

“BACIAKU”

ANNUAL CANONICAL NOVICES WORKSHOP IN TORORO CHRIST THE KING MONASTERY
17-22/6/2018.

Chair Person: Fr. John Baptist Prior Tigoni OSB

Secretary: Sr. Lucina Karen OSB

Facilitators:

1. Sr. Annie -Mondeca Monastery
2. M. Scholastica -Perpetual Adoration Monastery

Attendance:

1. Tigoni Benedictine Monastery, Kenya : 5 Novices + Novice Master
2. Karen Benedictine Monastery, Kenya: 3 Novices + Novice Mistress
3. Queen of Angels Benedictine Monastery, Kenya: 2 Novices + Representative of the Community.
4. Christ the King Tororo Benedictine Monastery, Uganda: 7 Novices + Novice Master
5. Perpetual Adoration Benedictine Monastery , Uganda: 3 Novices + Novice Mistress
6. Our Lady of Victoria Cistercian Monastery , Uganda: 2 + Novice Master
7. Our Lady of Praise Butende Monastery, Uganda: 1 Postulant, 1 Novice, and 2 Temporary Professed + Novice Mistress.

M. Scholastica:of Perpetual Adoration Monastery Toro, OSB presented 4 topics:

- a. Monastic Calling
- b. Conversion of life
- c. Monastic life and Community.
- d. Work and Prayer

1. Vow of conversion: Mother Scholastica affirms that: “the Vow of conversion is the mother of all other vows. If we truly convert, all the other Vows will have no complication”. She stated that ‘in former days, people went to the monastery to change their lives. Conversion of life is a Benedictine Vow thus, whoever knocks at the door from the first day of one’s entrance, has to begin to live the vow of conversion, let go of your will.” She stressed that ‘if I want to live monastic life, I need to change my life, I need to withdraw from ordinary way: my way of thinking; my way acting; my way of responding to things.

She continued to say that: “We shouldn’t wait until our day of profession that conversion starts, but from the beginning, when we ring the bell at the door, one has to ask oneself: am I ready to

adapt to the way of life in this community? We should stand on our own foot, we shouldn't follow those who have gone off road but to conform to Christ who is the center of our lives. A call to monastic life is a call to sanctity thus, we have to find the means to this sanctity within the walls of the Monastery. And the vital means to sanctity is falling in love to the community, having a real sense of brotherly/sisterly love."

Adaptation: Mother Scholastica asserts that "we all come from different cultures but we have to adapt. Every home has its own culture. Monastery has its own culture: I begin a life of prayer; I begin a life of simplicity; I begin to adjust to live in communion. Benedict encourages us to 'live by the labor of our hands' but we have to do with joy.

1. a). **Monastic life:**She called the attention of the novices by asking them: Friends what are you here for? What have you come to do in the monastery? What are you seeking?

She said that people usually join the monastery with different attitudes: some come because they have nowhere to fit in the world; some come escaping the challenges in the world; for some, they come seeking for themselves; for some, they come seeking for refuge. She quoted the rule of St. Benedict by saying: St. Benedict asks us not "to grant a Novice an easy entry. We have to "test the spirit to see if it is from God" (Chapter 58: 1-2).

"Novice Masters and mistresses", she said,"should discern well whether the novice is truly seeking God. Is she or He ready for obedience and for trials"? She talked of spiritual combat: "you join the monastery to commit yourselves in a spiritual combat. The Rule is a simple Rule for the beginners. This means that it is just a guideline, the rest is your responsibility to work hence to acquire your spiritual journey."

b).**Community:** She attested that: "when the child is born, the number is added to the community as well as the contribution. Thus, the contribution you can make is yourself, give yourself fully to the community, make a home in the monastery, cultivate a sense of belonging because if you are not secure, who will be secure on your behave? Never be an obstacle to anybody because Benedict tells us that, 'may he leads us together to heaven.'

2. Work and prayer:

a). **Work:** Manual Labor is part of our monastic life. Every work is accomplished within enclosure of the monastery and stability of the community. Each and every work is significant because all is centered in Christ. It is done for the glory of God and for the good of the community. There should be different between work outside and the work in the monastery. We do not come in the monastery as employees but as workers in the service of the lord and for His glory. For this reason, we should be prepared to change our ways of doing things.

We shouldn't make work our identity. Our identity is either Monk or Nun not the Career. We shouldn't be workaholics forgetting the purpose of coming to the monastery. Our lives should be balanced. According to Benedict, he says: 'by the labor of your hands that you are called

monks.' As monks and Nun, do you work freely without murmuring and complaining so that you may remain faultless and pure, spotless children of God (Philippians 2:14-15 (RB5:17).

b). **Prayer:** Office of the hours is our first work as monastics. Each member of the community must participate at all hours. Common prayer must be nourished by personal prayer. We must give ourselves freely, we have to create time for our personal prayer.

Most Formees join the monastery with so many a devotions. They are so full that adaption to monastic life is not easy. They are unable to follow up our monastic time table promptly because they have to find extra time to finish their devotions. The advice given was to "let go of devotions and embrace the monastic life fully because the life itself is a sanctifying life."

Monastic calling: Our monastic vocation is a call to witness Christian Conversion. It is the renewal of Baptismal promises; it is a call to live the Gospel values. We are called to identify ourselves with Christ. Personal conversion should conform to our attitude and characters: in whatsoever we do, we do in the name of Christ, the way we relate to each other, the way we approach each other should depict our inner conversion.

In the monastery there are two groups of people: those who are living their lives to the full and those who have gone Off Road. Those who have gone astray have many followers. These are the people who live their lives the way they want. For this reason, some of the formees who are not strong in their resolution in what they want for their lives, prefer to follow them. Why? Because the road is easy, forgetting that the narrow road is the Road that leads to eternal life. And few find this Road (Mt. 7:14).

The echo of one of our novice concerning this topic: "when we enter the monastery, we should have a clear conscious why we came to join monastic life. We should "prefer nothing to the love of Christ"; we should be ready to give up our own will, strong and noble weapons of obedience to do the battle for the true king Christ the Lord RB. Prol. 3; we should be tested toughly as is stated in 1 Jn 4:1 "Test to see if the spirit is from God "; we should be ready for the work of God , for trials, told all hardships and difficulties that will lead us to God (RB 7-8). We should know that "with God everything is possible"(Lk 1:57.)

Mother called the attention of the novices by saying: "in the novitiate, you are being trained to manage yourselves, to be centered in Christ .We must cultivate our lives by the Vows of humility and obedience. The teacher of Humility and Obedience is Christ. If within me I have ordered my life, there's nothing hard in me. I wouldn't be saying: so and so doesn't love me.

Mother pointed out that: A community is composed of 4 groups of people:

1. Killer- always kills the spirit of the community, "I can do all the work in the community by myself.'
2. A Sacrificer- carries all the burdens to Jesus, as Jesus says: "come to me all who are labor and ever burdened and I will give you rest for your souls"(Mt 11: 28-29).

3. Manipulator- always manipulates the formator. This person has five people outside the formator, and she shares her/his problems to all.
4. A Reporter- goes to report others to the formators. This person is in search of love, in search of recognition from the superiors. The advice was given to the formators that: they shouldn't encourage such persons by asking them about other novices. Each persons has her/ his personal journey.

Questions for personal reflection:

What makes us drift from the right path in the monastery?

- Pride
- Bad terms with people in authority, losing the sense of my calling.
- Position and power

How can I remain focused in my monastic calling?

1. Constant personal prayer
2. Self- confident
3. Constant Personal discernment
4. Good zeal.

Is it possible to live a balanced life in the Monastery? If so what are the hindrance?

- I. Tension. When a person is not at home.
- II. Rigidity- some formees are rigid, they do not want to change.
- III. Envy: when one is envious, she/ he will never be happy thus, becomes a burden to oneself as well as the community.
- IV. Extra work- one has no time for community work.

Is it possible to receive everybody who knocks at the door of the monastery? No, a good discernment should be made.



Presentation outline on spirituality of work by Mary Annie:

- I. Self - sustainability/self - Reliance
- II. Organizational Sustainability
- III. Work in the Scripture/ Social Teachings of The Church
- IV. Benedictine Spirituality on Work.

Self-Reliance - self-Sustainability: not business work but monks and nuns individually.

What sustains you in your community? We ask ourselves: how do I begin to look into the future? : Building depends on our foundation

How can we find the patterns?

What gives confidence that it will continue?

Our view of monastic depends on where we are, the effect of the ageing, in community call for young members to provide care of the frailties of the elderly i.e. dependency.

How does an ageing society affect?

Therefore, there is a culture shifting: the shape of monastic life in the future is shifting drastically.

Self –Sustainability is to be able to stand by your own both mentally and materially. Be able to bear the weight of situation. Example, if I am working hard in my department but my relationship is not good in the community, and when I am removed from my department, I get broken, I can't survive in the community , I have lost my Self- Sustainability.

Self-Sustainability is that inner conviction to stand firm and face the challenges before looking for help from outside. We ought to have the purpose for our lives. For this reason, the question was posed: What is your contribution in your community as individual?

- Take the responsibility of your personal life and that of the community.
- Come up with ideas and take to your superiors.

Thus, sustainability is the goal that one wants for the community hence to have self-sufficiency.

Self- reliance- is the ability to commit oneself totality to our responsibilities. We must look at ourselves as personal and as a community and use the resources we have at hand.

How can I live in a community as individual? Our destiny lies in us. The people in the community are there to help us but we as individuals are responsible for our lives and the life in the community. We journey together, we share our talents, we collaborate. Be part of them, try to produce more resources, time, and more money. Ultimately to do more of your mission.

Steps to become sustainable:

- 1) Identify that which is becoming sustainable
- 2) Build something greater
- 3) Keep it going

Hints for Building sufficient Team:

- a. Be open.
- b. Be transparent.
- c. Ask for help.
- d. Admit mistakes.
- e. Look for space and time to sort things together with you colleagues.

Some of the questions which was dealt in groups:

- I. Who am I to myself?
- II. Who am I to my colleagues?
- III. Who am I to my formator?
- IV. What value am I adding to my spiritual journey?
- V. What value am I adding to my community?

Work in the scripture /Social teaching of the church (Compendium of social Doctrine of the church pg.44)

Work is a human activity but can transcend into a divine activity when directed to the glory of God and the good of human kind. It becomes sacred. Genesis proclaims human beings as the stewards, and indeed, the crown and summit of God's creation.

Work is the duty to cultivate and care for the earth. God is presented as Omnipotent creator. He is all powerful. He created the universe and rested on the seventh day.

On the seventh day, God completed the work He had been doing (Genesis 2:2). He fashions man in His image and invited Him to work. Therefore, man is co-creator in the work of God Genesis 2:6. We have to continue the work of creation. The work becomes toil and pain because of the sin of Adam and eve who broke the relationship of trust and harmony with God. Genesis 3: 16-17. Work is the source of riches, the condition for a descent life, and is in principle, an effective instruments against poverty (Proverbs 10:4).

In the New Covenant (2 The 3:6-12):work and earn the food that you eat ;(Mark 6:1-4) Jesus is described as a carpenter or craftsman at Nazareth.

Church Teaching on Work:

Work is more than a way of making a living. It is a participation in God's creative activity and contributes to the common good, work becomes evangelization when done in love. (The common good no. 90); (*Revum Novarum* no. 33); Human dignity (*Gaudium et Spes* no. 34).

How can work sanctify people?

- by providing a means to serve God and others
- in creating a means to cultivate the virtues
- it increases our dignity
- and strive for social Justice and the common good.

It is achieved by preparing ourselves through prayer and reading scriptures and receiving Sacraments.

What does the Rule of Benedict teaches us on work? To be a monk is to be a brother/nun among brethren. A monastery is a human community where friendship, mutual support play a vital role. When we live by the labor of our hands then are truly monks."

Hospitality, table service, mutual and community service- Christ is present in all. Any work in the monastery makes us serve God.

When we begin identifying ourselves by work it becomes performance, self-seeking, it becomes career - boasting in the community, pride, Disobedient, Minimizing others. Work is sacred. St. Benedict tells us: "every time you begin a good work, you must pray to him most earnestly to bring it to perfection" (RB. Prol.4.)

The church teaching on work:

Work is more than a way of making a living. It's a vocation, we participate in God's creative activity, work increase our common good, (*Rerum Novarum*, is a plan of God, sanctification of work, part of human activity, sense of community

How does work sanctify us?

It provides means to serve God and others, cultivate virtues, increases human dignity, strive for social justice and common good.

