3 The Newcastle Dominican sisters**

### **6.3.1 The decline of vocations**

The implementation of the *Arum Indigenarum* document of 1924, which encouraged the separate formation of indigenous religious sisters, led to a decline of local vocations to the Newcastle Dominicans and other groups of religious. The Newcastle congregation lost more than ten sisters to the Montebello Dominicans.

After Vatican II, many sisters left the congregation because they felt they could fulfil the same services outside a vowed life. Other sisters left because new careers for women developed in Germany and Ireland, and young women were attracted to them.

The socio-political circumstances in South Africa, and especially the Apartheid system, which forced groups of peoples to live separately from each other, denied the Newcastle Dominican sisters the opportunity to promote vocations among the local communities, particularly the African communities. This severely retarded the growth of vocations.

After the death of Niland, the congregation neglected the task of rigorous vocation promotion, which Niland had followed throughout her life, thus fewer vocations came. The sisters had no vocations promoter who would travel far and wide promoting vocations. They had no policy regarding vocations and their promotion until the late 1990s, and even that policy was more English-based; it was not inclusive of Africa.

The Newcastle sisters no longer collaborated with other groups, as earlier encouraged by Niland. In the later years after Niland's death, the sisters neglected the importance of working with other people, like families, priests, youth and youth leaders on vocations promotion. Therefore, very few vocations came forward.

Tradition, prayer, community life and ministry to others had always attracted people to the Dominicans. However, the sisters no longer wear their traditional habit, and they live in smaller communities or as individuals. This makes them largely invisible, therefore they cannot attract people to them. Living in community would attract people, particularly African people. Some sisters seem to have lost a clear sense of identity and, without these features in their lives, they attract fewer or no vocations.

Insufficient indigenisation of the sisters and their ministry has denied them access to the majority of the people in South Africa. This meant that vocation promotion could only happen among a small section of the population, that is, in white communities and schools.

Diversified ministries meant that the sisters lived and ministered as individuals, and they met a diverse kind of people, most of whom are vulnerable and not in a state to join religious life.



### **6.3.2 What attracted vocations to the congregation?**

Chapter 3 showed that Niland was a woman of prayer and service. The women who joined the congregation remained under her exemplary leadership. She went about preaching, educating and informing people about religious life. In this manner, she attracted vocations to the congregation.

She also collaborated with others and organised a full-time vocations promoter, who travelled to other countries to promote vocations. Thus many vocations came from overseas.

The sisters had a clear vision and a strong ministry of teaching. They ministered as a group and worked as a team; therefore, they were easily identifiable. They ministered among the youth, who were at a stage of deciding their future. The sisters' lifestyle was therefore attractive to them. The wearing of the habit and veil, and their structured community life of prayer and service, attracted vocations to the congregation. Especially before the two World Wars and Vatican II, religious life offered many opportunities for young people, and many of them joined religious life.

## **6.4 The Irish, German, Zimbabwean and Montebello Dominicans**

### **6.4.1 The decline of vocations in Ireland and Germany**

After Vatican II, many religious left, either for new opportunities outside religious life or they felt they could still serve the church without living a vowed life. The development of industries brought new work options in Europe. Many young women had several opportunities from which to choose. That brought a decline in vocations to religious life.

The social movements influenced the choices that young people made. Feminism made women aware of their identity in society. They became aware of the church discrimination against women, and this affected their attitude towards religious life. Secularisation placed less emphasis on sacred institutions, thus a commitment to religious life diminished.

In developed countries like England and Germany (and other parts of the world), consumer cultures have had an impact on religious life and vocations. It is a culture that has been determined by the values of materialism. It does not speak truth to power, is not in touch with the spiritual nature of reality, and it inverts the values of the Christian tradition. In consumerism, things become more important than humans. In such a cultural setting, religious life is not important, but material things are seen as important.

Further, church scandals and clericalism have had a decidedly negative impact on vocations to religious life. In addition, because the sisters could no longer be identified by their uniform and community life, this cost them their credibility. Young people who need structure and direction lost interest in their lifestyle.

#### **6.4.2 Reasons for the increase in vocations**

Social circumstances can also encourage vocations to religious life. Connolly (2017:1) states that, in the medieval period, people joined religious life for economic reasons. It was one way to escape social and economic difficulties.

Particularly after World Wars I and II, the suffering and turmoil experienced by the people of Europe (including Germany and Ireland) brought them to faith and a better understanding of the life of sacrifice, hence many young people were prepared to join religious life.

Today, the religious who have confidence in the present, with the ability to let go of the old, still seem to attract young people. Contemporary religious should learn faith anew, that is, to reflect on God's work, not their own. They need to work together in collaboration, and in this way they would attract vocations.

To be attractive, religious should be a catalyst for unity, being people of prayer and the leaven that brings growth. An openness to change and the wisdom to entrust the work to dedicated younger sisters are invaluable. The trademark of the religious ought to be the 'willingness to serve'. It is suggested here that the religious who are open to diversity are likely to grow and reproduce. To them, God is the God of today, but who always calls to the future. Tradition, the wearing of the veil and habit, and the practice of community life seem to attract young women.

The congregations who abide by the above seem to attract vocations.

### **6.5. The decline in Zimbabwe**

#### **6.5.1 Socio-political reasons for a decline in vocations**

Vocations decreased due to socio-political conditions. During the two World Wars, Germany had no vocations to send to Zimbabwe, since women had to replace men in factories and, in later years, as German society became materialistic and secularised, vocations decreased. During the liberation wars in Zimbabwe, some members were killed and others left the

African region to return to Germany. There has also been a decline in the number of vocations from the towns because secularisation and materialism are creeping into Zimbabwe.

The racial laws by the white government of Rhodesia placed pressure on the missionaries and their activities, and the relationship between the sisters and the local people was strained and some sisters left the convent. The War of Independence from 1972 to 1980 destroyed much of the missionaries' ministry and, during these years, the number of vocations dropped.

### **6.5.2 Church-related reasons for a decline in vocations**

There were other church-related reasons for the decrease of vocations in Zimbabwe. In 1932, a group of local sisters was asked to leave the congregation in response to the Pope's Encyclical *Arum Indigenarum* of 1924, to form an indigenous congregation rather than being part of the Rhodesian Dominicans. Later it became a positive, because they were to indigenise more quickly.

Some of the reasons for the decrease in Zimbabwe are linked to the challenges brought by Vatican II. The majority of Germany sisters and some Rhodesians left after the changes made by Vatican II. They felt they could do the same apostolate without being part of a religious order. Others transferred to the Second Order contemplatives.

### **6.5.3 The reasons for increase in Zimbabwe**

The Zimbabwean Dominicans were recruited from Germany and Ireland for sixty-five years until after Vatican II, when the vocations from there dried up. They ministered for decades in schools and hospitals all over Rhodesia. They also established themselves in what became Zambia and received local vocations. From 1980, the new Zimbabwean government requested the Catholic missionaries, that is, both local and German and Irish sisters who never went back to Germany or Ireland, to continue to give their support towards developing the country. The sisters engaged in many activities in schools and hospitals. They worked with qualified indigenous staff, who were also later entrusted with the organisation and responsibilities of the congregation, which attracted vocations. From 1981 onwards, the number of young women wanting to become Dominican Missionary sisters in Zambia and Zimbabwe increased steadily.

The numbers increased as the leadership restructured their governance. They gave priority to the religious and professional formation of the sisters. The support given by leadership, either materially or spiritually, to those who ministered in vocations promotion helped to encourage and inspire the sisters. They were well trained and could travel to various places for vocations promotion.

In Germany, in the earlier years before Vatican II, these sisters did vocations promotion through mission magazines, personal visits, and contacts. They had a full-time vocations promoter, who worked in parishes and schools on a missionary apostolate. In Africa, they also have a full-time vocations promoter, and different age groups of sisters and novices travel frequently to youth meetings to promote vocations. Young women seeing personal examples of sisters living a religious life of faithfulness, humble service, resilience and other ethical behaviours, active in their apostolate and prayer, were effective in attracting vocations.

The sisters established a number of projects in the health system and ministered there. All these factors facilitated the possibilities of vocation attraction to the congregation. The sisters were visible, and their ministry was clear for all to see. The Zimbabwean Dominicans were indigenised early on; therefore, they attracted vocations.

#### **6.6. The reasons for the decline in Montebello**

The Apartheid laws separated people according to race; therefore, this decreased the chance for vocations to Montebello. Only black sisters could be accommodated by the congregation.

Today, materialistic attitudes have crept in among the young, and the life of service without receiving anything in return is a culture that is vanishing. Young people prefer to own property and be independent rather than joining religious life.

As a result of the leadership crisis in the congregation in the late-1970s, several of the sisters left. The disunity caused by this power struggle among the leadership also affected younger vowed members and members in the formation, and they decided to leave the congregation.

Scandals in the church have also had a negative impact on the church, thus reducing the number of people opting for religious life. Hence, the Montebello congregation has experienced some negative results regarding vocations due to scandals in the church.

## **6.7 Reasons for the increase of vocations to the Montebello Dominicans**

For the Montebello sisters, being of one culture is a positive, because it seems to attract local women of the same culture. Their ministry among the local people and the Dominican charism seem to be easily grasped by the local people and they are moved to join the sisters. Their maintenance of the tradition of the uniform and big communities seems to talk to the local people. Judging from the vocations they receive, the Montebello Dominicans responded well to *Perfectae Caritatis*. In this way, many vocations came to the congregation, because people felt part of the life of the sisters, and they found it meaningful.

They have had vocations teams for a long time. Members of the teams are trained in the ministry of formation. They are of varied ages and have experience in religious life. They journey with possible candidates and young religious. This establishes a young religious in the lifestyle and ministry of the Dominicans. Communication with and support from the congregation's leadership has been of great importance in this regard. For example, the leadership supports the sisters spiritually and with their daily needs to promote vocations. They also help with interviews and communication with the families and communities of the aspirants.

The response to the Pontifical document, *Arum Indigenarum* of 1924, ruled that fourteen sisters from the Newcastle congregation moved to Montebello, thus increasing the number of vocations there. Being a Diocesan and an African-only congregation has been attractive to many young women. The witness of these sisters is also strong.

## **6.8 The empirical findings**

### **6.8.1 Possible means of increasing vocations**

The adequate sharing of information and education of the public about the Dominicans, their spirituality and their lifestyle, and working closely with young people in the parishes and in their communities seem to be the main findings. In this manner, the sisters would be closer to the youth and could possibly attract some of them to religious life.

The greater visibility of the sisters among the youth, particularly in their habit and veil, would also attract the youth to the congregation. The habit and veil give the sense of belonging, and the sisters would also need to be witnesses of the leadership and teachings of Christ by their actions and spirituality.

The readiness of the Newcastle Dominicans to share their ministry with the youth is important, for in this way, they could encourage a vowed life as well as lay or friends of the Dominicans. This would attract more youth to the Dominicans and possibly vocations.

The youth would be attracted to the church and the Dominicans if the liturgy was revised to be more youth-friendly. This would give the youth opportunities to test their vocations.

Vocation attraction could also be effected by the mentoring of young women who want to join religious life, but have not made up their minds. If they are given time to experience life by living with the sisters for a time, while they are guided to make their decision, this could be of great assistance. The sisters can also consider the suggestion that selected young women are even given a stipend. If the Dominicans are open to 'shadow' and support working young women who want to know more about religious life and the Dominican ministries, they may attract them.

A diversified ministry is mooted by some as the answer to vocation scarcity. Such a view sees education as the main ministry as a limiting factor, as diverse groups of people cannot be reached. However, sufficient numbers of sisters would be needed to make an impact, as this strategy has not always been effective in the past.

The development of the skills and wisdom to use media as a means to share their information and their spirituality could attract vocations, because young people nowadays use it as a main form of communication.

## **6.9 Recommended strategies**

Below a number of recommendations are made' these include adhering to Dominican spirituality and ethics, maintaining sound Dominican traditions, while being flexible and aware of the African context, adhering to a commitment on moral integrity, being faithful to life in community, good leadership, an emphasis on attracting and maintaining vocations, a willingness to minister to and serve people, and a focus on young people.

To begin with, the Newcastle sisters must *adhere to Dominican spirituality and ethics*. The spiritual and ethical life, as established by Dominic and Niland, the founder and foundress of the Order and the Newcastle Dominicans respectively, need to be nurtured. Without the love of God, prayer and reflection on the truth, preaching and teaching, the core charism of the sisters cannot be sustained. As the Gospel of John (14:6) puts it, Jesus ‘is the way, and the truth, and the life’; it is through him that the Newcastle Dominicans can find direction, reality and fullness of life.

As quoted by Hollinger (2002:291) in chapter 2 of this dissertation: ‘Morality is a particular way of seeing the world.’ Dominic saw the world as Christ did, and he prayed as Christ did. This led him to build communities, listen to the Scriptures in his reflections, and to go far and wide to spread God’s Word. People were encouraged to heed the call of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Under Dominic’s leadership, the brothers were encouraged to do the same. Those who were faithful attracted many vocations to the Order. But the unethical actions of the brothers who came after him brought the opposite to the Order, the near extinction of it.

Today it is the responsibility of the Newcastle Dominicans to pray and to share the fruits of their prayers and contemplation with the youth and adults, to build communities through sharing Scripture, and to share their faith with others. Collaboration is biblical, as both Jesus and Dominic used their followers to spread the good news. These are all ways in which vocations can be attracted.

A second recommended strategy is to *maintain sound Dominican traditions, while being flexible and aware of the African context*. The Dominican tradition of wearing the habit and veil has proved to enhance the visibility of the sisters and to provide a sense of identity, belonging, unity and community. Young people look not only for a stable and structured life, but also for a sense of mission and direction. Therefore common prayer, community living and joint ministry could be strategies the Dominicans could employ to attract vocations. Preaching, teaching and serving as a team, and being open to other ministries and organisations, would give the Dominicans the opportunity to collaborate with other Dominicans and reach a wider range of people. The Newcastle sisters further need to focus on cultural awareness, language and a prophetic witness.

A deliberate discourse and reflection about the reality of the future of the congregation being led from Africa is necessary; since the establishment and the life of the congregation is in Africa, this is needed to attract more local vocations.



Third, there is a definite need to *emphasise moral integrity*. Scandals in the church, of whatever kind, do not bear witness to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Moral scandals in the church break down the ministry of faithful Dominicans and bring the faith and church into disrepute. Hence they have a very negative impact on vocations to religious life. The Newcastle sisters can remember that the Spirit is the Teacher, Unifier, Comforter and the Provider of the wisdom needed to discern right from wrong. In addition, clericalism perpetuates secrecy, a lack of truth and the immoral behaviour of discrimination. Since women are excluded from certain functions in the church, many Catholic women have decided against choosing the life of a religious to serve God.

A fourth strategy to adopt is that of a *commitment to life in community*. A religious community takes its characteristics from the community of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, who live in constant union. Birch (1989:17) says that ‘everything we know about morality and moral life is finally a community enterprise and achievement’. Where religious communities have lived this out, in prayer, a steadfastness spirituality and team work, they have awakened love and care in others, and therefore attracted vocations to their communities. This was reflected in chapter 4, where it is revealed that the Zimbabwean and Montebello Dominicans, who still live in big communities with a strong emphasis on ministry, have attracted new vocations.

In recent years, the Newcastle Dominicans have seen that ministering and living individually does not foster a biblical emphasis on community life. Although a commitment to community may take different forms, without love and support for each other, the Newcastle Dominicans cannot thrive. A structured prayer life, and community living, study and ministry attract young women who need direction, guidance and focus. In sound Dominican communities, power and responsibilities are also shared, and this facilitates growth, while centralised power stagnates and erodes growth. The recent history of the Montebello congregation attests to this.

The promotion of *good leadership* is a fifth strategy recommended to the Newcastle sisters. D’Souza (2001:13) suggests that ‘the purpose of a Christian leader is to pursue the same goal as Jesus pursued helping people to become all that they can become under God’. The sisters and the communities they serve need to see God’s power working through their Dominican leaders. This is also necessary to overcome the doubt that moral scandals have created in the hearts and minds of people about the trustworthiness of church leaders.

As said in chapter 4, good leadership and formation are dependent on a strong prayer life that is lived out in moral characters and lives of the Dominicans. A solid spirituality motivates love and a spirit of service in others. Good leadership, as reflected in the shared ministry of the leaders in the Zimbabwean Dominicans, has borne fruit in others who have used their lives and skills to attract vocations. Kretzschmar (2006:339) says: ‘A good leader is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a task.’

A sixth recommendation is a *deliberate emphasis on attracting and maintaining vocations*. A full-time vocations promoter has proved to be a central answer to vocations attraction, for the congregation and for the Lay Dominican vocations, particularly for those who feel called to the Dominican spirituality and ministry, but not to a vowed life. A vocations promoter needs to be supported by sound and relevant policies, as well as by the leadership and the other sisters. The Newcastle sisters also need to seek new and creative ways of communicating with parishioners, and especially with younger people. The sisters should be ready to take risks to open their communities for young women to explore religious life.

Those who have been attracted to the Dominican way of life and ministry also need to be supported and mentored. All sisters, and especially prospective and younger sisters, require support in their spiritual formation. A *Juniorate* could be re-established and deserving young women supported for a time while they seek to discern their calling. More emphasis can also be placed on attracting people to join Lay Dominican groups.

*Willingness and serving other people* is the seventh recommended strategy. As noted in chapter

2, Jersild (200:21) refers to Christian ethical lessons of relationship as ‘our responsibility to seek welfare for others’. Niland’s spirit of service among the people of different cultures, and within her own congregation, brought a positive change in the community and she attracted vocations to her congregation. Hence a caring spirit is vital to the future of the Newcastle congregation.

The dissertation shows that the Zimbabwean and Montebello Dominicans worked closely with the local people within their cultural context. This spirituality flows from John 1:14: ‘The word was made flesh and lived among us.’ Their service among the people provides credibility and continues to bring them vocations. Their spirituality of confidence in God and prayer have brought the local people hope in God, and this has attracted vocations to them.

The eighth and final suggested strategy is a *focus on young people*. This research, and especially the empirical chapter 5, suggests that there is not enough information about the sisters, and therefore young people are not connected to the life and spirituality of the Dominicans. The sisters and their ministry are also no longer clearly visible, since they do not wear the veil or habit.

The sisters should minister to the youth to inform and educate them about the Dominican way of life. They should also be conversant with local cultures and languages to facilitate a better understanding of religious life among them. Currently, the lack of opportunities for young people to experience life in the convent impacts negatively on vocation attraction. Thus, as noted earlier, the sisters should be open to those who wish to be mentored while they discern their vocations, while living temporarily with the sisters in their convents. The sisters are, according to D'Souza (2001:13), 'better than most in pointing the direction' for the young people discerning a vocation to religious life.

A significantly improved knowledge of how to use various forms of digital media and technology on the part of the sisters would allow them the opportunity to reach many more young people. This is because the youth today use technology to learn and communicate. However, it is the human presence and the spirit of *ubuntu* that will attract young women to the Newcastle congregation, and God is always the Initiator of that call to serve her people.

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## Appendix A

### QUESTIONNAIRE: 2018

#### **Background and information:**

My name is: M. Thulile Mazibuko, an MTh student in the Department of Philosophy, Practical and Systematic Theology, University of South Africa. The Title of my research dissertation is 'A Theological-ethical analysis of the reasons for the decline of vocations among the Dominican sisters of Newcastle, South Africa'.

I am collecting data from persons who live or lived and worked with the Dominican sisters of Newcastle in South Africa, to enable me to better understand the reasons for the decline of vocations among the Newcastle Dominican sisters.

#### **Details of participation:**

The research involves completing a questionnaire and filling in the relevant Consent Form. The session should take about forty (40) minutes. Please feel free to ask questions now if you have any.

#### **Note:**

1. Those NOT currently in religious life must please respond to only Sections 1 and 2.
2. People PRESENTLY in religious life must only respond to Sections 1 and 3.
3. Those who were sisters but LEFT the congregation must respond to Sections 1 and 4.

### SECTION 1

**(All participants are to answer questions in this section) Put**

a **X** mark next to your appropriate response:

1.1 What is your country of origin?

South Africa	
Ireland	
Germany	
England	
Holland	
Canada	
Other	

1.2 What is your age?

18–25 yrs	
26–36 yrs	
37–50 yrs	
51–74 yrs	
Over 75 yrs	

1.3 Your gender is:

Female	
Male	

1.4 How many years have you been a sister? Include the novitiate period.

1–5 yrs	
6–10 yrs	
11–20 yrs	
21–30 yrs	
31–50 yrs	
Over 50	
Not a sister	

1.5 In my area, religious sisters are

Common	
Seldom	
Very rare	
Never seen	

**SECTION 2**

**(Only those participants NOT currently in religious life must answer the questions in this section)**

2. Place an **X** in a box you think most appropriate to your perception

	True	False	Unsure
2.1 A religious sister must be Catholic			
2.2 A religious sister is a white person			
2.3 A religious sister must always wear a veil			
2.4 All sisters belong to the one group of sisters and they were all started by the same person			
2.5 Sisters pray from morning to sunset			
2.6 Sisters only work in schools and hospitals			
2.7 All sisters live in convents and in communities			
2.8 Sisters do not earn money, they always work for charity			

2.9 How would you define a religious sister?


2.10 Are sisters a common feature in your area? What do you think the reason is?


2.11 How do you recognise a religious sister?


2.12 Do you see sisters as happy, sad, fulfilled people? Why do you say so?


What kind of people are the sisters among the community? What is your perception of them?


2.13 What do you think of the sisters' service/ministry/work and their way of life?


2.14 What is a vocation to sisterhood? Do you believe in it?


2.15 Do you go to Mass? What inspires you about the Catholic Church?


2.16 Do you pray? How has that help you in your own life, if you do?


2.17 Do you belong to any group, e.g. parish council, Sacred Heart. What do you think of them?


2.18 Why do you think there are so few vocations to religious life?


2.19 What would attract young people to religious life?


### SECTION 3

#### Only for people presently IN religious life

3.1 Put a **X** mark next to your appropriate response:

	True	False
1. Catholics generally think positively of religious life		
2. The Newcastle Dominican congregation should die out		
3. I knew a lot about religious life before I entered		
4. I never thought of leaving religious life		
5. Religious life is the ideal lifestyle today		



3.2 Why did you become a religious?


3.3 Do you think African women would be attracted by the ministry and the lifestyle of the Dominican sisters? Why?


3.4 Would culture have any influence on people becoming religious? Why?


3.5 What do you think would attract people to religious life?


3.6 What would prevent people from joining religious life?


3.7 How would you describe your experience as religious, whether as a community member or in ministry?

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3.8 What do you think of the formation programme of the congregation?


3.9 Why do you think there are few vocations?


3.10 Do you feel cut off from your family?


3.11 What has been your most difficult experience in religious life?


3.12 Can you give any suggestions to get more vocations?


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3.13 Do you think race is a negative factor in the congregation?


3.14 This has been the most appreciated experience of my religious life


**SECTION 4**

**Only for people who LEFT religious life.**

4.1 Put a **X** mark next to your appropriate response.

	True	False
1. I knew enough about the Dominicans before I joined them.		
2. Prayer and the teachings of Christ are important to me.		
3. My family and community supported my vocation to the Dominicans.		
5. The Dominican lifestyle, charism, ministry appealed to me.		
6. The Dominican type of authority was open and democratic and facilitated growth of the individual.		
7. I would recommend vocations to religious life to my friends.		
8. The Catholic Church is the inspiration for anyone who thinks of religious life.		

4.2 What suggestions could you give to the Dominicans to get more vocations?


The Dominicans are the preachers of truth and they live that to the best of their abilities?


4.3 I found the Dominican formation programme ...


4.4 I left the Dominicans because ...


Place a **X** mark next to your appropriate response.

4.5 I go to Mass

Every Sunday	
When I am on leave/holiday	
Occasionally	
I do not go to church	

#### 4.6 I pray and read the Scriptures

I do not pray or read the Bible	
Every day	
On Sundays	
When I happen to be in a group for Scripture sharing	

The sisters' lifestyle is

Too lonely	
Pressurised	
Closed and undemocratic	
Inspiring and progressive	

#### 4.7 The vows of obedience, poverty and celibacy are

Irrelevant today	
Not part of my culture	
Only for special people	
Not biblical	