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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONSECRATED LIFE IN THE CHURCH AND THE OBLIGATION OF THE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY TO PROMOTE AND FOSTER IT PURSUANT TO CANON 574 WITH REFERENCE TO THE CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF NAIROBI, KENYA

A Thesis Submitted to the Institute of Canon Law, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Licentiate Degree in Canon Law

BY

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MAY, 2025

NAIROBI – KENYA

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has never been submitted to any college, institution, or university for academic credit. All sources consulted are duly acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my Parents, Samwel K. Nkeyemba and Clesensia S. Kelamiye, Our Lady of Good Counsel Sisters (O.L.G.C), and Ecclesial Communities especially the Archdiocese of Nairobi, as they promote and foster vocation to consecrated life.

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May God bless you all abundantly!

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AA	*Apostolicam Actuositatem*
AAS	*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*
ASS	*Acta Sanctae Sedis*
ACWECA	Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central America
AOSK	Association of Sisterhood in Kenya
Art.	Article
Can.	Canon
Cann.	Canons
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCCB	Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
Cf.	Confer
CCEO/*1990*	*Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium*
CIC/1917	*Codex Iuris Canonici* (1917 Code of Canon Law)
CICLSAL	Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
CLSA	Canon Law Society of America.
CIC/1983	*Codex Iuris Canonici* (1983 Code of Canon Law)
CUCA	*Congregavit nos in Unum Christi Amor*

CUEA	Catholic University of Eastern Africa
Dr.	Doctor
DPMB	Directory for Pastoral Ministry of Bishops
ECI	Episcopal Conference of Italy
ed.	Editor
eds.	Editors
ET	*Evangelica Testificatio*
Ex.	Exodus
et al.	*et alii* (and others)
ff.	Going forward
Gen.	Genesis
gen.	General
GS	*Gaudium et Spes*
KCCB	Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops
LG	*Lumen Gentium*
Lk.	Luke
MG	*Magno Gaudio*
MR	*Mutuae Relationes*

Mt.	Matthew
n.	Number
nn.	Numbers
PI	*Potissimum Institutioni*
p.	Page
pp.	Pages
PC	*Perfectae Caritatis*
S. V.	*Sub verbo*
Tim.	Timothy
USCCB	United States Catholic Conference of Bishops
VC	*Vita Consecrata*
Vol.	Volume
VDO	*Vultum Dei Quaerere*

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Promotion and fostering of vocations to consecrated life in the Catholic Church was legislated in canon law due to the growing need for individuals to dedicate their lives fully to God through religious life, prayer, and service. The Church recognizes that consecrated life, which includes monastic, religious, and clerical vocations, plays a vital role in the life of the Church, helping to maintain and strengthen its spiritual and communal foundations. In a world marked by rapid social and cultural changes, the Catholic Church understood that a strong commitment to the consecrated life provided a witness to the values of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and offered a counterbalance to the secularization and materialism that were increasingly influencing society. As such, the Church deems it necessary for the entire ecclesial community to be involved in fostering an environment where vocations could be recognized, supported, and nourished.

Canon Law addresses the importance of this collective responsibility by requiring the entire ecclesial community- bishops, clergy, religious, and laity to actively encourage and promote vocations to consecrated life. The Church considers the nurturing of vocation to consecrated life as not just a responsibility of individuals or religious Institutes as a communal mission. In this framework, the Church emphasizes the need for pastoral care, education, and discernment to help young people recognize their potential vocation. It affirms the necessity of prayer, support, and the creation of an environment conducive to such calls within the Church. Through this holistic approach, Canon Law aims to ensure that a variety of vocations could flourish, ensuring the Church remains faithful to its mission of offering spiritual guidance and service to the broader society.

1. Background of the Problem

The ecclesial community, which encompasses the entire body of believers, plays a role in promoting and fostering vocations to consecrated life. This involves creating an environment that nurtures discernment and supports individuals who are attracted to and wish to explore if they have a vocation to consecrated life. The entire ecclesial community, therefore, is called to provide spiritual guidance, education, and resources to help individuals understand and embrace their vocation.

Can. 574 §1 emphasizes the invitation of every faithful to encourage and foster vocation to consecrated life. This implies not only encouraging those who feel they have a vocation to consecrated life, but more so creating environments conducive for nurturing the budding vocations and of ongoing support and mentorship of those already living a consecrated life so that they continue to grow in their calling into perfection .The ecclesial community therefore in each one's condition has the responsibility of contributing to the faith of the young, and of introducing them to the different vocations in the Church. The community especially the local Church is also to endeavor to create opportunities and access to fora where the young people can learn more about consecrated life in order for them to be equipped with adequate knowledge and spiritual foundation necessary for the vocation they intend to choose.

While the Church in its legislation has laid emphasis on the significance of consecrated life in the Church and the obligation all members of the Church to promote and foster it, experience indicate that this state of life in the present times tend to be most unknown and where there is knowledge of it is most unattractive to young people. Additionally, those who are already living it on many occasions do not reflect the expected manner of life proper to the state, evident in a lack of fidelity and a lifestyle that is counter-witness. Consequently, young

people who may have some attraction to it, coupled with pressure from modern technology, are mostly discouraged and opt not to pursue this state of life altogether. It is regarded as counter-productive, left for those who have failed in life. Moreover, more and more families of the Christian faithful are laxed in their practice of faith; hence, the young people hardly know much about the faith, let alone consecrated life.

It is the light of the above that this study endeavors to reawaken the passion and enthusiasm among the faithful to recommit themselves to the obligation of fostering vocation to consecrated life. This they can do by learning more about it so that they have the correct understanding of it, encouraging the young who feel attracted to this state of life and creating faith filled environment where those considering assuming this state of life have the conducive atmosphere for discernment, and the ecclesial community have structures designed for vocation promotion.

2. The Purpose of the Thesis

This study aims to explore and address the role of the ecclesial community, taking into consideration the canonical provision of supporting and fostering the vocation of consecrated life, particularly in times of looking for which institute to join and live their vocation.
Additionally, the research offers a juridical perspective from canon law in providing substantial knowledge that can assist in addressing these issues more effectively. This thesis is not just an academic exercise, but also a means to propose practical solutions and support systems for those facing such profound life challenges.

Beneficiaries of this study include religious superiors, diocesan bishops, pastors, vocations promoters, schools, and families who oversee individuals embracing consecrated life. They will find valuable information to enhance their leadership and support strategies.

Moreover. This research more importantly, serves as a resource for those interested in canon law studies, contributing to a broader understanding of the intersection between legal frameworks and personal well-being in religious vocations.

3. The Rationale of the Thesis

Several researches have been done on the theme of fostering and promoting vocations of consecrated life in the Church. There however not enough research documents on the lack of interest in Consecrated life in the ecclesial community, especially in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi. This has led to young people not being to discern well their vocations, and hence missing proper direction as they contemplate joining various institutes of consecrated life particularly, those aspiring to join religious life. This research is therefore timely, for it addresses the causes and consequences of lack of proper information to foster and promote vacation to consecrated life.

4. The Central Question of Investigation

The central question of investigation of this study is "To what extent has the ecclesial community, cognizant of the indispensable role consecrated life play in the life, applied the provisions of Can.574 in promoting and fostering the vocation to this state?"

5. Working Hypotheses

If the Christian faithful of the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi were adequately catechized and informed of the significance of consecrated in the Church, they would take seriously the obligation to promote and foster the vocation to this state of life.

Perhaps with an adequate understanding of the canonical provisions of Can. 574, faithful will take seriously their obligation to promote and foster vocation to consecrated life. Probably,

if there was a specific diocesan coordinated structure for vocation promotion, the faithful would show a deeper commitment to promoting and fostering vocation to consecrated life.

Maybe if those in religious life strive to give authentic witness to the state of life by their manner of life and service, more young people will be attracted to the life.

6. Methodological Considerations

This section treats the various methods employed in the study and the structure of the thesis.

6.1. Methods of Approach

This thesis takes into consideration the appropriate juridical methodological approach in attaining its purpose. The research employs the historical approach, exegetical approach, analytical approach, and prospective approach.

Juridical-Historical Approach: This is used to trace the history and the development of Can. 574 in the canonical tradition. Promoting the vocation of consecrated life and cooperation among Christ's faithful is a role of the whole ecclesia community considers the biblical foundations of the concept, the experience of the early church, the medieval period, to the modern and contemporary periods.

The exegetical approach is used to analyze the sources and formation of the obligations to promote and foster the vocation of consecrated life and traces its roots and other related cannons on the obligation of the ecclesial community to support vocation, to have an understanding of the mind of the legislator and his intention concerning the text of the law.

Analytical approach is applied to make the analysis of the canonical legislation and the various teachings of the Church in the Magisterium, particular Church, and other documents on the obligations of the ecclesial community to promote and foster vocation in consecrated life.

Finally, the Prospective approach is used in this study to appreciate the teaching of the Magisterium and the canonical doctrine, and evaluate the obligation of the ecclesial community in promoting and fostering the vocation of consecrated life, to apply the provisions of the CIC/1983, Can. 574 especially in the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi. The prospective approach is also used to give practical recommendations on how the promotion of vocation to consecrated life in a collaborative nature can be approached and observed.

6.2 The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprises three chapters.

Chapter One: The Evolution of Consecrated Life and Its Significance in the Ecclesial Community in Canonical Tradition.

This chapter explores the canonical traditional background and experience of supporting and fostering the vocation to consecrated life. It explores the biblical, theological, and ecclesial foundations of Can. 574. It studies the writings of the Church Fathers, the *Corpus Iuris Canonici* (*Decretus Gratianus)*, and *Corpus Iuris Canonici,* the Council of Trent (1545-1563), *Codex Iuris Canonici* of 1917, Conciliar documents (1962-1965), and *Codex Iuris Canonici* of 1983, and recent Magisteral on the responsibility of the entire ecclesial community to foster and promote vocations to consecrated life.

Chapter Two: Juridical Study Analysis of Can. 574, on the Obligation of the Ecclesial Community to Esteem, Promote and Foster Vocation of Consecrated Life.

This chapter studies the sources of Can. 574, of the 1983 Code of Canon Law; its formation, exegetical analysis of the canon aiming at better grasping meanings, changes, and modifications that took place before its final formation. It also carries out the textual analysis,

to unveil the meaning of words, the scope of the norm and its rationale, focusing at its content, the biblical motivations, and the canonical ends; and related concepts, and related canons in the 1983 Code of Canon Law and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO 1990) highlighting the correct meaning of the canon under study.

Chapter Three: Conformity of The Particular Law of The Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi with the Universal Law on Promotion and Fostering of Vocations to Consecrated Life.

This chapter presents a brief historical description of the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi and an analysis of the proper law of the Catholic Archdiocese regarding the provisions of Can. 574. It also treats other particular legislation on the promotion and fostering of vocation to consecrated life, challenges that the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi faces in its efforts to promote and foster vocation to consecrated life, providing it considers the documents of the conference of the major Superiors in international, regional and national levels. It indicates some challenges in the practice of vocation promotion and finally suggests some canonical recommendations on the obligation of the increase of responsibility of the entire ecclesial community in the promotion and fostering of vocation to the consecrated life.

Promotion and fostering of vocations to consecrated life in the Catholic Church was legislated in canon law due to the growing need for individuals to dedicate their lives fully to God through religious life, prayer, and service. The Church recognizes that consecrated life, which includes monastic, religious, and clerical vocations, plays a vital role in the life of the Church, helping to maintain and strengthen its spiritual and communal foundations. In a world marked by rapid social and cultural changes, the Catholic Church understood that a strong commitment to the consecrated life provided a witness to the values of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and offered a counterbalance to the secularization and materialism that were

increasingly influencing society. As such, the Church deems it necessary for the entire ecclesial community to be involved in fostering an environment where vocations could be recognized, supported, and nourished.

Canon law addresses the importance of this collective responsibility by requiring the entire ecclesial community- bishops, clergy, religious, and laity to actively encourage and promote vocations to consecrated life. The Church considers the nurturing of vocation to consecrated life as not just a responsibility of individuals or religious Institutes as a communal mission. In this framework, the Church emphasizes the need for pastoral care, education, and discernment to help young people recognize their potential vocation. It affirms the necessity of prayer, support, and the creation of an environment conducive to such calls within the Church. Through this holistic approach, canon Law aims to ensure that a variety of vocations could flourish, ensuring the Church remains faithful to its mission of offering spiritual guidance and service to the broader society.

CHAPTER ONE

THE EVOLUTION OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN THE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY IN CANONICAL TRADITION

Introduction

In the early centuries of Christianity, some Christians felt called to live a life of heightened devotion and dedication to God. This led to monasticism, with individuals or small groups living apart from the general populace to focus on prayer, asceticism, and service. Consecrated life has been a vital source of spiritual vitality, intellectual richness, and apostolic fruitfulness for the Catholic Church throughout history.[1] It has adapted to the needs of each era while maintaining its fundamental commitment to evangelical counsels and radical discipleship.[2] Monasticism also brought in at a later stage, the missionary spirit, which was mandated by Jesus when He said, 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age' (Mt. 28:19-20).

This chapter explores the historical evolution of vocation to consecrated life in the canonical tradition and how this vocation has been promoted and fostered in different epochs of the history of the Church. It explores the biblical, theological, and ecclesial foundations of

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[1] Cf. A. PIGNA, *La Vita Consecrata. Trattato di Teleogia e Spiritualita, I identita e missione*, Edizione OCD, Roma 2010, pp. 429-488.

[2] Cf. S. SCHNEIDERS, *Selling All. Commitment, Consecrated Celibacy, and Community in Catholic Religious Life*, Paulist Press, New York 2013, pp. 115-128.

Can. 574. It studies the writings of the Church Fathers, the *Corpus Iuris Canonici* (*Decretus Gratianus)*, the Council of Trent, the 1917 *Codex Iuris Canonici*, the period of Second Vatican Council, the 1983 Code of Canon Law, (*Codex Iuris Canonici*) and the 1990 Code of the Eastern Churches. Lastly, it looks at some of the post-Conciliar Holy See documents on consecrated life.

1.1 Biblical Foundation of the Vocation to Consecrated Life

The Biblical foundation for the vocation to consecrated life in the Catholic Church is deeply rooted in the scriptures, highlighting the call to holiness and service. Isaiah 6:8 presents a prophetic call to radical commitment, (Isaiah: 6) while Matthew and Paul (Cf. Mt 9:12, 1Cor 7:2-34) emphasize celibacy for the Kingdom of God. Examples like the apostles leaving everything to follow Christ (Mark 10:28) illustrate the devotion required in consecrated life.[3]

1.1.1 Old Testament

In the Old Testament, God's calling and sending are seen in figures like Abraham, Moses, and the prophets, indicating God's initiative in promoting vocations for specific missions. Genesis 1:28 speaks to humankind's high dignity and participation in God's plan through procreation and service. Cassuto highlights Moses' call in Exodus 3:4 as the beginning of his leadership and Aaron's consecration to the priesthood (Exodus 28:1), showing how God fosters vocations within communities.[4] Cassuto demonstrates and highlights the language used in calling Jeremiah, noting that the phrase "the word of the Lord came to me" is a formula customarily used to introduce prophetic utterances. This establishes the divine origin and

[3] Cf. V. ZINKURATIRE *et al*., (*eds*.), *The African Bible*, Pauline Publications, Nairobi 1999.

[4] Cf. W. BRUEGGEMANN, *A Commentary on Jeremiah. Exile and Homecoming*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville 1998, pp. 15-23.

authority of Jeremiah's message, which can be affirmed today implicitly in the calling and fostering of consecrated life.[5]

Martti Nissinen examines the life and ministry of Prophet Elijah as exemplifying the promotion and fostering of vocation to consecrated life. He alludes to how Elijah's radical separation from ordinary society, ascetic lifestyle, and singular devotion to God's commands reflect the call to a life of total consecration. This becomes a replica of the promotion of religious life today. Those who experience the call are to abandon earthly life and join the spiritual life, a sign of eschatology, (Cf. Can. 573). Though raised as a priest, Samuel was called to be a prophet, showcasing a dedicated service to God (1 Samuel 3:1-20). Eli played a key role in fostering Samuel's prophetic mission. Saul's anointing as king symbolized God's call, but his pride and disobedience led to his loss of the throne. On the other hand, David's calling and consecration reflect God's preference for promoting His chosen servants. Both stories of Saul and David in specific roles as kings, offer insights into the broader concept of encouraging, fostering, and promoting vocations.[6]

1.1.2 New Testament

In the New Testament, the concept of calling goes deeper than in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, God calls people to communion with Him. This occurs as a response to Christ's call to follow him. The calling to follow Christ lies at the root of every other promotion of the calling. In his commentary on the Gospel of Mark, 1:16-20, Joel Marcus explores how Jesus' call of his first disciples reflects the demands of the consecrated religious life.[7] Marcus

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[5] Cf. W. BRUEGGEMANN, *A Commentary on Jeremiah. Exile and Homecoming,* pp. 15-23.

[6] Cf. M. NISSINEN, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near Eas*t, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta 2003, pp. 121-126.

[7] Cf. J. MARCUS, *The Gospel According to Mark,* Doubleday, New York 2000, pp. 178-182.

notes that Jesus' instruction to the fishermen when he said to them "Follow me" signals a total reorientation of their lives toward single-minded devotion to his mission. This foreshadows the radical self-denial and acceptance to be fostered and promoted to those who aspire to join consecrated life.[8]

Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza while commenting on the Gospel of Luke, examines Jesus' parable of the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25-33) as illuminating the sacrifices inherent to the consecrated life. Her emphasis is on how Jesus demands that his followers be willing to hate their family ties and material possessions, the complete detachment from worldly life as it is required for consecrated service.[9] This kind of witness to Jesus' mission is what all consecrated people are called to live. Scot McKnight examines how Paul's theological vision and practical exhortations in his epistles provide a scriptural foundation for the consecrated religious vocation**.** McKnight highlights Paul's emphasis on the believer's radical identification with Christ's death and resurrection as shown in passages like Romans 6:1-14 and Galatians 2:19-20. He argues that mystical union with Christ necessitates a life of promotion, fostering, self-denial, mortification of the flesh, and singular devotion to the divine will, core hallmarks of the consecrated religious life.

Paulo commenting on the diverse roles within the body of Christ points to the unique charisms and ministries associated with consecrated vocations (Cf. 1Cr 1: 12-14, Ep 4: 11-1). McKnight contends that Paul envisions certain believers being set apart for specialized service and leadership within the Church.[10]

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[8] Cf. B. FORTE, *La Vida Como Vacacion*, Narcea, Madrid 2014, pp. 218-225.

[9] Cf. E.S. FIORENZA*, In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins,* Crossroad, New York 1983, pp. 149-154.

[10] Cf. S. MCKNIGHT, *Apostle Paul, and the Christian Life. Ethical and Missional Implications of the New Perspective*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids MI 2016, pp. 117-120.

As has already been stated, religious life did not have its institution in either the New or the Old Testaments, it was from different elements which characterized the life of the communities in the biblical stories that later on formed the life forms of religious life. These elements which later on became part of the lifestyle of those who embrace consecrated life were seen as blueprints for authentic Christian life. For instance, St. Paul exhorted the Philippians to have the mind of Christ in their relationship with one another (Philippians 2:5-11); Jesus in his preaching referred to those who are eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom (Matthew 19:12); Jesus explained to the disciples that celibate state of life is can only be possible by the assistance of divine grace (Matthew 19:10-12). From these examples, it can be concluded that such elements which pointed to consecrated life were applauded during the time of Jesus as lifestyle which brought holiness and close following of Christ in as much as we cannot speak of a formal means of fostering and promoting it since in itself it was not a yet a structured way of life. Such lifestyles were significant in the time of Jesus as they pointed to radical ways of *Sequela Christi* through imitation of the evangelical counsels, being unmarried for the sake of the kingdom and life of prayer. The New Testament refers to distinct groupings in the early Church, including groups of celibate women dedicated to prayer and charity (Lk. 2:37; 1 Timothy 5:5).

1.2 Notion of Vocation to Consecrated Life in the Early Church

Just like the time of Jesus, consecrated life as a state of life was not yet structured. This period was characterized by remarkable development in the life of the Church especially in the structuring of her legal system and growth of the first forms of religious life.[11] In the 3rd and 4th centuries, some Christians felt called to withdraw from the world and devote themselves

[11] Cf. B.E FERME, *Introduction to the History of the Sources of Canon Law*, Wilson & Lafleur Limitée, Montréal 2007, pp. 29-34.

entirely to prayer, contemplation, and solitude. These earliest forms of religious life were characterized by asceticism which emphasized deeper spiritual life whereby individuals known as hermits or anchorites would live in solitude, often in the desert.[12] The ascetics had no defined Rule (norm) governing their practice and life; they followed closely the teachings of the gospel and of the apostles especially the call to follow Christ closely by embracing evangelical counsels. These forms of life emphasized virginity as a condition for ascription into religious families. These forms of life were widespread in the Church suggesting that they were esteemed by the ecclesial communities.[13] From the fourth century however, the Church begun enacting certain common provisions on their life and discipline .[14] Notable early figures in this tradition include St. Anthony the Great and St. Paul the first Hermit.

In the second half of the third century, there arose a new form of life: monasticism is manifested in two forms: hermits and cenobites. Hermits led solitary life and at times formed quasi communities that met often for meals, conferences or prayers. They did not have a Rule or superior but a spiritual master who had authority over members and to whom members professed obedience on individual basis.[15]Cenobites instead lived in a community, under the guidance of the written Rule and an internal Superior to whom all submitted by virtue of

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[12] Cf. L. J. SWIFT, "Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church. The Spiritual Life," in *The Journal of Early Christian Studies,* 16 (2008), pp. 605-608.

[13] Cf. S. J. DAVIS, *The Cult of Saint Thecla. A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, pp. 87-89. See also S. ELM, *Virgins of God. Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity,* Clarendon Press, Oxford 1994, pp. 227–372.

[14] The fourth century, there were several particular synods or councils, which were celebrated in particular Churches or ecclesiastical regions frequently, they legislated on religious life: especially disciplining life and fidelity to virginity and purity, as well as defining the relationship between the religious life and the life of the Church, especially ecclesiastical authorities. Among these Councils, were the council of Elvira (300) Can. 13; Ancyra (314), Can. 19; Laodicea (343-381), Cann. 24,30; Carthage I (349), Cann. 3,4; Valencia (374), Can.2; Saragozza (380), Can. 6; Carthage II (387-390), Can. 3; Rome (390), Can. 1; Carthage III (393) Cann. 9,35; Hippo (393), Can.10; Carthage IV (397), Can. 10, 97,104; Toledo (400), Cann. 6,9,16; Carthage VI (401), Can. 14; Rome (402), Cann. 1,2; Saragozza (418), Can. 8; Arles (442-504), Cann. 25, 52; Angers (453), Cann.5, 8.

[15] Cf. CARMINATI, A. Diritto dei Religiosi, *DIP*, Vol. III, pp. 629-630; G. TURBESSI, *Ascetismo e monachesimo prebenedettino*, p. 106; G.M. COLOMBAS, «Asceti e ascete», in *DIP*, Vol. I, 919; S. ATANASIUS, *Vita Antonii:* in *pp*. 26, 840ss; S. GEROLAMO, *Ep. 58*, in *PL* 22, 578ss; CASSIANO, *Collatio* 18, in *PL*. 49, 1100ss.

obedience. An example is St. Pachomius who pioneered the fostering of cenobitic monasticism. Under this form of life, the monks would live together in a community under a common Rule and in a more structured and organized form of consecrated life. Prominent monastic communities and rules were established by figures like St. Basil the Great and St. Benedict. Women also began forming religious communities, often called convents or nunneries, to live consecrated life. Early examples include the community established by St. Macrina the Younger and the order founded by St. Scholastica, the sister of St. Benedict. The call to consecrated life was seen as a special vocation, distinct from the life of the laity. Those who entered religious life would take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, dedicating themselves fully to God and the service of the Church.[16] The main significance of these forms of life in the Church was their contribution in fostering and strengthening life of prayer, solitude, asceticism which advanced holiness among members an also in the entire Church evidenced in the popularity of this form of life in this epoch. As for fostering or promoting this form of life, this was mainly through the witness of life of the ascetics and not so much as an organized ecclesial activity. Nevertheless, it was state of life recognize and esteemed by the Church.

1.3 Consecrated Life and Efforts to Promote it in the Church in the Patristic Period

The growth and evolution of consecrated life was a significant aspect of the Patristic period, which refers to the era of the Church Fathers in the first few centuries of Christianity. During this time, the concept of consecrated religious life began to shape and evolve and the Church increased her recognition and appreciation of this state of life as way of advancing holiness in the Church by the witness of spiritual life of those who embraced it. Many of the

[16] Cf. G.L. JUSTO*, A History of the Christian Church. 4th ed*., Harper One, New York 2010, pp. 59-65.

Church Fathers were instrumental in the growth and evolution of what is known today as consecrated life.

1.3.1 St. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35 A.D.)

One of the earliest and most influential figures in the promotion of consecrated life was Saint Ignatius of Antioch. In his epistles, Ignatius articulated a vision of the Church as a community of believers united under the leadership of the bishop.[17] Ignatius saw the bishop as the embodiment of the unity of the Church, and he urged Christians to be subject to the bishop and the presbyters. This emphasis on unity and obedience has a lasting impact on the understanding of consecrated life, particularly in the monastic tradition.

Living a life of sacrifice, self-denial, holiness, and devotion to God, was a call that would later become central to the understanding of the consecrated life in the Church. Ignatius recognized the reality of spiritual warfare and the need for consecrated persons to be vigilant and disciplined in their spiritual lives. He encouraged a life of prayer, asceticism, and the cultivation of virtues as essential for the ongoing struggle against the forces of evil and the world's temptations. The vision of consecrated life articulated by Saint Ignatius of Antioch has had a lasting impact on the Church's understanding of this vocation.[18] His emphasis on Christocentric spirituality, ecclesial unity, martyrdom, and eschatological hope continue to shape the identity and mission of consecrated persons in the modern era.

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[17] Cf. D.B. EHRMAN, *Ignatius of Antioch*. *The Letters of Ignatius. The Apostolic Fathers*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2003, pp. 91-92.

[18] Cf. L. HERMUT, *The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch*. *The Apostolic Fathers. An Introduction*., Baylor University Press, Texas 2010, pp. 91-95.

1.3.2 St. Anthony the Great and St. Basil the Great (251 A.D -356 A.D.)

St. Anthony the Great is said to be the first monk and the leader of the vast family of anchorites. Bearing evidence to this was Vita Antonii, who noted that St. Anthony sought spiritual guidance in the hands of a holy man living as an anchorite on the fringe of the village and that during his ascetical training, other solitaires in the district helped him.[19] Such is a sign of promotion of vocation. After his ascetical training, he retired to the tomb; but, still attracted by sightseers, he withdrew further to the desert and lived in solitude for twenty years after which he emerged as teacher and leader of the eremitical life of solitaires.

St. Anthony was known as the 'father of monks' model of the first group of anchorites of Egypt. These early Church Fathers were instrumental in the rise of Christian monasticism and asceticism. They emphasized the value of withdrawing from the world, renouncing all natural ties, and at the same time frees himself or herself from the temptation that accompanies material possessions, to dedicate oneself fully to prayer, contemplation, and spiritual discipline.[20]

1.3.3 St. Augustine of Hippo (c. 354 A.D.-430 A.D.)

St. Augustine was one of the Western Christians to be inspired by the ascetic life of Anthony. St Monica's prayers was part of fostering and promoting St. Augustine's vocation to the priesthood and hence a bishop. The presence of Augustinian Sisters and Fathers is a good example of such promotion and fostering of vocation. The story of the anchorites which was accounted by a visitor from Trier in his house at Milan, marked the beginning of his conversion

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[19] Cf. ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA, *Vita Antonii*. Translated by ROBERT T. MEYER, *Ancient Christian Writers* n. 10. The Newman Press, Westminster MD 1950, pp. 17-20. See also, P. KING, *Western Monasticism. A History of Monastic Movement in the Latin-Church*, Massachusetts, Michigan 1999, p. 38.

[20] Cf. P.H. GORG, *The Desert Fathers. Anthony and the Beginning of Monasticism*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2011, pp. 10-15.

in 386. After visiting Italy and several monasteries of men and women, Augustine returned to Africa and founded a monastery, promoting and fostering vocations in Tagaste. He composed (although in the form of a letter) a rule called the Rule of St. Augustine in the year, 427. This rule was revived later in the eleventh century by the regular (or Augustinian) canons. Prominent Fathers like St. Augustine and St. Jerome promoted the idea of the apostolic life, which combined contemplative prayer with active service to the community. This model of consecrated life sought to balance the withdrawal of monasticism with the missionary and pastoral responsibilities of the Church.[21]

1.3.4 St. Athanasius

The Patristic era saw the production of influential spiritual writings, such as the Conferences of John Cassian and the Vita Antoni by Athanasius, which provided guidance and inspiration for those seeking the consecrated life.[22] These texts articulated the spiritual disciplines, virtues, and practices associated with consecrated religious life. At the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D, Athanasius was a strong proponent of monasticism and had close relationships with prominent desert fathers like St. Anthony the Great. He emphasized their spiritual authority, moral purity, and ability to serve as living examples of Christian perfection. The council ultimately sided with Athanasius' view, recognizing monasticism as a noble and holy calling. This helped elevate the status of consecrated religious in the eyes of the broader Church.

While not explicitly focused on monasticism, the Council's reaffirmation of the expectation of celibacy for priests and bishops indirectly reinforced the monastic ideal of sexual

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[21] Cf. G. ZARNECKI, *The Monastic Achievement*, Thames and Hudson, London 1971, pp. 11-13.

[22] Cf. ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA, *Vita Antonii*. Translated by ROBERT T. MEYER, *Ancient Christian Writers*, pp. 17-20.

abstinence. This helped solidify the notion that the consecrated life, characterized by renunciation of worldly attachments, was a superior spiritual path compared to ordinary Christian existence.[23] The council's stance gave greater legitimacy to monasteries and convents as specialized centers of holiness.

1.3.5 Consecrated life and Efforts to Promote it during the Council of Nicaea (c. 324 A.D.)

The Council of Nicaea, the first ecumenical council of the Christian Church, addressed the idea fostering of consecrated life to some degree. During this time, the practice of asceticism and monasticism was becoming more widespread within Christianity. The Council affirmed the value and legitimacy of the consecrated life, seeing it as a valid and praiseworthy path for Christians to pursue. As the Council validated the idea of consecrated life, decades, and centuries following Nicaea, the monastic movement continued to grow and develop, with bishops and Church leaders providing more formal structures and guidelines for religious communities.[24]

One of the key issues debated at the Council of Nicaea was the status and rights of the clergy, including those living a consecrated life. The Council affirmed the special position of the clergy, emphasizing their sacred duties and the need to maintain high moral standards. The council upheld the idea that those who had taken vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience deserved particular respect and deference within the Church. Thus, indirectly strengthening the recognition of the monastic form of consecrated life. The Council dealt with challenges faced by the Church due to Diocletian persecution, where some clergy and nuns lapsed from their lives, and some were forced to apostatize under pressure; the Council thought of how they be

[23] Cf. G. ZARNECKI, *The Monastic Achievement,* pp. 11-13.

[24] Cf. P. TANNER, (*ed.*), *Council of Nicaea II* (787 AD), *In Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils,* Seed and Word and Georgetown University Press, London 1990, pp.18-22.

readmitted to their lives as clergy and nuns.[25] In doing so, the council did so by explicitly taking a solid stance against some other heresies like Gnosticism and Manicheanism, thus reinforcing the value of consecrated life. The Second *Nicaea* Council legislated more on religious comportment, especially with regard to contact with the opposite sex. It forbade women from living in the houses of bishops and monks, and from working in the local places whenever the named persons were present.[26] Bishops by the nature of their office were expected to exercise self-control since they had to have constant contact with their flock, not excluding women.[27]

1.3.6 Consecrated Life and Efforts to Promote it during the Council of Chalcedon (c. 451 A.D.)

The Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, held in 451 A.D. addressed various aspects of consecrated life in the Catholic Church. It recognized the importance of fostering consecrated life as a valid path of Christian devotion. The council established guidelines for the founding and administration of monasteries, including the need for episcopal oversight and permission from superiors if one was to be absent from their community for some reason. The council affirmed the importance of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience taken by those in consecrated life.[28] The Council provided guidelines for the disciplining of those in consecrated life who violated their vows or the rules of their communities. It allowed for the temporary or permanent expulsion of those who persistently disobeyed the orders of their superiors.[29]

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[25] Cf. H. CHADWICK, *The Early Church*, Penguin Books, London 1993, pp.123-125.

[26] Cf. P. TANNER, (*ed.*), *Council of Nicaea II* (787 AD), *In Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils,* Seed and Word and Georgetown University Press, London 1990, p.18-19.

[27] Cf. H. CHADWICK, *The Early Church,* Penguin Books, London 1993, pp.123-125.

[28] Cf. J.E. MERDINGER, "The Council of Chalcedon (451) and consecrated life in the Early Medieval Church," in *The Catholic Historical Review*, 92/ 2 (2006), pp. 192-196.

[29] Cf. J.E. MERDINGER, "The Council of Chalcedon (451) and Consecrated Life in the Early Medieval Church," pp. 198-200.

1.3.7 Consecrated Life and Efforts to Promote it in the Monastic Era (500-1200)

During the monastic era, monasteries and convents played a significant role in religious life, the promotion of religious vocations was primarily carried out through various means like good example of life, doctrinal teaching, and combating heresies. Monasteries and convents served as important centers for religious life and education. They provided a supportive environment for individuals contemplating a religious vocation. Spiritual directors and mentors play a crucial role in guiding people in their spiritual discernment process. These experienced religious figures provided counsel, listened to the concerns of potential candidates, and helped them discern their calling. Religious leaders and preachers delivered sermons that emphasized the virtues and rewards of the religious life.

Monastic institutions were renowned centers of learning during the medieval period. They offered education in various disciplines, including theology, philosophy, and the liberal arts providing intellectual stimulation and a rich educational environment, monasteries attracted individuals with a passion for knowledge and a desire to serve God. Preservation of religious texts by monks and nuns, including the Bible and other theological writings. Were instrumental in inspiring and nurturing religious vocations. The rich liturgical life of monastic communities, including the celebration of Mass, the Divine Office, and other religious ceremonies, served as a powerful means of attracting individuals to the monastic vocation.[30]

An influential figure in the early monastic movement was Saint Anthony the Great (c.251-356 A.D.), who is considered the father of monasticism. The life and teaching of Antony are chronicled by Saint Athanasius and published around (357 A.D.). In this chronicle,

[30] Cf. C. JOHN, *The Institutes*. Translated by Boniface Ramsey, Ancient Christian Writers, n. 58, Paulist Press, Mahwah NJ 2000, pp. 37-47.

Athanasius portrays Anthony as a model of the monastic vocation. His withdrawal into the Egyptian desert to live a life of solitude, self-denial, and devotion to God says all about monastic life and hence consecrated life for modern religious faithful (Athanasius, The Life of Antony, c. 357 A.D).[31] Monastic communities across Egypt, Syria, and Palestine during the 4th and 5th centuries, practiced communal living, and spiritual disciplines corroborating our modern life for consecrated faithful.

John Cassian in his works, "The Institutes and The Conferences" in the early 5th century articulates the monastic ideals of poverty, chastity, obedience, and ceaseless prayer as a means of attaining union with God.[32] Throughout the Middle Ages, monasticism played a vital role not only in spreading Christianity but also in advancing religious life in the Church. With periodic reforms, notably by the monks of Cluny in the 10th century and the Cistercians in the 12th century, the monastic way of religious life saw the founding of mendicant Orders such as the Dominicans and Franciscans.[33]

1.4 Consecrated Life and Efforts to Promote it in the Mendicancy Period (13th Century)

The mendicant Orders, such as the Friars Minor (1209), the Dominicans (1216), Augustinians (1244), and the Carmelites (1155), belonged to a form of religious life that involved a radical commitment to poverty, chastity, and obedience. Members of these Orders,

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[31] Cf. L. CADA *et al.*, (*eds.*), *Shaping the Coming Age of Religious Life*, p. 26; See also, R. GIANCARLO, *(ed.), Dizionario Degli Institute di Perfezione,* Edizioni Paoline, Cambiagio- conventualesimo (1969-), pp. 631-632.

[32] Cf. C. JOHN, *The Conferences*. Translated by Boniface Ramsey, Ancient Christian Writers, No. 57. Paulist Press, Mahwah NJ 1997, pp. 373-377.
For further reading on monasticism see, J. EVANS, *(ed.), The Flowering of the Middle Ages*, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London 1985. C.H. LAWRENCE, *Medieval Monasticism. Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, Longman, London and New York 1984; B. PENNINGTON, "The Integration of Monastic Law in the Revised Code," in *The Jurist*, 25 (1965), pp. 345-350; I.G. SMITH, *Christian Monasticism*: *From the Fourth to the Ninth Centuries of the Christian Era*, A.D. Innes, London 1892; W.M. JOHNSTON, *Encyclopedia of Monasticism*, Vol.1, Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, Chicago 2000; D. KNOWLES, *Christian Monasticism*, World University Library, London 1969.

known as friars or brothers, lived in the community and dedicated themselves to a life of prayer, study, and service to others. One of the distinguishing features of the mendicant Orders was their commitment to poverty. The members of these orders renounce individual ownership of goods and live in a state of material simplicity. This practice of begging, known as mendicancy, was an expression of their dependence on God.[34] Chastity is another essential aspect of consecrated life emphasized by the mendicant Orders.

By embracing celibacy, members dedicate themselves wholly to God and the service of others. Obedience also played a crucial role in the life of mendicant friars. They vow to submit their will to the authority of their superiors, following the example of Christ's obedience to the Father. Obedience enables them to live in a harmonious community.[35] The mendicant Orders emphasize a balanced approach to the spiritual life, combining contemplation and active ministry. They value intellectual pursuits, encouraging their members to engage in rigorous study and preaching the Gospel. Many mendicant friars also engaged in various forms of pastoral care, teaching, missions, and works of charity, seeking to serve the needs of the Church and society.[36]

St. Francis of Assisi is known for founding the Franciscan Order, also called the Order of Friars Minor He inadvertently fostered and promoted the vocation of St. Clare, hence the birth of poor Clare's consecrated nuns. He embraced poverty, simplicity, and a life dedicated to serving others. His teachings and example have had a significant promotion on the spirituality and practice of consecrated life.[37] One of the major contributions to the Church of the

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[34] Cf. R. WOODS, *The Mendicant Orders, A Brief Overview,* Ignatius Press, San Francisco1998, pp. 21-22.

[35] Cf. L. CADA *et al. Shaping the coming of Religious Life,* Seabury Press, New York 1979, pp. 15-16.

[36] Cf. G. BUONO, *Missiology. Theology and Praxis*, Pauline's Publications Africa, Nairobi 2006, p. 135.

[37] Cf. *The Rule of St. Francis,* Franciscan Institute Publications, New York 1982, pp. 104-105.

mendicant movement in the Middle Ages was the promotion of learning. Members of the mendicant orders are well known to be great teachers and preachers, as study remained an important aspect of the mendicant vocation. Another contribution of the mendicant lifestyle is that of 'itinerancy.' Members of mendicant orders adopted a lifestyle of mobility and flexibility. They are not bound to one religious house or one particular ministry and are free to move to wherever the Church and society have need.

1.5 Consecrated Life and Efforts to Promote it in the *Corpus Iuris Canonici*

*D*e *Decretum Gratiani* played a significant role in shaping the Church's understanding and regulation of consecrated life, in *Distinctio* 16 compiled the Decretals in the 1140s, creating a comprehensive work that synthesized and organized the diverse body of Canon Law that had developed over the centuries.[38] Gratian's compilation incorporated numerous decrees and canons related to the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience taken by members of religious orders. It outlined the obligations and expectations associated with these vows, promotion and fostering of vocations as well as the procedures for entering and leaving religious life.[39]

Building on earlier Church councils, the *Decretum* reaffirmed the expectation of celibacy for clergy, including priests, deacons, and bishops. Gratian's work helped codify and strengthen the Church's stance on clerical celibacy, which was seen as a distinguishing mark of the consecrated life. The *Decretum* made a clear distinction between the regular clergy, those belonging to religious orders and the secular clergy serving in parishes and dioceses. The

[38] This ecclesiastical system of law includes four official collections: the *Decretum Gratiani* ("Decree of Gratian"); the *Liber Sextus* (Book Six) of Pope Boniface VIII(1298) and the *Clementinae* of Pope Clement V (1317); and two private collections: the Extravagantes of Pope John XXII (1325) and *Extravagantes Communes* (commonly circulating decretals); the decretals, or replies of the Pope to particular questions of Church discipline, were from the time of Pope Boniface VIII to Pope Sixtus IV(Cf.C.VAN DE WIEL, *History of Canon Law*, Peters Press, *Louvain* 1991, pp. 107-112).

[39] Cf. GRATIANI, *Decretum Gratiani. Editio* Romana, *Decretum Magistri,* Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, Roma 1582, *Distinctio* 16 Canos 1-9.

Decretum also addressed the complex relationship between monastic communities and the local episcopal authorities, outlining the parameters of their respective authority and spheres of influence. These included issues related to the autonomy and privileges of monasteries, as well as the role of bishops in overseeing and disciplining religious houses. Its provisions and principles continued to influence the development of monasticism and other forms of consecrated life in the centuries that followed.[40]

1.6 Consecrated Life and the Efforts to Promote it in the Tridentine Legislation (1545 A.D. – 1563 A.D)

The Council of Trent was a renewed emphasis on the importance of monasticism and other forms of consecrated life. The council affirmed that consecrated individuals, through their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, were living a superior form of Christian discipleship. The council issued several decrees aimed at strengthening and standardizing the practices of religious orders and communities. Requiring all religious orders to adhere to a common set of rules and constitutions. Mandating strict enclosure for cloistered nuns to preserve their separation from the world and establishing more rigorous processes for admitting new members into religious life.[41]

The Council encouraged the establishment of new religious congregations and institutes that could better respond to the pastoral and social needs of the time, such as teaching orders and charitable communities. Prominent figures such as St. Teresa of Ávila, founder and reformer of the Carmelite Orders, and St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits

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[40] Cf. GRATIANI, *Decretum Gratiani. Editio Romana, Decretum Magistri,* Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, Roma 1582, Causa 18, *Quaestio* 2, Canons 1-29.

[41] Cf. M.D.W. JONES, *The Counter-Reformation: Religion and Society in Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995, p. 72; J.C. OLIN, *Catholic-Reform: From Cardinal Ximenes to the Council of Trent* 1495-1563, Fordham University Press, New York 1990, pp. 87-99.

championed the consecrated life. Their spiritual writings and reforms helped shape a renewed understanding of monasticism and religious vocation. Concerning religious profession, the Council of Trent decreed and approved for validity a minimum age of sixteen years preceded by one year of probation.[42] This implied that admission into the novitiate was possible at the age of fifteen, however, according to the decree of this council, it was possible to admit someone to wear religious habit even at twelve but the profession was never before sixteen.

Concerning the renunciation of property to the monastery, caution was placed on giving the properties of the novices to the monasteries to avoid influencing them, except for food and clothing.[43] Renunciation was only possible after profession but the bishop had to permit it two months before the time, provided it took effect only after profession. In other words, if in the end the novice was not admitted to the profession, everything became null. An exception to this rule was the religious order of clerks of the Society of Jesus where no part of the property belonging to a novice was to be given to the order before profession.

Other matters reserved to the diocesan bishop were the questioning of novices before putting on the religious habit and before profession. The free will of the novices was essentially required and if deemed qualified, they were not prevented except in the cases of penitents and converts. This norm was specifically addressed to nuns because of the council's concern in the development of norms for women at that time.

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[42] Chap. 15. It made a change from the previously determined age of twenty and eighteen successively. Cf. Innocent III, "Decretal Letter *Operante Divinae,"* 47, 49; Council of Paris (1212), 53, 55, chaps. I, II. The age prescribed by the Council of Trent would likewise contrast with the present law which requires a minimum age of seventeen before novitiate, one-year probation before profession, and consequently, eighteen for the profession; cf. Can. 643 §1, 1°, 648 §1, 656 1° CIC Can. 237, p. 238.

[43] Cf. Council of Trent (1545-1563), "Session XXV, Decree on Regulars and Nuns," in N.P. TANNER, *(ed.), Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils,* Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, London 1990), pp. 777, 780, chap. v, xiv. Cf. MAKOWSKI, "Translation of *Periculoso*," 135-136; and the Council of Basel (1431-1445).

1.7 Consecrated Life and Its Significance in the Church in the 1917 Code

The obligation of the Church to foster and promote vocation to consecrated life is highlighted in Can. 488 of the CIC/1917 Code. Can. 488 nn.1º-8º of the 1917 Code explains what a religious institute is; the 1917 Code defined it as a Society approved by legitimate ecclesiastical authority in which the members of their own Institute, pronounce public vows, perpetual or temporary upon the elapse of time, and who tend to evangelical perfection (CIC/1917, Can. 488, 1°).[44]

The notion of consecrated life was further developed and codified in the 1917 Code of Canon Law, which served as the primary legal framework for the Catholic Church for much of the 20th century. The Code provided a clear legal definition of consecrated life, distinguishing between religious orders, congregations, and societies of apostolic life. It categorized the different forms of consecrated life based on their specific charisms, vows, and modes of living. The Code outlined the requirements and obligations associated with the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience taken by members of consecrated life.[45] The commentary discusses the essential elements that define religious life, such as public vows, common life, and living under the direction of superiors.

It detailed the procedures for the profession of vows, as well as the rights and duties of those in consecrated life. The Code established the canonical structures and authority for the governance of religious institutes, including the roles of superiors, General Chapters, and regional/local authorities. It also addressed the process for the establishment, suppression, and

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[44] Cf. *Codex iuris Canonici,* PII *X Pontificis Maximi iussu digestus, Benedicti Papae XV auctoritate Promulgatus, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis,* 1917, English translation E.N. PETERS, The 1917 *Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2001, p. 139.

[45] Cf. V. ARTHUR, - J. CREUSEN, (*eds*.), *Epitome Iuris Canonici Cum Commentariis. Vol. 2, De Religiosis et Missionariis,* 7th ed. Mechliniae H. Dessain 1949, pp. 17-18.

amalgamation of religious communities. The Code clarified the relationship between consecrated religious communities and the local diocesan bishops, specifying their respective spheres of authority and oversight. It also outlined the limitations and restrictions placed on those in consecrated life, particularly regarding their participation in the temporal affairs of the Church.

This old definition of a religious institute was carried over by the 1983 Code, where minor changes were adopted in the following expression, "a Religious Institute is a society in which, by their law, the members pronounce public vows and live a fraternal life in common" (Can. 607 §2).[46] The sources of the obligation of the faithful in the promotion of consecrated life in the 1917 Code are also seen in the charismatic nature of founding a religious congregation. According to Can. 488 of the 1917 Code, the charismatic foundation refers to the moment when the future founder or foundress, having received inspiration from the Holy Spirit, inaugurates a new way of witnessing the Gospel, usually with an initial group of companions to respond to a particular need of the Church.[47] This kind of charismatic movement usually involves the faithful in discerning the charism needed by the Church and, hence, faithful obligation in the promotion of religious life.

1.8 Consecrated Life and Efforts to Promote it during the Second Vatican Council

The Second Vatican Council brought about a significant transformation in the Catholic Church's understanding and approach to consecrated life. The Council's documents, particularly the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* and the Decree on the

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[46] Cf. *Codex Iuris Canonici,* auctoritate IOANNIS PAULI PP. II promulgates, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 25 Ianuarii 1983, in *AAS*, 75 (1983), pp. 1-317.Hereafter cited as: CIC/1983.

[47] Cf. T.L. BOUSCAREN, - A.C. ELLIS, (*eds*.) *Canon. A Text and Commentary*, 4th rev.*(*ed.*),* Bruce Publishing Co. Milwaukee, WI 1966, pp229-231. See also Y. SUGAWARA, "IL ruolo delle Costituzion negli Instituti di Vita Consecrata (Can 587)," in *Periodica*, 98 (2009), pp. 665-667.

Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life *Perfectae Caritatis*, significantly shaped the notion of consecrated life in the post-conciliar era.

Lumen Gentium emphasized the universal call to holiness, highlighting the fundamental vocation of all the baptized to live a life of Christian perfection.[48] It highlights the prophetic dimension of the consecrated life. Through their radical commitment to Christ and the evangelical counsels, those who assume the state of consecrated life draw others to God and serve as a sign of the Kingdom. In their witness, they contribute to the evangelization and renewal of the Church. It also emphasizes the ecclesial nature of consecrated life. As a state of life, it is rooted in and belongs to the holiness of the Church. It is a gift to the entire Christian community and is subject to the guidance and discernment of the Church's authorities. The consecrated life, while distinctive, is lived out in communion with the Church and contributes to the growth and vitality of the entire Body of Christ.

The document acknowledges the diversity of charisms within the Church, including those expressed through the consecrated life. Each religious institute or form of consecrated life has its charism, spirituality, and mission, contributing to the richness and variety of the Church. This recognition underscores that the consecrated life is a gift to the Church and complements other forms of Christian living. The consecrated life is a path of radical discipleship that seeks to mirror Christ's own life using living and witnessing the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The document highlights the importance of communion and collaboration between those in the consecrated life and the laity. Consecrated men and women

[48] Cf. Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November 1964, n. 43, in *AAS*, 57 (1965), pp. 65-71.

are called to work in harmony with the lay faithful, recognizing and valuing their unique roles and contributions within the mission of the Church. [49]

Another key document issued by the Second Vatican Council that significantly shaped the notion of consecrated life in the post-conciliar era is. The Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, known as *Perfectae Caritatis*. The decree emphasizes the importance of consecrated persons and communities remaining faithful to the original charism and spirit of their founders. It called for careful discernment and preservation of the distinctive features that defined the identity and mission of each religious institute. The document acknowledged the need for religious life to adapt to the changing circumstances and needs of the contemporary world. It encouraged institutes to review and revise their constitutions, norms, and practices to ensure they remained relevant and responsive to the signs of the times. The decree reaffirmed the centrality of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience as the foundation of consecrated life.

Perfectae Caritatis addressed the relationship between religious institutes and the Church's hierarchical structure, affirming the appropriate autonomy of religious communities while acknowledging their accountability to the hierarchy. It also underscored the importance of collaboration and shared responsibility between consecrated persons and the laity in the Church's mission. The vision and directives outlined in *Perfectae Caritatis* served as a critical foundation for the comprehensive renewal and adaptation of consecrated life in the decades following the Second Vatican Council.[50] It paved the way for a more dynamic, contextually

[49] Cf. A. HASTING, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council*, Darton, Longman & Todd, London 1968, pp. 1-3.

[50] Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, decree on the Up-To-Date Renewal of Religious Life *Perfectae Caritatis*, pp.560-565.

relevant, and spiritually grounded understanding of consecrated life within the broader ecclesial community.

1.9 Consecrated Life and Efforts to Promote it in the 1983 Code of Canon Law

The 1983 Code describes consecrated life as a permanent state of life recognized by the Church, assumed freely by some members of Christ's faithful in response to the call of Christ to perfect charity. Consecrated life is characterized by the profession of evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience (Can. 573). The state of consecrated life belongs to the life and holiness of the Church, though it is not part of its hierarchical structure.[51] This form of life contributes to the purification of the heart and to spiritual freedom; it is a continual advancement to fervent charity and perfection of the baptismal consecration.[52] Those who embrace this state of life are chosen and set apart with a special title and therefore, consecrated in a special way by God through the profession of evangelical counsels. For this reason, one detaches from earthly things and is dedicated to the service of God.[53] Consecration is closely bound up with holiness. Given its significance in the fostering of holiness of the Church and of contributing to her salvific mission, the 1983 Code emphasizes the importance of promoting and fostering vocations to consecrated life as a fundamental duty of the entire ecclesial community. This collective effort is essential in creating an environment where potential candidates can discern their calling to a life of consecration.[54]

The canon calls for a collaborative effort among the faithful to create a culture that values and encourages vocations to consecrated life, thereby enriching the Church's mission

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[51] Cf. *Lumen Gentium,* n. 44.
[52] Cf. *Lumen Gentium,* n. 46.
[53] Cf. *Perfectae Caritatis,* n. 5.
[54] Cf. R.M. MCDERMOTT, "The Authority of the Apostolic See and the Diocesan Bishop over Institutes of Consecrated Life," in J.A. CORIDEN *et al.*, (*eds.*), *The Code of Canon Law. A Text and Commentary*, p. 450.

and witness in the world. This collective responsibility reflects the Church's commitment to fostering a vibrant and diverse expression of consecrated life that responds to contemporary challenges and needs. To this end, the Code provides specific provisions for the formation and support of those entering consecrated life. Can. 641 mandates that proper formation must be provided to candidates, emphasizing spiritual, human, and pastoral dimensions to prepare them adequately for their commitments. Can. 672 encourages the faithful to pray for vocations, underscoring the belief that prayer is fundamental to fostering a culture of vocations.

1.10 Vocation to Consecrated Life in the Post-Conciliar Documents

The post-conciliar documents on the vocation to consecrated life reflect the Church's efforts to articulate the significance of this unique calling in the modern world. Rooted in the commitment to live the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, consecrated life is presented as a radical following of Christ more closely and a prophetic witness to the Kingdom of God. For instance, in *Vita Consecrata* by Pope John Paul II, underscores the significance of consecrated life in the Church by describing this state of life as a gift of God to the Church and a sign of hope for humanity.[55]

1.10.1 Instruction Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life

In 1983, Pope John Paul II addressed the bishops of the United States, announcing the establishment of a special commission to assist them in addressing challenges faced by institutes engaged in apostolic works, particularly the decline in vocations.[56] Alongside his letter was a document from the Dicastery for Religious and Secular Institutes entitled Essential

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[55] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Post*-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Consecrated Life and Its Mission in the Church and the World *Vita Consecrata*, 25 March 1996, n. 1 in *AAS*, 88 (1996), pp. 337.

[56] Cf. A. MONTAN, "La Vita Consecrata nella Chiessa," in *Quaderni della Mendola, Associazone Canonistica Italiana*, Edizioni Glossa, Milano 2005, pp. 11-15.

Elements in Church Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate. This document responded to the confusion and insecurity within such institutes, caused by shifts like rising median age, fewer vocations, diminishing numbers, and diverse lifestyles and works.[57] As the period of experimentation mandated by *Ecclesiae Sanctae* II concluded, religious institutes were entering a new phase, prompting a review of their experiences. The document aimed to clarify the Church's teaching on religious life, emphasizing the theology of religious life as a witness marked by consecration through public vows accepted by the Church.[58]

1.10.2 The Documents of Paul VI on Consecrated life and its Significance in the Church

Paul VI, whose papacy spanned from 1963 to 1978, addressed the vocation to the consecrated life in various documents and speeches like Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelica Testificatio*, which reflects on the renewal of religious life and the call to holiness. He emphasizes that the consecrated life is a response to a personal call from Christ, who invites individuals to follow Him more closely and totally. The document highlights the importance of religious communities living their charisms authentically, engaging in apostolic activities, and fostering unity and collaboration with the whole Church.[59]

Encyclical Letter *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* while primarily focused on the celibate vocation of priests, this encyclical also touches on the consecrated life. Paul VI affirms the value of the consecrated life as a witness to the Kingdom of God and the eschatological reality

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[57] Cf. SACRED CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR INSTITUTES, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teachings on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of Apostolates*, 31 May 1983, Vatican Press, Vatican City 1983, in *Canon Law Digest*, 10 (1986), pp. 43-76. (Hereafter cited as: *Essential Elements*).

[58] Cf. *Essential Elements*, n. 4.

[59] Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious Life *Evangelica Testificatio*, 29 June 1971, in *AAS*, 63 (1971), pp. 497-526.

and importance of chastity as a sign of undivided love for God and the Church. Pope encourages consecrated men and women to embrace their vocation with joy and dedication.[60] In the Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* which briefly mentions the consecrated life, Pope Paul VI highlights Mary's unique role as the perfect model of consecration and encourages consecrated men and women to imitate her virtues and entrust themselves to her maternal care.[61]

Pope Paul VI also addressed the topic of the consecrated life in various general audience talks. He spoke about the commitment to Evangelical Counsels as a means to detach oneself from worldly values and conform more fully to Christ, emphasizing the importance of prayer, community life, and the apostolate in the consecrated life. He also encouraged religious men and women to be signs of hope and witnesses to the Gospel amid the challenges of the modern world.

1.10.3 Instruction *Potissimum Institutioni*

The Directive on Formation in Religious Institutes was issued on 2nd February 1990 after a long history of formulation. During the Vatican II Council, the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes issued an instruction entitled *Renovationis Causam* which reordered the norms on formation in the 1917 Code. This was followed by a process of consultation with religious institutes initiated by the Congregation on the topic of formation. The fruit of this consultation which was completed in 1973 was a new formation document drawn between 1974 and 1979.

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[60] Cf. PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter on the Celibacy of the Priest *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, 24 June 1967, in *AAS*, 59 (1967), pp. 657-697.

[61] Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation for the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary *Marialis Cultus* in *AAS*, 66 (1974), pp. 113-168.

Although this new document could have been issued in 1980, its publication was postponed to allow for the completion of the revision of the Code of Canon Law. The promulgation of the new Code, however, necessitated a second round of consultation on the topic of formation of religion which was conducted between 1986 and 1989. Finally, the instruction *Potissimum Institutioni*, directed specifically to the formation of the recipients' strictly religious life, appeared in 1990.[62] This document presents the theory, principles, and norms for various levels and types of formation in religious institutes.

Basing on conciliar and post-conciliar sources, the document reaffirms the mysterious dynamic of divine call and human response and the act of profession as consecrating the person to God and as simultaneously incorporating that person into a particular religious institute.[63] The instruction emphasizes that the evangelical counsels form the foundation of religious life. It acknowledges the diversity of institutes and recognizes that formation in living the counsels must not be uniform, with each institute maintaining fidelity to its purpose and character. However, this must be done within the ecclesial context to avoid a separation between religious life's end and the specific goals of the institute, its apostolic activities, and its mission in the world. Ultimately, the profession of evangelical counsels should embody a life unified in the Holy Spirit.[64]

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[62] Cf. CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes. *Potissimum Institutioni*, 2 February 1990, in *AAS*, 82 (1990), pp. 470-532.

[63] Cf. *Potissimum Institutioni*, nn. 8-10.

[64] Cf. *Potissimum Institutioni*, nn. 17-18.

1.10.4 Instruction *To Persevere in Fidelity: Reflections and Suggestions on Religious Formation*

The Instruction *To Persevere in Fidelity* (1990) emphasizes that the promotion and fostering of vocations to consecrated life is an essential responsibility of every religious institute and must be approached with deep pastoral sensitivity and realism. The document teaches that the quality of formation and the authenticity of religious life itself are the primary ways to attract and sustain new vocations. It insists that witness is more powerful than words: when communities live joyfully, faithfully, and transparently according to their charism, they become living invitations to others to consider a similar path. The community's authenticity, its prayer life, fraternity, apostolic commitment, and fidelity to the evangelical counsels, is itself a powerful vocational promotion.[65]

The document stresses that promoting vocations must be rooted in prayer, asking the Lord to send workers into His harvest (cf. Mt 9:38). It must be patient and discerning, avoiding any pressure or superficial recruitment. True vocational promotion respects the freedom and gradual development of each candidate, recognizing that vocation is a divine initiative and not simply human effort. A vital part of fostering vocations is accompaniment, where young people are gently guided and supported to hear and respond to God's call.[66]

To Persevere in Fidelity also highlights the importance of the local Church: vocational promotion is not isolated to religious institutes but is carried out in communion with diocesan and parish initiatives. Moreover, it points out that today's cultural challenges require presenting

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[65] CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *To Persevere in Fidelity: Reflections and Suggestions on Religious Formation*, 19 March 1990, Vatican Polyglot Press, Vatican City, 1990, pp. 1-72.

[66] CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *To Persevere in Fidelity*, pp. 1-72.

religious life in a way that is faithful to the Gospel and yet credible and meaningful in the modern world.[67]

1.10.5 Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*

The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, signed by Pope John Paul II on March 26, 1996, marks the final act of the 9th General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. This Exhortation provides a comprehensive pastoral and theological overview of consecrated life through the profession of evangelical counsels, focusing on three key aspects: the theological origins of consecrated life in the mystery of Christ and the Trinity, its role as a sign of communion in the Church and mission, and its manifestation of God's love in the world. The introduction highlights the Christological dimension of consecrated life, its value to the Church, and its contribution to the Church's mission. The document recognizes five forms of consecrated life and their spiritual and apostolic significance, urging both the Christian faithful to appreciate this gift and consecrated persons to remain faithful amidst the challenges of today's world.[68]

The first chapter of the exhortation, entitled *Confessio Trinitatis* (n. 20), demonstrates the link between consecrated life and the mystery of Christ and the Trinity. The chapter explains the profession and the living of the evangelical counsels by consecrated persons to imitate Christ the poor, the chaste, and the obedient. The state of consecrated life as a distinct and

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[67] CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *To Persevere in Fidelity*, pp. 1-72.

[68] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World *Vita Consecrata*, 25 March 1996, in *AAS*, 88 (1996), pp. 377- 486. Hereafter cited as: *Vita Consecrata*. See also, SCHOTTE, "The Consecrated Life in Church and World," p. 35; JOHN PAUL II, "The Start of the 1994 Synod of Bishops," in Origins, 24 (1994-1995), p. 307; J. CASTELLANO, "Lumen *Gentium* - *Perfectae Caritatis* - *Vita Consecrata*: Dynamic Accord and Innovation in Three Texts of the *Magisterium* on Consecrated Life," in *Consecrated Life*, Vol. 22, n. 1 (2000), pp. 164-176.

special path to holiness, a perfection of the baptismal commitment, and a powerful witness to the eschatological reality is too esteemed by all in the Church.[69]

The second chapter, *Signum Fraternitatis*, treats consecrated life in the context of ecclesial communion. The chapter explains that the consecrated life manifests fraternal communion in imitation of Christ's life and the Trinitarian unity model. This communion finds its expression in fraternal life in common, fidelity to spiritual life, and the shared charism and apostolates. Communion is to extend to the entire ecclesial community, demonstrated by greater cooperation and collaboration with the hierarchy at all levels of the Church:

> The fraternal life, a life shared in love, is an eloquent sign of ecclesial communion. It is practiced with special care in Religious Institutes and in Societies of Apostolic Life, where community living acquires special significance. Nor is the dimension of fraternal communion alien to Secular Institutes, or even to forms of the consecrated life lived individually. Hermits, in their profound solitude, do not withdraw from ecclesial communion but serve that communion by their specific charism of contemplation. Consecrated virgins in the world live out their consecration in a special relationship of communion with the particular and universal Church. The same is true of consecrated widows and widowers.[70]

Chapter 3 of the document, *Servitium Caritatis* (Of the Servant of Charity), emphasizes that consecrated life, marked by the profession of the evangelical counsels, serves as a sign of God's love for the world. Through community life and apostolic works, consecrated persons offer a prophetic witness that fosters the holiness of the Church. Their mission continues the work of Christ in various forms, including evangelization, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, inculturation, a preferential option for the poor, justice promotion, and education. The document highlights the role of consecrated persons in living out their call, witnessing to God's beauty, and being docile to the Holy Spirit while staying faithful to their charisms.[71]

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[69] Cf. *Vita Consecrata,* n.20.
[70] Cf. *Vita Consecrata,* n. 42.
[71] Cf. *Vita Consecrata,* nn. 72-103.

The document also underscores the importance of looking to the future of religious life, acknowledging both a rich history to reflect on and a great mission yet to be accomplished. Consecrated persons are encouraged to embrace the future, where the Spirit is calling them to do even greater things. This chapter elaborates on the norms found in the 1983 Code of Canon Law, stressing that religious life is a true witness of Christ's life within the Church, manifesting the ecclesial community's authentic life.[72]

1.10.6 Instruction *Congregavit nos in Unum Christi Amor*

On February 2, 1994, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life issued an Instruction on evangelical renewal. This document aimed at encouraging reflection among those who had distanced themselves from communal living, urging them to reconsider the importance of fraternal life for those consecrated to the Lord. It recalled the call of *Perfectae Caritatis* for a constant return to the foundational charism and the original inspiration of religious institutes.[73] A deeper engagement with the Gospel and the institute's roots is seen as crucial for revitalizing the spirit of fraternity and shaping the structures that truly reflect it. When this encounter with the origins is weak or incomplete, fraternal life faces risks and loses its vitality.[74]

In response to contemporary challenges, the Instruction encourages members to reflect on their vocation and support the efforts of many religious communities, both men and women, in improving the quality of their fraternal life. These communities are seeking to address the changing dynamics in religious life. The document emphasizes the importance of discernment

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[72] Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, n. 109.

[73] Cf. *Perfectae Caritatis*, n.2.

[74] Cf. CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, Instruction on Fraternal Life in Community *Congregavit Nos in Unum Christi Amor*, 2 February 1994, in *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, 14, (1994), pp. 220-283.

in pursuing authentic evangelical renewal, offering criteria for overcoming challenges and fostering a deeper commitment to communal living in religious institutes.[75]

1.10.7 The Instruction *Starting Afresh from Christ*

The document A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium on19 May 2002, issued by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, addresses the challenges faced by consecrated persons and their institutes, including declining numbers and vocations in certain regions. Acknowledging the positive contributions of consecrated life to the Church, it encourages the religious not to lose hope, referring to the current challenges as a moment of grace or *kairos*. The document calls for renewed commitment, urging consecrated persons to deepen their vocation with fidelity and creativity, drawing inspiration from the example of their founders and foundresses.[76]The document contributes worthy insight into religious life as it states:

> The communion in which consecrated persons are called to live goes far beyond their own religious family or Institute. Opening themselves to communion with other Institutes and other forms of consecration, they can spread communion, rediscover their common Gospel roots, and together grasp the beauty of their own identity in the variety of charisms with greater clarity. They should compete in mutual esteem (cf. Rm. 12:10), striving for the greater gift, charity (cf. 1Cor. 12:31).[77]

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[75] Cf. *Congregavit Nos in Unum Christi Amor,* n.5.

[76] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Message on the 8th World Day of Consecrated Life "Called to Faithfulness," 2 February 2004, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., 4 February 2002, pp. 1 and 11; JOHN PAUL II, Message on the 11th World Day of Consecrated Life "Call to Radical Evangelical Fidelity," 2 February 2007, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., 7 February 2007, pp. 2-3; JOHN PAUL II, Message on the 12th World Day of Consecrated Life "Follow Christ without Compromise," 2 February 2008, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., 6 February 2008, pp. 2 and 4.

[77] Cf. Starting Afresh from Christ, n. 30.

The central message of instruction is the invitation to consecrated persons to reawaken the desire of intense evangelical radicality and renewed fidelity rooted in Christ, hence, the title, ''starting afresh''.[78]

1.10.8 Apostolic Constitution *Vultum Dei Quaerere*

Vultum Dei Quaerere ('Seeking the Face of God') is an apostolic constitution issued by Pope Francis on July 22, 2016, addressing women's contemplative life. In this document, Pope Francis offers a profound reflection on the vocation to the contemplative life, expressing gratitude for its historic contributions to the Church's holiness through the hidden apostolic fruitfulness of prayer and solitude. Highlighting women's contemplative life as the Church's 'praying heart' and a storehouse of grace, he underscores its visible witness to the mystery and richness of holiness.[79] The Pope elaborates on twelve key aspects to help contemplative women fulfill their vocation: formation, prayer, the Word of God, the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, fraternal life in community, federations, the cloister, work, silence, communication media, and asceticism. Concluding, Pope Francis emphasizes the enduring relevance of contemplative life as a' beacon of light' for the Church and the world in guiding humanity through modern challenges.[80]

> Dear sisters, everything that I have written in this Apostolic Constitution is meant to be, for you who have embraced the contemplative vocation, an effective contribution to the renewal of your life and your mission in the Church and the world. May the Lord be ever-present and active in your heart and transform you entirely in Him, the ultimate aim of the contemplative life, and may your communities or fraternities become true schools of contemplation and prayer.
> The world and the Church need you to be beacons of light for the journey of the men and women of our time. This should be your prophetic witness. You have chosen not to flee the world out of fear, as some might think, but to remain in the world, while not

[78] Cf. C.M. MANGAN, "The Spirituality of CICLSAL's 'Starting Afresh,'" in *Review for Religious*, 62 (2003), p. 19.

[79] Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Constitution on Women's Contemplative Life *Vultum Dei Quaerere*, 29 June 2016, in *AAS*, 108 (2016), pp. 835-861. Hereafter cited as, *Vultum Dei Quaerere*.

[80] Cf. N. BAUER, "*Vultum Dei Quaerere*. New Norms for Nuns," in *The Jurist* 76 (2016), pp. 379-414.

> being of the world. Although you live apart from the world, through the signs of your belonging to Christ, you tirelessly intercede for mankind, presenting to the Lord its fears and hopes, its joys and sufferings.[81]

In *Vultum Dei Quaerere*, Pope Francis esteems and gives thanks for the cloistered contemplative form of religious life, recognizing its abundant fruits of holiness through prayer for humanity. He urges everyone to support this vital vocation and its contributions to the Church and the world.

1.10.9 Guidelines *New Wine and New Wineskins*

New Wine in New Wine Skins emphasizes the need to foster a culture and environment that is open and welcoming to vocations, through witness, outreach, and formation programs. This includes involving the whole Christian community in the promotion of vocations. It highlights the importance of the consecrated life itself as a sign and prophecy in the Church, and the need to recover the original charism and spirituality of each institute. Formation should focus on the centrality of Christ and the Gospel. Institutes are to be attentive to the signs of the times, to discern new forms of consecrated life, and to find creative ways of making the charism accessible to the world today.[82]

Religious persons have a unique charism and vocation that complements the vocations of priests. As they participate in the threefold office of Christ as prophet, priest, and king, the Religious are called to holiness and to be a sign of the transcendence of God in the world. The religious are called upon to promote and support the vocation. The Church is called to recognize

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[81] Cf. *Vultum Dei Quaerere,* n. 36.

[82] Cf. CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTE OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, Guidelines *New Wine in New Wineskin. The Consecrated Life and its Ongoing Challenges since Vatican II,* 6 January 2017, *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, Citta' del Vaticano 2017. Hereafter cited as: *New Wine in New Wineskins*.

and appreciate the unique identity and mission of consecrated life through promoting and supporting the vocation.[83]

Conclusion

Employing the historical-juridical method of approach, the study has established that from early Church practices, where communal discernment and support for vocations emerged, to the establishment of mendicant orders in the 13th century that emphasized the communal aspect of religious life, each era contributed to the understanding of vocation.[84] This history overview has also revealed that the Gratian period, with its codification of canon law, laid a foundation for formal recognition and support of consecrated life, while the Council of Trent reaffirmed the importance of religious communities in the Church's mission. The evolution through the 1917 Code of Canon Law and the subsequent revisions in Vatican II and the 1983 Code reflect a growing awareness of the Church's role in fostering vocations, emphasizing not only individual calling but communal responsibility.[85]

In addition, examining the Eastern Canons and the recent Magisterium reveals a broader understanding of vocation that transcends cultural and regional boundaries. The Eastern tradition often highlights the communal and mystical dimensions of consecrated life, presenting a complementary view to the Western focus on legalistic frameworks. Recent papal teachings and documents continue to emphasize the ecclesial community's duty to nurture vocations, recognizing the diverse ways individuals are called to holiness. This historical analysis underscores the ongoing commitment of the Church to promote an environment conducive to

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[83] Cf. New Wine in New Wineskins, n. 2.

[84] Cf. E. DURKHEM, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Free press, New York 1912, pp. 47-48.

[85] Cf. H.J. SCHROEDER, (*ed*.), "Decree on the Reform of the Clergy" N.P. TANNER *In the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis 1941, pp. 45-50.

vocations, acknowledging the interconnectedness of individuals and communities in the journey of faith.[86]

[86] Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation on the Call to Holiness in Today's World *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 19 March 2018, n. 19 in *AAS*, 110 (2018), pp. 865-892.

CHAPTER TWO

JURIDICAL STUDY ANALYSIS OF CAN. 574, ON THE OBLIGATION OF THE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY TO ESTEEM, PROMOTE AND FOSTER VOCATION OF CONSECRATED LIFE

Introduction

Any legal system has its origin and history. For any law to receive its codification and force, it has to undergo evolution and formation based on certain sources to achieve the correct interpretation of the words and the mind of the legislator for its proper application. Can. 574 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law is not as exceptional as demonstrated below. This chapter therefore, focuses on studying the sources of Can. 574 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, its formation, changes, and modifications that took place before its final formation. It also carries out the textual analysis to unveil the meaning of words. Related canons found in the 1983 Code of Canon Law, as well as in the 1990 Code of Canons of Eastern Churches, are highlighted in order to augment the deeper meaning of the canon under study.

2.1 Sources of Can. 574

The development of any law depicts its history and growth. It shows how it was formulated, indicating the sources from which it originated. Can. 574, has its sources in the 1917 Code Canon Law, Can. 487, and the various Second Vatican Council documents which are: The Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, nn. 43 and 44; the Decree *Perfectae Caritatis,* n.2; and documents of the Roman Curia namely; *Magno Gaudio,* 566 and *Mutuae Ralationes,* n.8.

2.1.1 The 1917 Code of Canon Law, Can. 487

In the 1917 Code of Canon Law, Can. 487 states: 'The Religious state is a stable manner of living in common, by which the faithful take up, besides common precepts, the evangelical counsels of observing the vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty that must be held in honor by all'. The perfection to be acquired in the religious state demands stability, and the evangelical counsels must be embraced by external and public life which each member is called to emulate.[87] The canon declares that for a Christ's faithful to live a religious life stably, he or she must observe faithfully the common precepts and evangelical counsels through a vow. Thus, this canon invites the ecclesial community to participate fully in discerning, fostering, and promoting vocations toward consecrated life.[88]

2.1.2. *Lumen Gentium* n. 43 and 44: On Vocation to Consecrated Life

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church is one of the principal documents of the Second Vatican Council. Numbers 43 and 44 outline the provisions of a juridical basis for the Church's efforts to promote and foster vocation to the consecrated life, which is the responsibility of the entire Christian community in supporting personal discernment and response to God's call.

Number 43 points out the evangelical counsel of chastity as a dedication to God, while poverty and obedience are seen as the foundation of the teachings and examples of Christ. These evangelical counsels assist a person called to rejoice in spirit, as they advance in loving one

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[87] Cf. *Codex Iuris Canonici,* PII X P.M., iussu digestus*,* Benedicti XV Papae, auctoritate promulgates, Rome, Vaticanis 1917, Can. 487 in *AAS*, 9 (1917), p. 139. (Hereafter Cited as CIC/17, Can).

[88] Cf. S. WOYWOD, *A Practical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, Vol.1, Joseph F. Wagner, Inc. New York 1918, pp. 278-280.

another and journeying towards holiness. They acquire a stable and more solid way of Christian life through receiving good teachings and recommendations as ideal. It should be seen as a form of life to which some faithful, both clerical and lay, are called by God to enjoy a special gift of grace in the life of the Church to which they contribute to one another in the mission of the Church. *Lumen Gentium* n.43 insists that it is the role of the Christian community, pastors, and religious, to promote and foster vocations to the consecrated life.

Number 44 builds upon this in discussing the nature of the call to the consecrated life. It emphasizes that this call comes from God and is discerned through prayer and the guidance of the Church.[89] There is need for a personal response to this call, which involves a commitment to follow Christ more closely through the vows or other Sacred bonds. The more stable and firmer these bonds are, the more perfect the Christian religious consecrated is expected to be nurtured.[90] It is hence the responsibility of the whole Church to promote and foster the personal growth of Christians who are aspiring to live their Christian life as consecrated persons. These baptized are to consecrate their whole life to God who is the Supreme love and Him alone is to be given supreme honor. The profession of evangelical counsel helps one to be free from hindrances that could hold him or her back from loving God and concentrating on the service to the entire Church. This is achieved when those who are called can serve the entire Church in their capacities in keeping with the particular kind of religious life to which they are individually called.[91]

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[89] Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium,* 21 November 1964, n. 43, in *AAS*, 57 (1965), pp. 49-50. (Hereafter Cited as *Lumen Gentium*).

[90] Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 44.

[91] Cf. A.F. MORLOT, "Vocatio à an Ministere, Vocatiani a la vie Consacrée*."* in *Studia Canonica*,7 (1974), pp. 75-76.

2.1.3 *Perfectae Caritatis*: on Vocation to Consecrated Life

In *Perfectae Caritatis*, the Council Fathers articulated the Church's understanding of consecrated life and emphasized its importance within the Church's mission. The document encourages religious orders and congregations to renew themselves according to the authentic spirit of their founders and adapt to the needs of the modern world. Due to this nature of adaptation, there is a need to preserve the sacred nature of consecrated life and be mindful of sanctifying the whole world. The Church whose mission is to sanctify the whole world, has to put structures in the local communities that help to foster vocation to the consecrated life. The document emphasizes the importance of consecrated men and women to live their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, as well as the necessity of ongoing spiritual formation.[92] As part of their mission to sanctify the world and adapt to the needs of the modern world as they all seek to be holy. The document reads in part:

> We exhort all those whom God calls to the state of perfection to persevere in their vocation with undivided hearts (cf. 1 Cor. 7:34). Let them diligently cultivate the spirit and virtues proper to their state, in a genuine self-denial that allows them to follow Christ more closely, conform themselves more closely to Him, and serve Him more fervently. Thus, they will be giving themselves wholly to God, the supreme love of all, and striving to bring all people to recognize His love. God is praised when religious achieve their perfection and at the same time contribute to the spiritual progress of others by the witness of their lives and the proclamation of the Gospel.

The renewal of religious life invites all to return to the sources of the whole of the Christian life and should adapt to the changes according to the signs of the time as long as these adaptations are helping people of God to grow in holiness and are ready to participate in the mission of making our modern world much holy than it may have been in the past.[93]

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[92] VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life *Perfectae Caritatis*, 28 October 1965, n.17 in *AAS*, 58 (1966), pp. 778-779. (Hereafter Cited as *Perfectae Caritatis*).

[93] Cf. *Perfectae Caritatis* n. 2.

2.1.4 Allocution *Magno Gaudio* (With Great Joy)

Paul VI (1964) in his allocution to the Supreme Moderators of some religious families and their members who had gathered in Rome for the general chapter of each institute, highlighted that religious life is of great importance in the life of the Church. He insisted on the idea that the doctrine of the universal call to sanctity is for all the baptized who are to be consecrated to God. He called upon them to encourage young people to choose this way of life, for it has its character from the vow of evangelical profession according to the example of Jesus Christ a perfect model of living in love and charity.

The address continued that the Church today needs social and public witness which is imparted to the religious life. The religious therefore should take their life seriously in living the vows that are compatible with their state of life so that they may be perfect in love, charity, and service in the Church. It insisted that obedience must remain a holy sacrifice of one's own life which is offered to God. This self-sacrifice should be seen when they submit to the Superiors who exercise their authority within the bounds of charity and with respect for the human person. In poverty, the religious are called upon to love this vow, use the temporal goods of the Church with content and abide by the norms as prescribed in their rule of life, and shun comfort and pleasures with which the religious vows can be put at jeopardy. Through their life of witness in and to the world therefore, they encourage young people to aspire and respond to God's call to religious life.[94]

[94] Cf. PAUL VI, *Allocution Magno Gaudio,* 23 May 1964, in *AAS,* 56 (1964), p. 566.

2.1.5 *Mutuae Ralationes,* n. 8

The document discusses the duty of the sacred hierarchy concerning religious life. It reflects on the place of religious life in the Church. The document emphasizes the unquestionable bond of religious life with the life and holiness of the Church. It explains that through the action of the sacred hierarchy, God consecrates religious for a more generous service of Him within the People of God. Likewise, the Church, through the ministry of her Pastors, besides giving legal sanction to the religious form of life and thus raising it to the dignity of a canonical state... sets it forth liturgically also as a state of consecration to God. The document further explains that the supreme authority of the Church, that is, the Roman Pontiff and the bishops have supervisory and protective authority over religious institutes wisely by regulating the practice of the evangelical counsels in authentically approving Rules proposed to them so that they may develop and flourish following the spirit of their founders.[95]

2.2 The Formation of Canon 574: A Juridical and Theological Developmental Study

The formulation of canon 574 in the 1983 *Codex Iuris Canonici* offers an important canonical and theological synthesis of the vocation to the consecrated life. Through various schemas and redactions, the *Coetus Studiorum de Institutis Vitae Consecratae per Professionem Consiliorum Evangelicorum* gradually refined the text to reflect a deeper understanding of the nature, vocation, and ecclesial contribution of consecrated persons. Drawing from *Lumen Gentium*, *Perfectae Caritatis*, and decades of juridical evolution, the canon came to define the

[95] Cf. SACRED CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND FOR SECULAR INSTTITUTES AND SACRED CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, Directives for Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church *Mutuae Relationes*, 14 May 1978, in *AAS*, 70 (1978), pp. 473-478.

consecrated state as one intimately linked to the sanctity and life of the Church, even if not part of its hierarchical structure.[96]

2.2.1. Early Schema (1977–1979): Can. 2 of the Draft *De Institutis Vitae Consecratae per Professionem Consiliorum Evangelicorum*

As part of the early post-conciliar legislative efforts, the *Coetus* proposed a draft canon, referred to as Can. 2, which represented a preliminary attempt to articulate the status of those who embrace the evangelical counsels in a stable form of life officially recognized by the Church.[97]

Draft Text

§1. *Status eorum qui in huiusmodi Institutis vitam fraternam agunt, licet ad Ecclesiae structuram hierarchicam de se non spectet, ad eius tamen vitam et sanctitatem pertinet et ideo ab omnibus in honore habendus est.*

§2. *Ad hunc vitae consecratae statum christifideles, sive clerici sive laici, specialiter a Deo vocantur ut in vita Ecclesiae peculiari dono fruantur et, suo quisque modo, eiusdem missioni salvificae prosint.*

The text proposed by the Relator which corresponds to canon 2 of the printed schema is as follows:

> *Can. 2 Il testo dello schema è il seguente:*
> *§ 1. Status eorum qui in huiusmodi Institutis vitam fraternam agunt, licet ad Ecclesiae structuram hierarchicam de se non spectet, ad eius tamen vitam et sanctitatem pertinet et ideo ab omnibus in honore habendus est.*

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[96] Cf. *Lumen Gentium,* n. 44.

[97] PONTIFICIA COMMISSIO CODICI IURIS CANONICI RECOGNOSCENDO, *Acta Commissionis: Coetus Studiorum de Institutis Vitae Consecratae per Professionem Consiliorum Evangelicorum*. *Communicationes*, 11(2) (1979), pp. 267.

> *§ 2. Ad hunc vitae consecratae statum christifideles, sive clerici sive laici, specialiter a Deo vocantur ut in vita Ecclesiae peculiari dono fruantur et, suo quisque modo, eiusdem missioni salvificae prosint.*[98]

The text is read together with the text of Can. 25 and Can. 27 of the revised schema of the *Lex Ecclesiae Fundermentalis*. The Secretary points out that in Can. 2 of our schema, we find the same ideas already exposed in the most authoritative text of the *Lex Eccleclecie Fundamentalis* (L.E.F) and also in canon 81 of the *De Populo Dei* schema, which states that:

§ 1. From the Divine institution of the Church, therefore we have Sacred Ministers also called clerics, and other faithful who are called laymen. § 2. Both of them are the faithful who by profession of evangelical counsels through vows or other sacred bonds, recognized and accepted by the Church, are consecrated to God in their special way and are useful to the saving mission of the Church, whose status, although it does not concern the hierarchical structure of the Church, nevertheless concerns its life and sanctity.

Taking this fact into account, Can. 2, or in the case *Lex Ecclesiae Fundamentalis*, was not promulgated. In any case, it seems appropriate to retain the idea that the institutes of consecrated life constitute their state in the Church. One consultant of the secretariat thought it was not necessary to retain the expression of § 2 *"sive clerici sive laici*" (whether clerical or lay); While a third consultor notes the convenience that new status is acquired through the profession or assumption concern evangelical counsels should not entail, for the members of secular institute a segregation or separation concerning other lay people or secular priests. A fourth consultor pointed out that a consecrated lay person is not an ordinary lay person but a

[98] Cf. PONTIFICIA COMMISSIO CODICI IURIS CANONICI RECODINOSCENDO, *Communicationes*, 11 (1979), p. 33.

lay person qualified by a special consecration other than baptismal consecration, and, therefore, the Church recognizes him in a particular state of life.[99]

A fifth consultant said that in 1947, at the time of the promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution. *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, members of the secular institutes did not enter the three personal canonical states of clerics, and therefore, at the time, there was a talk of the juridical status of a religious person. The distinction between the juridical and canonical state does not seem to be able to be preserved now. It is also true that the state of a consecrated cleric or layperson is not identically similar to that of a "religious" clerical or layperson. There is still a discussion on this point, and it was decided that the problem would be further explored when it comes to the secular institutes in consecrated terms. The status of those who in such institutions (practicing fraternal life) profess evangelical counsels (although they do not look to the hierarchy and structure of the Church) belongs unshakably to the life and sanctity of the Church, and therefore, to be honored by all in the Church, she or he must be young and promoted.[100]

§ 2. Stated that, to this state of consecrated life, the Christian faithful whether men or women (clerics or laymen) are specially called by God to be consecrated in their lives, and that the Church enjoys a special gift in their way, according to the purpose and spirit of the institute, benefiting from the same salvific mission of those institutes. § 1 was approved with the amendments proposed by a reporter based on the observations regarding § 2, the secretary points out that the specification "*sive clerici sive laici* also the proposed addition *"sive Vir sive Mulierae*" are not necessary, because there are statements that go without saying. The speaker and Consultant thought that it was appropriate to preserve § 2 to underline that this is a personal vocation, received by a faithful from God and for the universal Church. Another consultant

[99] Cf. *Communicationes*, 11 (1979), p. 33-34.
[100] Cf. *Communicationes*, 11 (1979), p. 34.

considers that the expression of the Can. 44, is of divine Call. The secretary and some other consultors argued that a juridical text of § 2 could be suppressed to avoid repeating concepts expressed in other canons. This possibility was put to a vote, but the majority of consultors preferred that § 2 remain. Some amendments were introduced; these included the deletion of the words*" vitae consecratae*" because the idea is simplified.[101] The phrase, "Who are faithful to Christ", was amended because it is not everyone: that is, all the faithful are called to holiness to perfection (*Perfecta Caritas*), but not everyone is called to seek holiness through consecrated life in a particular religious institute.

In this particular state of consecrated life, a deletion was done to replace the unnecessary words like '*Sive Clerici Sive Laici*'. To underline the value of the specific vocation received from God for the purpose and according to the spirit of the respective institute; that is, it will serve to prevent any abuse of personal activities outside and even contrary to the purpose of one's institute. Some amendments were made to reflect the reality of Can. 574 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law. The suppression of the expression each in his way without replacing it with another, Keep the same expression of the text without any additions. Each in his way and according to his end was introduced to protect the spirit of the institute.[102] To speak according to the purpose and spirit of the institute, instead of speaking in his way. In the end, the question arises, also proposed by a consultative body of saying personality instead of specialty. The amendment however was not accepted because it did not seem necessary, given the end personal character of each vocation.[103]

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[101] Cf. *Communicationes*, 11 (1979), p. 35

[102] Cf. *Communicationes*, 11 (1979), p. 36.

[103] Cf. E.N. PETERS, (*ed*.), *Incrementa in Progressu 1983 Codicis Iuris Canonici*, Wilson & Lafleur Limitée, Montréal 2005, p. 530; Cf. E.N. PETERS, *Tabulae congruentiae inter Codicem iuris Canonici et versiones anteriores Canonum* with a Multilingual Introduction Wilson & Lafleur Limitée, Montréal 2000.

2.2.2 The 1980 *Schema Codicis (Iuxta Placita Consultorum)*

First, in § 2, line 2, of Can. 504 instead of the words "*enjoy a special gift*" other suggestions were put that better express the offering of oneself to God. The proposal did not seem to be accepted, because there were already talks about the offering of oneself to God in Can. 503.Can. In § 2, line 3, the word "*constitute*" was not used. The formula in the constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 45, received also in mutual relations n. 8, some fathers' remarks are not admissible, because the word '*to establish'* is used in the same context under number 43 *Lumen Gentium* Constitution.

Secondly, this canon brings nothing tangible canonically; about § 2, the *Lumen Gentium* constitution saw it as inappropriate. To promulgate the *Lumen Gentium* as a juridical canon, some Fathers' remarks could not be accepted because the canon deals with the mental legal norm, that is, with the acting of the Church and its authority in receiving, preserving, and ordering the consecrated life through the council of the evangelical profession.[104] In § 2, it was added to establish religious life as a state of living that is consecrated to God by its liturgical action, living to the present. Remarks. The proposed addition could be accepted because it is a general canon, and the expression would not be entirely adequate for the secular institution

2.2.3 The 1982 *Schema Codicis*

In the 1982 *Schema,* the canon was adapted as it was agreed upon in the 1980 schema; no amendments were made to the canon, and so it reads: The canon in Schema 1982 appeared as canon 578. The text remained the same in which states:

> §1. Status eorum, qui in huihusmodi institutis consilia evangelica profitentur, ad vitam et sanctitatem Ecclesiae pertinent, et ideo ab omnibus in ecclesia fovendus et promovendus est.

[104] Cf. *Communicationess,* 15 (1983), pp. 59-60.

> §2. Ad hunc statum quidam christifideles specialiter a Deo vocantur ut in vita Ecclesiae peculiari dono fruantur et, secundum finem et spiritum instituti, eiusdem missioni salficae prosint.[105]

At the promulgation of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, 1752 canons had been codified; among them was Can. 574 with dual paragraphs that had been adopted from the 1980 and 1982 schema without further modification and changes states: § 1 The state of those who profess the evangelical counsel in such Institutes pertain to the life and sanctity of the Church and therefore must be fostered and promoted by all in the Church. § 2. Certain believers are specially called by God to this state of consecrated life, so that they may enjoy a special gift in the life of the Church and, according to the purpose and spirit of the institution, benefit from the saving mission of the same.[106]

2.2.4 The Promulgated Can. 574

The text of the canon, which finally appeared in the 1983 Code, states:

> Can. 574 § 1. Status eorum, qui in huiusmondi institutis consilia evangelica profitentur, ad vitam et sanctitatem ecclesiae pertinent, et ideo ab omnibus in ecclesia favendus est.
>
> § 2. Ad hunc statum quidam christifidelis specialiter a Deo vocantur, ut in vita ecclesiae peculari dono fruantur et, secundum finem et spiritum instituti, eiusdem missioni salvificae prosint.[107]

This canon describes consecrated life as a state of life linked to the advancement of the sanctity of the Church through the profession of evangelical counsels by those who profess it.

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[105] Cf. E.N. PETERS, *Incrementa* in *Progessu* 1983 *Codicis Iuris Canonici*, p. 530.

[106] Cf. E.N. PETER., *Incrementa* in *Progressu* 1983 *Codicis Iuris Canonici*, p. 530.

[107] Can. 574 §1 in English reads, "The state of those who profess the evangelical counsels in institutes of this type belongs to the life and holiness of the Church and must be fostered and promoted by all in the Church.

§2. Certain Christian faithful are specially called by God to this state so that they possess a special gift in the life of the Church and contribute to its salvific mission, according to the purpose and spirit of the institute."

Consequently, it calls for the whole ecclesial community to foster and promote it. In paragraph two, the canon indicates that among the Christ's faithful some members are called by God to this life to contribute towards the salvation of souls (Can. 1752) following the purpose and the spirit of the institute.

2.3 Juridical Analysis of Can. 574

Canon 574 §1 begins by underscoring the significance of consecrated life in the life and holiness of the Church. Given its significance in the Church, the canon places the obligation of fostering and promoting this state of life on the entire ecclesial community. §2 of the canon proceeds by giving further description of the state of consecrated life. It identifies this state of life as a vocation embraced by certain Christian faithful; a life distinguished as a special gift in the Church by those who embrace it; and a life which contributes to the salvific mission of the Church in accord with the purpose and character of the institute of ascription.

From the above overview of the canon, pertinent aspects to be analysed are: The significance of consecrated life in the life and holiness of the Church by means of: the charism of the founder, the consecration and personal witness of the members, and the proper works of the institutes. The personal witness of the members here refers to the manner of living the vows, community life, prayer life and any other aspects of this state of life which impacts on the lives of the entire ecclesial community through transformation and sanctification. The chapter therefore, employing the rule of interpretation of ecclesiastical laws provided in canon 17, carries out an analysis of the proper meaning of the words of Can. 574, according to its text

and context. This is to get a better understanding and clarity of its meaning in view of the mind of the legislator.[108]

2.3.1 Consecrated Life in the Life of Holiness of the Church

The understanding of consecrated life as being part of holiness of the Church is well brought out in the foundational norm, Can. 573 §1 which blends the theological its juridic meaning. It describes it as a state of life assumed through the profession of the evangelical counsels, as a stable form of living by which the faithful, following Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit, are dedicated to God who is loved most of all, so that, having been committed by a new and special title to His honor, to the building up of the Church, and the salvation of the world, they strive for the perfection of charity in the service of the kingdom of God and, having been made an outstanding sign in the Church, foretell the heavenly glory.[109]

Can. 574 §1 then proceeds to explain that this state of life pertains to the life and holiness of the Church as such it is to be promoted by all. Consecrated life is ecclesial by nature, that is, its spiritual origin, its juridical erection, and participation in the Church's mission and

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[108] CIC/ 1983, Can. 17 reads: "Leges ecclesiasticae intellegendae sunt secundum propriam verborum significationem in textu et contextu consideratam; quae si dubia et obscura manserit, ad locos parallelos, si qui sint, ad legis finem ac circumstantias et ad mentem legislatoris est recurrendum".

[109] Cf. The title which finally became "Consecrated Life" underwent several changes in various *schemas*. The title in the first *schema* was "De religiosis" but this included the members of secular institutes which the definition of *Perfectae caritatis* had declared as non-religious. See *Communicationes*, 2 (1970), pp. 170-173. The title was then changed to "De institutis perfectionis" but this too contradicted the spirit of the Second Vatican Council Fathers had declared that the call to perfection was a common Christian calling binding on all (Cf. *Lumen Gentium* n. 40). See *Communicationes*, 2 (1970), p. 174. The title changed again in respect to *Lumen Gentium* which had limited the title 'religious' to consecration by profession of evangelical counsels (Cf. *Lumen Gentium* n. 45). The new title agreed upon was, "De institutis vitae consecratae per professionem consiliorum evangelicorum" which was abbreviated to "De institutis vitae consecratae" (See *Communicationes*, 7 (1975), p. 63). This title was used generically to refer to all forms of consecrated life, which as Morrisey notes, unfairly included societies of apostolic life which do not possess all the elements qualified by the title. See F.G. MORRISEY, "Introduction," in J. HITE, *et al*., (*eds.*), *A Handbook on Canons 573-746*, p. 22. See also., J. HITE, "The Spirit of the Proposed New Law for Institutes of Consecrated Life," in *Studia Canonica*, 9 (1975), p. 79; J. BEYER, "Institutes of Perfection in the New Code," in *The Way Supplement*, 13 (1971), pp. 90-99; B. PENNINGTON, "The Structure of the Section Concerning Religious Life in the Revised Code," in *The Jurist*, 25 (1965), pp. 273-275; M. SAID, "The Present State of the Reform of the Code Concerning the Section *De institutis perfectionis*," in *Studia Canonica*, 8 (1974), p. 228.

charity is all at the service of the Church.[110] The ecclesial and spiritual dimension of consecrated life belongs to the holiness of the Church.[111] It is for building up the Church with the salvation of the world as a special way and mystery. The consecrated life shares the life of Christ, a life of communion, service, and mission.[112] The link between the state of consecrated life and the life and holiness of the Church is therefore in a broad sense demonstrated by: the consecration and personal witness of the members, the charism of the founder, and the proper works of the institutes. The consecration in this context denotes the profession of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience which witness to eschatological reality thus fosters and advances the sanctification of the ecclesial community in the manner of living these. Personal witness here refers to the manner of how those who embrace the state of consecrated life order their lives in faithfulness to its obligations such as community life, prayer life and vowed life.

2.3.1.1 The Profession of Evangelical Counsels As a Means of Advancing the Holiness of the Church

In context, Can. 574 strives to explain the significant role of the state of those consecrated in advancing the holiness of the Church and her salvific mission. These find their

[110] Throughout the history of the Church, consecrated life is a life of holiness that started in the early Christian community, where members lived in the evangelical profession (Can. 207). Cf. S. HOLLAND, "The Religious and bishops as Custodians of Communion" in *The Jurist* 62, (2002), pp. 312-340.

[111] John Paul II recalls the words of *Lumen Gentium*, n. 44 when he firmly asserts, "the state of consecrated life belongs undeniably to the life and holiness of the Church" (John Paul II, Discourses on the Occasion of the Synod on Consecrated Life, September 29-December 15, 1999, in *Consecrated Life*, Vol. 20, n. 2 (1999), p. 17. Smith notes, however, that the holiness of religious should not be considered to be superior to that of the other Christians since the fundamental call to holiness is a universal Christian vocation. Those who have embraced religious life are not necessarily themselves holy but the vocation they have chosen under the divine motivation ascribes them to a distinct state of holiness (R. Smith, "Theology of Religious Life," in B.L MARTHALER, (*ed*.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12, Catholic University of America, Washington DC 2003, p. 293).

[112] Cf. See L. CADA *et al*., (*eds*.), *Shaping the Coming Age of Religious Life*, Seabury Press, New York 1979, p. 26 where the author cites examples of the earliest form of this type of life were communities of St Antony (251 A.D. - 356 A.D.) and St. Augustine of Hippo (354 A.D. - 430 A.D.), where members strived to live a life of holiness and solitude.

expression in living and witnessing the life ordered by evangelical counsels, the apostolic work these persons carry out, and the quality of their lives in common.

It is in the profession of evangelical counsels through vows or other bonds, that an individual makes a formal commitment to live according to the charism, rules, and values of the institute.[113] It is a public declaration of one's intention to dedicate their life to God, following a specific religious way of life.[114] Before making a formal commitment, individuals interested in joining a religious institute usually undergo a period of formation called the novitiate.[115]

The profession is a sacred event that signifies the individual's complete surrender to God and their willingness to live by the charism and values of the religious order. Through profession, individuals become full members of the institute, participating fully in its spiritual and apostolic life.[116] The process and requirements for a profession can differ, but the underlying idea is the same, a formal commitment to live a life of consecration and service to God within a religious community.[117]

The idea of evangelical counsels is deeply rooted in Christianity, particularly within the Catholic Church. The evangelical counsels, also known as the counsels of perfection, are a set of vows or commitments taken by individuals who choose to live a religious life in a more radical and committed way. The evangelical counsels are derived from the teachings of Jesus

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[113] Cf. X. OCHOA, "Professioni Consecratio et Vota religiosa ante et post Concilium Vaticanum," in *Commentarium pro Religiosis*, 57 (1976), pp. 193-200.

[114] Cf. A. J. DOMINGO, "The Profession of Evangelical Counsels," in A. MARZOA *et al*., (*eds.*), *Exegetical Commentary* Vol. II/2, Wilson & Lafleur, Montréal 2004, p. 1475.

[115] Cf. D.P. NGUYEN, The spiritual Patrimony of an Institute of Consecrated life, Urbaniana Pontificia Universitas, Rome 1989, p. 62. During this time, they are introduced to the spirituality, traditions, and practices of the institute.

[116] Cf. J.M.R., TILLARD in *Dizianario Degli Instituti Di Perfezione*, Vol., II, Paoline, Roma 1975, pp. 1630-1634.

[117] Cf. M. BEVILACQUA, *Vieni e seguimi. Consigli evangelici e vita consacrata* San Paolo Edizioni, Cinisello Balsamo 2015, pp.112-114.

Christ, particularly from the Gospel passages where Jesus invites his followers to go beyond the basic requirements of the commandments to attain a higher level of perfection. (Mt. 5:48).

Evangelical counsels are voluntary commitments and are typically taken by individuals who enter religious orders or congregations, such as monks, nuns, and friars. In the decree *Christus Dominus*, the fathers of the council speak in the same way. They address members of religious life who make the profession of the evangelical counsels each according to his or her proper vocation, to be committed.[118] These vows are seen as a way to live a life of greater dedication and commitment to God and to embrace the values of simplicity, selflessness, and detachment from worldly concerns.

The profession of the evangelical counsels is a public association in which Christ's faithful commit themselves in perpetuity or temporarily, to make perpetual vows in the future. Can. 607 § 2 highlights the permanent and public nature of the vows professed by the religious within the Church.[119] These counsels are seen as a way to imitate Christ more closely and to live a life of greater dedication to God and service to others.[120]

The evangelical counsels are divine gifts which the Church receives from the Lord in order for her to progress in the path of sanctity. In the context of consecrated life, they are spiritual resources by which consecrated persons and their institutes progress in holiness and in the building of the Church. Rooted in the gospel values, the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience which religious embrace give a radical witness to sequela Christi and an in imitation of the chaste, poor and obedient Christ, are a witness of everlasting memory of the outpouring

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[118] Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 28 October 1965, in *AAS*, 58 (1966), pp.673-696. English Translation in A. FLANNERY, (Gen. *ed.), Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Vol. I, St. Paul, Mumbai 2007, pp. 510-522.

[119] Cf. M.B. PENNINGTON, "The Structure of the Concerning Religious Life in Revised Code of Canon Law,*"* in *The Jurist,* 25 (1965), pp. 274-278.

[120] M.R.A. AWITI, *Formation of Religious Members in the Church*, Peter Lang Publishing Inc., New York 2019, pp. 14-15.

love of God to His people thus a powerful means of advancing sanctification of the world. The evangelical counsels professed and lived by the religious are means of challenging the values of the world which are anti-gospel. He further explains that the vow of chastity as lived by religious is a witness to true and perfect love which is total surrender to God who is absolute love. Obedience, which is submission to God's will through human agents, is a sign of a great act of faith to allow other human beings to communicate the will of God. Poverty, which is surrender of self-satisfaction and fulfillment, is a sign of total dependence on God's providence. The insights from witness of vowed life by consecrated persons can be tremendous ways of advancing the sanctification of the world.[121]

2.3.1.2 The Founding Charism as a Means of Witness of Holiness by Consecrated Persons

The founder's charism is a means of witness of holiness for consecrated persons by virtue of its divine origin. The conciliar documents recognize the founding charism as a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church.[122] By means of this founding charism, the Church verifies the existence of a religious institute. Institutes of consecrated life have, throughout the history of the Church, participated in furthering the mission of the Church as a way of witnessing to the gospel message.[123]

Charisms of religious communities are gifts approved by the Church to foster the life and the apostolic service of these communities.[124] Lived out genuinely by members, the founder's charism is a powerful means of witnessing to the holiness of the Church by the religious communities who collectively contribute to the salvation of the world by transforming

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[121] Cf. V. MOSCA, (*ed.*), *La Vita Consecrata Nella Chiessa*, Marcianum, Venezia 2015, pp. 86-90.

[122] Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes Divintus*, 7 December 1965, n. 1 and n. 40. in *AAS*, 58 (1966), p. 947 and 988; *Gaudium et Spes*. n. 3 and n. 78)

[123] See E.L. AYUBAN, "Charism and Foundation: Canonical Aspects in the Establishment of Institutes of Consecrated Life," in *Philippine Canonical Forum*, 9 (2007), p. 30.

[124] See *Redemptionis Donum*, n. 15.

it through their works. The charism is an effective way of contributing to the common good, transcending all political, social, economic and religious boundaries in order to serve humanity selflessly.[125] As bearers of charism and grounded in the original spirit of their founder(s), consecrated life nourishes not only the vocation of those called to live radically the evangelical counsels but nourishes the hope and imagination of the wider Church as to how holiness might be exercised. By authentic living of their charisms, members of institutes of consecrated life show forth the accessibility and concrete shape of a life centred in God's gifts; in turn, they invite all members of the Church to a life of holiness.

2.3.1.3 Community Life as a Means of Witness of Holiness by Consecrated Persons

Life in common is one other way by which members of consecrated life advance the holiness of the Church and sanctification of the world. The 1983 Code presents fraternal life in community as an intrinsic and fundamental element of religious life (Can. 6072 § 2) and as the place where the spiritual and material wellbeing of religious are fulfilled (Can. 608). Religious community in the model of the first Christians, is a community in which members are to strive to a life of "one mind and one heart" (Acts 4: 32) and are to experience the joy of the presence of the Lord. It is an expression of the Trinitarian unity as members of religious community exists as one body nourished by the Eucharist and strengthened by the Word of God. It is from the community that religious are nourished and renewed to reach out to others in love and compassion, advancing the mission of Christ right into the present. Traditionally, religious houses were associated with holiness as those who lived within them were regarded as pious and holy people.

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[125] See E. MCDONOUGH, "Charisms and Religious Life," in *Review for Religious*, 52 (1993), pp. 648-655.

An apostolic community of religious, inserted within the world becomes an everlasting witness of God's love to His people by the decision of members to live together out of shared Gospel values, and to serve. Drawn together by the love of God,[126] carrying one another's burden (Gal 6:12), sharing the same spirit (Acts 2:42), a religious community becomes truly an expression of the eschatological reality and a powerful witness to the message of Jesus through ministry and service to the world. Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter to Consecrated Persons on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life reminds them to be experts of communion and encourages them to promote true communion "which is constantly open to encounter, dialogue, attentive listening and mutual assistance."[127] Authentic witness of community life by religious within ecclesial community can be a powerful pastoral means of bringing reconciliation, healing and unity among the people of God. In the same Apostolic Letter, the Holy Father emphasizes that:

> "Where there are religious, there is joy" (. . .) and that, "the authentic fraternity found in our communities increases our joy; and that our total self-giving in service to the Church, to families and young people, to the elderly and the poor, brings us life-long personal fulfillment."[128]

When the people of God see the unity and love amongst members of consecrated life in their communities, these become schools of peace, reconciliation and justice where people can learn to live and love each other without any distinction of race, tribe or nation. By such witness of life, members of consecrated life advance the holiness of the ecclesial communities.

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[126] Cf. *Congregavit nos in Unum Christi Amor*, n.1.

[127] Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Letter to Consecrated Persons on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life *Scrivo a Voi*, 21 November, 2014, II (3) in *AAS*, 106 (2014), pp. 942-945.

[128] Cf. *Scrivo a Voi*, n. II (1).

2.3.1.4 Personal Witness of Spiritual Life by Members As a Means of Fostering Holiness in the Church

As for the spiritual dimension of consecrated life, the canon underscores the fact that the ultimate goal of the members of these religious institutes is to attain holiness, which is spiritual, purity, and closeness to God. It involves living a life following the teachings of Christ and striving for spiritual perfection. Members of religious institutes are to lead a life of special consecration and dedicate themselves entirely to God and His service.[129] Can. 574 §§ 1 and 2 emphasizes that the holiness of the members of religious institutes serves as an example and a witness to the entire Church and the world.[130] By living lives of holiness and dedication to God, they inspire others to deepen their faith and commitment to Christ.[131]

2.3.2 Fostering Vocation as a Duty of Entire Christian Community

Can. 233 §1 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law states that the duty of fostering vocations rests upon the entire Christian community so that the needs of the sacred ministry in the universal Church are provided for sufficiently. This duty binds Christian families, educators, and, in a special way the clergy who are concerned with promoting vocations.[132] Notice that the canon does not say the duty of fostering vocations rests upon parents only, but rather with the entire Christian community, as the Knights of Columbus have long been reminding us, that

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[129] Cf**.** R. MCDERMOTT, "The Authority of the Apostolic See and the Diocesan Bishop over Institutes of Consecrated Life," pp. 452-456.

[130] See for instance *Vita Consecarata*, n. 39 where John Paul II states: "Consecrated persons, at the deepest level of their being (...) are caught up in the dynamism of the Church's life, which is thirsty for the divine Absolute and called to holiness. It is to this holiness that they bear witness. "The fact that all are called to become saints cannot fail to inspire more and more those who by their very choice of life, have the mission of reminding others of that call."

[131] Cf. *Potissimum Institutioni*, n.17.

[132] Cf. R.M. McDERMOTT, "Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CC. 573-606)," pp. 178-187.

vocation promotion is everybody's business.[133]The general duty of the entire ecclesial community to promote vocation to religious life takes many perspectives. David Fleming for instance sees this from the point of the community in which a person is brought up. According to him vocation to consecrated life is greatly fostered and enriched by an environment that is supportive of one's spiritual and vocation journey.[134]

Additionally, Joseph Gallen points to the duty of the Church to support and prepare those who wish to commit their lives to consecrated life for service by means of practical training.[135] Such training has its rationale in the fact that religious life has its origins in a divine call whose authenticity can only be ascertained through discernment and testing. Also, those who embrace religious life take up serious obligations in the Church through the apostolic works they carry out and the witness of their lives. This is why the Church emphasizes that they therefore are to undergo proper training and formation for them to attain the correct understanding of their identity and place in the Church; to be equipped with the necessary skills for apostolic work, and to gain the necessary maturity required for lifelong commitment.[136]

2.3.3 The Special Role of the Diocesan Bishop to Esteem, Foster and Promote Consecrated Life

The norm of Can 574§ 1 on the obligation of all in the Church to foster and promote consecrated life recalls the specific duty of the diocesan bishop to promote vocation to this state of life directed in Can. 385. This obligation of the bishop finds its elaboration in the Directory

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[133] Cf. K. COLUMBUS, *Vocation and Families. Our Faith in Action. A Guide to the Faith*, Knights of Columbus, New Haven 2022, pp. 23-27.

[134] Cf. D**.** FLEMING, "Vocation Ministry in Consecrated Life," in *Review for Religious* 50, (1991), pp.7-78.

[135] Cf. J.F. GALLEN, *Canon Law for Religious. An Explanation*, Alba House, New York 1983, pp. 3-5.

[136] Cf. M.R.A. AWITI, *Formation of Religious Members in the Church*, pp. 3-4.

for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops *Apostolorum Successores* nn. 99-100.[137] The Directory assigns the diocesan bishop the primary duty of holding in esteem the state of consecrated life cognizant of its significant place and role in the Church of advancing her holiness through the benefits of the various charismatic gifts translated in apostolic works and witness of life of members which enrich the Church both particular or universal.

The diocesan bishop has a special concern to support consecrated persons, so that, while always remaining faithful to the inspiration of their founder, they may open themselves to an ever more fruitful spiritual and pastoral cooperation according to the needs of the diocese.
He ensures that the forms of consecrated life present in the diocese remain fully a part of the diocesan family and through the example and witness of their lives and their apostolic work, they bring an inestimable benefit to the diocese.

In as much as consecrated life is not part of the hierarchy of the Church, the bishop is to always consider this state of life as a divine gift which in its uniqueness bring great missionary and evangelizing energy in the diocese and which he should hold in deep gratitude. In view of ecclesial communion, the diocesan bishop is to ensure that institutes of consecrated life present in the diocese are fully incorporated in the diocesan apostolic action in collaboration with other the other groups. To this end, the bishop should be well acquainted with the charism of each institute and society, described in their Constitutions, and he should meet the Superiors and the communities personally, reviewing their situation, their concerns and their hopes for the apostolate.

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[137] CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops *Apostolorum Successores*, 22 February 2004, Liberia Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2004, nn. 99-100.

The Diocesan bishop is also to ensure that consecrated life is known and esteemed by the faithful, so that they sincerely value consecrated persons, not only for the contribution they can make to diocesan pastoral work, but most of all the richness they bring by the witness of their lives. In particular that clergy and seminarians whose formation should also include knowledge on consecrated life. The diocesan bishop is also to foster a spirit of collaborative relationships between diocesan clergy and those belonging to institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life through organization of frequent meetings between them and when it seems opportune, he can involve them in the formation of the diocesan clergy. Lastly, the diocesan bishop is also to see to it that the consultative diocesan structures adequately reflect the presence of consecrated life in its various charisms within the diocese. He does this by appointing them in the various offices and functions in the diocese.

2.3.4 The Christian Faithful Who are Called to Embrace Consecrated Life

Can 574 § 2 indicates that the state of consecrated life is not for everyone when it states that, "certain Christian faithful are specially called by God to this state so that they possess a special gift in the life of the Church and contribute to its salvific mission, according to the purpose and spirit of the institute." Members of consecrated life refer to the category of Christian faithful who dedicate themselves to a deeper level of commitment to Christ and His Church. This dedication is expressed through the profession of the evangelical counsels, often within the context of a religious institute or society of apostolic life living in the community, and serving the Church's mission.

This vocation, which is recognized and regulated by the legislation of the Church, is seen as a special gift and response to God's call. It is also a perfection of the baptismal

consecration.[138] It is however a state of life which is not meant for everyone. John Paul II provides an excellent explanation on this. He observes that the gift, though given by divine action, is not a gift given to all. The Holy Father stresses that there is need to understand that not everyone can understand this total consecration to God that those who embrace this state of life undertake. It is a state of life is understood only by means of grace granted to those called to it; not everyone is able to grasp its meaning, to accept it, to practice it as this grace it is only granted to some. He explains that those who do not understand it are not attracted to it."[139]

2.3.5 Consecrated Persons as Special Gift in the Life of the Church.

Can 574 § 2 also states that those called to consecrated life possess a special gift in the life of the Church. The meaning of this special gift is to be understood from them understanding of consecrated life itself which is described as total consecration to God, a symbol of nuptial union likened to the marriage of Christ to the Church and perfection of the baptismal consecration.[140] The act of consecration by means of public profession of the evangelical counsels is a special witness of holiness in itself by virtue of religion and a means of worship and service to God.[141] The consecration implies a total self-giving of the person and a commitment to a life of constantly seeking God with an undivided heart, a life focused on God who is supremely loved.[142] The seeking of perfect charity and the splendid sign of the heavenly

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[138] Cf. T.J. MCGOVERN, "Religious Men and Women," in B.L. MARTHALER, *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., 12, (2003), pp. 456-458.

[139] JOHN PAUL II, Discourse on Consecrated Chastity, 17 November 1994, in *Consecrated Life*, 20/2 (1999), p. 43.

[140] Cf. *CCEO*, Can. 410. See *LG*, n. 44. See also *Perfectae Caritatis*, n. 5,

[141] Cf. Thomas Aquinas explains that, "Religion is the virtue by which we perform the service and worship of God. Hence, religious are so called because they dedicate themselves totally to the service of God, as if offering God, a whole-burnt sacrifice" (*Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 186, art. 1, English translation FATHERS OF THE ENGLISH DOMINICAN PROVINCE, *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Vol. 4, III-1, New York, Casimo Classics, 2013, 1964).

[142] See *Perfectae Caritatis*, n. 5.

glory which constitute the witness of consecrated life are essentially a witness to the sanctity of the Church (c. 574 § 1).[143]

The special gift therefore is understood as total consecration which according to *Redemptionis Donum*, is an "it is a free and conscious giving of self to God."[144] The total consecration which in itself is a divine gift freely given by God is also given back to Him.[145] According to Sandra Schneiders, the act of total consecration as a serious juridical act which creates a new status of permanence and stability. She explains, that religious life is not something that a person casually enters but one which one becomes. She adds, that it is a permanent, stable and public form of life and not a kind of, drop-in drop-out" life.[146] This stability is guaranteed by lengthy formation and testing which is accompanied by mature meditation and discernment followed by a definitive decision which culminates into profession of vows. In affirmation, Rose McDermott observes that the consecration of a religious through which he or she acquires the special gift in the life of the religious, is an ecclesial act by which the Church imparts on the religious a unique and a new status by means of public profession of the evangelical counsels.[147] Through consecration, consecrated persons become a gift in the Church through their witness of eschatological reality, their total self-giving in apostolic works, their prayer life, community life through which they advance communion in the

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[143] See JOHN PAUL II, Message on the 4th World Day of Consecrated Life "The Prophetic Value of Consecrated Life to All Christians," February 2, 2000, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., February 9, 2000, 2. See also G. BATTELI, *Religious Life in the Light of the New Canon Law*, Nairobi, St. Paul Publications - Africa, 1996, p. 56.

[144] JOHN PAUL II, post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Redemptionis Donum*, March 25, 1984, n. 7, in *AAS*, 76 (1984), 513-546, English translation in *Origins*, 13 (1983-1984), p. 721-731.

[145] See CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, Essential Elements in the Church's Teachings on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of Apostolates, May 31, 1983, n. 5, in *Origins*, 32 (2002-2003), p. 134.

[146] SCHNEIDERS, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context*, Paulist Press, New York/Mahwah, NJ 2000, pp. 127-129.

[147] See R. MCDERMOTT, "Commentary on Religious Institutes (cc. 607-709)," pp. 771-778.

Church and sequela Christi by witness of evangelical counsels hence promotion of holiness in the Church.

As a life of special invitation from God to follow Christ more closely, it is perceived as a gift of grace and sustained through spiritual aid in prayer, reflection, and spiritual direction. John Paul II, in his apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata* explains that consecrated life is deeply rooted in the example and teaching of Christ the Lord, as a gift of God the Father to his Church through the Holy Spirit.[148] The Christ faithful who embrace the consecrated life professes vows or promises. These vows are seen as a way to imitate Christ more closely and to live in radical conformity to the Gospel. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "The evangelical counsels are inseparable from the commandments and consecrated persons profess the evangelical counsels by vow or another sacred bond.[149]

The state of those who profess evangelical counsels is ordered to find its practical and juridic expression in the context of life in common with others who share the same religious charism or mission. Community life provides support, accountability, and opportunities for mutual growth in holiness. Paul VI, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelica Testificatio* emphasizes the communal, dimension of consecrated life: "Communities are thus truly communities, where the love of Christ reigns supreme.[150]

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[148] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and the Word *Vita Consecrata*, 25 March 1996, n.3 in *AAS*, 88 (1996), pp. 374-486. Hereafter, *Vita Consecrata*.

[149] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 1995, pp. 233-243.

[150] Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious Life *Evangelica Testificatio*, 29 June 1971, n. 3, in *AAS*, 64 (1972), p. 573; in A. FLANNERY, (Gen. ed.), *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Vol. 1. St. Paul, Mumbai 2007, p. 616. For more commentary on life in common see, for instance, M. GALLAGHER, *The Common Life: An Element of Apostolic Religious Institutes of Women*, JCD thesis, Saint Paul University, Ottawa1995; P. GARCIA, *Religious Community as a Parable of Love*, Claretian Publications, Quezon City1995; G. KAITHOLIL, *Communion in Community: A Renewal Programme for Religious*, St. Paul's, Mumbai 2002; A.B. SMITH, "Dialogue: The Path to Community," in *Religious Life Review*, 37 (1998), pp. 10-14; G. URÍBARRI, "A Reflection on Community Life and Its Demons," in *UISG Bulletin*, 120 (2002), pp. 4-12; R. MCDERMOTT, "Community Life Supports Mission - Reflections on Vita fraterna," in

Those in consecrated life also dedicate themselves to various apostolates, ministries, and works of service according to the charism of their institute. They participate in the Church's mission of evangelization, serving the needs of the Church and the world. The Second Vatican Council, in its decree *Perfectae Caritatis* affirms the missionary aspect of consecrated life that, since the charism of each institute has its particular purpose, all religious should be concerned to cooperate in the one mission of the Church.[151]

2.3.6 Consecrated Life as a Contribution to the Salvific Mission of the Church

From the God-given seed of the counsels, a wonderful and wide-spreading tree has grown up in the field of the Lord, branching out into various forms of the religious life lived in solitude or community and carrying out variety of apostolates deriving from the charismatic gift of each.[152] The special gift of each religious family is for the sanctification of the world. John Paul II in his address to superior's general observed that the charismatic gift which each religious family is possess is a gift to the universal Church whose expression has its fulfilment m within the structures of the local Church and in unity with the universal Church.[153] These gifts have existed from the very beginning of the Church, expressed by some men and women who set out to follow Christ with greater liberty and to imitate him more closely, by practicing the evangelical counsels. In the earliest times, such men and women who today are called

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Commentarium pro Religiosis et Missionariis, 81 (2000), pp. 189-205; G.R. MURPHY, "Candidates and Community: Mutual Formation," in *The Way Supplement*, 62 (1988), pp. 25-32;

[151] Cf. *Perfectae Caritatis* n. 5.

[152] See Pius XII in his encyclical letter, *Mystici corporis* where he affirms the significance of consecrated life in the Church when he states: "[…] Ecclesia praeterea, dum evangelica consilia amplectitur, Redemptoris paupertatem, obedientiam, virginitatemque in se refert. Ipsa per multiplicia variaque instituta, quibus veluti monilibus ornatur, Christum quodammodo commonstrat, vel in monte contemplantem, vel concionantem ad populos, vel sanantem aegros et saucios, ac peccatores ad frugem bonam convertentem, vel denique bene facientem omnibus"([PIUS XII, Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis*, 29 June 1943, in *AAS*, 35 (1943), pp. 214- 215).

[153] J. BEYER, "Religious in New Code and their Place in the Local Church," in *Studia Canonica*, 17 (1983), pp. 175-180.

consecrated persons, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, became hermits or founded religious families.[154]

These charismatic gifts from which religious families are founded have a universal presence and the evangelical nature of its witness are clear evidence and reality that affects the whole Church as such they have to be approved by the Church.[155] The Church therefore has the duty, through her hierarchy, to authenticate the gift of consecrated life and to ensure that it is ordered toward the mission of the Church according to the spirit of the founder (Can. 576). While bishops are empowered to discern new gifts of consecrated life granted to the Church by the Holy Spirit, the approval of new forms of consecrated life is reserved to the Apostolic See. In effect, the consecrated life is at the very heart of the Church as a decisive element for her mission, since it manifests the inner nature of the Christian calling and the striving of the whole Church as Bride towards union with her one Spouse.[156]

Giulio Batteli notes that consecrated life is the gift of the spirit in the Church and as a gift of grace given to both clergy and laity it helps them to contribute in their unique way to the mission of the Church.[157] The Church has to give directives for the maintenance of this form of life. Ecclesial community must participate in the whole being and formation of those aspiring as it is directed in the universal law. The Church has to foster and promote the vocation in consecrated life even if the provision fails due to different challenges.[158]

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[154] Cf. S. HOLLAND, "Following Christ," in J.A. CORIDEN, *et al.*, (*eds.*), *The Code of Canon Law A Text and Commentary*, pp. 851-852.

[155] The bishops at the Synod frequently reaffirmed, *de re nostra agitur,* this is something which concerns all (Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, n. 3).

[156] At the conclusion of the Synod on Consecrated Life, the bishops affirmed that the state of consecrated life is a precious and necessary gift in the Church for the present and future as an intimate part of her life, holiness, and mission (Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, n. 3).

[157] Cf. G. BATTELLI, *The Religious in the Light of the New Law*, St. Paul Publications-Africa, Nairobi 1999, pp. 60-64.

[158] Cf. R.M. McDERMOTT, "Consecrated Life and Its Role in the Church and in the World. The *Lineamenta* for the 1994 Synod of Bishops," in *The Jurist*, 53 (1993), pp. 240- 244.

Consecrated life, within the Catholic Church, is often understood as a profound commitment to live out the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience in a radical way. The Sacred nature of this calling and the importance of individuals responding with openness, humility, and fidelity to God's will as an invitation to a specific way of life. It is dedicated to religious service within the Church. This commitment is seen as a response to a special calling from God, and it is believed to contribute significantly to the salvific mission of the Church.[159]

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, John Paul II highlights the essential role of consecrated life in the Church's salvific mission. The document explains that consecrated life is at the very heart of the Church as a decisive element for her mission since it manifests the inner nature of the Christian calling and the striving of the whole Church as Bride towards union with her one Spouse. It is not simply one way of living the Gospel but is an expression of the very nature of the Church.[160]

In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council, consecrated life is described as a sign of the kingdom of heaven and a foretaste of the eschatological realities**.** By their profession of evangelical counsels, the members of religious communities give to the world a striking witness that the power of the Holy Spirit is at work in them and that the Gospel surpasses all that is transitory in this world.[161]

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[159] Cf. J.F. GALLEN, *Canon Law for Religious*, pp. 4-5.
[160] Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, n. 5.
[161] Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 44

2.3.7 Participation in the Salvific Mission of the Church According to the Purpose and Spirit of the Institute

Can 574 §2 in part states that those who embrace the state of consecrated life contribute to the salvific mission, of the Church according to the purpose and spirit of the institute. The canon therefore underscores the fact that in as much as institutes are to make their contribution in the salvific mission of the Church, there works however are to be in line with the spirit and purpose of their institute. Flowing from the founding charism and the intention of the founder enshrined in the spiritual patrimony (Can. 578), religious institutes contribute to the mission of the Church through a variety of apostolic actions (Can. 577). Such works which derive from the intention of the founder and the founding charism is what is referred to as the mission and works proper to the institute which members are to retain faithfully according to Can. 677§, 1.

The spirit refers to the spirituality of the institute which is the specific modality through which the institute articulates the mystery of Christ to the world. The spirit of the institute is to be understood from the context of the founding charism of a given institute. As Can. 578 puts it, the spirit of the institute is regarded as being determined by the founder. The spirit of the institute which forms part of its spiritual patrimony is transmitted by the founder(s) to the followers and becomes essentially a special style of life unique to the member. It becomes the roadmap for looking at things, of judging and evaluating, and a particular way of articulating the mystery of the Church and making it present to the world. It is the spirit of the institute which accords its members the criterion for discerning what direction the institute is to take in given circumstances.[162] The spirit also informs the apostolic action of the institute (Can. 675§1). The institute's spirit therefore helps to determine its own distinctive spiritual identity and a

[162] Cf. *Evangelica Testificatio*, n. 11.

means of pursuing the purpose of the institute. The spirit of the institute is regarded as its soul which animates its life and activities. As such, the correct understanding and living of the spirit of the institute by its members contributes to its (institute) preservation.

The purpose of the institute refers to the motive for which it was founded. In other words, the purpose of an institute refers to the reason why it exists, that is the mission its founder(s) envisioned it to fulfil. The expression of the purpose may change as needs and circumstances change but the original thrust has to be consistently safeguarded throughout the history of the institute. The purpose of each institute is to fulfill the mission of Christ in accordance with the inspirational spiritual gift which the founder(s) received.[163] Each institute therefore has a particular purpose, a special end or a specific work deriving from its original vision. Such specific work is what is referred to as works proper to the institute. In view of the needs of times, institutes may undertake other works of apostolate besides its proper works but such apostolic endeavors have to be in line with the purpose of the institute.[164] Whatever apostolic endeavors the institute decides to undertake, it is however, to remain faithful to its specific purpose as was intended by the founder(s). Through participation in the salvific mission of the Church in accord with the spirit and purpose of the institute, by serving others selflessly, members grow in holiness, and give radical witness to the values of the Gospel while remaining faithful to the vision of the founder(s) and consequently inspire the entire ecclesial community to holiness.[165]

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[163] Cf. B.J. SWEENEY, *The Patrimony of an Institute in the Code of Canon Law, A Study of Canon 578*, Pontificia Studiorum Universitas A.S. Thomas AQ. in Urbe, Roma 1995, p. 67. See also, R. McDERMOTT, "Consecrated Life and the Novus Habitus Mentis," in *The Jurist* 56 (1996), pp. 275-278.

[164] Cf. E. O'HARA, "Norms Common to All Institutes of Consecrated Life," in J.F. HITE, S. HOLLAND, and D.J. WARD, *A Handbook on Canons 573-746*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 1985, p.37.

[165] Cf. C.D. NGUYEN, *The Spiritual Patrimony of an Institute of Consecrated Life*, Urbaniana Pontificia Universitas, Rome 1989. pp. 61-70.

2.4 Related Norms to Can. 574 in the 1983 Code of Canon Law

Can. 207 § 2 outlines that individuals who profess the evangelical counsels through recognized vows or sacred bonds are uniquely consecrated to God. While their state does not fall within the hierarchical structure of the Church, it contributes to the Church's life and holiness. These consecrated individuals play a vital role in promoting the Church's salvific mission.[166] Can. 799 emphasizes the importance of integrating religious and moral education into the legal framework governing youth formation, reflecting the rights of parents to guide their children's education according to their conscience. This alignment calls for a cooperative relationship between civil authorities and religious institutions to ensure that educational policies respect familial values. Can. 573 describes consecrated life as a stable form of existence wherein individuals commit themselves to following Christ more closely through the profession of the evangelical counsels, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This way of life reflects a total dedication to God, emphasizing the supreme love for Him.[167] Can. 598 §1 also emphasizes the responsibility of each religious institute to articulate in its constitutions how the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience are to be lived out following its unique identity and mission.[168]

2.5 Related Norms to Can. 574 in the *Codex Canonum Ecclessiarum Orientalium*

Consecrated life in the Oriental Churches refers to the various forms of religious life and consecrated vocations found in the Eastern Catholic Churches. These Churches have their roots in the Eastern Christian tradition and follow distinct liturgical, theological, and canonical

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[166] Cf. M.B. PENNINGTON, "The Structure of the Section Concerning Religious Life in Revised Code of Canon Law," in *The Jurist*, 25 (1965), pp. 534-535.

[167] Cf. G. O'COLLINS, *The Emergence of the Church*, Paulist Press, New York 2019, pp. 112-113.

[168] Cf. G. COTTIER, *Commentaire du Code de Droit Canonique*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 2006, pp. 258-257.

traditions. In the Oriental Churches, consecrated life encompasses a wide range of vocations, including monks, nuns, hermits, consecrated virgins, and other forms of religious communities.[169]

Can. 411- 415 emphasize the nature of consecrated life as a special vocation that involves a commitment to live the Gospel through the profession of the evangelical counsels: poverty, chastity, and obedience. They highlight the importance of this life as a means to grow closer to God and serve the Church's spiritual development and proper formation programs that help individuals understand their vocation.[170] It is the role of the Church to recognize and establish institutes of consecrated life, laying out the requirements for establishing such institutes, including the need for a clear purpose and the fulfillment of the Church's mission. The code focuses on the governance of institutes of consecrated life. It emphasizes the need for a legitimate authority within the institute to guide members and ensure adherence to the community's purpose, rules, obligations, and rights of those living the consecrated life. [171]

[169] Cf. L.H. SHARON, ''Norms Common to All Institutes of Consecrated Life,'' in J.A. CORIDEN *et al., (eds.), The Code of Canon Law a Text and Commentary*, Paulist Press, New York 1985, p. 443.

[170] Cf. D. SALACHAS, *La Vita Consecrata nel Codice dei Canoni delle Chiese Orientali*, Centro editorial Dehoniano, Bologna 2006, pp. 50-54.

[171] *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium,* auctoritate IOANNIS PAULI PP. II promulgatus, Rome Vaticanis, 18 Octobris 1990, in *AAS*, 82 (1990), p. 212.

Conclusion

This chapter has delved into the juridical study of Can. 574 on the ecclesial dimension of consecrated life. It has treated the sources of Can. 574 along with its formation, analysis as well as other related norms on the significance of consecrated life in the life and holiness of the Church. Through analysis of the link of consecrated life to the holiness of the Church, the chapter has pointed out the significance of the place and role of consecrated life in the Church. This is using their founding charism, which is a powerful means of witnessing the holiness of the Church by the religious communities who collectively contribute to the salvation of the world by transforming it through their works. Also, witnessing their lives in seeking perfect charity, pointing to a splendid sign of the heavenly glory and a means of furthering the mission of the Church, thus fostering the sanctity of the Church. As such, it is to be fostered and promoted by all in the Church.[172]

[172] Cf. M.B. PENNINGTON, "The Structure of the section Concerning Religious Life in Revised Code of Canon Law", pp. 534-535.

CHAPTER THREE

CONFORMITY OF THE PARTICULAR LAW OF THE CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF NAIROBI WITH THE UNIVERSAL LAW ON PROMOTION AND FOSTERING OF VOCATIONS TO CONSECRATED LIFE

Introduction

The promotion and fostering of vocations to consecrated life is an essential responsibility of the Church, deeply rooted in her mission of evangelization and sanctification. Canon 574 emphasizes that consecrated life is a divine gift entrusted to the Church, and therefore, the entire ecclesial community has a duty to encourage and support those discerning this vocation. Within this framework, the Archdiocese of Nairobi, as a local Church, is called to align its particular legislation and pastoral initiatives[173] with the universal law of the Church to ensure the effective promotion and fostering of vocations to consecrated life.

This chapter evaluates the conformity of the Archdiocese of Nairobi's particular law with the universal provisions of canon 574. It begins with a brief historical overview of the Archdiocese, providing context for its approach to vocation promotion. The chapter then explores the Archdiocese's particular legislation on vocations, examining pastoral guidelines, pastoral letters, synodal reports, and deliberations from key ecclesiastical meetings. Additionally, the role of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) and other auxiliary

[173] Cf. O. OGUNU, "The Contribution of Enculturated Consecrated Life to the Deepening of Christian Faith and Fidelity to Vocation," in *African Journal of Consecrated Life*, 21, (2024), pp. 1-5. The archdiocese has implemented various initiatives, such as vocational retreats, educational workshops, and collaboration with parishes, to raise awareness and encourage young people to consider living consecrated life.

legislative bodies in vocation promotion is analyzed, highlighting their influence on the Archdiocesan framework.

A further section discusses the institutional structures within the Archdiocese that support vocation promotion, including the Archdiocesan Office for Institutes of Consecrated Life, the Vocations Director's Office, and vocation efforts at the deanery level. The chapter also presents a critical assessment of the actual experience of vocation promotion in the Archdiocese, identifying both strengths and areas requiring improvement.

The discussion then turns to the challenges that hinder vocation promotion, such as economic factors, competition among religious institutes, and cultural perspectives on religious life and marriage. In light of these challenges, the chapter assesses the conformity of the Archdiocese's practices with universal law, considering how well its particular provisions uphold the principles outlined in canon 574.

Finally, the chapter concludes with canonical recommendations for strengthening vocation promotion efforts. These include general recommendations from the universal Church as well as specific proposals tailored to the Archdiocese of Nairobi, addressing discernment processes, financial constraints, training of vocation promoters, and the role of families in fostering vocations.

By critically evaluating these aspects, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how the Archdiocese of Nairobi fulfills its obligation to promote and foster vocations to consecrated life, ensuring that its particular law remains in harmony with the Church's universal norms.

3.1 Brief Historical Overview of the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi

The Archdiocese of Nairobi has undergone significant canonical developments in response to the evolving pastoral needs of the Church. Its origins trace back to February 26, 1860, when it was established as the Apostolic Prefecture of Zanguebar, carved from the Diocese of Saint-Denis-de-La Réunion in Réunion.[174] On November 23, 1883, it was elevated to the Apostolic Vicariate of Zanguebar. By 1887, it was renamed the Apostolic Vicariate of Northern Zanguebar, and on December 21, 1906, it became the Apostolic Vicariate of Zanzibar. Finally, on March 25, 1953, it was elevated to the status of a Metropolitan Archdiocese of Nairobi,[175] marking a significant ecclesiastical growth.

As a metropolitan see, the Archdiocese of Nairobi encompasses the administrative counties of Nairobi and Kiambu, covering approximately 3,721 km². It serves a cosmopolitan population of about 7.1 million people, of whom 4.03 million are Catholics, according to the 2023 census. To effectively minister to this vast and diverse population, the Archdiocese is structured into fifteen deaneries, which collectively oversee 120 parishes. As of 2023, the Archdiocese was served by 206 diocesan clergy and 180 institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life.[176]

Over the years, the Archdiocese of Nairobi has experienced a series of leadership transitions, each shaping its pastoral and missionary orientation. The early Vicars Apostolic included Bishop Jean Marie Raoul Le Bas De Courmont (1883-1896), Bishop Émile Auguste Allgeyer (1896-1913), and Bishop John Gerald Neville (1913-1930). Following its elevation to

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[174] Cf. J. MJUGAMBI, *Christianity and African Culture*, Action Publishers, Nairobi 2002, pp.127-133.

[175] Cf. EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS, *Your Church and Education*, Catholic Secretariat, Education Department, Nairobi 1985, pp. 45-47.

[176] Cf. L.M. NJOROGE, *Beyond Century of Endeavour. A History of the Catholic Church in Kenya* Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi 2020, pp. 34-36.

an archdiocese, notable leaders included Archbishop John Joseph McCarthy (1930-1971), Maurice Cardinal Otunga (1971-1997), and John Cardinal Njue (2007-2018). The appointment of Most Rev. Philip Arnold Subira Anyolo as Archbishop of Nairobi on October 28, 2021,[177] marked the beginning of a new era of pastoral leadership.

One of the defining priorities of the Archdiocese has been the establishment and strengthening of active ecclesial structures to support collaborative ministry and missionary work. A key aspect of this mission has been the promotion and fostering of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, a responsibility that has been consistently upheld by successive archdiocesan leaders. This commitment aligns with the universal Church's teaching, as articulated in canon 574, which underscores the obligation of the ecclesial community to cultivate and sustain vocations to consecrated life. Through pastoral initiatives, vocational programs, and structured discernment processes, the Archdiocese of Nairobi continues to play a vital role in fostering and nurturing vocations within its jurisdiction.

3.2 Particular Legislation of the Archdiocese of Nairobi on the Promotion and Fostering of Vocations to Consecrated Life

In its commitment to fostering and promoting vocations to consecrated life, the Archdiocese of Nairobi has established particular legislative frameworks and pastoral directives to guide vocation promotion efforts. These measures align with the universal norms of the Church while addressing the specific pastoral realities of the Archdiocese. Among the key aspects of this framework are pastoral guidelines that provide direction on strategies and initiatives aimed at encouraging and nurturing vocations.

[177] Cf. His Grace, Archbishop Philip Arnold Subira Anyolo was installed as Archbishop of Nairobi on 20 November 2021 within a month after his appointment by Pope Francis. Cf. ARCHDIOCESE OF NAIROBI, < https://archdiocesefnairobi.org/?page-id=4621>, (20 February 2025).

The vocation to consecrated life is a vital aspect of the Catholic Church. Canon 574 emphasizes the Church's responsibility to encourage and support individuals called to live a consecrated life, whether as monks, nuns, brothers, or members of secular institutes. The Archdiocese of Nairobi has a strong tradition of consecrated life, with a significant number of men and women dedicating their lives to God through religious orders and communities.[178]

Several religious institutes serve within the Archdiocese, including international congregations such as the Franciscans, Jesuits, Salesians, the Loreto Sisters, and Dominicans, as well as locally founded religious congregations such as Sisters of Mary of Kakamega, the Assumption Sisters of Nairobi, and the Assumption Sisters of Eldoret, among others. These communities play a crucial role in both spiritual and social service ministries within the Archdiocese. Their apostolic activities include teaching catechism, counseling, family ministries, marriage encounters, and outreach programs for the poor and marginalized. Through these ministries, they not only serve the faithful but also actively promote vocations to the consecrated life, inspiring and guiding young people to discern their call to religious life.[179]

By maintaining and strengthening these legislative and pastoral measures, the Archdiocese of Nairobi continues to uphold its commitment to fostering vocations, ensuring that consecrated life remains a vibrant and essential part of the Church's mission in Kenya.

3.2.1. Pastoral Guidelines on the Promotion of Vocations

The "Pastoral Guidelines" for the Archdiocese of Nairobi (2013) emphasize the critical role of promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life. The document states the following: "The Archdiocese appreciates the role of the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya

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[178] Cf. H. JAVIER, *Introduction to Canon Law*, Wilson & Lafleur Ltd., 2007, pp. 54-56.

[179] Cf. S. EUART, "Complimentary Norms Implementing the 1983 Code of Canon Law by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops," in *The Jurist*, 53 (1993), pp. 396-420.

(AOSK) and Religious Superiors Commission of Kenya (RSCK) and the importance of the Liaison Committee in promoting mutual relations. It continues, "The Archdiocese recognizes the importance of promoting vocations and the right of congregations of religious men and women in promoting vocations."[180]

The Archdiocese's Pastoral Department is tasked with implementing these guidelines, organizing diocesan pastoral events, and collaborating with religious men and women involved in pastoral activities.[181] This collaborative effort aims to create an environment conducive to nurturing vocations within the Archdiocese.

3.2.2 Pastoral Letters of the Local Ordinary on Vocation Promotion to Consecrated Life

In addition to pastoral guidelines, the Local Ordinary has issued several pastoral letters over the years, addressing the significance of vocation promotion within the Archdiocese of Nairobi. These letters provide theological and pastoral insights, offering direction to clergy, religious, and the lay faithful on their shared responsibility in fostering vocations to consecrated life. Among these pastoral letters, some of the most recent and significant are presented here.

3.2.2.1 We Are Witnesses to These Things, and so It Is the Holy Spirit Whom God Has Given to Those Who Obey Him (2024)

In this pastoral letter, the archbishop highlights the central role of the family as the domestic Church in nurturing vocations. He emphasizes that parents are the first heralds of faith to their children and have a fundamental duty to instill Christian values that encourage vocational discernment. Through both word and example, parents play a crucial role in guiding

[180] Cf. ARCHDIOCESE OF NAIROBI, *Pastoral Guidelines*, Don Bosco Printing Press Makuyu, Makuyu 2013, pp. 44-47.

[181] Cf. ARCHDIOCESE OF NAIROBI, *Pastoral Guidelines*, p. 46-48.

their children toward an awareness of their calling, including the possibility of a vocation to consecrated life.

This teaching aligns with the Second Vatican Council's *Lumen Gentium* (n. 11), which underscores the family's responsibility in fostering vocations by providing a faith-filled environment where children can grow in spiritual maturity and openness to God's call. Furthermore, the letter underscores that passing on the faith is not merely a parental duty but a communal ecclesial responsibility - helping young people recognize that they are members of the Body of Christ with an active role in the Church, including responding to Christ's call to serve as consecrated persons.[182]

3.2.2.2 Good Master, What Must I Do to Enter into Eternal Life? (2016)

In this pastoral letter, Cardinal John Njue reminds consecrated persons that they are a gift from God to the Church and a sign of God's presence among His people as they journey toward the New Jerusalem. He emphasizes that those in consecrated life must remain steadfast in their vocation, recognizing their pastoral responsibility to bring the Gospel to as many people as possible. This is achieved through faithfulness to the teachings of Christ and His Church, ensuring that their witness to consecrated life remains authentic and inspiring to others.

Furthermore, the Cardinal underscores the importance of vocation promotion, affirming that the consecrated life, when lived with zeal and authenticity, becomes a compelling invitation for others to discern their call. He calls upon consecrated men and women, as well as missionaries, to actively participate in making their way of life attractive and accessible to those aspiring to embrace it. From this letter, it is evident that Cardinal Njue acknowledges the urgent

[182] Cf. P.A. ANYORO, Pastoral Letter *on the Occasion of Catholic Archdiocesan Family Day*, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Nairobi 2024, pp. 6-7.

need to promote and foster vocations to consecrated life, not only through formal vocation programs but also through the personal witness of consecrated persons themselves.[183]

3.2.2.3 We Hold a Treasure That Is Jesus Christ Our Lord (2012)

In this pastoral letter, the Archbishop of Nairobi emphasizes his significant responsibility in promoting and fostering vocations to consecrated life within the Archdiocese. He underscores the pastoral duty of the local Church in identifying and accompanying candidates who feel called to consecrated life, ensuring they receive adequate support, guidance, and resources for discernment and formation.

The letter highlights the importance of active listening within the Archdiocese, particularly in attentively accompanying those who express a desire to embrace religious life. The Archbishop stresses that vocation promotion is not merely administrative but a spiritual and pastoral endeavor that requires creating an environment where vocations can flourish. Furthermore, he encourages those discerning consecrated life to deepen their relationship with God through prayer, meditation, and active participation in the life of the Church, reinforcing that spiritual growth is foundational to an authentic and enduring vocation.[184]

3.3 KCCB Supplementary Norms on the Promotion and Fostering of Vocations to Consecrated Life

The Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) has established a National Office for Vocations to Consecrated Life, which plays a coordinating and supportive role in vocation promotion efforts across the country. This office organizes vocation camps, bringing together

[183] Cf. J.C. NJUE, Pastoral Letter *On Occasion of Catholic Archdiocesan Family Day*, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Nairobi 2016, pp. 10-11.

[184] Cf. J.C. NJUE, Pastoral Letter *On the Occasion of the Nativity of Our Lord*, Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, Nairobi 2012, pp. 9-23.

hundreds of young people from different dioceses. These camps provide opportunities for prayer, reflection, and dialogue with religious sisters and brothers, helping participants discern a possible call to consecrated life. Additionally, bishops encourage religious congregations to actively recruit, mentor, and accompany potential candidates, ensuring they receive the spiritual and material support necessary for vocational discernment.[185]

To further enhance vocation promotion, the KCCB introduced vocation caravans, where teams of religious visit schools, parishes, and communities to engage with young people and encourage them to consider consecrated life.[186] It is mandated that all Catholic schools and parishes dedicate time and resources to vocation promotion by inviting religious men and women to share their testimonies, thereby inspiring and guiding young people in their discernment journey.

Many religious congregations have also established structured mentorship programs, pairing young discerners with professed members who accompany them throughout their vocational journey. These mentorship programs typically include regular meetings, retreats, and community life experiences, fostering a deeper understanding of the religious vocation.

Mwangi V. (2020) highlights the initiatives of women's religious institutes in vocation promotion, emphasizing that they should not only raise awareness but also provide discernment opportunities and continuous support to young people. These efforts help individuals deepen their relationship with God and explore the charism of specific congregations, ensuring that vocation promotion remains a spiritually enriching and well-structured process.[187]

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[185] Cf. M. WANJIRU, "Promoting Vocations to Consecrated Life in Kenya," in the *African Ecclesial Review*, 63 (2021), pp. 41-50.

[186] Cf. CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF KENYA, *The Role of Women Religious in the Church and Society in Kenya*, KCCB Publications, Nairobi 2016, pp. 23-27.

[187] Cf. V. MWANGI, "The Role of Women in the Catholic Church and Society in Kenya" in the *Journal of the Catholic Theological Society of East Africa,* 15 (2020), pp. 16-24.

3.4 Auxiliary Legislations on Vocation Promotion from Other Episcopal Conferences and Regional Perspectives

It is essential to consider regional perspectives when examining auxiliary legislations on vocation promotion from other Episcopal Conferences. One such significant contribution comes from the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA), which provides insights and guidelines tailored to the vocational needs of the region.

3.4.1 The Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA)

The AMECEA's legislative efforts demonstrate a strong commitment to nurturing vocations to consecrated life, acknowledging the unique cultural and pastoral realities of Eastern Africa. Through formation programs, youth engagement initiatives, awareness campaigns, and inter-congregational collaboration, AMECEA seeks to cultivate a vibrant culture of vocations that is both contextually relevant and spiritually enriching. These programs focus on inspiring young people to consider a vocation to consecrated life by fostering environments that encourage discernment and spiritual growth.

To achieve this, AMECEA works closely with various religious congregations, promoting a unified and coordinated approach to vocation promotion. This ensures that potential candidates are exposed to different charisms, allowing them to discern where they feel most called. The association also facilitates collaboration among dioceses, creating networks for sharing experiences and best practices in vocation promotion.

Additionally, AMECEA develops and distributes resources and materials to support dioceses and religious communities in their vocation promotion efforts. These resources emphasize the importance of fostering vocations within the Church, highlighting how a deepened faith is essential for young people as they discern their calling to consecrated life.

Through these collective efforts, AMECEA continues to play a pivotal role in strengthening vocation promotion across the Eastern African region.[188]

3.4.2 United States Catholic Conference Bishops (USCCB)

In their 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, the Bishops identified an initiative of "Create a culture that nurtures consecrated life and Holy Orders," aiming to encourage lifelong discernment and formation to fulfill one's God-given vocation, focusing on supporting vocations to consecrated life and the priesthood. The USCCB designated National Vocation Awareness Week to be celebrated from January 9th -15th each year. This observance encourages parishes across the country to promote vocations through prayer and education.[189] The idea is encouraging in that an elaborate structure is laid down for the celebration of the vocations each year to encourage young people to desire the vocation. Thus, the effort of the conference is an insight for the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi on fostering and promoting vocations.

3.4.3 The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB)

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) has consistently emphasized the importance of fostering and promoting vocations to consecrated life. In 2015, the CCCB issued a pastoral letter titled "Pastoral Letter to Young People on Chastity," which encourages young Catholics to consider a vocation to consecrated life. The document provides guidance and support for those discerning their vocation. In 2014, the Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories released a pastoral letter titled "Year of Consecrated Life," highlighting the

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[188] Cf. AMECEA SECRETARIAT, *Fostering Vocations in Eastern Africa*. *A Pastoral Initiative*, AMECEA Press, Nairobi 2019, pp. 15-21.

[189] Cf. UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, Strategic Plan. Create a Culture that Nurtures Consecrated Life and Holy Orders, 2021-2024, https://www.usccb.org/resources/202124%20Strategic%20Plan%20Thematic%20Framework%20%28004%29.pdf, (2021), (22 February 2025).

significance of consecrated life and encouraging the faithful to reflect on and support vocations to this state of life.[190] This harmonizes with the pastoral office of the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi on issuing the pastoral letters encouraging the vocation among the youth.

3.4.4 Episcopal Conference of Italy

The Episcopal Conference of Italy (ECI) consistently emphasizes the importance of fostering and promoting vocations to consecrated life. In 2001, during the 61st General Assembly, Pope John Paul II addressed the bishops, urging them to highlight the transcendent nature of life as a vocation, whether to consecrated life, priesthood, or marriage. He encouraged the faithful to respond generously to God's call, as only through such a response can individuals attain what is essential for their lives.[191] In 2012, the Congregation for Catholic Education released Pastoral Guidelines for Fostering Vocations to Priestly Ministry.

While this document is not specific to the Italian Episcopal Conference, it provides valuable insights into the Church's approach to fostering vocations, especially for the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi. In 2019, Pope Francis addressed a conference organized by the National Office for Pastoral Care for Vocations of the Italian Episcopal Conference. The theme of the conference was "Arise, go forth, and fear not," emphasizing the importance of encouraging young people to consider vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. [192]

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[190] Cf. CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *Pastoral Letter to Young People on Chastity*, 2015, <https://dol.ca/documents/2016/11/chastity_en.pdf, (2015)>, (22 February 2025).

[191] CF. L. BIANCO, ' *'Conferenza Episcopale Italiana* (CEI),'' in C.C. SALVADOR *et al*., (*eds*.), *Nuovo Dizionario di Diritto Canonical*, Edizioni San Paolo, Milano 1993, pp. 258-260.

[192] Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, Pastoral Guidelines for Fostering Vocations to Priestly Ministry, 2012, < https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=9990, (2012)>, (22 February 2025).

3.4.5 Regional Perspective of the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA)

The Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern Africa and Central Africa (ACWECA) has played a significant role in promoting vocations to consecrated life. The organization works in collaboration with dioceses to organize events and initiatives that highlight the importance of vocations. ACWECA emphasizes that vocation fundamentally means following Jesus, which begins with being a good Christian and living a life rooted in faith and service.[193]

Vocation promotion within ACWECA is carried out through apostolic outreach to young people, particularly within their families, ensuring proper upbringing, academic excellence, and holistic human formation. Catechetical instruction plays a key role in instilling moral values and virtues in young people, equipping them with a strong ethical and spiritual foundation for discerning their vocation. Furthermore, the community life and selfless living of consecrated persons serve as a powerful witness, encouraging young people to consider consecrated life as a viable and fulfilling path.[194]

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[193] Cf. ACWECA is an acronym of Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa. It is a regional religious body which was established in 1974 and is composed of National Associations of Sisters (Conference of Women Major Superior from nine (9) English speaking countries of Eastern and Central Africa. including; Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Sudan, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Originally its membership was from the only four Conferences of Women Religious Superiors from Eastern and Central African countries that already had established National Conferences (the Association of Sisterhood in Kenya (AOSK), the Tanzania Catholic Association of Sisters (TCAS), the Zambian Association of Sisters (ZAS) and the Association of Religious Institutes in Malawi (ARIMA) by then, now Association of Women in Religious Institutes of Malawi (AWRIM). Since then, the Association has continued to grow with Zimbabwe being the latest membership. Today ACWECA has a membership of ten (10) National Associations from the countries namely: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Sudan, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Association was created to empower consecrated women in the region for deeper evangelization. Its operations involve promoting the dignity and validity of human life of women religious in Eastern and Central Africa; foster the spirit of collaboration and sharing of spiritual, human and economic resources among member Associations (Cf. ACWECA, *Challenges Expressed by Women Religious in Prayer, Community and Apostolate*, ACWECA Secretariat, Nairobi 2007, p. 1).

[194] Cf. ACWECA, 13th Plenary Assembly *Empowering of Women Religious in Light of Our Past Heritage, Our Present Reality and Future Challenge,* The Seed Studio press Nairobi 2005, pp. 58-59.

Before a candidate is admitted into consecrated life within a particular institute, vocation animation is necessary to help them discern their calling appropriately and deeply. This process typically begins during secondary education, providing young people with knowledge and exposure to consecrated life. Those who show interest are later invited to "Come and See" programs, where they participate in religious life experiences to learn about the culture, values, and spiritual commitments of consecrated life.[195]

In line with its mission to foster and promote vocations, ACWECA held its Annual Assembly in 2023, bringing together consecrated women from across Eastern and Central Africa to discuss strategies and best practices for encouraging and supporting vocations. The assembly deliberated on key areas such as community life, spiritual formation, and youth outreach, reinforcing ACWECA's commitment to nurturing and sustaining vocations to consecrated life.[196]

3.4.6 Regional Perspective of the Association of Sisterhoods in Kenya (AOSK)

The Association of Sisterhoods in Kenya (AOSK) is a national network of Catholic women's religious congregations established in 1963 to promote, support, and coordinate the work of religious sisters in the country. AOSK plays a pivotal role in fostering and nurturing vocations to consecrated life by organizing vocation campaigns and awareness programs to encourage young women to consider a religious vocation. It collaborates with parishes, schools, and youth groups to reach out to potential candidates, offering guidance and support throughout the discernment process.[197]

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[195] Cf. L.G. TOCHALLO, *Formation Guide, Some Common Elements for the Religious and Priestly Formation*, Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat Printing Press, Addis Ababa 2021, pp. 96-101.

[196] Cf. ACWECA, *Assembly on Fostering and Promotion of Vocation to Consecrated Life*, (2023).

[197] Cf. B. WANJIKU, "Promoting Vocations to Consecrated Life in Kenya. The Role of the Association of Sisterhood in Kenya (AOSK*)*," in *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 11 (2021), p. 45-54.

To facilitate vocational discernment, AOSK organizes retreats, workshops, career guidance sessions, and school talks, helping students explore their calling and discern how their gifts and talents can be used in service of the Church. Additionally, it arranges vocation rallies, pilgrimages, and community events, bringing together young people, families, and religious congregations. These events create opportunities for personal interaction with religious sisters, allowing aspirants to learn about their way of life and be inspired by their witness.[198]

AOSK also oversees the formation programs for women in their pre-novitiate and novitiate stages, ensuring they receive adequate spiritual, pastoral, and academic preparation. It provides ongoing formation and mentorship to young sisters, guiding them in deepening their spiritual growth and integrating fully into religious life.[199]

Through these various initiatives, programs, and resources, AOSK remains instrumental in promoting, forming, and sustaining vocations to consecrated life, ensuring that the rich tradition of religious life continues to flourish within the Church in Kenya.

3.5 The Conformity between the Particular Law of the Archdiocese of Nairobi and the Universal Law (Can. 574) on the Promotion and Fostering of Vocations

The particular law of the Archdiocese of Nairobi aligns closely with the provisions of canon 574 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, which highlights the essential role of the bishop and the entire ecclesial community in fostering vocations to consecrated life. This conformity is reflected in the Archdiocese's commitment to vocation promotion through collaboration at

[198] Cf. M. WAMBUI, "Fostering a Culture of Vocations. Best Practices from the Association of Sisterhood in Kenya," in *Journal of Consecrated Life*, 8/2 (2018), pp. 67-84.

[199] Cf. AOSK, Research and Documentation Committee, *the Contribution of Religious Congregations to Education and Healthcare in Kenya,* AOSK Nairobi, Nairobi 2019, pp. 12-29.

all levels of the diocesan family, education, and pastoral support, ensuring a dynamic and responsive approach to God's call within the local Church.

A fundamental aspect of this alignment is the role exercised by the Archdiocesan offices in vocation promotion. These offices implement structured programs and initiatives aimed at identifying, nurturing, and accompanying individuals discerning a vocation to consecrated life. Through coordinated efforts involving clergy, religious communities, and the laity, the Archdiocese effectively integrates universal Church norms with local pastoral strategies to sustain and grow vocations.[200]

The discussion that follows examines the specific contributions of these Archdiocesan offices in promoting and fostering vocations, illustrating how their work upholds both the spirit and the letter of universal ecclesiastical law while responding to the unique pastoral realities of the Archdiocese of Nairobi.

3.5.1 The Archdiocesan Office for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life

The Office for Religious in the Archdiocese of Nairobi is dedicated to fostering and promoting vocations to consecrated life. It organizes events, retreats, and workshops to encourage a culture of vocation among young people, inspiring them to consider a call to religious life. The office collaborates with parishes, deaneries, and schools to raise awareness about the importance of vocations. It provides assistance to various religious congregations in the -archdiocese in their vocation programs, facilitates communication and collaboration among

[200] Cf. THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NAIROBI, *The Office for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Nairobi 2023, pp. 8-15.

different religious communities, and establishes networks among congregations to share best practices for promoting and fostering vocations. [201]

Additionally, the office connects with national and international organizations focused on promoting religious vocations. It develops and disseminates materials such as brochures and videos that highlight the beauty and significance of consecrated life. Furthermore, it offers one-on-one guidance and counseling to individuals discerning their vocation. [202]

3.5.2 The Vocations Director's Office and its Role in Promoting Vocations

The Archdiocese of Nairobi has an Office for Vocations Promotion dedicated to supporting and encouraging vocations to the priesthood, religious life, and other forms of consecrated life within the archdiocese. This is achieved through various initiatives, including annual vocation rallies, retreats, "Come and See" programs, discernment programs for youth and young adults, vocation fairs, and expos showcasing different religious communities. [203]

In collaboration with all religious institutes, the office ensures a well-coordinated and structured approach to recruiting aspirants for consecrated life within the archdiocese. It also produces and distributes vocational materials - such as brochures, posters, and videos - to parishes and youth groups, promoting awareness and discernment of consecrated vocations. Additionally, spiritual direction and vocational counseling are provided for those discerning a call to consecrated life.

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[201] Cf. THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NAIROBI, *The Office for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*, pp. 12-17.

[202] Cf. THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NAIROBI, *The Office for Institutes of Consecrated Life*, p. 8; Cf. P. OCHIENG, *Vocations in the Catholic Church. A Study of East African Dioceses*, Catholic University Press, Nairobi 2021, pp. 102-115.

[203] Cf. C. AMEDEO, *Spiritual and Emotional Maturity: Guiding Young People in Religious and Priestly Formation*. Pauline Publications Africa, Nairobi 2006, pp.96-98.

The Vocations Office works closely with the Archdiocesan Vocations Commission, which comprises clergy, religious, and lay representatives.[204] This commission plays a vital role in providing strategic direction and support for fostering and promoting vocations to consecrated life.

In promoting vocations, Auxiliary Bishop David Kamau emphasized the need for closer collaboration between religious institutes, dioceses, and the universal Church in providing formation. He also encouraged young people to cultivate the virtues of chastity and mutual respect while using social media wisely for authentic growth rather than self-destruction.[205]

3.5.3 Vocation Promotion at the Deanery Level

Ecclesial communities have a responsibility to educate their members about various vocations within the Church, including consecrated life. This involves providing information on what consecrated life entails, its significance for both the individual and the Church, and its contribution to the mission of evangelization and service.[206]

The Christian community plays a vital role in fostering vocational awareness among youth. Echoing the message of Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*, Archbishop Philip Anyolo, in his pastoral letter on the occasion of the family, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers*, urged parents to be the primary educators and role models in the spiritual and religious formation of their children.[207]

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[204] Cf. M.O. ROWLAND, "The Catholic Voyage," in *The African Journal of Consecrated Life*, 11 (2015), pp. 101-103.

[205] Cf. D. KAMAU, Pastoral Letter *On the Occasion of Archdiocesan family day*, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Nairobi 2021, pp. 7-10.

[206] Cf. J.C. NJUE, Pastoral Letter *On The Occasion Of Celebrating The Archdiocesan Family Day*, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Nairobi 2014, pp. 4-5.

[207] Cf. P.A. ANYOLO, Pastoral Letter *On the Occasion Of The Archdiocesan Family Day*, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Nairobi 2022, pp. 12-21.

Animated by a spirit of faith, charity, and piety, the community fosters genuine vocations. The duty to promote and support vocations rests upon the entire Christian community to ensure that sufficient provisions are made for the needs of the sacred ministry throughout the Church (Cf. Can. 233 §1).

Fostering vocational awareness is also the responsibility of families and consecrated persons. By doing so, they help young people find meaning in these realities and empower them to pursue their dreams, particularly in relation to consecrated life.[208]

3.6 Challenges in the Promotion and Fostering of Vocations to Consecrated Life

History indicates that consecrated life has not gone without some challenges. Over some time, it has faced two opposing sides of poverty and riches. Religious life has also faced some other challenges like modern technology, individualism, materialism, and globalization.[209] In many parts of the world, there has been a decline in the number of people entering consecrated religious life, whether as monks, nuns, brothers, or sisters. It is attributed to cultural shifts, declining religiosity, and other societal changes, like increasing secularization that make the call to consecrated life less appealing, especially for younger generations who are drawn towards more worldly pursuits and values. The technology-driven lifestyles of many people today clash with the contemplative, communal, and disciplined nature of consecrated religious life. Abuse and misconduct within some religious orders and congregations have undermined trust and damaged the reputation of consecrated life in the eyes of many. Balancing fidelity to religious traditions and charisms with the need to adapt to modern contexts, makes spiritual

[208] Cf. C.M. HARMER, "Invitational Vocation Promotion," in *Human Development,* 20 (1999), pp. 37-45.

[209] Cf. ACWECA, 18th Plenary Assembly *Re-Awaken Our Prophetic Role. A Call for Reformation towards Holistic Transformation in ACWECA Region Today*, Pauline Press, Nairobi 2022, pp. 58-60.

passion and lifelong commitment difficult amidst the daily routine and challenges of consecrated life.[210]

3.6.1 Diverse Understanding of Religious Life

Some young people join religious life believing that Religious Institutes have a lot of money and thus join such life for material benefits. A young man or woman joining a religious life is not exempted from this social misconception. Faced with this problem, many young people find themselves at a loss when they join religious life.[211] A lot of work is needed by the Local Church and the vocation promotors to educate both candidates and their families to grasp the true meaning of total giving and abandonment to the Lord's service. [212]

3.6.2 Economic factors affecting Vocations

Many potential candidates for consecrated life come from simple backgrounds and lack the financial means to support themselves during the formation process. Poverty significantly influences the vocational choices of many young people. Some erroneously perceive religious life as a comfortable and financially secure existence, believing that religious institutes possess abundant resources. However, they are often unaware that everything within religious communities is owned and shared collectively.

When these individuals come to understand the true nature of religious poverty, some experience disillusionment and become discouraged, leading them to abandon their journey

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[210] Cf. C.A. RICHARD, "Challenges to Consecrated Life Today," in *Review for Religious*, 57 (1998), pp. 124-129.

[211] Cf. G. DOTTI, *Vocazione e crisi vocazionale. uno studio dei sacerdoti italiani*, Brill, Leiden, Netherlands 2006, pp. 218-219.

[212] Cf. L. LE, *Religious life: A Reflective Examination of Its Charism*, Cambridge Scholars Publication, Cambridge 2016, pp. 46-54.

toward consecrated life.[213] This presents a challenge for religious communities, especially in regions where providing adequate material support for vocation promotion is already difficult.

Additionally, the rise of materialism and consumerism, particularly among the growing middle class, has made religious life less appealing to young people. Religious communities also face increasing financial burdens, including the rising costs of education, healthcare, and community living, which pose further challenges in attracting and sustaining new vocations.[214]

3.6.3 Competition among religious institutes in promoting vocations

Many religious institutes find themselves competing for a relatively small group of young people interested in consecrated life. Well-established institutes often have greater financial resources, higher visibility, and stronger recruitment capacity compared to smaller or newer communities. This creates an uneven playing field, making it more difficult for less established institutes to effectively promote and attract vocations.[215]

In such a competitive environment, there is a risk that religious institutes may become overly focused on comparing themselves to others or attempting to outdo one another in vocation promotion efforts. This can lead to tensions, a lack of cooperation, and missed opportunities for sharing best practices and fostering collaborative initiatives.[216]

Additionally, the pressure to attract candidates may tempt some religious institutes to compromise their discernment processes and formation programs, prioritizing numbers over genuine vocation discernment. This shift from a focus on fostering authentic vocations to

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[213] Cf. P. BABIN, *Adolescents in Search of a New Church*, Herder and Herd, New York 1969, pp. 56-65.

[214] Cf. A.E. OROBATOR, "Economic Factors and Vocations to Consecrated Life. A Global Perspective, in *International Review of Mission*, 107 (2018), pp. 34-47.

[215] Cf. E. McDONOUGH, "Categories of Consecrated Life," in *Review for Religious Life*, 50 (1991), pp. 251-312.

[216] Cf. M.E. SHEEHAN, "Institutional Relationship. Religious Life in the Church," in *The Way Supplement*, 65 (1989), pp. 82-87.

merely increasing recruitment can lead to distractions from the primary goal: helping candidates discover their true calling. In the long run, such an approach undermines the broader mission of promoting and sustaining consecrated life within the Church.[217]

3.6.4 The Role of Personal Responsibility and Moral Commitment

The decision to embrace consecrated life should be made freely by Christian faithful who feel called to this form of dedication. However, the decline in moral values, brought about by a lack of firm moral commitment among many young people in modern society, presents a significant challenge to living out authentic Christian virtues.[218] It is within this societal context that vocation promoters must seek and nurture vocations. This task becomes even more difficult when vocations to consecrated life arise in an environment where sincere commitment and respect for one's vocation are often lacking.[219]

Given these challenges, it is essential to recognize the crucial role of ecclesial communities in actively promoting and fostering vocations to consecrated life. Their responsibility extends beyond mere encouragement; it involves creating an environment that nurtures faith, moral integrity, and a genuine response to God's call.[220]

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[217] Cf. M. LINSCOTT, "The Personal Identity of the Apostolic Woman Religious," in *Informationes*, 16 (1990), pp. 97-110.

[218] Cf. J.A. HERNÁNDEZ, CMF, *La animación vocacional. desafíos y perspectivas*, Ediciones Claretianas, Madrid, Spain 2018, pp. 102-105.

[219] Cf. L.V. NARDELLI, *La promozione delle vocazioni alla vita consacrata. Prospettive Canoniche e pastorali*, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome 2010, pp. 101-110.

[220] Cf. C.A. RICHARD, "Challenges to Consecrated Life Today." in *Review for Religious*, 57 (1998), pp. 132-135.

3.6.5 The Impact of African Cultural Perspectives on Marriage and Family on Vocational Discernment

As J. Mbiti once stated, "For African people, marriage is the focus of existence." [221] In many African cultures, a person is not considered complete until he or she has borne a child.

This cultural perspective poses a significant challenge to vocation promotion, as many families are reluctant to allow their children to pursue consecrated life. As a result, a considerable number of young people struggle to respond to their vocation because their culture, society, and even their families place greater value on marriage than on religious life.[222]

3.7 Canonical Recommendations for Promotion and Fostering of Vocation to Consecrated Life

In light of the challenges associated with promoting and fostering vocations to consecrated life as a responsibility of the Church, this segment presents proposals aimed at addressing these difficulties. It offers recommendations and suggestions on how to minimize these challenges within the Archdiocese of Nairobi.[223] Additionally, these insights may also be beneficial to other dioceses facing similar issues.

3.7.1 Specific Recommendations for the Archdiocese of Nairobi

In the Archdiocese of Nairobi and various dioceses across Kenya, the promotion of vocations to consecrated life presents both challenges and opportunities that require targeted strategies. Specific recommendations are essential to foster an environment conducive to nurturing vocations, particularly in the context of a rapidly changing cultural landscape. These

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[221] Cf. J. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy,* Heinemann, London 1969, pp. 132-142.

[222] Cf. CARDINAL CHARLES MAUNG BO, At the 80th SERRA International Convention, Chiang Mai, 24 June 2023.

[223] Cf. E. GAMBARI, *Renewal in Religious Life*, St, Paul, Boston 1967, pp. 186-190.

recommendations may encompass enhanced formation programs, increased collaboration between parishes and religious communities, and the integration of vocation awareness initiatives.[224]

3.7.1.1 Providing Meaningful Discernment and Support for Aspirants

The ecclesial community encompasses the entire body of believers within the Church and is crucial in promotion and fostering vocations to consecrated life. This involves creating an environment that nurtures discernment and supports individuals as they explore their calling to live the consecrated life. The community is called to provide spiritual guidance, education, and resources to help individuals understand and embrace their vocation. Developing ways of praying, spiritual direction, mentorship, and accompaniment for those discerning creates spaces for honest dialogue about the joys and challenges of consecrated life.[225] Spirituality is the awakening energy that is within young people that prayer can address, hence the need for someone who can help them integrate this reality well. Besides all these, we recommend that houses of formation and consecrated life houses should offer true and attractive invitations to ecclesial community for them to discern well the vocations of their young ones. These communities should be welcoming and empowering places not only for new members but for all.[226]

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[224] Cf. L. CADA *et al*., (*eds.*), *Shaping the Coming Age of Religious life*, Seabury, New York 979. pp.14-15.

[225] Cf. SYNODO DEI VESCOVIX, *I GIOVANI, La Fede e il Discernmento Vocazionale*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2018, pp. 36-42.

[226] Cf. W.P. SHERIDAN, "Functionalism Undermining Priesthood" in *Human Development*, 22 (2001), pp. 3-11.

3.7.1.2 Addressing Financial Constraints in Vocation Promotion

Religious communities and dioceses are supposed to offer financial aid and develop sustainable funding models to ease the financial constraints of discerners. Strategies like fundraising for vocation programs, and scholarships to support discerners and new entrants when it is done in collaboration with parishes, and other Catholic institutions will pool resources together and hence cover the cost of education and formation for those discerning vocations.[227]

Building relationships with stakeholders and demonstrating the impact of their support is very important in securing ongoing funding.[228] Exploring ways of generating income through ministries, businesses, and investments will reduce reliance on external funding thus ensuring a more stable financial foundation for vocational programs. It is also recommended that the promotion of financial literacy and responsible management of resources within religious communities be optimized to help the proper use of available scarce resources. This will help religious communities to encourage greater financial contributions and a deeper sense of stewardship which can then be directed toward vocational promotion efforts.[229]

3.7.1.3 Adequate and Appropriate Training and Preparation of Vocation Promoters

In considering both the joys and challenges of vocation promotion, the Church must prepare ministers who are ready to journey with young people and guide them toward proper vocational discernment. This preparation should not be limited to academic formation but should encompass the holistic development of the promoter - someone willing to immerse

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[227] Cf. S. KENEL, "Challenges Facing Active Religious Today," in *Review for Religious*, 49 (1990), pp. 7-13.

[228] Cf. D.R. HOGE, - J.E. WENGER, (*eds.*), *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood. Changes from Vatican II to the Turn of the New Century*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 2003, pp. 293-320.

[229] Cf. G. E. GANSS, *Jesuit Educational Tradition, and St. Ignatius Loyola*, Fordham University Press, New York 2016, pp. 323-325.

themselves in the lives of young people, understand their values, accept them, and remain open to learning from them.[230]

In the past, most vocation promoters were missionaries who deeply understood and appreciated the cultural obstacles to consecrated life. Through their shared life experiences and witness, they helped to break down many of these cultural barriers. Since the harvest is abundant, we encourage the ecclesial community to go out and engage with young people, bringing them the right message with the right disposition. In doing so, the Lord of the harvest will provide the laborers needed for His work.[231]

Vocation promoters are expected to be well-versed in the behaviors and backgrounds of young people to effectively guide them in their vocational choices. As W. Marlen notes, during the transition from childhood to adulthood, young people often perceive themselves as fully grown. If told otherwise, they may react defensively or exhibit confusion. Therefore, the ecclesial community must adopt a friendly approach, allowing them to interact freely and feel understood.[232]

To better understand young people, we recommend that consecrated individuals invite them into their communities for shared prayer and ongoing formation. Additionally, the ecclesial community must emphasize the development of basic interpersonal skills and the freedom to make informed decisions. This requires great openness and attentiveness from

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[230] Cf. M.G. RODRÍGUEZ, "Reflexiones sobre la animación vocacional," *Revista Vocacional*, 56 (2015), pp. 33-40.

[231] Cf. P. BEDNARCZYK, "The Changing Landscape of Religious Vocations. Implications for Vocation Directors," in *Horizon*, 42/1 (2017), pp.79-91.

[232] Cf. W. MARLEN, "Institute of Consecrated Life," in *The Journal of the Catholic Health Association of the United States*, 96 (2015), pp. 34-39.

vocation promoters, who must be sensitive to the lived experiences of young people while offering them a respectful and listening ear as they seek confirmation of their call.[233]

3.7.1.4 The Personal Witness of Life of Religious as A Means of Fostering Vocations

Ecclesial communities that embrace consecrated life serve as tangible examples for others. Their commitment inspires individuals to consider joining such a vocation. Thus, promoting vocations also involves supporting those already living the consecrated life so that their lives may serve as fruitful testimonies.

We recommend that priests and consecrated men and women in the Archdiocese of Nairobi strive to live their vows faithfully, so that their lives become true witnesses and role models for young people. Often, young people simply need a companion who can invite and welcome them to the table of life, where they can share their anxieties and hopes. When they are accompanied by experienced mentors, vocation promoters find it easier to guide them.

Therefore, vocation promoters must be well acquainted with the realities and challenges faced by the youth they are engaging with. Moreover, leaders of religious institutes should consider their first and principal duty to be the proper formation of vocation promoters, ensuring they are well-equipped for this important mission.[234]

3.7.1.5 The Role of the Family as the Domestic Church in Fostering Vocations

Helping a child discern his or her vocation in life is one of the most important responsibilities of a parent. Guiding a child to discover and follow their unique, God-given path is one of the greatest gifts parents can offer.

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[233] Cf. CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *Starting Afresh from Christ. A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium*, 19 May 2002, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Cittá del Vaticano 2002.

[234] Cf. P. BABIN**,** *Adolescents in Search of a New Church***,** Herder, and Herder, New York 1969, p. 56

We therefore recommend that parents, in promoting and fostering vocations, strive to help their children embrace their calling while nurturing their life of faith and their journey toward holiness.[235]

3.7.1.6 Fostering Coordination and Collaboration Among Religious Institutes in Vocation Promotion

Unity, cooperation, and collaboration between different religious institutes and other structures within the archdiocese are essential for the effective promotion of vocations. To maintain and strengthen this collaboration, we recommend that institutes involved in vocation promotion remain mindful of their shared mission: fostering the growth of vocations in the Church.

Regular meetings and open communication among these institutes should be encouraged to reinforce this collaboration. Moreover, the bishop serves as the visible principle and foundation of unity within his particular Church.[236]

Fostering a spirit of collaboration among religious institutes and faith communities in vocation promotion initiatives requires mutual support. It emphasizes the unique charisms and identities of each religious community while encouraging the sharing of resources and best practices. The focus should be on the quality of discernment and formation rather than the quantity of candidates, ensuring unity in vocation, consecration, and mission within a lived experience marked by the seal of the Trinity.

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[235] Cf. J.A. HARDON, "Preparing for the Lay Apostolate," in *Review for Religious*, 5 (1946), pp. 3-14.

[236] Cf. T. PAZHAYAMPALLIL, - A. PADINJARATHALA, (*eds.*), *Pastoral Guide. A Handbook on the Latin and Oriental Codes of Canon Law*, p. 446.

Consecrated life is a loving response to the divine call, involving a deliberate choice to follow Christ intimately under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.[237] Various approaches should be employed to foster a culture and environment that is open and welcoming to vocations. Formation should emphasize the centrality of Christ and the Gospel while exploring creative ways to make the charism accessible to the world today.[238]

Conclusion

Can. 574 underscores the shared responsibility of the ecclesial community in promoting and fostering vocations to consecrated life within the Catholic Church. By actively engaging in this duty, the Church seeks to ensure that individuals called to live a consecrated life are supported, guided, and encouraged in their vocational journey. The awareness of new understanding in the Church is that a charism of consecrated life is a consecration by God, through the divine vocation of the founder and his or her members. This choice of life is to be renewed and better understood both by those who have received it and by those for whom it has been a gift from the Lord. Every Institute is therefore founded and willed by God for the Church.[239]

The Church, which has received this gift, has the right to see it preserved and bear fruit. Indeed, she is obliged to preserve and protect it. The diocesan bishop's pastoral responsibilities are respect to religious Institutes and concern for religious vocations. The Church approves and protects Institutes so that they can grow and flourish by the spirit of their founders. The bishop

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[237] Cf. E. KELLY, "The Religious Life and the Apostolate," in *African Ecclesiastical Review*, 7 (1965), pp. 213-218.

[238] Cf. CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *Guidelines New Wine in New Wineskins, the Consecrated life and its Challenges since Vatican* II, 6 January 2017, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Cittá del Vaticano 2017. Hereafter cited as *New Wine in New Wineskins*

[239] Cf. *Lumen Gentium, n.* 43. A divine gift which the Church has received from the Lord and which she ever preserves with the help of his grace.

also is to inculcate fidelity in religious observance and dependence on superiors.[240] John Paul II told the youth gathered at the Olympic stadium in Montreal in 1984 that, "the youth would take their place in the Church if the Church renews herself along with them in the freshness and truth of the Gospel.[241]

[240] Cf. *Lumen Gentium, n.* 45, "The Church approves and protects Institutes so that they can grow and flourish in accordance with the spirit of their founders."

[241] Cf. J. BERTHELET, *The Place of the Youth in Our Church*, Mic Publications, Quebec 1998, p. 5-10.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Can. 574 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law emphasizes the responsibility of the entire ecclesial community in fostering and promoting vocations to consecrated life. It highlights that bishops, clergy, religious communities, schools, and parents should actively work together to encourage and support individuals who feel called to religious life. The promotion of vocations is not just the task of religious institutions, alone, but it is a shared mission, which requires the collaborative efforts of all members of the Church. By fostering a culture of prayer, discernment, and formation, the ecclesial community helps to create an environment where vocations to the consecrated life are nurtured and recognized.

The canon stresses the importance of a comprehensive approach to vocational promotion. Bishops and priests are encouraged to provide spiritual guidance and to engage in teaching about the value and beauty of the consecrated life. Religious communities and schools should also contribute by offering opportunities for discernment, education, and mentorship. Parents play a crucial role by supporting their children's vocational discernment with prayer and encouragement.

Chapter one has treated the Biblical foundation of consecrated life. The vocation to consecrated life has evolved throughout history, rooted in the biblical call to holiness and service. In the early Church, consecrated life was a radical response to Christ's call, with individuals choosing celibacy and poverty to follow Him more closely (*Sequel Christi*). During the 13th century, the rise of mendicant orders such as the Franciscans and Dominicans emphasized poverty and itinerant preaching. The Tridentine legislation (1545 A.D-1563 A.D) provided structure and discipline to religious life, while St. Francis de Sales in the 17th century emphasized the importance of interior spirituality. The 1917 Code of Canon Law formalized

regulations on consecrated life, which were updated in the 1983 Code to foster and promote vocations through new pastoral approaches. The *CEEO* promoted a deeper understanding of consecrated life, and post-conciliar documents highlighted the need for renewal and adaptation to modern challenges. These developments reflect a continuous journey of deepening commitment to God through consecrated life.

Chapter two has dealt with sources and formation of Can. 574 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, along with related documents and canons, which reflect the Church's deep commitment to promoting and fostering vocations to consecrated life. Rooted in the foundational principles of the 1917 Code of Canon Law (Can. 487), *Lumen Gentium* (n. 43-44), and *Perfectae Caritatis* (n. 2), these sources emphasize the vocation to consecrated life as a divine call that is crucial for the sanctification of the Church and the salvation of souls. The 1980 and 1982 *Schema Codicis* and the promulgation of Can. 574 reflects a more structured and pastoral approach to the formation of religious persons, underscoring the need for careful discernment, spiritual formation, and ecclesial recognition. Documents such as *Mutuae Relationes* and *Vita Consecrata* highlight the mutual relationship between consecrated persons and the Church, fostering an understanding of consecrated life not only as a personal commitment but also as a contribution to the broader salvific mission of the Church. Can. 574 emphasizes the importance of guiding and fostering these vocations in collaboration with the Christian community, aligning with the idea that consecrated life is a special gift from God that enriches the Church's life of holiness. In the 1983 Code and the *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium*, norms related to the formation and promotion of vocations reflect the ongoing pastoral responsibility of the Church to support and protect those called to consecrated life.

Chapter three has handled the application of Can.574, providing the essential guidelines for fostering and promoting vocations to the consecrated life, and its application within the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi. It emphasizes both pastoral and organizational responsibilities. The archdiocese, through its Pastoral Letters, such as We Are Witnesses to These Things (2024), has sought to inspire and guide the youth toward a deeper commitment to consecrated life, reflecting the universal Church's mission to promote vocations. The Catholic Archdiocesan Office for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, along with the Office of Vocations, is central to creating structured vocational promotion initiatives and addressing challenges such as economic constraints, societal perceptions of marriage, and competition among religious institutes. The role of vocation promoters and the support of families as domestic Churches are crucial in helping individuals discern their call.

The research has emphasized the primary role of the entire ecclesial community in holding in esteem the state of consecrated life and of promoting and discerning vocations to this state of life. Families and communities deeply influence the life choices of individuals, making their involvement in the discernment process essential. Parish priests are encouraged to organize regular vocation awareness programs that highlight the beauty of consecrated life. These programs foster reflection on various vocations within the Church and promote discernment through prayer and dialogue.

By creating a culture of active community involvement, young people feel supported and encouraged to discern their vocation more deeply. This research has significantly contributed to the ongoing studies on the responsibility of the ecclesial community in fostering vocations to consecrated life and, by extension, to the legislation of the Church. However, while this work provides valuable insights, it is not conclusive. Further research is necessary to

explore the ecclesial community's role in the promotion of vocations to consecrated life more comprehensively.

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