THE INITIAL FORMATION IN RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AFRICA

Africa Meeting 2
Of the Hospitaller Sisters of SHJ
Dapaong (TG) – December 14th-15th 2017
THE INITIAL FORMATION IN RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AFRICA

Presentation’s Plan

Introduction
1. What is educating virtual reality?
2. What is the training of virtual reality?
3. What content for the initial training in Africa?
4. Some points to take into consideration in initial training in Africa?

Conclusion
THE INITIAL FORMATION IN RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AFRICA

The basis of the WHOLE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

«May the word of Christ dwell into you with all its wealth. Instruct and warn with all wisdom, singing to God, sincerely and thankful, psalms, hymns and inspired songs. Whatever you do, by word and deed, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him».

«Women, be submissive to your husbands, as befits those who believe in the Lord. Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children obey to your parents in everything because it is pleased to God in the Lord. Parents, do not exasperate your children, lest they become dull». 

(Col 3,16-21)
The challenge launched by the XX General Chapter: "Identity and Mission: Recreating Hospitality, paths of revitalization" requires you to pay attention and a new look at initial formation, a place par excellence for the construction of identity and the assumption of mission.

The dynamics of religious life is more the combination of education and learning of a charismatic and spiritually approved way of life by the Church that confirms its content.

This delicate and personalized work on the people that the Lord sends us requires the capacity for discernment, listening, proximity, strong spirituality ... All these attitudes should help the candidates to mature, humanly, spiritually and charismatically.
1. WHAT IS EDUCATING TO RELIGIOUS LIFE?

1. Education is a process by which the best of the person entrusted to us emerges.
2. This process also involves the transmission of new knowledge to lead the person to take control of their own destiny and their response to the call of God.
3. The education, through the knowledge that communicates, offers to the young people in formation the useful instruments for their development and their integral growth: to allow the person to assume in a know-being, in a know-how, in a know-how.

- To educate, therefore, we must believe in the person who is entrusted to us as a bringer of "a better" in her.
- She must be a bringer of the Principles, Values and Traditions to be transmitted and communicated.

- It also requires healthy and quality interpersonal relationships that favor a climate of trust and growth towards a true maturity.
Healthy and quality interpersonal relationships arise from the right balance between cohesion and adaptability according to David OLSON's circumflex family model.

The educational process to be effective must be built on a family model with clear and well defined roles and responsibilities: no comrades, no teacher-patron, are not mere traveling companions.
1. WHAT IS EDUCATING TO RELIGIOUS LIFE?

- Some educational experts derive it from the Latin *educere*, which consists in taking out or putting out in the sense of making what is better in the human person emerge. Others, however, see their roots in the *educare*, which emphasizes raising, caring and cultivating to make the person grows.

- Whatever be the modality, the education to the religious life is done through the Crucified-Christ the only one Master and Lord of life of all those ones called.

- Education, therefore, implies trust and a sense of responsibility. You can not educate without believing that there is a better person in each person and without seriously committing to take care of those entrusted to us for their education.
1. WHAT IS EDUCATING TO RELIGIOUS LIFE?

6. ""All education comes from an asymmetric, necessary and temporary relationship, directed to the emergence of a free subject"

- **The relationship is asymmetrical** and involves a link between one who is the educator and the other educated with different roles, rights and duties.

- **The relationship is necessary** because no one educates himself. It is always necessary to have a face-to-face person who has things to communicate and from whom I have things to receive, like it or not. Therefore, it is not educational for the trainee to dictate the criteria of his education or determine what is "good" or not for him, that is not his role and does not fall within his competencies.

- **The relationship is temporary (provisional)** because no one should be eternal in his role, under penalty of not letting emerge the best that there is in the other. Although one is always a father or a mother, he can not treat his son for two, ten, twenty, thirty or forty years in the same way.

- **The relationship is finalized, has a purpose**, a sense in the dual orientation of direction and meaning. Education must in effect raise a human subject capable of making decisions at a certain moment by himself, of determining himself as a person who has his individuality and who has the right and duty to think and act for himself and not by proxy. But above all have goals in your life for which you will be trained to acquire the convictions and skills that guide your path of growth and maturity.
2. WHAT IS TRAINING TO RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AFRICA?

- Training is to reconstruct and restructure the systems of thought, perception and conception of life and of the things that the young woman on training had before the training action. It is about communicating Principles and Values that transform your gaze on God, on the world and on yourself to open yourself to the new.

- Training is to give a new form, a new style of living and connecting with others in a new way of thinking, reasoning, seeing and conceiving life and evolution. It is to propose to the person on training categories of transformation to example of the potter (Jr 18)

- The training action is the transmission of convictions, seeds in the heart and the life of the person on training that already offers not to be as before.
- The training action must touch the person on training in his deep being, in his emotions and feelings to allow him to get moving; to leave herself to go to the encounter of God that the look of faith has given her to discover also outside her. This approach leads to an overcoming of oneself to be everything for God and for others.
2. WHAT IS TRAINING TO RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AFRICA?

"Don't let yourselves be shaped by the world where you live, but rather be transformed through the renewal of your mind. You must discern the will of God: what is good, what pleases, what is perfect."

(Rom 12: 2)

Any education system, especially the consecrated life, must first avoid some errors, have a content that gives meaning to the educational action and have a constructive method.

1. Some mistakes to avoid in the religious education houses

- the lack of coordination and agreement within the training team, even if everyone has a specific contribution to give: discipline and care. (No = No, Yes = Yes, avoid No, but ... or Yes, but ...)
- **Overlook the fact that** they are adults that we receive and have to hold them responsible even if they have things to learn from us.
- Double messages: It's true, but not ...! or you can not, but you can! or good it depends on! To tell the truth, it is necessary to pay attention or justice it is necessary to see what earn from it.
- Give bad example; enunciate the Principles, the Values and trample them at the same time by yourself.
- Torpedo towards the members of the same team because we do not share the same vision.
It should be clear that there is no specific religious education for Africa and in Africa. This forces us to reject an education of "more or less" because the demands of the Gospel are the same for everyone, whether in Africa or elsewhere.

- The first content of education must be holiness. We must stop being satisfied with the education of religious men and women who soon become social agents of development. The holiness that is to share the life of God here and now is the first vocation of every Christian: in the Church, all Christians are called to holiness according to the word of the apostle: "Yes, what God wants is your sanctification" (1 Thess 4, 3, see Ep 1, 4) (LG 40). All the other things are only means for the service of this call.

- The second content of the education is the transformation of the person in Jesus Christ through the complementary double orientation of the Christi sequela and imitatio. It is about making the students understand that becoming another Christ is a privilege of the mercy and grace of God and, at the same time, a responsibility that compromises the coherence of life with the compelling and incessant desire: "What would have done Christ in this historical situation that is mine? "

3. WHAT CONTENT FOR INITIAL TRAINING IN AFRICA?
3. WHAT CONTENT FOR INITIAL TRAINING IN AFRICA?

The third content of the formation must be fraternity. This fraternity that today necessarily takes the form of interculturality: "Yes, it is good, it is sweet for the brothers to live together and be united!" (Ps 132: 1) and also "Look how they love each other" (Tertullian) commenting on the Acts 4: 32-35. The consecrated persons must show that the vocation of humanity to communion and unity is not only possible but also in action.

The fourth content of the education must be the march toward human and spiritual maturity. Africa needs consecrated men and women on their feet capable of helping others to rise up from a charitable action, that only has a passive welfare dependency vision, to a charitable action that makes people protagonists of their future. This perspective will not be possible if the consecrated ones themselves need to be dragged by cranes because they are overwhelmed and entangled in cultural conditions that devour their freedom as children of God.
4. SOME POINTS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT IN THE INITIAL EDUCATION TO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AFRICA

- In the process of education-training to the consecrated life in Africa or anywhere else, one must work towards a greater inner freedom of the people, an indispensable condition for a total, complete and definitive offering of life. It is necessary to help the people on training to emerge from the diffuse fear of "you never know!".

- It must take care of and be aware of the limits of what is inherited from original family and childhood. It is not about to blame original family but to take into consideration the dysfunctions that, in spite of himself, could have been imposed on the child of yesterday and who knocks at the door of convent today.

- It should take care with the conception and perception of the family regarding the sense of motherhood and paternity transmitted in the educational system. A certain perception of the Father or Mother can make it difficult to relate to God himself and the figures of authority.
4. SOME POINTS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT IN THE INITIAL EDUCATION TO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AFRICA

- Attention to a culture that is familiar or simply social, in which men do not have to express their emotions because the signs of fragility and weakness, can make them lukewarm in interactions and interpersonal relationships. The relational limit can also come, for example, from a culture that instills a supposed fragility of nature, a true sense of inferiority in fact to women and superiority to man as the natural possessor of power, authority, knowledge do. This leads to relationships of low quality because such a culture will make diversity a discrimination and creating a complex of superiority in some, and inferiority in others, which in one sense or in another is a limit that will hinder, for example, collaboration and the cooperation between men and women and that run the risk of being according to a unilateral vision of who should always give and who should always receive.

- It must take care to help people heal their internal wounds that may come from very critical or overly severe parents, from a significant loss during childhood, from abusive, alcoholic, drugged, neglected, overprotective parents, etc.
4. SOME POINTS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT IN THE INITIAL EDUCATION TO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AFRICA

- We must help the person on training to have a good and fair self-esteem regardless of what they may have lived or suffered. Nobody is obligated to remain a prisoner of its past. It must be recognized, assume it to surpass it.

- We must work with the people on training on the different fears that mark their lives and encourage them to have bold options marked by faith and trust, because if God calls, he also gives the means to respond and in addition: "No trial greater than human endurance has overcome you. God is faithful and will not let you be tempted beyond your strength. He will give you, together with the temptation, the strength to escape and to resist." (1Cor 10,13).

- We must work for an authentic faith that is rooted in Jesus Christ and let Him graft on us to transform us. A faith rooted in the Word of God that can not accommodate certain syncretisms that do not say His name.
4. SOME POINTS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT IN THE INITIAL EDUCATION TO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AFRICA

The educational and training method of consecrated life must combine a strong love with a tenacious requirement.

"Love one another and be considerate. Outdo one another in mutual respect". (Rom 12,10)

- Ultimately, the educators be moved by sincere love, human warmth, real interest, joy and happiness to put themselves at the service of the true good of young people as a vocation received from God.

- Be interested in the young person in front of you and not first to what you want to do with her, because you risk of breaking her or, what is worse, thinking of the young woman you would have liked.

- To trust and respect the young person believing in the person she is, with a look capable of recognizing her dignity as a human being created in the image and likeness of God and, therefore, worthy of esteem.

- To demand to the young woman the sense of sacrifice as an act of love and faith in her abilities and real possibilities to bring out the best that exists in her.
4. SOME POINTS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT IN THE INITIAL EDUCATION TO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AFRICA

The educational and training framework of consecrated life must be that of the family; a new family in God.

- May the educators feel at the service of the human family, the ecclesial family, the congregational or institutional family

- **This family is a good that exceeds our limited** interests because it is in the name of God and for God that we are called to be potters of human lives.

- **For the greatest good of this family** the training work is entrusted to it. No one should work for himself, but just only so that young people can also respond freely and generously to God's call.

- **For the mission of the** family in carrying on the work of God, beyond our people, is the first place of fertility of the educational and formative action.
- Education and training to the consecrated life is an essential task of every religious family that cares to respond according to the needs of times and places to the call of God.

- The trainers should not forget that our life is the reflection of our beliefs and it is a much stronger message than all the discourses we can do. In addition, in the consecrated life, the process of transmitting values takes place simultaneously in an educational and learning dynamic alongside the predecessors.

- Even if the question may have something of anguish because it is very demanding, it is always useful to ask: Am I a model for the young people in training of whom I am in charge? And besides, do I love them enough so that I can say instead that I'm happy to have a trainer that really helps me grow?
The education and training of young people to the consecrated life is a service of charity for the good of humanity, of the Church and of their own religious family. It is another way of living the great commandment of love by the washing of the feet.

"If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also must wash one another's feet.

Understand this, and blessed are you if you put it into practice"

(Jn13: 14,17)