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Abstract

This study explored family impact on vocation discernment among De La Salle Brothers in Lwanga District, Kenya. Though family impact on vocation discernment can be both positive and negative, the researcher dwelt more in exploring the negative impact. The objectives of the study include exploring the impact of parents on the vocation discernment of aspirants to the Religious Life among the De La Salle Brothers; to study the impact of pressure for financial family support on temporary professed Brothers. The study was carried out among 90 targeted population and 90 sampling population, in Lwanga District of Africa, an Anglophone Province of the De La Salle Brothers Congregation in the Catholic Church. The Province comprises of six countries: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mozambique, South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya, with the headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. The study has been able to find out the impact of family pressure on professed Brothers and young men aspiring to join the congregation. This impact could be negative or positive. When the family plays its role of good family upbringing, family prayers and bible reading, family devotion, unity and love in the family, parents' faithfulness to each other, and participation in religious activities in the parish, there is positive impact on the child. All these prepare fertile ground for the child later in life to choose Religious Life of the Brothers. However, when the family fails in its role of proper upbringing, it has negative impact on the child. The research used a mixed method design comprised both qualitative and quantitative methods. The data was collected by the use of questionnaires and interview guide. The quantitative data was analyzed and presented in percentages and numbers while the qualitative data was analyzed according to the emerging

themes in line with the research objectives. The study suggested some intervention strategies for addressing family impact on vocation to religious life among the Brothers.

Keywords: *Religious Community, African Community, Affective Love, Religious life/Consecrated Life, Initial Formation, Lwanga District.*

1.1 Introduction

The choice of Consecrated Life is a person's response to a call that seems to have come from God, for special service in the Church, to God and to fellow men and women. Life consecrated through profession of the evangelical counsels is a stable form of living, in which the faithful follow Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit, and are totally dedicated to God, who is supremely loved. They are a splendid sign in the Church, as they foretell the heavenly glory (Can. 573 §1). "The Consecrated Life, deeply rooted in the example and teaching of Christ the Lord, is a gift of God the Father to His Church through the Holy Spirit." (Vitae Consecrata).

God's call continues in our day. However, some human factors inhibit the human response to this call. One of such factors is the family, particularly in the African context. The family, consciously or unconsciously, exerts some impacts on the vocation discernment of their children. Such impacts could be manifested in the stability of the family, there is peace and unity, there is family religious activities like prayer, going to Church, pious group meetings etc., through these pious and religious activities, the child grows to value commitment. But when these qualities are lacking, the impact can be devastating on the spiritual life of the growing up child.

This article aims at exploring the impact of the family on vocation discernment of young people who aspire to Religious Life, particularly among the De La Salle Brothers in Anglo-phone African region. The article concludes with some possible recommendations.

2.1 Family Impact on Vocation Discernment

2.1.1 Consecrated Religious Vocation in the Church

From the history of religious life, religious consecration started with departure from the world and family and moving into the desert, devoting life totally to God in prayer, abstinence and work for sustenance. While the call to consecrated life remains a mystery of grace, the family exerts much influence on the response of the person hearing the call and responding to it today.

By virtue of baptism, all Christians are called to sanctity, because Christian vocation is a vocation to holiness. Religious vocation is therefore, to deepen the universal holiness received at baptism; it is a call "to perfect apostolic charity, that is, the co-redeeming mission,"¹ that Jesus entrusted to the Church, (cf. Mt.28:19-20). The Religious "spend themselves ever increasingly for Christ, and for His Body the Church." (Perfectae Caritatis, 1)

Saint John Baptist de La Salle understood Christian's call to sanctity. He was convinced that the Brothers teaching the children was a way of salvation or holiness for the Brothers, and a means of evangelisation of the students. "One of the principal achievements of De La Salle was to elevate the despised function of the schoolteacher to the status of a vocation worthy of the dedication of a lifetime... The Brothers are justly proud of the reputation they enjoy for conducting good

¹ Francis Giegelka, *All Things New: Radical Reform and the Religious Life* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 24.

schools.”² Religious Brothers are called to be brothers of Jesus Christ, brothers to one another, brothers to everyone, particularly brothers to the children under their care. Through quality education, the Brothers ‘Teach Minds, Touch Hearts and Transform Lives.’

2.1.2 Impact of Parents on Vocational Discernment of Aspirants to Religious Life

Good training received at childhood lays a good foundation for adulthood. “Proper training is an act of love and care for the children. Good training in childhood has good consequences in the adult life.”³ This was demonstrated in the life of the Holy Family of Nazareth. Mary and Joseph set the tune for the child Jesus, taking him to the annual pilgrimage in Jerusalem, (Lk. 2:41-52). Because good foundation of obedience had been laid, Mary was able to plead with Jesus on behalf of the couple at the wedding feast in Cana, (Jn. 2:1-11).

The life of most individual that makes up the society starts from the family. “Youngsters are greatly influenced by their parents, even before they are five years old. After that, others merely build on the foundation already laid.”⁴ John Owor opines, “Families need to commit to prayer with and for the young members regularly. Children will grow with respect and as God-fearing people and with the knowledge that they need to rely in God for enlightenment and for the grace to grow in love and make good decisions for their own lives.”⁵ When this attitude is formed at the early stage in life, it helps and facilitates vocation discernment later in the life of the young adult aspiring to Religious Life. Such spiritual life at the early stage of growth lays foundation for adulthood spiritual life, at least in most cases.

According to James Fowler, a child’s religious belief is an extension of his parents’ religious belief. It is later in life that the child makes discovery of religious institution and becomes capable of personal religious decisions.⁶ How the parents prepared the child for this later life decision making is crucial in the spiritual growth of the child. The seed of faith is planted in the minds of the children right in the family from childhood. It is also in the family that such seed germinates and grows to maturity, and consequently, leading to vocation discernment. When the family grows in its true vocation, it shares already in building the Kingdom of God here on earth. However, when the family fails in this duty, the opposite will be the case. The home used to be the fertile garden where vocation seeds were planted and nurtured in the hearts of young people.

Family unstable behaviours, disunited parents have great impact on the children. “Their disunion does not have to be finalized by divorce to be damaging. It may often lie concealed under the outward appearances of unhappy life together, or be confined to one particular area of disagreement – religion perhaps. But the children do not fail to notice it and it may make a vivid

² Luke Salm, *The Work Is Yours: The Life of Saint John Baptist de La Salle* (Illinois: Christian Brothers Publications, 1989), 210

³ John Martin Owor, *In Loving We Are Reborn: For The Life of The Family* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2019), 66.

⁴ Poage and Treacy, *Parents’ Role in Vocations* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1959), 1.

⁵ John Martin Owor, *In Loving We Are Reborn: For The Life of The Family* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2019), 71.

⁶ William, Fowler J. *Stages of faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981),

impression on them.”⁷ According to Peage and Treacy, “when parents failed to guide their children as wisely or as effectively as they might, unhappiness, foolish choices, and loss of vocations sometimes result. Seldom can such failure be attributed to lack of good will among parents.”⁸ A young man aspiring to Religious Life, though healthy looking and full of potentials, yet because of the trauma he went through in the family, he may not be able to sustain the vocation.

In his own contribution to the Symposium on ‘Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment’, John Mwaura emphasizes the family impact in planting the seed of vocation to Religious Life in the hearts of their children. “The development of the person begins in the family. It is in the family that God reveals His intentions for us. The family is the center of vocation promotion... parents have a role to play in introducing the young ones to the Catholic faith...”⁹ While God certainly is the one calling, the family is the fertile ground that prepares and allows a young man to say “yes” to God’s call.

In the concluding part of *Vita Consecrata*, the Holy Father, Pope Saint John Paul II appealed to the family to “remember that if parents do not live the values of the Gospel, the young man or woman will find it very difficult to discern the calling, to understand the need for the sacrifice which must be faced, and to appreciate the beauty of the goal to be achieved.”¹⁰

Discerning a religious vocation is a huge decision that affects everyone in the family, most especially parents. The family, consciously or unconsciously, influences the vocation discernment of their children. When the family is stable, at peace and united, there is family religious activities like prayer, going to Church, pious group meetings etc., the child grows to value commitment, and all these contribute immensely to vocation discernment. However, when all these are lacking, they also affect the child’s vocation discernment process later in adulthood.

2.1.3 Impact of Pressure for Family Support on Faithfulness to Religious Vocation

The family plays major role in shaping their children’s educational and career decisions. Hence, parents are very selective in the colleges their children attend. Parents are concerned about the quality of the college, and how marketable are the graduates from such college or university. This is because the more lucrative the job the more money the child will earn and the better the child will be able to take care of self and able to support the family. The choice to respond to a divine call to the Religious Life does not stop this aspiration by parents.

Parents serve as major influence in the lives of their children. According to a large body of research, family factors often influence career development and decision-making.¹¹ This impact however, can be negative or positive. Where it is positive, there is encouragement, advice, freedom to choose, moral, psychological and financial supports. When a candidate experience this support in his choice of Religious Life of the Brothers, he feels spiritually strong and ready to answer

⁷ Hostie R., *The Discernment of Vocations*, translated by Michael Berry (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 62.

⁸ Poage and Treacy, *Parents’ Role in Vocations* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1959), 126.

⁹ John E, Mwaura, *Vocations Ministry: Journeying Together, in Symposium, Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment*, ed, Giuseppe Caramazza and Eleanor Gibson (Nairobi: Institute of Youth Studies, 2017), 56.

¹⁰ *Vita Consecrata. The Consecrated Life*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1996), 107.

¹¹ Keller, B. K. *Parental Behaviours that Influence Adolescents’ Career Development*. (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2004).

God's call. In his article, 'The Survival of the Catholic Family', Fr. John A. Hardon, SJ, elaborated, "Where the Catholic family is strong, the Catholic Church is strong. Where the family is weak, the Church is weak. Where the family is struggling for survival, the Church is struggling for survival."¹²

The communal life in African context demands that a grownup man does not just live on his own even after marriage; he is responsible for the training of younger ones. These younger ones may not necessarily be the same father and mother, but include members of the extended family. "The concept of kinship has spiritual values deeply rooted in the lives of African people who believe that the past, present and the future of their lives is influenced by their immediate relatives whether living or dead or yet to be born.... As a result, members of a kinship are expected to ensure the health, socio-cultural orientation, education, income, and security of other members."¹³ This definitely possess a big challenge to a Religious Brother who does not earn salary or income, who depends on his Religious Community for every financial need.

In strict sense, the concept of kinship connotes the idea of being related by blood. In general term, this relationship is mainly by blood, particularly, father, mother, and direct brothers and sisters. This may not be so in African context of family and kinship. Kinship goes beyond being 'related to by blood'. "A related person is not simply an individual...kin relationships are categorized as consanguine or affinity, it goes beyond the expressed biological constituents."¹⁴ This, invariably, puts financial responsibility on every member of such family. Whether one likes it or not, the desire to help will always hunt you. Because, an African is known as a community man. As Mbiti rightly puts it, "I am because we are, and because we are, I am too."¹⁵ An African belongs to a web of relations far beyond blood relation or nuclear family. An African man is indeed a community man.

It is obvious that there is family bond between parents and their children. This bond continues in adulthood and even old age. Therefore, making financial demand on the children, particularly in African context, is inevitable. This financial demand is not limited to just the parents and siblings, the extended family is inclusive. When this pressure is mounted on a Consecrated Religious Brother who does not earn salary, the tendency to vacillate or abandon his vocation is high.

2.1.4 Impact of the Pressure to Beget Offspring Influence on Faithfulness to Religious Vocation

An African is not just in community with people, but he is also in community with nature and his environment. "Africans see that human life and activity in constant contact with the life and

¹² John A. Hardon SJ, *The Survival of the Catholic Family*, © 1984. *Institute on Religious Life*. <http://catholiceducation.org/articles/religion/www.lifeeternal.org>

¹³ *African Cultural Domains Book 2: Circle of Family and Interpersonal Relationships*, ed. Michael Kirwen (Nairobi: MIAS BOOKS, 2010), 80.

¹⁴ Petri Assenga, *Towards an African Model of Church as Family: A Socio-Anthropological, Ecclesiological and Pastoral Study Based on Family Structures and Community Building Rituals among the Chagga* (Koln, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2009), 66.

¹⁵ John Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd Ed. (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd.1991), 104

activity of other people and with nature makes life and living life fully possible.”¹⁶ Hence, continuity of life, not just of human beings, but also continuity of life of nature, trees, rivers, hills etc. is essential for Africans.

The sole reason for marriage in most African culture is for procreation. Marriage, according to Laurenti Magesa, “is not an end in itself, but a means to an end... for without children – who are proof of the transmission and preservation of the force of life – marriage has no meaning.”¹⁷ The pressure mounted on a Religious Brother to beget offspring, even after the Perpetual Profession, can make him question his vow of chastity. Perpetuation of life for the survival of the family is a great value for an African. Hence the reason why procreative fecundity is so indispensable in Africa. As Petri Assenga rightly puts it, “This ensures not only the perpetuation of the earthly kin for the future of the family, but the survival of the ancestors depends on the perpetuation of their memory by the earthly kin.”¹⁸

The intensity of the pressure to beget offspring is stronger on the first-born son than other children. This pressure cuts across all other responsibilities expected of the first child. “Birth order and sibling dynamics are significant factors in shaping one’s role in the family, and they are critical to the career decision-making process.”¹⁹

A typical traditional African society believes that God commanded human beings to get married, bear children and multiply. Therefore, marriage is not an option; it is rather a sacred duty. John Mbiti declares, “Marriage is looked upon as a sacred duty which every normal person must perform. Failure to do so means in effect stopping the flow of life through the individual, and hence the diminishing of mankind upon the earth.”²⁰ However, certain people set aside and consecrated to the gods, during the duration of their duties to the gods, observe celibacy and do not get married.

Children are born not just for themselves, but to increase their clan, to comfort the parents in poverty, to provide help in old age, and for the parents to be remembered through their children. This is clearly indicated by Philip Kibride and Janet Kibride, “When thirty men were asked why men want children? Typical responses included, ‘to increase their clan, to comfort them in poverty, to provide help in old age, and to be remembered through their children.’”²¹ The expectation of parents that the children will provide not just for their needs at old age, but also that the elder ones will be able to take care of their younger ones, has a debilitating effect on vocation discernment.

¹⁶ Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1997), 82.

¹⁷Magesa, *African Religion*, 118-119.

¹⁸ Petri Assenga, *Towards an African Model of Church as Family: A Socio-Anthropological, Ecclesiological and Pastoral Study Based on Family Structures and Community Building Rituals among the Chagga*, (Germany:Lambert Publishing AG & Co. KG, 2009),77.

¹⁹ Parrott , Leslie and Les Parrott, *The Career Counselor: Contemporary Christian Counseling* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995)51.

²⁰ John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd Ed. (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd.1991), 104.

²¹ Philip Kilbride and Janet Kibride, *Changing Family Life in East Africa: Women and Children at Risk* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1990), 88.

As the young man is thinking of giving his life to God in Religious Life, he is also confronted with the challenge of who will take care of his parents in their old age.

3.0 Research Design and Methodology

The study used convergent parallel mixed method research design. Kumar Ranji asserts, “The mixed method approach reinforces the accuracy and significance of the researcher’s conclusions.”²² This method is credited with the value of providing a better of the situation under study and reconfirms findings. The instrument of data collection for this study was questionnaire and interview guide. The interview guide was constructed using the same items on the questionnaires but with open-ended questions. The interviews were conducted on purposefully selected Brothers, while the questionnaire was administered to randomly selected Brothers

The research was carried out among De La Salle Brothers in Lwanga District of Africa, consisting of six countries: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya. Lwanga District consists of about 110 Religious Brothers, spread around the six countries. However, majority of the Brothers reside in Kenya, which is the Provincial Headquarter.

The target population to which the researcher generalized the results of the study consists of De La Salle Brothers in Kenya, a Male Religious Congregation in the Catholic Church. Ninety (90) Brothers in different communities in Kenya and other parts of Lwanga District of Africa. Two of the communities engaged mainly in ministry of initial formation, while other communities are for Brothers in apostolic life, teaching and administration. The study adopted a stratified random sampling technique to stratify the target population into four strata as follows: Perpetually Professed Brothers in Administration; Perpetually Professed Brothers in formation houses; Temporary Professed Brothers in graduate studies; and Brothers in the second stage of initial formation, which is the Novitiate.

4.0 Results

4.1 On Parents Influence on Brothers to Take Up Other Occupations

The high percentages of the respondents supported the view that some parents encourage their sons who are Religious Brothers to abandon their vocation so that they can take up lucrative job in order to meet the needs of the family. High among such needs, from the oral interview conducted, include: payment of school fees for siblings; caring for the health need of aged parents; provision of accommodation for parents. The result of the finding illustrates further some of the reasons children are very crucial in African marriage. Children are born not just for themselves, but to be able to take care of their parents when they grow old and take care of the needs of the family in entirety. The result is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Parents Influence on Brothers to Take Up Other Occupations

Category	SA	%	A	%	U	%	D	%	SD	%	Total
Initial Formation	5	29.4	10	58.8	2	11.8	0	0	0	0	100%
Undergraduate	10	28.62	18	51.4	5	14.28	2	5.7	0	0	100%
Formators	4	33.3	6	50	2	16.67	0	0	0	0	100%
Administrators	5	31.25	6	37.5	2	12.5	1	6.25	2	12.5	100%

²² Kumar Ranji, *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide For Beginners*, (Los Angeles: SAGE Publisher, 2014), 70.

4.2 Candidates’ Loss of Vocation Due to Discouragement from Parents

Well above average of the respondents affirms the view that some candidates have lost their vocation due to discouragement from family members. What then could be the reason for the discouragement? Taking care of the family needs such as health care of the parents, food, shelter, payment of school fees of siblings, just to mention but a few. Despite the abundance of natural resources all over Africa, poverty of different category and level seems to bedevil the continent. “The sign of poverty in Africa include inadequate housing, unemployment, needless illness, and illiteracy”²³. When a prospective candidate to Brotherhood does not get support from his family, he may lose interest in God’s call and eventually abandons his vocation. This view is supported by Patricia Wittberg, who expressed that, “the lack of supportive cultural incentives to enter (Religious Life) is a prime reason for the decline of any international community, and Religious Congregations cannot expect to be different in this regard.”²⁴ The result is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Candidates’ Loss of Vocation Due to Discouragement from Parents

Category	SA	%	A	%	U	%	D	%	SD	%	TOTAL
Initial Formation	4	23.52	8	47.05	4	23.55	1	5.88	0	0	100%
Undergraduate	8	22.85	19	54.28	5	14.30	2	5.77	1	2.8	100%
Formators	3	25	6	50	2	16.6	0	0	1	8.4	100%
Administrators	5	31.25	6	37.5	4	25	0	0	1	6.25	100%

4.3 Parents’ Ignorance of the Implications of Vow of Poverty

The result indicates that 70% of the Brothers in initial formation agreed that some families do not understand the vow of chastity hence they pressurize brothers to beget offspring. Undergraduate Brothers supported this statement with 91%. Formators agreed with the statement by 75%, while Brothers in administration consented with it by 68%.

This result proves beyond doubt that the joy parents derived in seeing their children dedicated and committed to God’s work as Religious and Priests seems to be peter-out gradually or dyed-in-the-wool. Even when it happens that parents support their son going to Religious Brotherhood, their expectation can sometimes be wrapped in what the young man can bring to support their livelihood, particularly at old age. The result is illustrated in Table 3.

²³ Emmanuel Obeng, ministerial Formation For An Effective Church In Africa, in Pastoral Care in African Christianity: Challenging Essays in Pastoral Theology, ed., Douglas Waruja and Hannah kinoti (Nairobi: 2000 Acton Publishers, 2000), 29.

²⁴ Patricia Wittberg, Creating A Future For Religious Life: A Sociological Perspective (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1991), 99.

Table 3: Parents’ Ignorance of the Implications of Vow of Poverty

Category	SA	%	A	%	U	%	D	%	SD	%	TOTAL
Initial Formation	9	52.95	5	29.41	3	17.64	0	0	0	0	100%
Undergraduate	18	51.43	16	45.72	1	2.85	0	0	0	0	100%
Formators	6	50	5	41.66	1	8.34	0	0	0	0	100%
Administrators	10	62.5	3	18.75	1	6.25	1	6.25	1	6.25	100%

4.4 Families Ignorance of Religious Vow of Chastity

The finding indicates that 80% of the Brothers in initial formation agreed that some families do not understand the vow of chastity hence they pressurize brothers to beget offspring. Undergraduate Brothers supported this statement with 91%. Formators agreed with the statement by 75%, while Brothers in administration consented with it by 68%. The responses from the respondents indicate that most families of the Brothers do not truly understand what the vow of chastity that their sons take mean. It is as a result of this ignorance of the vow of chastity that make some family members in general and parents in particular pressurize some Brothers to beget upspring. The result is illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4: Families Ignorance of Religious Vow of Chastity

Category	SA	%	A	%	U	%	D	%	SD	%	TOTAL
Initial Formation	8	47.05	4	23.52	5	29.43	0	0	0	0	100%
Undergraduate	14	40	18	51.43	3	8.57	0	0	0	0	100%
Formators	3	25	6	50	2	16.66	1	8.34	0	0	100%
Administrators	4	25	7	43.75	2	12.5	2	12.5	1	6.25	100%

4.5 Some Brothers Struggle with Cultural Values of Bearing Offspring

The result indicates that 76% of the Brothers in initial formation are of the view that some families still question Brothers’ decision not to get married, even after Perpetual Profession. 68% of the undergraduate Brothers are in support of this. 83% of the Formators agreed with the statement, while 68% of Brothers in administration agreed. The challenge of the desire to have offspring does not disappear with Religious Perpetual Profession. The result from the respondents confirms this assertion. High percentage of the respondents agreed that they struggle with the cultural values of bearing offspring. This, however, does not mean that the Brothers are unfaithful to the observance of the vow of chastity. It rather indicates their humanness and the strong awareness of the value African culture attached to bearing offspring. The result is illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5: Some Brothers Struggle with Cultural Values of Bearing Offspring

Category	SA	%	A	%	U	%	D	%	SD	%	TOTAL
Initial Formation	6	35.29	6	35.29	4	23.53	1	5.89	0	0	100%
Undergraduate	11	31.42	17	48.58	5	14.28	1	2.86	1	2.86	100%
Formators	3	25	5	41.66	3	25	1	8.34	0	0	100%
Administrators	3	18.75	8	50	3	18.75	1	6.25	1	6.25	100%

5.0 Conclusion

The findings of this study have proved that the family has great impact in vocation discernment of De La Salle Brothers in Lwanga District of Africa. When the family plays its role as the smallest unit of the Church, daily family prayer, sharing of scripture, active participation in the parish activities. The children grow up developing a strong affection for religious activities. This attitude lays good foundation for Religious Life.

The aftermath of questionnaires, interview guide and literature review divulged that visit to the family of candidate before admission into formation programmes is indispensable. The questionnaires and other data processes also revealed that there is need to create bond between the Congregation and Brothers’ families. This family ties could be done by extending invitation to families to participate in Lasallian feasts, Profession of Vows and other ceremony of the Congregation. The results revealed further the need for De La Salle Congregation to map out strategy to support Brothers whose parents are in dare need of financial aid. The aid may include providing a suitable accommodation for aged parents, health care assistance, extending scholarship to siblings.

Consecrated Religious Life is a value in itself; and Religious Brotherhood in particular “provides valuable services of various kinds, inside or outside the community, participating in this way in the mission of proclaiming the Gospel and bearing witness to it with charity in everyday life,” (VC 60). God continues to call young men and women to Priestly and Religious Life today. However, some factors serve as impediment to respond to God’s call. The family up-bring of a child contributes to his vocation discernment. How the extended family in general and parents in particular shaped the life of a child can enhance or mall the vocation process of the child aspiring to join the Religious Life. As Pope John Paul II says, “Everything depends in principle on the way parents and family have fulfilled their first and fundamental duties, on the way and in the measure that they have taught ‘to be human’ that creature who, thanks to them, has become a human being, has obtained humanity.”²⁵

When a young man, aspiring to Religious Life gets support from the family, it is an encouragement, a motivator and energizer. However, when, instead of support, it is criticism, financial expectation, not just from the parents, but also from the extended family and friends, such a Religious may end up losing his vocation.

²⁵ Pope John Paul II, *A Year With Mary* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1986), 77-78.

Vocation Promoter's preparedness for the job is important. His willingness to go extra mile in knowing the candidate, the family, the faith journey all contribute to better prepare the candidate and his family for better understanding of Religious Life.

6.0 Recommendation

The word of Jesus to the disciples is truer now than it was over 2000 years ago: "The harvest is plenty but the laborers are few. Pray therefore to the Lord of the harvest to send laborer to his harvest", (Lk. 10:2). All Consecrated Religious who wish continuity for their congregation have the duty to pray fervently for more 'laborers' into the field.

Qualities of vocation Promoters: The Vocation Promoter is in the limelight for the family to see. He is a familiar sight to young people and their family. He should be familiar with the youth, otherwise, "how will a child take something unknown to be a model? Without the possibility of seeing a religious or priest doing his or her thing, how can one desire to be like them?" Each Religious Congregation must have Vocation Promoter/Recruiter. The work of vocation promoter or recruiter is enormous. If the Vocation Promoter wants to get candidates recruited, he must be ready to pay the price in energy, time, and money. He cannot be stint on either time, energy or money. It is a full-time job, an apostolate within the apostolate. He must 'pray as though everything depended on God and work as though all depended on him'.

Training of Vocation Promoters: The ability to recruit – to inspire and direct youths in his or her choice of vocation – is a skill, and not everyone has that skill. A skill is acquired and developed through training and natural talents. Therefore, Vocation Promoter should be properly and adequately trained for the job. Academic qualification as well as practical training are necessarily required. A Diploma or Certificate in Religious Formation will be an added advantage. There should be nothing exaggerated, nothing minimized.

Home Visit: Another step to get home support is to visit the home as soon as the Vocation Promoter is sure that the youth has become serious about his vocation. The Vocation Promoter/Recruiter must take the pain and courage to visit the home of the candidate before he/she is invited to start formation. "It is both bad manners and bad public-relations to advise a youngster: 'If your parents don't like the idea, tell them they can come and see me'".²⁶ It is imperative for the Vocation Promoter to get to know the candidate's family, the Parish Priest. Vocation Promoter should make enquiry about the candidate's contributions in the Parish: Altar Server, Chorister, pious society he/she belongs. All these are important to know the candidate's journey of faith.

Faithfulness and commitment of Religious: The young people need to see the Religious in action. Not just the young people, even their parents need to see the Religious witnessing to the vows they pronounced and being living the vows faithfully. It is by seeing them 'doing their things' and living their life that the parents will have better understanding of who we are and what the Religious vocation entails. Through their ways of life and faithfulness to their vocation, the Religious become witnesses to their vocation, thereby helping young people in their discernment process.

²⁶ Godfrey Poage, *Secrets of Successful Recruiting : The Principles of Religious Vocational Guidance and Tested Techniques of America's Most Successful Religious Recruiters* (Maryland: The Newman Press, 1961), 87.

Financial aid: “When the rabbit is old, it takes the milk of its offspring”, so goes the adage. Giving financial assistance to needing parents may be required sometimes.

Family Participation in Congregation’s Ceremony: Invite family members to participate in congregations’ feasts and celebrations like taking of habit, pronouncement of Religious vows, Jubilee anniversaries etc. through this regular contact with the family, the family get to know the congregation and their ways of life, thereby creating more understanding, leading to acceptance and support.

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