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**THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN THE CULTURE OF APARTHEID:
THE CASE OF CATHOLIC LAITY IN NATAL
(1948 -1965)**

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ABSTRACT

This study falls into the area of Church History and is an attempt to investigate the impact of the socio-political system of apartheid on the laity within the Catholic Church in Natal (1948 - 1965). It shows the interplay between events within the secular arena and how these affected the majority members within the Catholic Church in Natal. The period covers the coming to power of the National Party with its policy of apartheid (legislated racial discrimination) and the end of Vatican II (an Ecumenical Council which re-assessed, among other things, the role of the laity in the Catholic Church).

The methodology used was oral history. Since the period investigated was so recent, oral history was the best means of acquiring the information needed. This thesis also needed to have primary historical sources created to help articulate the voices of persons not previously considered to be major players in the study of this topic. This being despite the fact that laity were often bearing the brunt of the legislation being implemented. The perspective used, was gleaned from the *Annales School* of historical research and of microhistory. Within South African historiography, the political implications of apartheid have been well documented. However, the ramifications of how the lives of ordinary lay people were affected within the culture of apartheid has been somewhat neglected and not written about in South African Church History.

The Catholic laity included in this study represent a cross-section of Catholics in terms of cultural background, gender and age. They include the Knights of Da Gama (K.D.G.), a predominantly white male organization for Catholic men. The Catholic Women's Union (C.W.U.) which comprises mainly of indigenous African women, who belong to the sodalities that exist within the Union. And finally, the Young Christian Workers (Y.C.W.) who were a group of active young people grappling with their own struggles in the midst of this apartheid society. They represent three important threads in the tapestry that comprises Catholic laity in Natal. However, this is still just a sampling of the total number of lay Catholics in Natal. Nevertheless, it is as representative as this study can allow.

This study shows that Catholic laity in Natal (1947 - 1965) had responded to apartheid in an indirect manner. That the mentalities of these lay Catholics was very much shaped by their micro-environment within the Church and society. That within this micro-environment, the lay organisations to which these Catholics belonged helped to create a social network that confirmed or rejected the mentality about apartheid, that these people were developing. Also, since the identity and role of the laity within the Catholic Church was changing during this period, they experienced a new way of relating to the clergy and the Catholic Hierarchy of the Catholic Church in South Africa. It shows that the social order of people from different cultural backgrounds being separate, was also replicated within the Catholic Church in Natal. Thus, having created the myriad of cross-cultural problems that ensued, and which the Catholic Church in Natal is still trying to grapple with and heal.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the loving memory of my older brother, Gregory Henriques, who passed away tragically in a motor car accident, at the time when I first contemplated beginning this project. Gregory, spoke out against racial discrimination in the everyday experiences of daily life, no matter how mundane or simple the circumstances. Thus, alerting me to the pain and hurt incurred by the effects of discrimination in the most ordinary of situations. For me, he will always be the powerful black stallion that goes careering into the sunset, ready to fight the good fight. That memory has empowered and motivated me over the past two years.

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To my parents, Norris and Lynette Henriques, for the faith and confidence you have passed on to me. To the rest of my family and friends, who have been a source of joy and inspiration to me over the last two years. You have given me the strength to continue, in the sometimes dark moments of trying to make sense of a very dark and painful period in the history of the Catholic Church in Natal.

To my supervisor, Philippe Denis OP, for the prodding that was necessary to bring to fruition this project, which you suggested to me two years ago. I was afraid of the controversial nature of the subject, but it has been worth the effort. It has helped to deepen the conviction within me, that the reconciliation and healing that is needed in the aftermath of apartheid is something that does not happen easily.

To the Knights of Da Gama in Pietermaritzburg, for moral and financial support, as well as having the courage to participate in a project which must have caused quite a bit of fear and trembling. To the Catholic Women's Union for the patience and commitment to tell your story of the affects of apartheid on your members. To the Young Christian Workers for the contribution that you have made in helping the Catholic Church in Natal make that important link between faith and daily life.

Above all, my thanks go to the informants, whose stories constitute the oral historical narratives on which this study is based. Your dedication to telling your story has helped to transform memory into history.

ABBREVIATIONS

General Abbreviations

A.D.A.	Archdiocese of Durban Archives
A.N.C.	African National Congress
B.C.A.	Bishop's Conference Archives
C.A.U.	Catholic African Union
C.W.U.	Catholic Women's Union
Fr.	Father
I.C.U.	Industrial and Commercial Worker's Union
K.D.G.	Knights of Da Gama
S.A.C.B.C.	South African Catholic Bishop's Conference
S.A.I.R.R.	South African Institute of Race Relations
Sr.	Sister
Y.C.S.	Young Christian Students
Y.C.W.	Young Christian Workers

Abbreviations of Religious Orders

CMM	Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannhill
CSSp	Congregation of the Holy Spirit
CSSR	Congregation of the Holy Redeemer (Redemptorists)
FFJ	Franciscan Familiars of St. Joseph
MFSC	Missionaries, Sons of the Sacred Heart
OCarm	Carmelite Fathers
OFM	Franciscan Friars Minor
OFMCap	Order of Franciscan Friars Capuchin
OMI	Oblates of Mary Immaculate
OP	Order of Preachers (Dominicans)
OSB	Order of St. Benedict
OSFS	Oblates of St. Francis of Sales
OSM	Order of the Servants of Mary (Servites)
SAC	Society of the Catholic Apostolate (Pallottines)
SCJ	Congregation of the Sacred Heart
SJ	Society of Jesus (Jesuits)
SMB	Missionary Society of Bethlehem
SVD	Society of the Divine Word
WF	White Fathers

CHAPTER 1

1.1. Introduction: Aim of the Study

The period 1948 - 1965 is significant for Catholics in South Africa because on a secular level South African society endured tremendous socio-political changes before and during the National Party victory in the elections of 1948. On the ecclesiastical level this period marked the beginning of the Catholic Hierarchy in South Africa with the establishment of the Southern African Bishops' Conference in 1952, and the build up to the Second Vatican Council (1962 - 1965) through which the Catholic Church engaged in a serious re-evaluation of its identity and mission. Catholic laity (the body of ordinary lay people within the Catholic Church who were not consecrated religious or in the priesthood) were caught up in a process in which their destinies would be decided by ecclesiastical and political authorities. Despite the establishment of Catholic Action by Pius XI and Pius XII which had helped to increase the participation of lay people in the life and work of the Church. Lay participation in decision making within the Catholic Church was still very limited in the period prior to the Second Vatican Council. What impact did these changes have on the lives of ordinary lay people? How did laity respond to the emergence of this new order? What were the successes and failures of lay Catholics in this process of moving beyond the old order and embracing the new circumstances in which they had to live out their faith in a changing context?

In order to investigate the response of Catholic laity it is necessary to consult a wide range of groups and individuals within the Catholic fraternity. I have chosen to select three groups who are significant representatives of Catholic laity: viz. the Knights of Da Gama (K.D.G.), the Catholic Women's Union (C.W.U.) and the Young Christian Workers (Y.C.W.). These groups represent as broadly as possible a variety of ethnic groups, age groups as well as politically motivated and a-political groups. For this reason, the study does not presume to make conclusions

about all Catholic laity in general, but intends to make a statement about the dynamics and issues faced by the above mentioned groups. The geographical area of Natal has been chosen since the Knights of Da Gama and the Catholic Women's Union were both started in Natal. The Young Christian Worker's were also established in Natal during the period covered by this study. Archbishop Hurley was also extremely vocal in his condemnation of apartheid but on the grass roots level of the laity it was difficult to implement that vision. It is not only statements by the Hierarchy that shape the Church but the actions and beliefs of lay believers as well. Priests and religious often served as a link between the bishops and the laity.

1.2. Background to Apartheid

Since the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape in 1652, the issue of racial prejudice has been a part of the fabric of South African life. However, it is a fallacy to believe that the prejudice and segregation formalised in apartheid legislation is due solely to the Afrikaner. The outlook of British colonials included viewing native peoples as inferior. Within Natal as early as 1846 the Native Land Commission was set-up to deal with the influx of Zulus into the colony.¹ This Commission resolved to create six locations which would accommodate these Zulus, thereby starting an official policy of segregation. Sir Theophilus Shepstone persuaded approximately 8 000 - 10 000 Zulus to move into these locations which would act as "agencies of civilization."² The use of land as a means of segregation and discrimination was further intensified by the legislation of the Native's Land Act of 1913.³ This legislation limited indigenous

¹ J.B. Brain, *Catholic Beginnings in Natal and Beyond*, (Durban: T.W. Griggs & Co. Ltd., 1975), p. 53.

² Ibid., p. 53.

³ E.H. Brookes, *APARTHEID: A documentary study of Modern South Africa* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), p. xxiv.

African people to the purchase of land only within the confines of reserves that occupied one-eighth of land in South Africa. In effect one-third of the population was expected to eke out an existence on this limited land mass. The next important piece of legislation according to E.H. Brookes was the "Natives Trust and Land Act Representation of Natives Act, both in 1936, represent apartheid of the old type."⁴ By virtue of this legislation limited land concessions were made in the Transvaal and a minimal representation was effected in the Senate. The Native's Representative Council was also set-up as an advisory body. This legislation was effected in 1936 due to the amalgamation of the parties of General Smuts and General Hertzog.

The word 'apartheid' however, was coined among Afrikaners in 1943-1944 and later was used extensively as a slogan by the National Party during the election campaign of 1948.⁵ On the 3 September 1948 Dr. Verwoerd, as a Senator made the first public exposition of the National Party's Policy of 'apartheid':

" The party accepts the christian trusteeship of the European race as the basic policy in regard to the non-European races. In accordance with this it desires to afford the non-European races the opportunity of developing themselves in their own fields, according to their natural ability and capability, and it desires to assure them of fair and just treatment in the administration of the country, but it is emphatically opposed to any mixture of blood between the European and non-European races.

It further declares itself in favour of the territorial and political segregation of the Natives, as well as the separation between Europeans and non-Europeans in general in the residential and, in so far as it may be practicable, also in the industrial field.

Further, it desires to protect all sections of the population against Asiatic immigration and competition, among other things by prohibiting further intrusion into their fields of activity, as well as by an effective scheme of Asiatic segregation. [...]

There must be separate residential areas for Europeans and non-Europeans, and as far as possible this principle of apartheid must also apply to the various non-European racial groups in their relationships towards one another, such as Coloured people, Indians and Natives." ⁶

The above forms the core of the National Party 's plan for the

⁴ Ibid., p. xxv.

⁵ Ibid., p. xxvi., E.H. Brookes supports his argument with quotes from *Dawie 1946 - 1964*, An anthology selected from the writing of *Die Burger's* political correspondent by Louis Louw.

⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

implementation of apartheid. Through the following legislation this vision became a reality:

Asiatic Laws Amendment Act of 1948

Population Registration Act of 1950

Group Areas Act of 1950

Bantu Education Act of 1953

The Separate Amenities Act of 1953

The Native Laws Amendment Act of 1957

Coloured Disenfranchisement, 1957

Marriage and Immorality Laws of 1958

Extension of University Education Act of 1959

Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959

The Prohibition of Improper Interference Bill, 1966

By writing racial discrimination into legislation the National Party made its policy open to scrutiny and began a new era in the practice of what had previously not been so blatantly articulated. South African society eventually entered into a period of upheaval as whole communities were uprooted and displaced so that this system of apartheid could be implemented. This took its toll on parishes where the faithful began to see the impact of this system on their daily lives. As well as the existence of racial prejudice within their own ranks as faith communities.

1.3. Catholic Response to Apartheid

To date the literature dealing with the issue of Catholics and apartheid include Edwin Theron's thesis entitled '*Die geskiedenis en aksie van the Rooms-Katolieke Kerk, veral in die Unie van Suid Afrika*' (1958). It is briefly mentioned in the epilogue of *The Catholic Church in South Africa* (1960) by W.E. Brown and completed by Michael Derrick who edited this work after Brown's death. David Bixley's dissertation '*The Catholic Church and Apartheid in Education*' (1977), *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (1979) by John de Gruchy, *Catholics in Apartheid Society*

(1982) edited by Andrew Prior, *The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation* (1983) by Majorie Hope and James Young, *The Catholic Church and Apartheid* (1989) by Garth Abraham and *South Africa: A Catholic Perspective* (1991) by Noel Peters also deal with this topic. All of these works viewed the Catholic Church and apartheid from different perspectives. However, none of them endeavoured to look at the issue from the specific perspective of Catholic laity.

The works by Andrew Prior, Garth Abraham and Noel Peters are the most pertinent to my area of study. Andrew Prior, who edited *Catholics in Apartheid Society* focused on issues within the Catholic Church in the 1980's and showed how they had stemmed from earlier developments in the 1950's. This work looked at how the Catholic Church as an international organisation which upheld the equality of all people had dealt with the advent of apartheid. It also looked at Catholic social teaching, ideology, politics and the relationship between black and white Catholics in apartheid South Africa. *South Africa: A Catholic Perspective* which was written by a South African Indian priest who investigated the socio-political impact that apartheid had on the Catholic Church in South Africa. In particular Peter's focused on the demands made on Church personnel because of the apartheid system. He also put forward the point of view of Indians as another minority group within the country. This work was of a general nature and also included an analysis of apartheid from a psychological and sociological perspective. Garth Abraham paid particular attention to the Catholic Hierarchy in South Africa (1948-1957). Abraham stressed that, since the Hierarchy were responsible for teaching and guiding the faithful it therefore followed that they were in the fore-front of developments between the Catholic Church and the apartheid State. This he captured in the statements of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference and the deliberations that they had engaged in during the course of their meetings. Abraham⁷ in *The*

⁷ Garth Abraham, *The Catholic Church and Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), pp. 49-52.

Catholic Church and Apartheid pointed out the different points of view of the Catholic Bishops. He showed how Archbishop Hurley was the one who most favoured a more confrontational approach. Whereas some of the more conservative bishops supported a more cautious approach so as not to jeopardise good relations with the government of the day. All of these works focused on the whole of South Africa.

Of the works mentioned above, Abraham's *The Catholic Church and Apartheid* is the most detailed study of the Catholic response to apartheid. This study relied heavily on documents found in the archives of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference and on articles that appeared in *The Southern Cross* at the time. The author asserts:

"While it is acknowledged that the Hierarchy forms but a small part of what constitutes the Church, it is the bishops, in fulfilment of the mandate given to the apostles by Christ, who guide and teach the faithful, and it is thus they who direct developments within the Church, and have therefore been of primary concern in this work."⁸

It is acknowledged that it is the bishops who have the responsibility of leadership and therefore are at the fore-front of developments. However, it also needs to be kept in mind that it is the laity who were the majority of people who suffered during the apartheid period since they constituted the rank and file membership of the Catholic Church. The planning, strategy and statements of the bishops were also formulated with the welfare of the laity in mind and what would be best for the Catholic community as a whole in dealing with the situation that had emerged after 1948. However, the bishops had to also consider the long term implications of their decisions. What was the plight of the laity in the interim? To what extent did lay Catholics feel supported by the bishops? And to what extent did groups at variance with bishops sentiments feel alienated from the official Church position? Were the statements of the bishops followed by appropriate and constructive action, or was there a discrepancy between what was said and what was practised?

⁸ Ibid., p. x.

1.4. Methodology

In my initial reading, my attention was drawn to the *Annales Movement* which is commonly stereotyped as being a group concerned with "the history of structures over the long term, employ quantitative methods, claim to be scientific and deny human freedom."⁹ I found that I could draw inspiration from the approach developed by the many scholars of the *Annales School*. Due to the divergent approaches of L. Febvre, M. Bloch, F. Braudel, G. Duby, Roger Chartier and others it may seem misleading to give the impression that they constituted a united view on how to introduce a new kind of history? However, P. Burke points out that in broad outline they were attempting to introduce a problem oriented history in place of the traditional narrative of events. They sought to investigate the whole gamut of human activity as opposed to only focusing on the political. They also recognised that there was a need to collaborate with other disciplines in the writing of history.¹⁰ I find this approach important for my study as it is not simply an attempt to investigate the political ramifications of apartheid on Catholic laity but to discover how the political circumstances of the day impacted on their lives as lay members within the Catholic Church. It is an attempt to shift the emphasis from the hierarchical leadership to the lives of the ordinary believers struggling to be faithful to the Lord in the midst of a socio-political crisis. The study involves the interplay between the social, political, religious and cultural aspects of Catholic laity in Natal during the period 1948 - 1965. Roger Chartier cites Clifford Geertz in speaking about the influence of culture on history:

"The culture concept to which I adhere ... denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by

⁹ P. Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School 1929 - 1989*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990, p. 108.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life."¹¹

In more practical terms I hope to investigate the reasons for laity not responding to the changing socio-political circumstances as well as they could have. In looking at the conceptions and ideas that prevented them from responding to apartheid it is hoped that we can learn something more about the Church and how we operate in a time of crisis. The above therefore provides the perspective with which I approach my subject of the impact of apartheid on Catholic laity in Natal.

A crucial issue in this study is the scale of the investigation. Since the problem of apartheid and the Catholic Church has been dealt with by Prior, Abraham, and Peters there was a real suspicion as to whether anything new would emerge from a further study of the apartheid issue and its impact on the Church. It was then that I realised that microhistory was the best approach since by reducing the scale of the study, I could then experiment with the new themes or issues that emerge. Giovanni Levi describes microhistory as follows:

"The microhistory approach addresses the issue of how we gain access to knowledge of the past by means of clues, signs and symptoms. This is a procedure which takes the particular as the starting-point [...] and proceeds to identify its meaning in the light of its own specific context."¹²

By looking at the particular one inevitably has to face the problem of the ambiguities that emerge from the various groups studied. By recognising the ambiguities that result from the way particular groups viewed the problem of apartheid, it is hoped that the complexity of the issue will become more apparent. Thereby aiding further analysis of the problem. By focusing on minimal facts and individual cases there is the possibility that

¹¹ R. Chartier, *Cultural History* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 48.

¹² G. Levi, "On Microhistory", in Peter Burke, ed., in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 106.

more general phenomena are revealed.¹³ Since individuals spend more time in the little circle of their colleagues and acquaintances, it is important to investigate the effect of the conceptions and ideas about society that are taken for granted within these groups. Similar views about issues often draws people together into a group and continues to sustain the solidarity experienced within the group. Within Church circles the sodalities and associations to which lay people belong become the source of the way in which they approach and interpret the events with which they are confronted. And since, all these groups belong to the Church, the differences in their world-views and perceptions of the Church and its relation to society begin to affect the Church as a whole. Therefore, microhistory can play an important role in our efforts to understand the development and growth within a local church. However, it needs to be stated that this study uses the general approach of microhistory but is not microhistory *per se*. The period of investigation of the lay groups concerned and the depth of enquiry have been limited compared to what microhistory as such would demand.

Practical means for collecting information relied heavily on oral history narratives of members within the three groups studied viz. the Knights of Da Gama (K.D.G.), the Catholic Women's Union (C.W.U.) and the Young Christian Workers (Y.C.W.). In the Archives of the Archdiocese of Durban I discovered information on the Knights of Da Gama and Young Christian Workers relating to the period 1948 - 1965. However, it was difficult to locate documented sources concerning the Catholic Women's Union during that period. Therefore, that part of the study depended more on oral historical narratives. The informants in the study included a cross section from the Church viz. laity, priests and bishops. This is due to the fact that the priests and bishops interviewed had played a crucial role in the creation of these lay organizations and therefore proved to be extremely valuable

¹³ Ibid., p. 109.

sources of information regarding the founding of these groups and the subsequent development of these organizations. This pointed out the important link that exists between the laity, clergy and bishops. The questions directed to informants were shaped by the scope of the study as well as issues that had emerged in the initial reading of the written sources. The general thrust of the interviews focused initially on the social context of the time. The discussion then moved on to how these organizations were affected by the apartheid system and how they responded? Then the influence of the Second Vatican Council and how it affected the self-understanding of the role of the laity was discussed? And finally, the future of the organization was spoken about. Once the transcripts of these interviews had been typed out, the transcripts were analyzed so as to see what salient issues emerged. In addition the work, *The Knights of Da Gama 1943- 1993* by Francis Coleman served as an important resource for providing background information about the Knights of Da Gama and how they responded on a national level to the issue of apartheid. Other works like *Y.C.W.: South Africa 1950-1960* by Fr. Edward Mitchinson and *Many in this City are My People* by Fr. Jean-Marie Dumortier gave important information about the ethos and context in which the Young Christian Workers operated. The rest of the study depended on research accrued through the oral historical narratives of the informants associated with the K.D.G., C.W.U. and Y.C.W. Investigating the similarities and differences that emerged in terms of how these groups represented the response of Catholic laity to apartheid.

1.5. Catholic Laity before the Second Vatican Council.

The French Revolution brought about the fall of the feudal system which the Catholic Church had used as a means to bolster its monarchical structure. With the advent of Modernism the old order within society was being questioned and the Catholic Church applied the term *Modernism* towards anyone within the Church who was not in favour of the conservative point of view on debatable

issues.¹⁴ It was a gradual process for the Church to come to terms with the upheaval in society caused by the industrial revolution and the advent of modern technology. Eventually with the advent of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) the Church started addressing itself to the conditions of ordinary workers. Later encyclicals such as *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) by Pius XI as well as his emphasis on lay apostolate promoted greater participation of the laity within the Church. Pius XI and Pius XII sought to involve more lay people in the work of the Church through their promoting "Catholic Action".¹⁵ Therefore, well before the Second Vatican Council we see the Hierarchy within the Church preparing for greater participation of the laity and the re-evaluation of the role of the laity within the Church. The lay apostolate was asserted again in John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963).¹⁶ However, such documents do not change age old traditions at the parochial level. So none of these had the kind of impact that was later experienced after the Second Vatican Council.

Within the Vicariate of Natal, the Catholic population consisted of "Whites, Blacks or Zulus, peoples of every intermediary shade referred to as Metis, and two groups of recent immigrants, namely the Indians who spoke Tamil and the Mauritians who spoke French."¹⁷ In describing the position of Catholic laity in Natal prior to the Second Vatican Council Archbishop Hurley points out: " I think we would have to admit that we operated in rather different departments concerning the Zulu speaking faithful and English speaking faithful."¹⁸

¹⁴ R. McBrien, *Catholicism Vol. 2.*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1980), p. 644.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 646.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 647.

¹⁷ D. Levasseur, *A History of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate: Towards a Synthesis*, (Rome: General House, 1989), p. 263.

¹⁸ Interview with Denis Hurley, Durban, 28 October 1996, Appendix p. 31.

On 13 October 1927 Fr. Bernard Huss CMM from Mariannhill Monastery near Pinetown founded the Catholic African Union (C.A.U.) at Mariannhill "for the spiritual, moral, social and economic welfare of the Bantu."¹⁹ The inspiration behind Fr. Bernard Huss founding the C.A.U. was the German People's Union (*Katholischer Volkseerein*) and the French Social Weeks (*Semaines Sociales*).²⁰ The motto of the C.A.U. was "Better Homes, Better Fields, Better Hearts."²¹ Essentially the C.A.U. was a co-ordinating body to which all African Catholic Solidalities and Associations had to belong. The method of education and formation used was that of large Congresses around themes addressed by key speakers and then decisions would be made from that process. Within the then Vicariate of Natal the C.A.U. was promoted mainly by Fr. Joseph Kerautret OMI, Fr. Rene Le Voeur OMI and Fr. Denis Howard St. George OMI. Apart from these energetic promoters there was a general antipathy towards the C.A.U. in the Vicariate of Natal as some of the priests who arrived in the 1930's and 1940's felt that it was like "trying to get French priests to impose a German system on Zulu people."²² It is for this reason that the C.A.U. was not as successful in the Vicariate of Natal as it was in areas served by Mariannhill. Apart from the C.A.U. there was nothing on the same scale of numbers and organization among English speaking Catholics in Natal during the 1920's and 1930's.

D. Levasseur OMI points out that Committees of Catholic Action were first established in Natal in 1934 under the direction of Fr. Leon Sormany OMI who worked among the whites and Fr. Joseph Kerautret who worked among the Africans. These Committees of Catholic Action represent the first real attempt to have lay people participate more fully in the life of the Church. This

¹⁹ F. Schimlek, *Against the Stream*, (Mariannhill: Mariannhill Mission Press, 1949), p. 70.

²⁰ F. Schimlek, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²² Interview with Denis Hurley, *op cit.*, Appendix p. 31.

way of thinking demanded that the laity become involved in the work of the Hierarchy by promoting the growth of the Church in the areas where they lived and worked. Representatives from various organizations came together in these Committees of Social Action so as to co-ordinate the efforts of lay people in Natal.

Another important lay organization at this time, was the Kolbe Association started by Fr. Pat Holland OMI in the 1940's which represented the Catholic intelligentsia among the laity. By virtue of their comprising of intellectuals and professional people they formed an elite and were not broadly based within local Catholic communities. However, they often addressed the race question in their gatherings. Archbishop Hurley mentioned in an interview in Durban, that one of the only organizations at that time which was beginning to address the issue of the evil of apartheid was the Institute of Race Relations, which began in 1929.²³ The Institute of Race Relations was a mainly liberal group of people who conducted surveys. It was not intended to be an organization that could initiate programmes to conscientise and mobilize the masses of people being adversely affected by apartheid. A real problem at the time was the fact that so many ordinary people had grown to accept the segregation of persons from different race groups that the evil of the separation had ceased to be apparent.

Within the Catholic Church as a whole, there was among the bishops a great dependence on and a somewhat naive confidence in the abilities of encyclicals to transform situations. Another problem appears to me to be the fact that the language in which these encyclicals were couched also meant that ordinary lay people were unable to understand these documents. They were therefore not that well informed by their contents. This brings into focus the difference between the perception that the bishops had of apartheid and the experience of ordinary people suffering

²³ Interview with Denis Hurley, op. cit., Appendix p. 33.

as a result of this discrimination. The importance of the priests in being intermediaries between the vision of the bishops and having hands-on experience of the affects of apartheid on the laity needs to be noted as well. This points to the fact that the Catholic Church in South Africa was going through a tremendous upheaval with the State viewing her as "Die Roomse Gevaar", as well as the internal struggle of lay people coming to a point of greater participation in the life of the Church. These lay people were further divided by the segregation that had been handed down from the colonial period. However, the role of the Second Vatican Council in addressing this issue of the place of the laity within the Church is extremely significant:

"Vatican II was a watershed in the history of the Catholic Church. We leave on the farside of the watershed a Church gazing heavenwards, wrapped in her isolation and identified with her bishops, priests and religious. On this side of the watershed we are swept along in a somewhat turbulent Church, still gazing heavenward but taking in as well the terrestrial scene, shedding her isolation and recognising that the bulk of herself is made up of the laity."²⁴

As the Catholic Church worked towards the Second Vatican Council, movements like Catholic Action helped laity redefine their identity and role within the Church. Depending on their position and status in society this had different effects on their relations with priests and bishops who had formerly been treated with a certain deference and were put on a pedestal. Lay people began to see themselves as having a say in the affairs of the Church, and the running of parishes would also not survive without the specific input of the laity. This would mean by consequence that issues affecting laity would increasingly have to be reviewed within the Church. Laity were gradually being seen as having an important role to play in the making of decisions within the Church of the future.

²⁴ Denis E. Hurley, 'Catholic Social Teaching and Ideology' in Andrew Prior (ed), *Catholics in Apartheid Society* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1982), p. 35.

1.6. Summary

Since the three lay organisations being investigated represent groups originating from different social and economic circumstances their perceptions of the Catholic Church's response will be dependent on their own views about the apartheid system and how it impacted on them within their micro-environment. For persons who were in a privileged position the role of the Church could be viewed as an unnecessary interference in the affairs of the State. Whereas, for those who were being unjustly oppressed by the apartheid regime, the Church could serve as a possible platform through which they could articulate and work through some of the trauma that they were exposed to due to the discrimination they experienced. Nevertheless, there are bound to be conflicting versions of what occurred and how best the Catholic Church as embodied in the laity could best respond to apartheid. The role of the context out of which these different groups emerged needs to be carefully studied so that it becomes clearer why certain views and options were upheld.

At a time when the Catholic Church was still hankering after its glorious past, it was difficult for lay people to insert themselves into this modern context when the Church that sustained them still viewed the modern with suspicion. On the other hand there were attempts being made to take greater cognisance of the importance of dialogue with the secular context in which we had to be immersed as Church. So as to try to respond in a way that would bear witness to the Gospel. Yet at the same time the individuals involved were also contaminated by the social norms they had come to accept as a result of the segregation practised during the colonial period. The spirit of Catholic Action had permeated the Church since Pope Pius XII and yet the Catholic Church still viewed itself as being apart from the world. The theology of being immersed in the world and having to dialogue with the signs of the times was still to be enunciated more clearly in the Second Vatican Council.

As the Catholic Church was standing at the threshold of a new way of looking at itself as Church, the apartheid system had brought to culmination the prejudiced mentality of the colonial period and had written this discrimination into legislation. The Catholic laity of Natal had to deal with these powerful influences in their lives. This study is an attempt to investigate how they coped with the impact of apartheid on themselves as a faith community that was going through a socio-political transition. This therefore marks a period where Catholic laity were caught up in the process of self-definition during the period of the implementation of apartheid.

In a sense this study is about how ordinary Catholics struggled to cope with socio-political and ecclesiastical events in which their fates were being decided and yet they did not have the scope to determine their own future. However, lay people did engage in various initiatives within different lay organisations which helped them cope with the situation of apartheid. Despite changes within the Church the laity were still very much under the influence of the Hierarchy who still had a great, yet somewhat naive, belief in the power of encyclicals to transform people's lives. And despite the fact that a minority of Catholics were white in 1948 and therefore did have the opportunity to vote in the General Election of that year, the Catholic Church as a whole was still a minority in a country run by a predominantly Protestant following. Thereby putting the Catholic Hierarchy and laity in the difficult position of being treated as the "*Roomse gevaar*" which was viewed with suspicion. All of this compounded to a greater extent the Catholic Church's introspective tendency which was already very strong at that time. Most clearly articulated in the theological notion of *Extra Ecclesia nulla Salus* - outside of the Church (Catholic) there is no salvation. This was the extent to which the Church had become focused in on herself thereby affecting the way her lay members responded within the culture of apartheid.

CHAPTER 2

THE KNIGHTS OF DA GAMA

*Ut Omnes Unum Sint*²⁵

The Knights of Da Gama are significant in the Catholic Church in Natal as they have Councils in most of the large urban parishes. Within Natal there are Councils in Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith and Empangeni. Having started in Durban in 1943 their growth in Natal was gradual and they then expanded to the Transvaal, Orange Free State and the then Rhodesia. They have a national membership of about 1 300 active members and are engaged in various charitable works: Toys for Happiness (collecting toys for under-privileged children) and Put Christ back into Christmas (fund raising campaign to support their projects). As well as development projects such as assisting homes for the aged in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. On a national level they are also involved in adult spiritual education, the Catholic Servicemen's Support Programme and the Perpetual Novena for Peace in South Africa.

2.1. The Founding Formula

Alan Woodrow, an architect from the Holy Trinity Parish in Durban, had first been initiated into the Knights of Columbus during his stay in London in 1927. Before returning to South Africa he was trained by Colonel Wilson in the techniques of recruiting and initiating new members, as well as inaugurating new Councils. On his return to Durban in 1928 Alan Woodrow approach Bishop Henri Delalle and requested if he could begin a Catholic Lay Order in South Africa. Bishop Delalle was initially doubtful about the success of such an Order due to the small number of Catholics in Natal at the time. Together with Fr. Leon

²⁵ "That all may be one" the motto on the Coat of Arms of the Knights of Da Gama as formulated by Fr. Emmet Neville at the first meeting of the 'Original Council' in Durban on the 25 November 1943.

Sormany , a group of 15 prominent professional hardly Catholic gentlemen met on a monthly basis for tea and discussion at the Marine Hotel in Durban. However, the group did not persevere and Bishop Delalle's suspicion proved to be a reality. "It lacked a programme, had no real common purpose, achieved nothing for the community at large and soon disintegrated."²⁶ The first attempt was thwarted by problems, especially the fact that many of the initial members were rather occupied with their own personal pursuits. The group lacked a common vision for being together. Nevertheless Alan Woodrow did not give up the idea of beginning this Catholic Order of laymen.

Alan Woodrow's hope was rekindled with the arrival of Fr. Emmet Neville OMI in South Africa. Emmet Neville hailed from the United States of America, where he had been born in Montana in 1911. He then joined the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and was ordained a priest in 1937. Soon after his ordination to the priesthood he volunteered to come to South Africa. He was transferred from Seattle to the Vicariate of Natal in South Africa. In 1943 during the course of his ministry in Durban, Fr. Emmet Neville met another American priest who was a member of the Knights of Columbus. After much discussion Fr. Neville decided to approach Bishop Delalle with the idea of starting a South African version of the Knights of Columbus, which was based in the United States. Bishop Delalle recalling that Alan Woodrow had shown interest in the same venture arranged for these two men to meet in June 1943. By the end of that year the Knights of Da Gama had been founded by this two-man "Inception Committee".²⁷

Alan Woodrow and Fr. Emmet Neville met regularly to create a basic structure for the new Lay Order to be formed. Much was gleaned from their predecessors: i.e. the Knights of Columbus in the United States, the Knights of St. Columba in England, the

²⁶ F. Coleman, *The Knights of Da Gama 1943 - 1993*, (Pinetown: The Knights of Da Gama, 1993), p. 12.

²⁷ F. Coleman, op. cit. p. 13.

Knights of St. Columbanus in Ireland and the Knights of the Southern Cross in Australia that had sprung up after the First World War. However, it was clear that they intended to start something completely new in the South African context. The Catholic Order of the Knights of Da Gama was founded on the 20 November 1943 at the home of Alan Woodrow, in Springfield Road, Durban. Fr. Emmet Neville, the first Supreme Chaplain was the one who decided that the new Order should be named after Vasco da Gama. The founding members were: Alan Woodrow, James Devlin, Henry Mazery, Denis O'Flaherty, Pieter Vos, Gerard Dooley, Wilfred Sheldon, Herbert O'Connor, Edward Paull, John Clark, Justin Kelly, Neville Creaney, John Mulheron and John Behr.²⁸ Alan Woodrow then addressed the new initiates:

"The path of progress is not necessarily an easy one. As the Order goes on it must expect to meet obstacles. It must come up against the mundane difficulties in this life. Battles lie ahead for us. We must engage in them with determination to win. We must have the desire to instill into others courage and the willingness to serve. We can do so only by example, by our writing and our doing ...

Knighthood involves the dedication of life to high ideals, to sound principles and to the implementation of them. In the year 1165, eight hundred years ago, John of Salisbury prescribed the terms of knightly ideals thus:

To protect the Church and its teachings

To fight against treachery

To reverence the Priesthood

to fend off injustice from the poor

to make peace in one's own Province

(and) if need be, to shed your blood for your fellowmen,

and, if necessary, to lay down your life for them."²⁹

The initiation ceremony took three hours and included a ceremony before the Bar of Authority and the original emblem of the Knights of Da Gama.³⁰ Not all of these first recruits were to persevered. The stress that the Knights of Da Gama put on the ritual, immediately put them into a different category to other organizations of laymen such as the Men's Guild. Another striking feature was that there were three distinct degrees

²⁸ Constitution of the Catholic Order of the Knights of Da Gama, Knights of Da Gama 1953 - 1956 (Archives of the Archdiocese of Durban), p. 25.

²⁹ Alan Woodrow cited in F. Coleman, Ibid. pp. 20-21.

³⁰ F. Coleman, Ibid. p. 17.

within the Knights namely the First Degree, the Second Degree and the Third Degree. The First Degree consists of those who have been recruited and are undergoing a programme to introduce them to the Order, its objectives and practices. The Second Degree is a more spiritual degree when the Knights have to be trained in Catholic teaching and are encouraged to grow spiritually. And the Third Degree is when the Knights have been fully initiated into the Order of the Knights of Da Gama. Members had to engage in acts of good works before they were elevated to the next Degree. The elevation to the next Degree included a ritual which helped to impress upon the person being elevated the demands made by the Degree to which he had now entered. There was also a ritual designed for the opening of every General Assembly of all the Knights belonging to a particular Council. The rituals for the elevation to a higher Degree have always remained secret so as to make a greater impact on the person being elevated. In the past this has tended to give the Knights of Da Gama the reputation of being a 'secret society' within the Catholic Church. There was also a Code of Honour which regulated the lives and activities of the Knights of Da Gama.

2.2. A Crisis over Colour

The Knights of Da Gama had accepted the social norms of their day which operated on the basis of different racial groups remaining separate. During the first few years the Knights were to experience the impact of the existing social norms on their newly created organization. Francis Coleman emphasises that the K.D.G. were not intentionally racist, despite the fact that the Constitution of the Knights had specified the word 'European'.³¹ The attitude of the Knights not being ready to accept persons of colour caused the resignation of Fr. Emmet Neville. Fr. Neville could not reconcile with the fact that the majority of Knights at that stage did not see their way clear to open up the Order

³¹ F. Coleman, Ibid. p. 29.

to persons of colour. Fr. Neville not being South African could not accept the segregationist attitudes prevalent in the country and consequently how it had affected the Knights of Da Gama. According to recollections of Archbishop Denis Hurley the main source of the dispute was the issue of accepting Lebanese members into the K.D.G.:

"When I came back as Vicar Apostolic and Bishop in 1947 the Knights were in total disarray. My clearest recollection is that they fell apart over a quarrel over the admission of Lebanese gentlemen into the Knights. That's how strong segregation was in South Africa in those days. That a great body of Catholic white persons thought the Lebanese were not racially pure enough to belong to the Knights of Da Gama. I think that was the reason for the big explosion."³²

However, after the exodus that followed the furore over the acceptance of Lebanese, the number of Knights whittled down to about 8 or 9 men who then began to meet in the cellar of the home of a Dr. Frank Proksch which was situated off Ridge Road. Archbishop Hurley continued to support this remnant who remained as members of the Order since "they were not the types who would have excluded Lebanese so I encouraged them."³³ The Order accepted that the Bishops were in favour of the inclusion of the Lebanese and so the Knights accepted to begin breaking down the colour-bar which at this stage still did not allow for inter-racial socialising at public facilities.³⁴ Coleman cites Archbishop Hurley as saying at the time:

"It was a difficult time [1947] for me as I had just been named Vicar Apostolic of Natal; it was a far more difficult time for the Knights, for the remnants of them were barely holding on to what looked like the debris of their organisation, badly shattered by early failings and misunderstandings that seem to strike inevitably at all brave new endeavours. There was little I could do to help, little that any priest could do. It was up to the Knights themselves to salvage and resurrect."³⁵

In December 1952 the Knights of Da Gama unanimously repealed the 'European only' clause in their Constitution. Due to the

³² Interview with Denis Hurley, op. cit., Appendix p. 34.

³³ Interview with Denis Hurley, Ibid., p. 39.

³⁴ F. Coleman, op cit., p. 27.

³⁵ F. Coleman, Ibid., p. 26.

realities of the time as experienced by existing Knights and the fact that most had grown to accept as normal the status quo which supported the idea of segregation it was a step taken not without certain misgivings as to its success. However, the step had been taken to eliminate the exclusion of people of colour in terms of the Constitution. As pointed out earlier by Coleman, the exclusion was not intentional but more as a consequence of the social climate of the time - which saw separation as the normal mode for inter-racial social encounters. However, in the fray of the battle the Knights had lost their first Supreme Chaplain in the person of Fr. Emmet Neville, who had by this stage distanced himself from the Knights. Fr. Neville only made an exception by accepting to attend the Supreme Council of 1951. In the interim the Knights of Da Gama had recruited many members in the Transvaal, some of whom helped to generate new interest in the Order here in Natal. Fr. Emmet Neville eventually returned to the United States in 1953 and died on 4 June 1964.³⁶

A salient feature about the Knights of Da Gama is that they did not experience as a large membership as that the Knights Columbus, Columba, Columbanus and of the Southern Cross. This is most likely due to the fact that from the outset recruitment was among an elite white minority, in a country where Catholics were already a minority. The influence of the segregationist attitude handed down by the colonial system and the impact of apartheid all helped to create a climate whereby the segregation that existed in society continued to exist in the Catholic Church. In the first attempt to establish an Order of Catholic men, it was more strictly stipulated that these would have to be professional men. However, as the Knights of Da Gama developed the acceptance criteria eventually changed to accepting any Catholic gentlemen who were deemed to be of the calibre to be accepted into the Knights. That is Catholic men who were committed to their faith and regular and reliable within the parish community and society. This would have made it possible

³⁶ F. Coleman, *Ibid.*, p. 29.

for more people of colour to enter the Order as they would not have been debarred on account of their occupations. Since the majority of people of colour at this stage would not have been in the professional class of the South African population.

Another drawback to the development of the Knights in areas where specific racial groups resided was the decision not to allow councils comprising of specific racial groups. Council no. 16 in Durban North is an example of a Council that tried to recruit blacks into the Council as early as the 1960's.³⁷ According to a Knight who joined in 1953 attempts were made by various Council to recruit blacks into the organisation but these were not that successful:

"But also, you know, several Council's have had the experience of introducing black members. And a lot of them fell by the way side. They did not stick to it. I think they felt out of the normal run of things."³⁸

Due to the lack of opportunity for blacks to be assimilated easily during the apartheid period when the Separate Amenities Act prevented them from socializing with whites in public places, the number of black members recruited was very small. In what was previously Rhodesia the Councils had recruited black priests and teachers into the Order. But they too did not persevere. In Natal also the black recruits did not persevere. With the exception of some Councils, notably in the Durban area where the growth of members of colour in some Councils has been successful to date. It appears from the quote above that in some cases these new black members failed to fit in and in other cases the Knights of Da Gama failed to have any special appeal to these new recruits. The development of the Knights of Da Gama among the black Catholic population in South Africa still remains a challenge for the future.

³⁷ F. Coleman, Ibid., p. 30.

³⁸ Interview with Mr. Norman Dorkin in Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg on the 30 October 1996, Appendix. p. 54.

2.3. Circles of Influence

In an Information Brochure written with the intention of recruiting new members, the Knights placed an emphasis on the significance of having a network of people that could assist one in the areas of socializing and business. The brochure *These Men Called Knights* printed in 1953 points out the advantages of belonging to such an Order:

"Recently a man transferred from Durban to Johannesburg . He and his wife were sad to leave their many friends - and they recollected: it will make no difference , for immediately we'll have as many friends again in our new home. We shall not have to build up a circle of friends - it is there ready for us to receive. He is a Knight of Da Gama.

Another went on business from Johannesburg to Northern Rhodesia. His passport into the hearts and homes of men like himself went before him - he is a Knight of Da Gama.

In every town where there is a Council there are dozens and dozens of Catholic men who never before knew each other , now firm friends. And they are not strangers when they travel from their home-town to another where a Council exists; for they number their friends not only in their own towns but in many towns. ...

A few years ago a man started a business. How would he get on? He got on well, for he belonged to a brotherhood whose members - justice and prudence permitting - were glad to find clients for him."³⁹

The importance of the Order of the K.D.G. as a source of networking is focused upon very strongly. It would appear that this might well have been a reason for members joining. As this aspect was emphasised in the brochure cited above. The people that we spend most of our time with have a great influence on our attitudes and values. This raises the question of the exact nature of the influence of ordinary experiences such as loyalty to a group. As well as the compromises one makes in the process of establishing and maintaining acquaintances for social and business purposes. The ethos of the K.D.G. is one of serving the Church. However, the social nature of the Order is not to be overlooked as it is in the informal time that members of an organization spend together that sharing on the deeper issues of life and how they affect one begins occur. Our social network then becomes a micro-environment out of which a sub-culture emerges. For those within that sub-culture the rules and norms

³⁹ *These Men Called Knights*, p. 3.

are taken for granted. But outsiders need to be initiated into these groups in order to gain a sense of belonging.

The work environment, for example, becomes a significant platform for the formation of ideas about members of other race groups - as well as political and social norms in general. The circle of acquaintances that an individual socializes with are an important source from whence they formulate their ideas about society. It is for that reason that I questioned the informants about the racial attitudes that they encountered in the work place. And in the general social setting in which they had found themselves. In trying to understand contexts which helped to establish an attitude of treating black people differently, I felt it would be important to look at the work environment since most laymen spend a large part of their lives at work. In the work environment individuals are also initiated into practices that are established within that environment. In interviewing a Knight who originally came from the United Kingdom it became evident that there was a significant impact on him by racial attitudes prevalent in the work place. In the example below one sees how pressure was put on this individual by members of a trade union, furthering the privileged position of white workers. When immersed in such an environment the individual concerned had to eventually bow to the pressure. In this discussion with a Knight responsible for initiating new recruits into the K.D.G., he mentioned an experience which illustrates the racial mentality of some of the people where he worked in the late 1940's.

"I had this chappie who was my assistant and we had to build a scaffold for the brick-layers to do their work. And we were quite a way off the ground. And we were actually planking the scaffold with planks so they could be able to work on it. And being this way off the ground, I nailed my end of the plank - on this particular day when it came home to me - and my assistant being at the other end, I said : "Do have any nails with you?" He said: "Ja baas, I have some nails here." I said : "Well here is my hammer - nail that in." Well he took my hammer and proceeded to nail the other end of the plank. We no sooner started and when the local Union shop-steward who was a brick-layer came shooting across to me and he said: "What do you think your doing?" "What do you think I am doing - I am building a scaffold man. What are you talking about?" He said: "Well why is he nailing that in?" I said: "Well he is my assistant." I said: "To save me climbing all the way over to there to nail in and climbing all the way back again." I said: "He can nail that in." "Oh! no, he can not", he said. I said : "Why not?" He said:

"Your teaching him a trade." I said: " For God's sake! A man who is knocking a nail in, am I teaching him my trade? Because his knocking a nail in." He said : "You can't do it. I forbid you to do it or else I will call a strike on the job." "I will call everybody out", he said, "you are going against the whole Union and everything else." I said: "Oh well, O.K. then." [...] And that was the thing that brought it home to me, the prejudice in certain areas amongst the white community against blacks."⁴⁰

This incident points out how the local white shop-steward used his authority in a given work situation to coerce two other individuals in completing a task. It also points out the ridiculous lengths that such persons would go to in order to prevent a black person becoming more skilled. It points out how threatened that individual was within his work environment. However, since he was wielding a certain authority in the situation, his impractical suggestion was ultimately put into place. The work place, therefore, became an important arena for persons establishing a clear idea of certain race groups only being allowed to develop to a certain extend and not any further. This denial of access to skilled labour would also affect the financial standing of that person. As well as, the social status that is often associated with the type of employment in which one is engaged.

On the level of the Church there was also division between people of different language groups. In effect it amounted to the different race groups worshipping separately. These societal practises of the different race groups being separate was also accepted within the Church. It was pointed out in the introduction that the English and Zulu speaking groups within the Catholic community within Natal operated along separate lines. This separation was re-enforced within the Church which was then still uncritical of the segregationist norms which had evolved within South African society. Masses were celebrated separately for the different race groups who attended mass during different times of the day. This separation within the same parish environment is pointed out in the next quotation.

"Actually yes, in those days you did not have the other races mixing so freely as they do now. Even in the last few years

⁴⁰ Interview with Dave Williams in Pietermaritzburg on 31 October 1996, Appendix pp. 60-61.

which they gradually begun to do. They had Zulu mass like they still do now. But it was a Zulu mass and you very seldom - in fact I don't think I can recall thinking back to those days - seeing any blacks or Indians or anybody in the church itself. It was mainly a congregation of white people. I don't even recall seeing a black priest in those particular days. [...] They had got into that mould where they would not think of going to the white mass. Or as I say I don't think there is any fault of the whites themselves from a Church point of view. At least it is just that they themselves would not think of going to a white mass. They had their own mass and they congregated together and that was it. And no white would think of going to the Zulu mass either, that is another thing from that point of view as well. So it worked both ways."⁴¹

What is of interest is that the Zulu and English speaking communities acted as virtually two communities using the same facilities. There was the occasional exception of members of one language group attending the religious services organised for members of the other group. Due also to the fact that many white Catholics did not have an indigenous priest working with them, it denied the ordinary layman of the opportunity discovering the many indigenous clergy who were being ordained. In the quotation the informant also indicates that in his view the black people had got themselves into this mode of behaviour and could not get out of this "mould."

Another interesting aspect that emerged is the way some black people at the time would present themselves to white people in authority. Despite the fact that the approach would be consistent in terms of how an indigenous African would show respect for an authority figure within his/her own culture, in terms of Western culture these practices were viewed as unnecessary and self-demeaning. The cross cultural problem that ensued meant that the white person in the encounter was left feeling that the other person had abased himself or herself, and not just simply having showed respect for them as someone in authority. One of the Knights reflected on his experience which made this point more apparent to him:

"I know a chappie in Council 25, he was actually a manager of a sugar mill up on the North Coast. We were talking and he said: "Well, you know, there was an old man who came into my office the other day. And he knelt on the floor to talk to me. And I said: "You don't have to do that. Sit on the chair." This was the attitude of Natal people. "Hai khona baas, no Baba no." And you

⁴¹ Interview with Dave Williams, Ibid., Appendix p. 63.

see, when he had stated his case and I had spoken to him, and then he got up. He then walked backwards out of the office saying "Baba, Nkosi ..." I said to him: "Samuel, you don't have to do that. Walk out as if you?" "Oh, Baba..." That was the outlook of the black himself. Because I think he got so used to being in that position, he thought that this was his position, so what the heck. And that was the position in Natal at the time. I think only because the blacks themselves had got themselves into that servile position. They knew no other way around it."⁴²

The traditional manner for a Zulu to approach an authority figure would be to bow and almost cower as he approached or left the person in authority. This was intended to show respect to the person in authority. However, it does high-light the subservient attitude that the authority figure would detect in their subordinate. It would appear from the context of the example that this is what led some white people to believe that this was the culture of African people in any case. As the example points out, the manager of the sugar plantation did not expect the elderly Zulu man to approach him in that manner. Yet, the Zulu man would have it no other way. This type of encounter certainly indicates a certain style of power relations that began to take place as these two men from different cultures engaged in this social interaction. Certainly it re-enforces the subservient position adopted by the Zulu man. However, whether this is done simply out his own cultural background or because in his mind he perceives his employer to expect it cannot be known. Nevertheless, it disempowers him and allows the employer who is already in authority to receive more power through the interaction.

We therefore see, that the milieu in which white males found themselves within the Church and in the country re-enforced this idea of segregation and the notion of superiority. These are issues that were accepted as part of the reality of the day. The Knights of Da Gama did not intentionally discriminate against people of colour. However, due to the situation in the country it is understandable that not many people of colour chose to join the K.D.G. as it was not the norm for the races to mix. Another

⁴² Interview with Dave Williams, Ibid., Appendix p. 62.

Knight, who has been a K.D.G. member Council No. 9. in Pietermaritzburg, reflects on this point:

"The whole thing is you know, it was really difficult to socialise because everybody was separated. Amenities were separated, and if you didn't have the facilities for that it just didn't go."⁴³

A distinction should also be drawn between the position of the Order and the ideas of individuals within the K.D.G. that might well not have held the official line as their personal opinion. The exception was eventually made to accept Lebanese persons as honorary whites and eventually the organisation was opened up in 1952 for all to join. The extent of these circles of influence in terms of making contacts for ecclesiastical and business pursuits was stunted by the lack of attraction of the Order to the majority of Catholics who were black. It is important perhaps to now consider what aspects of the Order made it unattractive to people of colour.

2.4. Rites and Rituals

It has been the experience of the K.D.G. in the earlier years that many of the persons of colour who were initiated did not persevere within the Order. "I think they felt out of the normal run of things."⁴⁴ said one informant. This statement indicates their inability to really fit into the group. A unique aspect of the K.D.G. is the important role played by rituals in the General Assemblies and the Ritual of Initiation of Knights and the Elevations to the Second and Third Degree within the Order. Alan Woodrow was very enthusiastic about heraldry and wanted to "emphasise this aspect of chivalry and, in particular, its religious connotation, to the utmost."⁴⁵ *These Men Called Knights* describes briefly the intention of the ceremonies within

⁴³ Interview with Norman Dorkin in Scottsville on 30/10/96, Appendix pp. 55-56.

⁴⁴ Interview with Norman Dorkin, Appendix p. 54.

⁴⁵ F. Coleman, op. cit., p. 144.

the K.D.G.

"The ceremonies of initiation into the First Degree, and the elevation to the Second and Third Degrees are not silly; they each have a solemn purpose, and they inculcate fundamental Catholic principles. They make a profound impression upon the well intentioned candidate - and on those who have been through the ceremonies again and again. That is why men stick to the Order and love it."⁴⁶

It is the rituals of the Knights that distinguish them from other organisation of men within the Church. An appreciation of pomp and ceremonial are essential for a correct understanding and love for the rituals engaged in within the K.D.G. However, since rituals are often culturally conditioned, it is a fallacy to believe that a Catholic from an African cultural background would elicit the same response and meaning from the ritual as a Catholic from a European cultural background.

This point is illustrated well by an informant who described the initiation of a candidate from an African background having the opposite experience from the Ritual of Elevation than what the ritual was intended to achieve.

"A very well educated black person. [...] But when he went from First Degree to the Second Degree, the actual ceremony of elevation rather upset him. [...] In fact he has since going up to the Second Degree or Senior Degree which is strictly a spiritual degree. In that degree they actually have meetings or lectures on the catechism and they deal with spiritual matters. [...] And in fact he has refused to go any further because of this particular elevation ceremony. I personally do not see anything in it. In the fact it just brings home to us what would happen if we were suddenly called from this earthly climb? Would we be in the state of grace, that we would have no fears of departing this earth? That is what it brings home. That is the impact of the elevation. But the thing is that we use a coffin to illustrate this. At one particular point in the ceremony they are blindfolded, so they don't know what wood they are touching. And I as the initiator, I say to him, that he must place his hands on the wood. And then he has to say: "That touching this wood I swear that I will remain faithful to and ..." And then I go to him and I whisper in his ear, and I say: "Bend forward and kiss the wood between your hands." And he bends forward, and kisses the coffin. And then they have to all knee round the coffin and they are told - it is all in darkness, just candles - then they say, or I as the initiator would say: "When your blindfolds are removed you will not take your eyes from the principal object." And of course when it is taken they see the coffin in front of them. And then I say: "Just think if this night you were called? Would you be prepared?" And that sort of thing. That was the thing that exercised a negative impact on him." [...] I think that among the black races, as you probably know, there are certain superstitions about all sorts of things. And I think that sort of thing might dissuade them. [...] But I

⁴⁶ *These Men Called Knights*, op. cit., p. 10.

think that is mainly a superstitious thing, to see this. And I think it is in their culture although he is a well educated man."⁴⁷

Despite the fact that this example is of a more contemporary event it helps to make the point that cultural difference do affect the way people interpret symbols and ceremony within a ritual act. In the example given above complete aversion was induced by having the candidate kiss a coffin during the elevation ceremony from the First to the Second Degree. Whilst being blind-folded brings to light the different attitudes various individuals and cultures have towards objects connected with death. This the informant interprets as being the result of certain superstitious beliefs held by the person being initiated. The original intention of the ritual was to instill a deep sense of commitment within the candidate. However, the result was anything but that as the candidate had refused to proceed any further. Later on in the interview the informant mentioned that there have also been some white men who have objected to the format of the Rituals of Elevation. If the persons being elevated proceed to the Third Degree they are then placed on a cross in that Ritual of Elevation. This might have a more detrimental effect than the original intention of the ritual, which is to be identified with Christ in His passion. So the desired effect of the ritual is not always achieved.

Another example of how symbols are understood differently by different cultures is in the use of the sword in certain ritual actions engaged in by the K.D.G. The example that follows points out there is a sense of loss experienced by the older members as they see significant elements of the ritual being transformed.

"To a lot of us older chaps, who I suppose are traditionalists - that's the thing. The first blow to our perception of the ritual was the fact that they took away the sword and replaced it with the Bible. The Bishop said that the sword was a symbol of violence and that was one of the reasons they did not think it was appropriate. They also at the Convention refused to have the sword in the church. But is you go back in history to the crusades - where I think a lot of the Knightly ideas were based on the crusades - when they fought for the Church. Before a Knight went on the crusades, he spent the night before the altar.

⁴⁷ Interview with Dave Williams, op. cit., Appendix pp. 71-72.

He put his sword on the altar before he went and fought in the crusades. We don't look on it as a symbol of violence at all."⁴⁸

The controversy over the use of the sword in the Opening Ritual at the start of each General Assembly makes a similar point. For some in the assembly the sword evokes the grand memory of the crusades conquering in the name of Christ and furthering the aims of the Church. The interpretation of such a symbol would not be the same for someone from a people who had been subjugated by the crusades or even by colonial powers. The sword in that instance becomes a symbol of the subjugation and oppression of the one who has been subjugated. This helps us to realise that symbols are potent, convey different meanings, and have different effects depending on who is interpreting the symbol. The person who has been the victim of conquest will view that instrument as a means of violence and not see it as something positive. The object in and of itself might be neutral, but the interpretation of the object is coloured by the personal experience of the one viewing it or experiencing the ritual. This is the way symbols and ritual evoke different responses from candidates who have different backgrounds. In initiating people from a homogenous cultural background there is likely to be less divergence in the various interpretations. However, the more varied the cultural backgrounds of those being initiated and elevated, the more complex the interpretation of these symbols and rituals. This may lead to persons of colour not feeling as comfortable as those members who are in the majority, and who share a very similar cultural heritage. Aware of these problems the K.D.G. have now simplified the ritual for the Opening of General Assemblies and the Initiation Ceremony for receiving recruits. At present the rituals for the Elevation Ceremonies are being reviewed. This is difficult for the older members, who have a deep love for the ritual, but it is important in a cross-cultural context if new members from other cultures are to be recruited.

Another example was also cited, which indicates the attitudes towards certain duties and the way they are perceived. When a

⁴⁸ Interview with Dave Williams, op. cit., Appendix p.73.

Knight is initiated into the First Degree there are certain duties that he has to perform. The Knights in the Third Degree are in a different strata within the Hierarchy of the Order and therefore enjoy a higher status.

"I think you are right, it was started as a professional men's Order. For lawyers, and doctors, and architects and all these professional men. I think we were in this Council anyway. I was, so to say, the fore-runner of the common man you might say. Who was not in the upper strata of professionalism - in the professional order. But and in those days of course in the First Degree - as a First Degree member I would have to when we had tea and cake of the G.A. - it was up to me to serve. The Grand Knight would not come and get his own tea. That would be the day. I had to go with his tea and his cake and say: "Oh! Grand Knight, here is your tea." And take the cake so that he could make his choice of the cake. And that was it. The First Degree was a First Degree, and that was it."⁴⁹

Within the sub-culture of the Knights, the ritual of serving the Grand Knight his tea might be a rather quaint custom. However, within an apartheid context that takes on different overtones. It was usually the black people in the society who tended to do the more menial tasks. This complicates matters since that gesture among equals is intended as an act of service. However, for a black person this might well raise negative emotions as the person could see this as a further abasement. And yet the problem of having to start at the bottom of an organisation is a reality that needs to be faced. Yet also, the challenge to be of service is a valid one. It is just that the social context would have the impact of complicating the issue. In addition, the fact that the K.D.G. was started as an organisation for professional men could also have an impact. Since the majority of people of colour do not belong to the professional class. It would be reasonable to surmise that someone in a less prestigious occupation would not want to further demean himself by joining a group who in terms of their occupations were above the niche that he occupied in society.

Changes to the ritual have occurred over the years with the aim of simplifying the ritual in many instances. Older members have a true loyalty and love for the ritual and as it is transformed there seems to be a certain experience of loss. Nevertheless,

⁴⁹ Interview with Dave Williams, op. cit., Appendix p. 65.

it is important for the ritual to be re-assessed as the situation in the country changes. Since rituals are part of a particular sub-culture. As the sub-culture changes the rituals that such groups engaged in need to be tested to see if they achieve the purpose they were established to achieve. And the politics of racial prejudice and the consequent hurt incurred by the past racial practices needs to be evaluated as they are all part of the over-all equation to establish a climate where people of colour can feel more comfortable and develop a sense of belonging within an organisation like the K.D.G.

2.5. The Ambiguities of Loyalty

When studying the K.D.G. another important issue that emerged was loyalty to Church and to country. Francis Coleman cites the 1950 Information Brochure in describing the kind of man that the K.D.G. were attempting to recruit:

"We want no weaklings, no fair weather friends; we want men - Catholic men - who will stand by a Brother, who will stand by the Order of the Knights of da Gama, who will stand by their Bishop, their Church and their Country - like good soldiers- through thick and thin."⁵⁰

Of interest to me was : "How did the Knights of Da Gama faced with the difficult situation of being faithful to their bishop, their Church and their country?" Especially in those instances when those three sectors were at variance with one another.

Archbishop Denis Hurley had been supportive of the K.D.G. in Natal. In 1945 Bishop O' Leary appointed Fr. William Patrick Whelan as the spiritual director of the K.D.G. in the Transvaal. Fr. Whelan, who was later made Bishop, together with Dr. Frank Proksch had helped to establish the K.D.G. in Johannesburg. In 1964 both these bishops who had been supportive of the K.D.G. entered into a public debate over the race question and held different views on the subject. On the 16 January 1964, Archbishop Denis Hurley delivered the Hoernle Memorial Lecture

⁵⁰ F. Coleman, op. cit., p. 4.

in Cape Town on the topic of Apartheid a Crisis for the Christian conscience in which he condemned apartheid and stated that:

"In South Africa the circumstances are such that justice for the non-White races cannot be achieved in a common society with the Whites, because the latter fear that in a common society they will be submerged and lose what is most precious to them, their identity as a white race. [...] In the light of all this it must be concluded that separate development in South Africa cannot be pursued without injustice and is therefore, not in accord with the Christian ethic."⁵¹

Later this lecture was published in the *Southern Cross*. Archbishop Whelan responded by forecasting an optimistic future for South Africa which would not necessarily demand the eradication of apartheid.⁵² This now set the stage to show the split that existed in the thinking within the Southern African Catholic Bishops, that is between Hurley and Whelan. However, so as to avoid the saga getting out of hand - the Apostolic Delegate at the time, Archbishop Joseph McGeough, ensured that the matter did not develop any further.⁵³ In questioning informants within the K.D.G. none could recall that particular incident having much of an impact on the Knights and their policies at the time. However, the significance of the incident lies in the fact that there was a basic opposition between Hurley's opposition of apartheid, Bishop Whelan's attempting to focus on the positive that he saw within the policies instituted by the government of the time, and that position held by the Nationalist Party that was then in power. Bishop Whelan was interpreted to be justifying apartheid by some members of the public. Although there were times when he was vehemently opposed to some of the consequences of apartheid in terms of its effects. Especially when the government wanted to interfere in the running of the Catholic schools. So even for Bishop Whelan there was a tussle of loyalties between supporting the Church and trying to trust in the initiatives that the government was introducing to solve the social and political problems of the time.

⁵¹ *Southern Cross*, 5 February 1964, p. 9.

⁵² *Southern Cross*, 19 February 1964, p. 1.

⁵³ Interview with Denis Hurley, op. cit., Appendix p. 36.

When discussing the issue of loyalty to the Church and the State, it was pointed out that the K.D.G. was not supporting the apartheid system as put forward by the Nationalist Party. But that many members saw themselves having to support the country despite which particular party was in power. That in the initiation ceremony there was a pledge to be loyal to the Church and the country. In a later incident between Archbishop Hurley and the K.D.G. over the issue of conscription there was a difference of opinion since some members within the K.D.G. interpreted Hurley as not supporting their sons on the border because of a statement he had made. By this stage members within the K.D.G. felt that loyalty included the possibility of questioning what the Hierarchy were saying in certain instances.

"But, the general idea was that we were quite prepared to be behind the Bishops. But, if they made any statements which reflected on the laity themselves, and it was not what they [K.D.G.] thought, then they were quite entitled to question the Hierarchy and what they had said."⁵⁴

This points out a shift from the more traditional view which meant an unquestioning and blind obedience to what the Hierarchy were be promoting. Within the context Archbishop Hurley emphasised that he was speaking in his personal capacity and that the statement should have been understood as such. However, the differing views of loyalty towards the Hierarchy led to a Grand Knight at the time resigning, as he saw the K.D.G. not being faithful to their pledge. Nevertheless, the situation brought to a head the importance of clarifying the relationship between the K.D.G.'s loyalties to the Church and the country within this situation of conflict and divergent opinions.

⁵⁴ Interview with Dave Williams, op. cit., Appendix p. 73.

2.6. Conclusion

When the K.D.G. was first established in 1943 ,it was not intentionally created to be racist. However, from the outset it was intended for Catholic gentlemen from the professional class. When that failed, it then opened its doors to men who were well respected Catholic gentlemen regardless what their occupations were. Nevertheless, people of colour could not join due to the fact that the members of the Order had been affected by the racial norms inherited from the colonial past and therefore saw separation between the races as being normal within society. This attitude was first challenged in 1947 when the issue of accepting Lebanese Catholic gentlemen in the Order arose for the first time. The differences of opinion regarding this issue led to the co-founder of the K.D.G. viz. Fr. Emmet Neville distancing himself from the Order. Eventually in 1952 the specific reference to "European" in the Constitution was repealed.

Despite the official barrier being removed, the K.D.G. as an organisation did not manage to successfully recruit and retain black people who have shown interest over the years. One factor seems to be the emphasis on ritual that was originally intended to deepen the commitment of the Knight being initiated or elevated. Yet, the significance of the ritual for the K.D.G. is vital. Since it is this aspect that distinguishes the Order from other organisations for Catholic laymen. This has in some cases provoked very different responses among those engaging in the ritual. Some of this is due to the fact that rituals are not devoid of cultural traces. The symbols that are used within the ritual do come from the past e.g. the sword originating from the period of the crusades. But today the significance of emphasising that aspect of our past has been called into question. As persons who come from those subjugated people raise new questions about the "benefits" of this process of proselytizing. The secret nature of the rituals intended to enhance the experience of the recruits and Knights being elevated seems to distress persons from backgrounds that have a cautious

attitude towards objects such as coffins. The cross-cultural problem is a real one since those who have been initiated in a particular manner in the past hold a sentimental attachment to that ritual. In appeasing the needs of the new recruits, one ends up watering down the impact of the experience to which the older members have been accustomed. The Second Vatican Council simplified the liturgy of the eucharist and many of the ritual practices that existed in religious communities before. The K.D.G. have also made changes to their rituals so as to keep abreast of the times. In view of the fact that the Order now hopes to reach out and develop members in the African community, the question of the inculturation of some of the rituals in terms of African culture needs to be delved into for the future.

In terms of the social practices of the apartheid era it is not difficult to see why black persons would not be comfortable going through the Degrees towards full Knighthood in the Third Degree. The hierarchical sub-culture whereby the Knights in the lower Degree are responsible for doing more menial tasks re-enforces a sense of having to adopt this servile position within the Order. The practice of lower ranking members doing more menial tasks would not be as much of an issue since this is part of the training of the person. However, within a culture where it is taken for granted that certain menial tasks is the sole preserve of certain groups of people, the racial overtones of the general social setting are bound to contaminate the initial intention of the process of initiation. Is emphasising of the rank of the Knight indispensable? Can other ways of having members prove loyalty and humility not be a possible way of avoiding persons feeling that they are being demeaned by the kind of tasks they are expected to perform?

Within the K.D.G. there are moments when the dual loyalty expected towards one's country and Church do come into conflict. This became especially evident in 1948 when the Nationalist Party began to implement apartheid and the Catholic Bishops in 1952 made their first condemnation of the segregationist practices

prevalent in South African society. In the same year the K.D.G. removed any trace of a stipulation regarding race within its Constitution. This does not mean that individual members might well have subscribed to the segregationist norms of socializing between different races within South Africa. This is illustrated well in issue regarding the acceptance of Lebanese into the Order. Since this controversy had started in 1947 before the Nationalists had even come to power. The struggle between personal views and the official line of the Order complicates the already difficult conflict that sometimes emerges in trying to be loyal to both Church and country.

In looking at what the K.D.G. emphasised the most as it was established and grew through this period of the implementation of apartheid, it is the ritual that becomes the most salient feature in helping to create a bond of solidarity among a group of Catholic laymen who found themselves to be a religious minority. The ritual has been the source of their bonding and indicates to us the importance of ritual in lay organisations. However, in view of the fact that not many black people feel attracted to the K.D.G., the ritual which has proved to be a source of unity needs to be modified so as to have a greater appeal to the sector of the Catholic community that the K.D.G. hopes to recruit. It is then that the K.D.G. as an Order can say that within her ranks the motto on their her coat of arms rings true: "*Ut Omnes Unum Sint.*"

CHAPTER 3

THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S UNION (C.W.A.)

"Cultural anthropology, in both theory and practice has afforded historians languages for discussing the symbolic meanings of the body, in particular as contextualised within systems of social exchange; and in a rather similar way, sociology, and medical sociology above all, have encouraged historians to treat the body as the crossroads between self and society."⁵⁵

The Catholic Women's Union was founded in Cato Manor, Durban during the Annual Congress of the Women's Sodality in April 1956. Its objective was to build unity among Catholic African women in Natal, especially within the Archdiocese of Durban. To date, there are no official figures regarding the number of their members. However, they are without doubt the most numerous of the three lay organisations covered in this study. They have members in the majority of parishes in the Archdiocese of Durban, which covers a large portion of Natal. They constitute the majority of lay people who make up the Catholic Church in Natal, considering that in many areas the active parishioners within the Church are women. Their role is to support the parish, their families and the society in which they find themselves.

3.1. Forging Unity within Diversity

Among African Catholics the Catholic African Union (C.A.U.) had served as a means of co-ordinating the various sodalities within the Dioceses. These comprised of groups such as the Sacred Heart Sodality and the Legion of Mary which consisted of both men and women, as well as the St. Anne's Sodality which was an organisation specifically for married women. These groups organised large annual congresses which would take up a theme and invite speakers to address them. From the discussion which followed resolutions would then be passed. Although the C.A.U. did an excellent job of bringing these various lay organisations

⁵⁵ R. Porter, "The History the Body", in P. Burke, ed., *New Perspectives in Historical Writing*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 207.

together so as to co-ordinate their efforts, there was however still much division. The division seemed to be more noticeable among the women as they all wore different uniforms and only tended to mix with others from the sodality to which they belonged.

"People of the Sodality of the Sacred Heart were dressing in black and white. And those that belonged to the Sodality of St. Anne wore black and blue. There was a sort of friction among them. So to stop this friction the Bishops decided there should be a Union. And particularly Bishop Hurley took a lead in this Union."⁵⁶

By forming a Union of the African women it was hoped that some of the friction and animosity that had developed between these different groups would be resolved. At Inchanga lived Mrs. Ellen Makai, one of the women responsible for promoting this new moment to unite African women within the Catholic Church. The other influential woman was Mrs. Catherine Gumede from Cato Manor in Durban, who had met Mrs. Makhai through their work as members of the teaching profession. These two women approached Archbishop Hurley in 1954 and spoke about the need to have an organisation which would be a vehicle for uniting these various sodalities. Discussions continued between Mrs. Makhai, Mrs. Gumede and Archbishop Hurley, who recalls:

"We tried to bring all the women together - at least the Zulu speaking women. I thought it a bit of a disadvantage to have Sacred Heart Women, St. Anne's Women and Catholic Union Women. I asked Bishop Khumalo, then a priest at that time, to try and promote a stronger unity within them all. And just call it the Women's Union and get on with it. But the method they used again was mainly the Congress method. Then of course they had branch level reporting from the Congress and preparing for the Congress. The Congress was very much the great educational fulcrum for the women, and for what groups of men there were. But the women were much more conspicuous than the men. And in the old days they belonged to the C.A.U., the Catholic African Union - which later became the Catholic Africa Organization under the Constitution drafted and formulated by Fr. Howard St. George."⁵⁷

It was during the Congress of April 1956 held at St. Anne's Parish at Cato Manor that the Catholic Women's Union was eventually formed. The first President of the C.W.U. was Mrs. Catherine Gumede, the Vice-President was Mrs. Ellen Makhai, the

⁵⁶ Interview with Ildephonsa Zikalala in Pietermaritzburg on 26 October 1996, Appendix p. 25.

⁵⁷ Interview with Denis Hurley, op. cit., Appendix p. 41.

Secretary was Mrs. Tekla Skhosana who resigned after a year and was replaced by Mrs. Rose Nkabinde.⁵⁸ The first Executive Committee would have three additional members viz. Mrs. Ndaba, Mrs. Anastasia Skhakhane and Mrs. Theresa Sithole. The women chose as their spiritual director Father Dominic Khumalo OMI who was teaching at Inchanga and serving as priest at the Bethlehem out-station attached to the Inchanga Mission. The word Union was chosen because it comprised of groups that already existed.

"Archbishop Hurley insisted on three points. He said we should help the women to learn to understand their faith, their religious belief, and how to put it into practice so as to become true christians. One of the aims therefore is that they should be a convinced and committed christians in their way of life. Secondly, they should learn ways of spreading the Good News wherever they are and whatever the situation. [...] So that they become apostles, first of all in their family and then from there spreading outside. That is the second aim. And the final big aim is that, they had to be people who could see the needs of the society where they were living. And try to respond to that. In other words to develop some sense of leadership. These were three basic aims Archbishop Hurley always hammered on."⁵⁹

The vision of the C.W.U. was of being committed Christians, spreading the Gospel and responding to the needs their local area within the Archdiocese of Durban. The creation of the C.W.U helped to resolve the dreadful divisions that used to exist among Catholic women within the different sodalities. Under the guidance of Fr. Dominic Khumalo, the movement gradually gained an ever increasing following. Eventually the majority of parishes in the Archdiocese of Durban would have parishioners belonging to the C.W.U.

3.2. Perpetual Minors and Maids

Within South African society African women suffered the double oppression of being black and being female. The racial discrimination against African women in the public arena was encapsulated in the State giving them the legal recognition of being perpetual minors. That apart from her father or husband

⁵⁸ Interview with Dominic Khumalo in Pietermaritzburg on 25 October 1996, Appendix pp. 12-13.

⁵⁹ Interview with Dominic Khumalo, Ibid., Appendix p. 16.

an African woman was trapped in the ultimate fate of being regarded as a child before the law for the rest of her life.

"Well the government did not regard us as women. A black woman was nothing else but a perpetual minor. She could not think, she could not make decisions because she was treated as a perpetual minor. Fortunately by being in this Catholic Women's Union, we were taught that in front of God we are all equal. And we should do equal work of bringing up our children in a Catholic way."⁶⁰

This re-enforced the fact that a black woman during this period could not take control of her life because she was not considered capable before the law of making her own decisions. In the interviews with Ildephonsa Zikalala and Elizabeth Mlangeni this was really emphasised as a reason that made them feel put down as people.

Living in a multi-cultural society meant that African women were also subjected to the prejudice of those in that society. One informant related her experience of going to town during a period when she was studying nursing.

"Apartheid did affect us as African women. At that time I was a student nurse at the Benedictine hospital in Nongoma. At the same time I joined the Legion of Mary, the name of which was the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary. In this Presidium we used to pray the rosary particularly for the sick. And at the same time I belonged to the Sodality of the Children of Mary which helped us very much in being brought up as virgins. This Sodality also helped in producing vocations. It was during this time that we experienced a lot of apartheid. And when we went out of the hospital to Nongoma to shop. One of the shops was called Irons. [...] I have just forgotten the Zulu name, but the name of this shop was Irons. We experienced a lot of apartheid there. Because these white men when they saw us, they said we think we are Europeans, we think we are white - we should bear in mind that we will die being black. We should not just dress up like this thinking that we are white. We are only kaffir maids."⁶¹

It is these kinds of experiences to which African women were subjected that affected their self-confidence detrimentally, in that it stressed the fact that they were different and also inferior. This would lead to the importance of focusing on helping to develop their confidence. This was eventually achieved by their coming together as women. Out of that experience they then began to feel they could assert themselves more. The issue of dress comes up in the context of the excerpt

⁶⁰ Interview with Ildephonsa Zikalala, op. cit., Appendix p. 26.

⁶¹ Ibid., Appendix p. 25.

indicating that African woman adopting western style clothing were subjected to verbal harassment. It is not clear whether those commenting wanted these women to retain traditional African clothing or whether they were making the point that wearing western clothing could never turn a black person into a white person. The incident nevertheless points to the significance of the style of clothing that African women wore. This is important because adopting western style clothing meant being victimised by those who supported the idea that African women should remain in their traditional dress. For this reason the actual clothing worn by African women became a cross-road between herself and the society, as it indicated her options in terms of she portrayed her personal identity.

Another aspect of oppression that African women were subjected to was in the area of education. Another member of the C.W.U. who is also a nurse pointed out that the way apartheid affected her detrimentally was through the education to which she was subjected.

"My experience was very serious because I was student that time. We were not treated properly. There were so many laws that defeated us from doing what we wanted to do. As Africans we were so put off. We didn't know what to do because everything was strict, strict order. Eventually the exams we were taking caused us to be divided. You see: Bantu - English. And at that time it was so serious for us because we wanted to be treated equally. We wanted to have the same education. We saw that our education was inferior. We couldn't do anything with it because it was so going down, going down. As for official languages, we couldn't afford going on because we were just given short period of 30 minutes. After that is Zulu right through because you were an African. That's what made us feel that the Europeans are just pressing us down."⁶²

This points to the fact that education was used as a tool to keep the African people from progressing. The issue of language is also important since the medium of education in the vernacular meant that the students would not have the opportunity to become more proficient in the official languages of English and Afrikaans. This again led to a feeling of inferiority because the unequal educational opportunities given to black people was intended to prevent them from advancing.

⁶² Elizabeth Mlangeni interviewed in Pietermaritzburg on 30 October 1996, Appendix p. 45.

Within the Catholic Church there was also a mixed experience in terms of positive and negative events described by the informants. One needs to continue to keep in mind the fact that the Church still operated separately with the English speaking and Zulu speaking communities. The only real overlap of the two groups occurs with the white priests who were serving parishes where African people resided.

"Well apartheid has always been there, even in church there was apartheid. Because black was black and white was white. Then when services were being conducted they were conducted for all black and white alike. We were at the hospital - there was Christ the King which is where black people used to go and there was the chapel for the nuns. We nurses used to attend Holy Mass in the chapel with the nuns. But the black nuns did experience that they were black because they used to walk bare-foot while the other nuns used to wear - the white ones - they used to wear shoes."⁶³

In this quotation from the interview we see that the impact of apartheid was felt a lot more by the informant as an African women. She even points to the discrimination she saw within religious communities. Yet, she had also accepted the separation as the way things were. Again highlighting that as a result of the colonial period even many African people had accepted the separation despite the fact that they were the ones who were most disadvantaged by retaining the status quo. Another informant said that there were two different attitudes experienced with the priests of the time:

"And these Catholic priests, they were the people who comforted us. We would be free speaking with them. But some of them were just no where. We could not be supported that these are our priests. They were just as rough as these white people - the boers. They were just the same to us. But as we know they were christians, we just fell down to them and made them use us as they wish. We just obeyed what they were saying to us as our priests. But these ordinary Europeans we could not, we were just two lines apart. Africans, whites, different people. Even if we speak with their children, the child would insult you because he has been told that you are nothing. That is how apartheid defeated us. We were not free."⁶⁴

Here we see that some of the Catholic priests serving in African communities were a comfort but that others had adopted the attitudes of the day and treated the parishioners in a less than satisfactory way. The expression "we just fell down to them and

⁶³ Interview with Ildephonsa Zikalala, op. cit., Appendix p. 25.

⁶⁴ Interview with Elizabeth Mlangeni, op. cit., Appendix p. 45.

made them use us as we wish" indicated the experience of being a victim once again. The informant then goes on to say that even white children treated them badly because of the lack of respect and lack of status that African women were subjected to at the time.

The focus is very personal because as victims of racial discrimination these women were gradually having their spirits broken. And due to the fact that the reasons for the discrimination was the colour of the person's skin or the way in which they chose to dress, it affected the way they would react and present themselves in public. It is for these reasons that their means of coping with the situation was by dressing in a manner that they deemed to be dignified, developing confidence and working towards achieving a better education. And their belonging to the C.W.U. helped them in achieving these goals.

3.3. A Sacred Bond: Uniforms developing Unity

When speaking about the importance of the uniform the Spiritual Director of the C.W.U., Bishop Dominic Khumalo, said it was important to keep in mind the importance of distinctive dress in traditional Zulu society. That within African society the way a woman dresses is a deliberate statement about her identity. In the following excerpt this is elaborated even further:

"If you meet a girl who is above 15 but not yet officially engaged to any boy, you will see by the way of her attire as she wears mostly beads. They show it. And if you meet another who is above that age - engaged I suppose. The attire will be quite different from the first one. If you see newly married women, again a different attire. The uniform is very significant for the Africans. That is why you will not easily make them change. Now there is of course a big change. One of the things you should remember: an African women is supposed out of respect for her husband, is supposed to put something on the head. It is strange that I said it is pagan and yet that is what St. Paul said that the woman must cover her head all the time. Now, the uniform among the African is very significant. It is automatically an identifying thing. You are seen to be what your are by the uniform. Unfortunately some of the non-African people condemn that, since they see vanity in that. It is not vanity, it is a very good cultural practice which serves its purpose very well. I give you an example. A woman who is a married woman living with her husband, if she appears to be dressed like an unmarried woman it can be taken - I don't say it is always, but it can

easily be taken as a sign of improper behaviour. No self-respect because the married state is far more respectful than a younger unmarried state, and you must show that except for if you are up to mischief."⁶⁵

In this way we see that the attire of an African woman is linked to her sense of her personal identity. With the discarding of traditional garments for females there was a need to re-enforce that cultural practice and that was done by means of adopting a uniform. One of the informants speaks about it also being a means of proselytising since by wearing a uniform you are indicating that you are a Catholic. However, there was bound to be a problem since the C.W.U. did not intend for its members to leave the Sodalities to which they previously belonged. Since some of the members belonged to the St. Anne's Sodality, others to the Sacred Heart Sodality or the Legion of Mary. All of which had their own uniforms. Others who were not members of Sodalities at that stage had no uniform at all. It would be difficult for a women to discard her previous uniform to which she felt loyalty since it indicated the sodality to which they belonged.

In 1964 at St. Peter's Seminary in Hammanskraal there was a meeting of all the Sodalities of the various Dioceses throughout the country. Seventeen Dioceses were represented and at this meeting. The question was raised of trying to bring these different Sodalities together. After fierce discussion it emerged that many of the women had grown tired of having to change their uniforms each time they moved to a new parish. A Mrs. Mohlokong from Manzini in Swaziland pointed out that she had to change her Sacred Heart uniform on four occasions because her husband was a teacher and had been transferred four times⁶⁶. This meant that the Sacred Heart Sodality alone had four different uniforms. This was complicated by the fact that some of these women felt a loyalty to the uniforms they had been wearing until that point in time. Eventually, agreement was

⁶⁵ Interview with Dominic Khumalo, op. cit., Appendix 19.

⁶⁶ Interview with Dominic Khumalo, Ibid., Appendix p. 18.

reached and it was decided that all the women would wear purple no matter which area they lived in. The only exception was the Diocese of Mariannhill where the St. Anne's Sodality was very strong and they felt that they wanted to retain their blue uniforms.

At a subsequent Congress of the C.W.U. the new purple uniform was presented to the members of the Union and it was very well received. The women felt that the purple represented the Church as it was one of the liturgical colours.

"And to make it one thing - we wanted to make unity. We said we must all dress in this purple. And this purple resembles Lent time. When it is Lent the altar is just purple and the priest is dressed in purple. So we chose this colour purple to resemble the Church. When we wear this purple colour, we say this is the dignity dress for an African woman in the Union."⁶⁷

The women of the C.W.U. now felt united due to the agreement reached on the common uniform for all members. The purple is specifically meaningful for them as it symbolises the prayer and penance which are part of the liturgical seasons of Lent and Advent. It also helps to create a bond between the women and the priesthood in that during these liturgical seasons the priest is dressed in purple. The sacred aspect of wearing this uniform is particularly important for the women who come from an African cultural background where there is no dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. This combined with the concept of dress signifying the identity of the woman wearing the garment helped to create a sacred bond that became a unifying force within the C.W.U. Archbishop Hurley points this out in the following extract from an interview:

"They of course had a great dedication to the uniform. It seems to be an expression of identity, especially of community identity. Some priests were very much opposed to it and told the women it was not necessary to dress up that way, but that hurt the women because to them their dress was something sacred. A symbol of their sacred unity, their religious unity in the Women's Union."⁶⁸

For the women within the C.W.U. it was a great achievement to reach a situation where there was one common uniform forming a

⁶⁷ Interview with Elizabeth Mlangeni, op. cit., Appendix p. 48.

⁶⁸ Interview with Denis Hurley, op. cit., Appendix p. 41.

sacred bond that expressed their identity as a united Catholic community. This is in direct contrast to the division and lack of respect shown towards these women by the discriminatory policies of the government of the time. They built a solidarity around a significant organisation that helped them develop a real sense of their own dignity and self-worth as African women.

"This uniform of our is of paramount importance in that it stopped all the disputes that used to exist between the Sodality of St. Anne, the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Legion of Mary. It made us one in uniform and to work together, because we never used to work together. And it gave us confidence in ourselves, that when we are united we can work well and be successful in our work."⁶⁹

The uniform being a source of sacred bonding among the women of the C.W.U. lends significance to the quote by R. Porter cited earlier, where he points out that "the body is the crossroads between the self and society." It is for this reason that the wearing of uniforms by the C.W.U. needs to be assessed in the light of the social context out of which it emerged and the continuing solidarity that the uniform brings about within the C.W.U.

3.4. Self-confidence and Service

Bishop Dominic Khumalo points out that many of the women in the C.W.U. have grown in an awareness of their being respectable and dignified. Through involvement in the Union they "have grown out of that submissive fear in life that they are nowhere. They know and they are very proud of being themselves."⁷⁰ By joining the C.W.U. many of the women described the experience of meeting with other women as a context which helps them to develop self-confidence.

"I came to the Union because I saw that to be together as women, women being together builds something in me. Having a uniform is not just a thing to show that we have to be in a Union. Its just dressing-up, but what is more important is to build one another, is to build our homes, is to build

⁶⁹ Interview with Ildephonsa Zikalala, op. cit., Appendix p. 27.

⁷⁰ Interview with Dominic Khumalo, op. cit., Appendix p. 22.

people outside - we are just accompanying to tell them what to do as women. Here in the Union we have workshops which we take to teach others what to do. There are some who are in different Congregations and now to bring them together we just tell them about what women should do being together."⁷¹

Gathering together as women to discuss issues that concerned them and to learn skills also helped to improve their self concept. By teaching others the skills they had learnt in the Union, these women found that they also became a much more confident and outgoing. Bishop Khumalo points out that at times they can become so confident that "sometimes they can even question the authority of their priest."⁷² This shows the extent to which some of these women have grown in confidence despite the adverse conditions they were subjected to as a result of the racial discrimination they had endured.

However, in times of hardship people who are suffering can become more united and make a concerted effort to assist each other so as to overcome the difficulties that beset them. This is illustrated most clearly in the commitment shown by the members of the C.W.U. who were in the teaching profession especially when the government's apartheid policy started affecting the Catholic schools from 1953 onwards. The issue at stake was that the government was cutting much of the assistance that these schools were dependent on for their survival. For example, the feeding schemes which helped to alleviate the malnutrition being experienced by many African school children. As mentioned earlier the Catholic African Union (C.A.U.) started by Fr. Bernard Huss later became the Catholic African Organisation (C.A.O.) under the leadership of Fr. Howard St. George.⁷³ The C.A.O. had a meeting in 1954 at Maria Ratschiz, near Ladysmith. At that meeting the women of the various Sodalities which would later be within the C.W.U. made their pledge of support to the needs of the Church and to the struggle within the schools.

⁷¹ Interview with Elizabeth Mlangeni, op. cit., Appendix p. 46-47.

⁷² Interview with Dominic Khumalo, op. cit., Appendix p. 22.

⁷³ G. Abraham, op. cit., p.51.

"... That meeting was very big. That was when Archbishop Hurley addressed his Archdiocese about the latest decisions taken by the Catholic Bishop's Conference regarding apartheid; which was that we refused to give our schools to the government because it will mean accepting the immoral form of education for the black people. We refuse because we believe that they have the right like anybody else to a decent education. The women of the Union were there in quite a noticeable number. Although they were not all formal official members of the Union but they were there. And they clubbed together and they made their presence felt at that meeting. And they said, we are not prepared to leave our schools because the government wants us to leave our schools. We shall live and die with our schools and with the Church. And that time Archbishop Hurley told the meeting that we are trying all we can to try and keep the schools going. It will mean the Catholic community of South Africa will have to build up a fund. But we know that the fund cannot go forever. It cannot even give adequate salaries to the teachers. Therefore the Bishops do not bind anybody to continue to teach. It is up to you, if you feel that you can sacrifice and take less salary than you have had from the government. It is up to you. If you feel that you cannot do it, you are perfectly free to leave for any other job or place where you can manage to make ends meet for your life and your family - we are aware of that. All the women [...] stood up, and said "Your Grace, we stand or die with our Church. We will never, none of us will leave teaching posts in order to go and get a better salary." It was tragic and very moving because while all the women stood up and spoke in front of everybody - not one of the men opened their mouth. It is true! And the reason was not really that the men were weak or I suppose less Catholic. No. It was a very concrete fact of losing money for the sake of supporting the schools. Many of the men were already graduates, teaching in high schools for instance. It was not easy to see their way to accepting a lower salary. In many cases it meant having to stop the higher education of their children. But they did not say anything, they just kept quiet. The women stood up and said let us vote for it. I remember Archbishop Hurley sat down, he was so moved, he was almost sobbing. It was so touching, how the women were standing. And this kind of courage for the Church has been very characteristic in this Women's Union."⁷⁴

It is quite understandable that the men who were the providers for their families could not afford to accept lower salaries than their qualifications would allow. However, it is more striking to see the commitment of the African female teachers in their readiness to support the Hierarchy's bid to keep the Catholic schools in operation. When these schools eventually had to close due to lack of funding many of these women found themselves unemployed and had to undergo further training so as to enter into professions such as nursing. Unmarried females Catholic teachers found it particularly difficult as well. Due to the fact that to a large extent they were sole providers in many situations. In these cases parish priests had to rally around

⁷⁴ Interview with Dominic Khumalo, op. cit., Appendix p. 13-14.

so as to lend assistance to these teachers who had stood by the Church in the midst of the crisis over the government subsidies to the Catholic schools. In speaking about those times and his experience as a teacher at Inchanga, Bishop Khumalo points out that: "In a way apartheid made the Church a very living reality to depend on in life."⁷⁵

Another area where the C.W.U. was of assistance was in emphasising the importance of family life. Due to the migrant labour system, families were divided, as the men had to often seek employment in the major cities which meant leaving home. This caused inevitable problems in families and led to the stress put on family life within the C.W.U.

"The aims of this Catholic Women's Union was to bring families together. Men and women together, making women be responsible in their families. To love their husbands, to love their children, to bring them up in a Catholic way, to learn to work together in a family. To bring up Catholic life."⁷⁶

By recognising the need to focus on family life shows that the Union was facing some of the challenges set before it on a social level as a result of this separation that existed within the family. It also served as a support group for the women themselves who had to endure the frustrations and disappointments connected with the breakdown of the family as a result of circumstances.

"One other very big potential I see myself, is that the women members of the Union begin to learn in this way seriously before their marriages. Not only to wait until they are married people. Which is an indirect, if you like, remote preparation of their married life. And this is good, they need that. But secondly and very important they should be helped to realise that they have a very big duty to be true apostles of their own families. I often quote to them that a christian family is a domestic church. This is the famous phrase of the Vatican Council. And I think that is very true. If they are made to understand or to take seriously with courage the transformation of an ordinary family life into a christian family life, that would have been a tremendous wealth. I think they are capable of doing just that."⁷⁷

This concept of the family being a domestic church is important

⁷⁵ Interview with Dominic Khumalo, Ibid., Appendix p. 15.

⁷⁶ Interview with Ildephonsa Zikalala, op. cit., Appendix p. 26.

⁷⁷ Interview with Dominic Khumalo, op. cit., Appendix p. 22.

in that it gave the women a clear concept of being apostles and believers within the family context. That the faith had to be lived out in the very real challenges put before them and the consequences that apartheid had on the lives of the members of their families.

With the advent of the Second Vatican Council the C.W.U. were in the advantageous position of having Fr. Dominic Khumalo as their spiritual director, since he instructed them on the documents coming out of the Council. Later, these Council documents were translated into Zulu in the late 1980's. This further helped to make the text more accessible to them. By reflecting on these documents in their meetings they engaged themselves in a process of discovering their identity in the light of changes made within the Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council. The document that was stressed the most was *Lumen Gentium*, as Fr. Dominic Khumalo wanted them to have a good idea of how the Church was defining itself. Elizabeth Mlangeni relates how this has helped her understanding of the Church and what the Church expects of her.

"As we are going on with this Union I see that there are so many things that are being enlightened in my mind. The Vatican II has given us new ideas about the Catholic Church. We are have a book which we have to read - it is just like a Bible, but not exactly. It called *Lumen Gentium*. And that book is gives us a lot of learning. When you take a Bible and you take this *Lumen Gentium* - and we take this book for our meetings here as Union. We just find out what a woman should do, what a Catholic should do. And by that we know how to go about calling ourselves christians."⁷⁸

In this way the C.W.U. provided an opportunity for its members to update their understanding of the their faith and of kind of Church that the Second Vatican Council was trying to establish. This gives them an idea of where the Church is trying to move as a whole and in that way they could move along with the rest of the faith community through the enlightenment they had received at their meetings. This knowledge helps to empower them in terms of their projects of charitable works and of their understanding of themselves as Catholic women with a mission to assist the Hierarchy in the process of spreading the Gospel and serving

⁷⁸ Interview with Elizabeth Mlangeni, op. cit., Appendix p. 47.

humanity.

3.5. Wider Unity within the Church?

Within the C.W.U. one sees that there was no intentional effort made to discriminate on the basis of race. However, it is striking that this Union has not managed to recruit substantial numbers of Catholic women from other race groups. This for the most part was due to the division between different language groups within the Catholic Church at the time. When Bishop Dominic Khumalo was asked to explain why he thought only indigenous African women tended to join the C.W.U. he said:

"Its not a law, it never was a law. It simply speaks of the Catholic Women's, but it began among the black people. Archbishop Hurley wanted to make that start among the black people where I suppose, I don't know, but I suppose he had seen the need glaring. The need to organise and form into a logical or manageable formation and upbringing. It was among the black women that he had seen them working without any formal organisation and any skills. [...] But it was never meant to be only for them. And I have seen two places where they have tried. The one place did not grow very fast, that was Stanger. But they came to me, the so-called Coloured people and they asked why is it that you have to wear a uniform. We would have joined this wonderful sodality but only for the uniform. We don't want the uniform. Well, I said, I am sorry but there is nothing I can do. The uniform has been very hard fought for. And then the other group was Wentworth - that one was successful. We still have the Wentworth people, Coloured ladies existing as members of the Union and they go to every Annual Congress. They never miss it. I say it is a strange happening. It was never meant to be only among the blacks. But it began among the blacks. Well, maybe it will go on but I think myself it should not surprise us if some of them take this step as the Wentworth ladies did. They understood it and they went ahead. Others cannot do that. Why? What a uniform means to an African does not necessarily mean the same thing in a non-African person. I think that is the only reason."⁷⁹

A start was made to unite the indigenous African women as Archbishop Hurley saw the terrible divisions among these women. Among the Catholic African women there were ladies like Ellen Makai and Catherine Gumede who also saw the need to develop more solidarity and co-operation. By Archbishop Hurley appointing Fr. Dominic Khumalo to encourage this growth in unity among Catholic African women, the dream of Ellen Makai and Catherine Gumede became a reality. The irony of the situation is that the very

⁷⁹ Interview with Domini Khumalo, op. cit., Appendix p. 21.

uniform that was so instrumental in building unity among the African women is precisely the stumbling block to the ability of the Union to attract women from the other race groups, as evidence by the group from Stanger who would have joined the C.W.U. had it not been for the insistence of on the wearing of the uniform. The success with the women of mixed ancestry that established a group in Wentworth was made easier by the fact that many of them have Zulu roots, as they even conduct their meetings in Zulu. Their exposure to African culture seems to help them have a similar appreciation for the wearing of the uniform as they recognise its potential as a binding force within the C.W.U.

There are members within the C.W.U. who recognise the problem of the different interpretations given to the wearing of the uniform given by persons from different cultural backgrounds.

"I see especially in white people that they don't consider this thing as necessary. [...] I think they think that this is showing off - this uniform of ours. We are not wearing it because we are showing that we are creating something rigid. They think this is a showing off. Because this Women's League it is just the same with us. Only that don't wear uniform as we do. We are having the same structures as them. Only the uniform, they don't want to wear. [...] These black people they just want a uniform because they see that they are dignified with the uniform. They won't take it out because the way the uniform came in South Africa to the Catholic women. The priests wanted to have a Church, they wanted to have members joining. And the people didn't want to join the church services. They were just Zulu people. [...] So the priests were very clever those who came first here. They said you see if you have this thing; you are just recognised. You are just a good Catholic with this thing on. They put a uniform. So we Africans, it was just like that we wanted to be seen. All of us dressed up in uniform and that is how uniform came out. It was not this one we are having now. The first was black and white and the ribbons, and at last we formed this one to put us all together. It was the idea of the priests. I think it was good because even today we would just like these white ones who are the League - the Women's League and we would not have a uniform. Now we are proud of it. The way it came in it gave us power that we are something with the uniform."⁸⁰

As pointed out above, the uniform for African women is intrinsically part of the way they have been evangelised and is still a part of their on-going efforts to evangelise. It also represents for them the long struggle to build unity among African Catholic women. For this reason they do not see any

⁸⁰ Interview with Elizabeth Mlangeni, op. cit., Appendix p. 49.

possibility or have any desire to relinquish the uniform as it is something that they worked hard to achieve and it motivates and empowers them.

Another issue is the African cultural elements which have become part of the C.W.U. This would need to be looked into more deeply if the C.W.U. hoped to attract members of other cultural backgrounds.

"We have got great hope that other cultures will eventually join this Catholic Women's Union because in it we have also got cultural signs which we practice and which we teach to other people. Well, I start with us Zulus. We will stick to our culture and our culture will work hand in hand with our Catholic African Women's Union. And that is called *isigungu samasikho* and we are going to teach it to people who don't quite understand because most people don't understand this. But after we have been trained, we are also going to teach it to other people. If other people with different cultures from ours join our Union, we will learn their cultures and also in return teach them our culture so that we work hand in hand with them."⁸¹

It would appear that the Zulu language and cultural influence within the Union is important for its existing members but that is an aspect which would hinder members of other race groups joining. There is an openness on the part of members within the C.W.U. to receive members of other cultural backgrounds, but there will have to be a process of integrating these people so that the existing cultural elements of the Union are understood. However, it is quite likely that women from other cultural groups will not join the Union if it is too rigid in only adopting a Zulu cultural style in their meetings and activities. In a very real sense the C.W.U. is faced with a similar situation as the K.D.G. Namely, that their existing members bond because of the similarity in culture the dominates their organisation. With the K.D.G. operating along more Western cultural lines and the C.W.U. operating along the lines of African culture. By the introduction of other members from different cultures the composition of the C.W.U. will change, and so will the sub-culture within it as new cultural aspects will be introduced. This is the challenge for the future of the C.W.U.

⁸¹ Interview with Ildephonsa Zikalala, op. cit., Appendix p. 28.

3.6. Conclusion

In considering how the C.W.U. coped with the impact of apartheid it becomes evident that the first task of the Union was to bring about unity among the various sodalities and lay organisations. The principle method of gathering people was the large congress system that brought great numbers of people together to discuss a theme and decisions would be made as a result of their deliberations. This method was initially used in the Catholic African Union started by Fr. Bernard Huss and then continued by the C.W.U. Within the Archdiocese of Durban the need for this greater collaboration among African Catholic women was recognised by Mrs. Catherine Gumede, Mrs. Ellen Makhai and Archbishop Denis Hurley. With the assistance of the then Fr. Dominic Khumalo, the Union was then formed as a means of alleviating the animosity and friction that tended to dominate the relations between the various sodalities and organisation within the African Catholic community.

For African Catholic women within Natal their bodies truly became the crossroad between the self and society. This was due to the impact that apartheid had on them. Since the discrimination that they endured was due to the colour of their skin and also as a result of the way they tended to dress. Within African culture dress particularly among the women is an important part of the identity of the individual as well as the communal identity of the group to which the person belongs. The discrimination experienced by these women eventually led to a diminishing of their confidence, since they saw themselves as victims of a situation they could not control. However, by focusing on issues significant to them as women they were able to cope with their adverse situation through the support they received from each other.

An important means of achieving a greater spirit of unity among these women, who had formerly not related well to each other, was through the uniform they all eventually opted to wear. Since the

uniform was an expression of the sacred bond of allegiance to the sodalities to which these women belonged. When the C.W.U. was formed it was the uniform which became the new source of their unity. It was nevertheless a difficult process as all the woman felt regret to have to abandon their former uniforms which also had the same significance of expressing their unity. However, once the common uniform was adopted a greater unity began to develop. The women felt that they were dignified and respectable in these uniforms and it helped them to be recognised and respected as Catholic women. The uniform had the effect of motivating them and bonding them as a group of women, who supported each other and the mission of the Catholic Church.

By meeting together as women they were able to acquire skills to improve their own confidence, as well as learn about issues concerning family and social life. This gave them a greater sense of confidence in the areas where they were expected to perform a function in the home and in the community. A tremendous contribution was also made by many of the teachers in the C.W.U. who stood by the Catholic Church in its effort to keep the Catholic schools functioning when the apartheid government started to introduce an inferior education for African people. These women endured the sacrifice of being underpaid and eventually were unemployed when the Catholic Church's education fund eventually ran dry. Nevertheless, their commitment to home and community helped them to develop confidence and gain respect within society - as they supported each other in those difficult times.

Although the Union never intended to discriminate, it also did not attract Catholic women from other cultural backgrounds. This was due to the fact that English speaking and Zulu speaking Catholic communities tended to operate in separate arenas. The African culture and the uniform which binds the members of the C.W.U. together will need to be re-assessed if they wish to recruit members from other cultural groups. This is bound to prove a difficult issue to resolve since the uniform is such a

significant element in how African Catholic women eventually achieved unity among themselves. And yet it is precisely the uniform that members of other cultures often find objectionable.

Through having a common uniform which created a sacred bond between African Catholic women, these women were able to deal with the circumstances that they found themselves in due to implementation of apartheid. Belonging to the C.W.U. helped them develop confidence and the freedom to be themselves despite the discrimination and abuse to which they had been subjected. By gathering together as women they felt empowered and able to cope with being victims within this climate of racial discrimination.

These women were also able to cope with changes within the Church brought about by the Second Vatican Council. This was made possible by their studying the documents of Vatican II documents at their meetings. Within Natal they also received much support from Archbishop Denis Hurley and the guidance of Bishop Dominic Khumalo. The support that these women showed towards the Church in the education crisis earned them the respect they deserve for the important role they played in the Church's opposing apartheid in the area of education. In the future these women will continue to make a contribution to the growth of the Church and society. But since the body is the crossroads to the self and society, they will need to continue searching to find the most appropriate way to deal with the new crossroads at which the Catholic Church in Natal finds itself. This might well call forth a different response to their response in the past.

CHAPTER 4

YOUNG CHRISTIAN WORKERS , Y.C.W.

"We were all called to be sons and daughters of God. We had to achieve this in our ordinary everyday life. That the situation of life - instead of uplifting people, helping people achieve their destiny - tended to pull people down." Eric Tyacke (1996)⁸²

The Y.C.W. is an international organisation for young workers, which was officially established in Belgium by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn in 1924. In 1949 Fr. Emmet Neville started two groups which adopted the name Y.C.W., and were based at St. Joseph's, Stamford Hill, Durban. These groups did not survive for very long; as they were not really trained in the methods of the movement, and did not have the mentality of the Y.C.W. as a movement. Eric Tyacke, after having been trained in England, then started Y.C.W. sections in Johannesburg, also in 1949. These groups grew and by 1959 there were 50 Y.C.W. sections, 300 leaders and 500-600 team members in all the major cities and towns throughout South Africa. These groups reflected on the situation of their daily lives, and tried to transform this reality in accordance with the plan God had destined for them. This was achieved through Gospel and social enquiries according to the See-Judge-Act method of the movement. Within Natal, the number of members has dropped in recent years. However, during the period covered by this study the Y.C.W. was the only youth movement in Natal providing a clear method and formation to young Catholics.

4.1. Facing Reality

Eric Tyacke, the Founder of the Y.C.W. in South Africa, was born in Johannesburg, 15 October 1924.⁸³ He was educated by the

⁸² Interview with Mr. Eric Tyacke in Bedford Gardens, Johannesburg, on the 21 November 1996, Appendix p. 91.

⁸³ E. Mitchinson, *Y.C.W. South Africa 1950-1960*, (Durban: Young Christian Workers, 1982), p. 1.

Christian Brothers in Kimberley. On completion of his schooling, he returned to Johannesburg where he first started working on the mines. After a stint of six months, he then went and worked in the printing department of the Union Correspondence College.⁸⁴ At this time Eric Tyacke was an active member of the youth group at the pro-Cathedral Parish in Braamfontein. He had become bored with the usual sporting activities of that youth group, and was seeking something more. He also, experienced frustration at the fact that he found that the same small group of people ended up doing most of the work in the group. He recalls his dad mentioning at the time that travelling helps to broaden one's mind. Having saved some money, he then approached Fr. Whelan as to what he should do. Fr. Whelan had recently been to England where he experienced the Y.C.W., and was very impressed with their work. In 1948 Eric Tyacke went to England for a period of six months, but eventually stayed a year. While in England he travelled and worked in Y.C.W. sections, so as to gain experience of the Y.C.W. method. During his stay in England, Eric Tyacke was struck by the plight of the bulk of young workers. He left England in May 1949 and returned to Cape Town.

Eric Tyacke then moved on to Durban where he stayed at St. Joseph's Parish in Stamford Hill Road, Greyville. Here he made contact with priests who could introduce him to young people interested in the Y.C.W. While staying at St. Joseph's, he met Fr. Emmet Neville, who had been trying to establish the Y.C.W. in this parish. Fr. Neville arranged for Eric Tyacke to meet with two groups of young people. The experience that Eric Tyacke had with them left him with a good impression. However, Fr. Neville was put out as the gathering did not go exactly according to his plan. At the same time, Fr. Theobald OMI at the Cathedral was trying to start a section, but the group members were not suitable candidates for the Y.C.W. Fr. Kerautret introduced Eric Tyacke to groups of African young men and women. These groups met separately when Eric Tyacke addressed them of the topic of

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

Y.C.W. methods. At the African Mission, next to St. Joseph's, the Oblate Provincial, Fr. Bryce OMI, introduced him a group of six Coloured young men, who discussed their work conditions with him.

While in Durban Eric Tyacke met with Fr. Kerautret who was very involved in promoting Catholic Action in Natal. He was also shown around Durban by Fr. Neville and Fr. Kelly OMI. On the 19 June, while in Durban, Eric Tyacke witnessed the tension between the different cultural groups and made this note in his log report:

In a bus on the way to St. Joseph's, getting in in front of me was a white man with his wife. The top of the bus was filled with mainly Indians and Africans. The man shouted at an Indian youngster, "Put your feet, you bastard or I will knock them in for you!" Later, there were two seats vacant, one next to a European woman, the other next to a European man. An African came up, stopped and hesitated about where to sit. The women saw him and moved across the whole seat. The African laughed and sat next to the man. I was tripped when I was getting out and I don't know if it was intentional or not."⁸⁵

In this experience one notices the brute aggression of the white gentleman, the fear of the white woman and the defiance of the black man looking for a seat on the bus. The tension between the different cultural groups was rife due the recent riots in Cato Manor. Fr. Kerautret, who worked in Cato Manor, took Eric Tyacke there on a sick call. It was at this time that Eric Tyacke saw the shops, owned by Indians, that had been burned down in the course of the riots. Fr. Bohec OMI took him around to visit the railway compounds in which many African people lived. There was a Catholic run night-school functioning from one of these compounds. Eric Tyacke was particularly struck by the poor and squalid conditions in which these people lived.

On his way back to Johannesburg he stopped over at Pietermaritzburg, where he stayed at the Oblate Scholasticate. Here he met Fr. Fitzpatrick OMI and Fr. Holland. In a discussion with the seminarians, Eric Tyacke quoted from the "*The Church and the Young Worker*" as they were speaking about the apostolate and

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

the social environment.⁸⁶ On returning to Johannesburg, Eric Tyacke resumed his contact with Fr. Whelan, who helped Eric Tyacke to reflect on the progress he was making. Eric Tyacke then found a job as a costing clerk for Lever Brothers until 1951, as there were no full-time Y.C.W. workers at that stage.⁸⁷ He then worked in the stores at Mincer Motors until 1953.⁸⁸

The first structured Y.C.W. section to start was the group in Kliptown, where Fr. Embo OMI, an Oblate from Belgium, was working. Fr. Embo had known Cardijn and had been a chaplain to the Y.C.W. in Belgium for a period of three years.⁸⁹ It was Fr. Embo, who had contacted the members of this first Y.C.W. section that had been established in Kliptown on 25 August 1949. The next group was established at Ferreira's Town and comprised of a number of Indian young people, among whom was Eugene Peters. Then, Eric Tyacke started a Y.C.W. group in his home parish at Braamfontein, among a group of young people known as the "Braamies"⁹⁰ - the lower layer of the working class among the whites in Braamfontein. Around about this time Fr. Verstraete OMI, later made bishop, started the first black Y.C.W. group at Orlando West. At this stage Kevin Muir came out from England for a short while. Other important people like Flo Triendl and Jean Tyacke (nee Pew) came out from the United States to help assist in Y.C.W. work. Jean was based in Cape Town and helped to get things in operation there. Fr. Edward Mitchinson then came from England and was based in Cape Town. He did much to promote and inspire the Y.C.W. in those days. Back in Natal, Archbishop Hurley continued to encourage the establishment of groups, and provided the funds for Theresa Mthembu and Martin Dlamini to be employed full-time in Natal. Throughout this period the Y.C.W.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.7.

⁸⁹ E. Mitchinson, op. cit., p. 9.

⁹⁰ Interview with Eric Tyacke, op. cit., Appendix p. 89.

maintained a policy of being non-racial in recruiting. The movement therefore had members from all the cultural backgrounds represented in South Africa.

4.2. Catholic Youth

In 1957 Eric Tyacke approached Archbishop Denis Hurley and requested that Fr. Albert Danker OMI, then working at Machibisa in Pietermaritzburg, be allowed to go as chaplain to the 1957 Y.C.W. Pilgrimage and Congress in Rome.

Fr. Danker had first had contact with the Y.C.W. method as a high school student, when Fr. L'Henoret OMI was using Y.C.W. programmes that he had received from France.⁹¹ Throughout his priestly formation, Fr. Danker retained an interest in the Y.C.W. After the Congress Fr. Danker stayed on in Europe and travelled to France, England, and Belgium, to discover more about the Y.C.W. Fr. Danker was initially captured by the "apostolic youth characteristic"⁹² and not really the "worker dimension." In an interview he described his role as follows: "I was not a politician and I never intended to be. I was the priest offering formation."⁹³ His aim was to bring young people together. He made an option not to focus on class differences because of the already great number of divisions existing in South Africa.

His spent energy and imagination on liturgies and workshops. Some of the programmes were even based on the Church's liturgical cycle. In this way he attracted many "youth group" type people to the Y.C.W. And this later, led to criticism of him because he did not stress sufficiently the worker aspect of the movement. In his defence he says:

"I deliberately tried to bring people together and I was criticised for that. "You are not stressing a worker ethic, you

⁹¹ Interview with Fr. Albert Danker in Sydenham, Durban on the 23 October 1996, Appendix p. 2.

⁹² E. Mitchinson, op. cit., p. 33.

⁹³ Interview with Fr. Albert Danker, op. cit., Appendix p. 5.

are stressing the breaking down of the barriers of apartheid." Barriers caused by apartheid."⁹⁴

On the other hand, for others in the Y.C.W. the feeling was that even if apartheid is not there, the class problem still exists. However, it was also during time that Y.C.S. groups were established as a feeder into the Y.C.W. Lynn Lambert (nee Hepburn) and Dawn Haines travelled around the country to recruit new members. Within South Africa, the Y.C.S. was not seen as a separate movement from the Y.C.W. They worked hand in hand, and behaved as one organisation.

4.3. Method: See-Judge-Act

The most striking feature of the Y.C.W. was the method that it adopted. It was simple, yet effective in linking faith and the ordinary events of everyday life. By engaging in Gospel and social enquiry these groups were better able within the apartheid context to analyze their situation, and respond to it more effectively. Eric Tyacke points out, that it was often in applying this method of enquiry that issues of racism in the work place would emerge:

"Well, it was raised first in enquiries where we were talking about work. Or under the review of life. Where work situations came in, that was very often referred to in a racial situation, because foremen and supervisors were normally white. Sometimes, white workers behaved as though they were foremen. And so this would be a regular situation there. Then of course you would have the other wider spectrum that would be discussed as well. Passes for instance, and people getting arrested for not having passes."⁹⁵

The strength of the Y.C.W. was in the method that it promoted in observing situations, reflecting on them, and finally embarking on the right course of action. Since the method was simple and practical it could be used by lay people, once they had been trained. It sought to make one's faith relevant in the concrete situations in which persons found themselves.

⁹⁴ Interview with Albert Danker, Ibid., Appendix p. 7.

⁹⁵ Interview with Eric Tyacke, op. cit., Appendix p. 93.

The method encouraged members to go through a gradual process of awareness of the problems and issues that beset them in their daily lives. This was done in the supportive environment of a section where trust was built on friendship. Groups would do enquiries on issues common to those in the group, so that they could learn from each others experiences and interpretations of events. This was also connected to the three fundamental truths of the Y.C.W. The truth of faith: What we believe? The truth of experience: What we see around us? The truth of method: A special movement is needed.⁹⁶ With these three truths in mind the members of a group would apply the See-Judge-Act method. They began with a social enquiry about a particular problem within society. Then, they judged that situation in the light of the Gospel. And finally, they decided on a plan of action that would be appropriate in terms of God's plan for us as His children.

The practical nature of the Y.C.W. method has been so effective that other pastoral approaches have adopted this system, e.g. neighbourhood Gospel groups that now exist in various parishes. During the period of the implementation of apartheid, the Y.C.W. had the advantage of a method that helped to link daily life and the faith of Y.C.W. members. However, it is with regret that we note that the Y.C.W. method was not very well received by the majority of Catholics in Natal. Archbishop Denis Hurley points out that we could have dealt more effectively with the problem of apartheid, if we had adopted the Y.C.W. methods more readily.

"Well, it was a great regret that we didn't do enough to focus and to help the laity focus their attention on apartheid. And to acquire methods of dealing with the problems of their life under apartheid. The method would have been Y.C.W. methods: See-Judge-Act. One had to be in a Y.C.W. section or had got special training to be a chaplain to the Y.C.W. - or you never felt at home. You never felt able to handle those methods, and impart them and share them with the people. So, I think we failed rather badly in not moving from the dimension of speeches, statements and big instructions down to education. Lay education based on good practical See-Judge-Act methods. We failed rather badly there. I suppose we were not aware of how badly we were failing because we were caught up in a great variety of things. And unless one had been dedicated to this method through the

⁹⁶ *How to Start a Y.C.W. Section?*, (The Young Christian Workers: Johannesburg)

experience of the Y.C.W., one never really promoted it vigorously and successfully. We can just say that we acted very poorly when it came to giving people a true practical social education."⁹⁷

In retrospect therefore, we see that a more vigorous application of the Y.C.W. methods: See-Judge-Act could have been of great benefit to a larger number of people. Allowing young people to learn and discover on their own, often brought them into conflict with the clergy. Despite the initial enthusiasm of many of the clergy, who attended Y.C.W. study weeks that were held at Mariannhill, Cedara and Lesotho. Friction began to emerge at the parish level, when Y.C.W. sections in parishes embarked on forms of action that were contrary to the parish priests' ideas of what should have been done. It was pointed out by Archbishop Hurley, that many of the priests felt that these groups were not sufficiently disciplined.⁹⁸ This resulted at times when the action embarked upon by Y.C.W. sections was not according to the priests' wishes, thereby leading to resentment on the part of the priests.⁹⁹ This shows us the extent of the influence these priests wielded within those parish situations. However, without priests who were aware of the need for this practical social education of the faithful, the Catholic Church in Natal was impoverished.

4.4. Living a New Vision

Another important aspect of the Y.C.W. was the emphasis on transforming situations of oppression and sin. As regards the issue of race, I have mentioned earlier that the Y.C.W. was non-racial. A bonding occurred between members at times that made them forget the norms expected of them in the racist situation in which they found themselves. This is illustrated well, in the

⁹⁷ Interview with Denis Hurley, op. cit., Appendix p. 42.

⁹⁸ Interview with Denis Hurley, Ibid., Appendix p. 39.

⁹⁹ Interview with Denis Hurley, Ibid., Appendix p. 39.

following example, when two Y.C.W. members were arrested in Durban while they were at the first National Study Week, which was held at Mariannhill on 2-9 January 1959.

"I remember when we had our first National Study Week at Mariannhill. On our day off, we used to take off and give a certain portion for relaxation. To our horror we heard that two guys had been arrested in Durban, in the city centre. These were two guys who had until the study week not known each other. When this so-called Coloured guy Dougie Human, from Kliptown, and the other was, I suppose, you could call him, a so-called white guy who came from Orange Grove. They were walking through town. I guess they had dressed in those days - they would have been described as duck-tails. And they were arrested by the police. Dougie was released shortly after a couple of hours. But, they kept Manfred until evening. And the effect on the study week is like an electric shock. The injustice of it. I guess they just forgot about the fact that it was unusual for these two different kinds of people to be walking together on the pavement anywhere."¹⁰⁰

Y.C.W. created an environment where people could meet others from different cultural backgrounds, thereby indirectly breaking down the prejudice that the society at the time was inculcating. In this way, Y.C.W. assisted young people at that time in living a new way. A way that differed from what they were being induced into accepting as normal within society. By spending time together socialising across the colour barrier, the Y.C.W. gave many young people the opportunity to grow beyond their ignorance and fear. Flo Triendl in August 1959, while speaking to the scholastics at Cedara made the following observation:

"Women are the heart of the Church and they can do much to bring about racial harmony. A white girl told me that the Y.C.W. gave her, her first chance to meet blacks as friends and to discuss common problems with them."¹⁰¹

Such an opportunity would definitely not have overthrown the Nationalist Party at the time. But it did succeed in transforming the heart of one person, thereby effecting a transformation on a personal scale. Such experiences, helped Y.C.W. members face to the harsh reality of the division within

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Eric Tyacke, op. cit., Appendix p. 93.

¹⁰¹ E. Mitchinson, op. cit., p. 57.

society. However, it also created within its ranks the opportunity for effecting a new way of thinking about members of other race groups.

Another initiative, along similar lines, was the establishment of Y.C.W. houses for young men in Durban. Three such houses were established while Fr. Danker was still chaplain. One was in Florida Road, the other in Chelmsford Road and third was on the beach-front. These houses were multi-racial and were for young men who wanted to come and live the experience of christian community. The majority of people living in these houses were white, but there were some black people who lived there over the course of the years. It was not just an opportunity to transgress the Group Areas Act. It was a way of discovering a different way of being the body of Christ. Fr. Danker comments further:

"We established in Durban three houses for young men. [...] There 18, 13 or 14 young fellows lived together. They were not welcome there just looking for board. We welcomed those wanting to live christian community. We had our hassles, we took in non-whites, a few of them like Jeff Bandy and so on. Against the law. One house was in Florida Road, one was at the beach front and one was in Chelmsford Road. So, there they had again a very christian dimension."¹⁰²

These initiatives helped to confirm for the Y.C.W. members that change and transformation were a very real possibility. They did not involve controversial conflicts opposing the system, but in a quiet and unassuming way they were making the statement that there can be a different way of living within society. That individuals can make a difference to the situation they find themselves in. Depending on your outlook and vision, it was possible to transform one's micro-environment. Even, if you could not change the whole of society, you could begin by changing yourself and your vision of the future. To the point, where one can live the future in the present, since one's vision for the future is being realised in the present.

¹⁰² Interview with Albert Danker, op. cit., Appendix p. 5.

4.5. Autonomous Workers

Another aspect that has surfaced as being significant is the long struggle for the Y.C.W. to be recognised within the Church as an autonomous body of workers within the Church. This issue takes us beyond the period intended for this study. However, the seeds of this conflict were already beginning to surface in the conflict between the parish priests and Y.C.W. sections mentioned earlier. I consider it necessary for this issue of Y.C.W. autonomy as a worker movement to be discussed, as it is important for understanding the decline of the movement in the Catholic Church in Natal. That there is a relationship between the Y.C.W. and the Church, but it is not simply a question of workers being parishioners. Rather, that the Church recognises that the Y.C.W. is an autonomous body of workers within the ranks of the laity. And that their autonomy needs to be understood and respected. Fr. Jean-Marie Dumortier, who arrived in South Africa in 1979, said that this issue came to a head in the early 1980's and explains further:

"The other point, that possibly people don't know, particularly those who were not in the movement at that time. Is the stressing of the autonomy of the Y.C.W. [...] Also getting on with the ecumenical dimension of the Y.C.W., which means having members from other Church backgrounds. And the workers' characteristic of the Y.C.W., also as an organisation on its own. [...] I would say that the National Committee of the Y.C.W. became strongly aware of their responsibility in the movement and to be in charge of the Y.C.W."¹⁰³

This shift of the Y.C.W. stressing the worker side of its identity is important when discussing the Y.C.W. in South Africa. The point was briefly mentioned earlier in discussing Fr. Danker and his approach to seeing the Y.C.W. more as a youth organisation that operated within the confines of the Church. In 1972 when Fr. Danker was succeeded as chaplain by Fr. Gerard de Fleuriot, this approach was later discarded in favour of focusing more specifically on the worker aspect of Y.C.W. identity. This also meant, that the Y.C.W. gradually began to be dominated by the working class. Most of whom in South Africa

¹⁰³ Interview with Jean-Marie Dumortier in Mayfair on the 20 November 1996, Appendix p. 79.

would come from an indigenous African background. Despite the fact that the Y.C.W. at present would like to increase its membership and does not intend to be exclusive, there are still very limited numbers of white people in the country at present interested in joining the movement.

The leadership within the Y.C.W. wanted the autonomy to move the organisation in the direction that they choose. Not seeing themselves simply as the bishop's representatives amongst the workers. This clash in the understanding the Y.C.W.'s identity has cost it the support that it used to enjoy within certain parishes. The following quotation illustrates this for us:

"There were some clashes with some chaplains of that time. And taking the stand also with the Church Hierarchy - to be a movement of their own. Having relationship with the Church Hierarchy and trying to get in touch also with the structure of the Council of Churches. But being an autonomous type of organisation, i.e. workers organisation and christian organisation of their own. And, that also on the ground, on grassroots level meant that the movement shifted from parishes to the community. Not being covered in the parish activities as one of these youth clubs or whatever. But more community based and it also implied that some of the chaplains lost interest in the movement because they couldn't see it as part of their own business as a parish priest or whatever."¹⁰⁴

The question of the relationship of the Y.C.W. to parish communities is a difficult issue. Since, the Y.C.W. has opted to become more community based, it therefore will lose some of the members who would join if these groups were based in parishes. If one looks at the example of Eric Tyacke, he also started his involvement in a parish environment. In a certain sense it appears to me that what is important is to implement the vision of the Y.C.W. Why choose between a community base and a parish base? Obviously, a parish based group will have to negotiate with the parish priest, who is in charge of the parish. In the past the conflict of interest between the priest and the Y.C.W. section did cause hassles, as pointed out earlier by Archbishop Hurley. However, you can only receive support and membership from parishes, if there is contact with people in parishes. Nevertheless, the autonomy allows a greater latitude of association within ecumenical circles and also on the grass

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Jean-Marie Dumortier, Ibid., Appendix p.79.

roots level of local communities, where the Y.C.W. is doing good work at present.

The Y.C.W. wants the opportunity to also have its vision and programme recognised within the Church. Fr. Jean-Marie Dumortier, who has been involved with the Y.C.W. for the last forty years, reflects on a statement made to him by a bishop:

"The Y.C.W. is the long hand of the bishop among the young workers. That, I believe many priests or bishops believe that it should be like that. An extension of the Church Hierarchy among the young workers. And the Movement doesn't understand itself in that way. At least our movement in South Africa. And, I believe that it is quite interesting also for the future. To have this type of lay organisation truly developing inside the Church or Churches. [...] Since possibly people also have the right to handle something in the Church, as well."¹⁰⁵

This excerpt indicates that it is not just the Church that needs to be represented among the workers, but that the workers also need to be represented within the Church. That the influence of workers needs to be recognised, in terms of their right to follow what they are being called to do according to their vocation as sons and daughters of God.

4.6. Conclusion

When Eric Tyacke was sent to England by Fr. Whelan, a process was begun which would lead to the establishment in South Africa, of one of the most effective of the Catholic Action Movements of this century, viz. the Y.C.W. As a young worker, Eric Tyacke, vigorously promoted the growth of the Y.C.W. With the expertise of Fr. Embo, and the supervision of Fr. Whelan, Eric Tyacke would help to establish Y.C.W. sections in all the major cities throughout the country. An alliance between Church and workers would be forged and tested in the years ahead.

With the appointment of Fr. Albert Danker as National Chaplain, the Y.C.W. would experience growth in Natal. With Y.C.W. workers from the England, the United States of America and Australia

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Jean-Marie Dumortier, Ibid., Appendix p. 87.

assisting the setting-up of Y.C.W. sections, phenomenal growth occurred. However, at this stage the Y.C.W. was a parish based organisation of Catholic workers seeking to fulfil God's plan in their everyday lives. Fr. Danker's gift for organisation and his imagination would draw increasing members into the Y.C.W. The youth apostolate dimension was high lighted during this period. It was a period of attempting to bring young people together, so as to break down the walls of division that apartheid had created.

The method of the Y.C.W. had tremendous potential for assisting the Catholic Church in Natal to deal with the difficult situation of apartheid. The See-Judge-Act method would serve the Y.C.W. well, and help young workers come to terms with the difficulties that beset them. However, due to the fact that the actions embarked upon by many in these Y.C.W. groups, disagreement began to emerge between the clergy and some of the Y.C.W. sections. With the clergy in Natal not being that eager about promoting the Y.C.W. method, a great opportunity was lost. However, the strength and longevity of the Y.C.W. method can now be experienced in the Gospel enquiry and social enquiry programmes that abound in the Church today.

Apart from the Y.C.W. method, the autonomy of the Y.C.W. as an independent worker movement within the Church has been another problem that the Y.C.W., the Catholic Hierarchy and the clergy, have had to deal with over the years. Now, the Y.C.W. is more community based as it focuses on recruiting in factories, as well as assisting in the development of the living conditions of those people living in the sprawling informal settlements spotted around South African cites. However, there needs to be a resurgence of new members for the Y.C.W. to become the formidable force that it once was. It would be a tragedy for the potential of such a good lay worker movement, with excellent social enquiry potential, to be overlooked as we move into the future.

During the period 1948-1965, the Y.C.W. has made its contribution

to helping Catholics in South Africa to understand and analyze the situations that apartheid presented. This focus on the situation of oppression, helped those involved in the process of enquiry. And the inspiration of those, who guided the Y.C.W. helped to create an environment where young workers could live out the dream of not assimilating the values of a racist society. However, it is unfortunate that this movement was not more vigorously promoted by the clergy, as it had and continues to have tremendous potential in helping the faithful become more committed to God, as their Father and creator, who challenges them to join His plan for the transformation of the world.

The Y.C.W. has challenged the Church to recognise that workers do not only have a role to pray in church, they have the mission to also begin transforming the Church. With the advent of Catholic Action promoted by Pius XI and Pius XII, the laity were seen as having to participate and assist the Catholic Hierarchy in their apostolate. Since the Second Vatican Council, the laity are now coming into their own and wanting to be recognised and dialogued with rather than being dictated to as in the past. This presents a challenge to the Institutional Church. Is it not challenges such as these, that remind us the God allows the Holy Spirit to break into our lives, so that we can create the world anew?

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In looking at how Catholic laity in Natal responded to the implementation of apartheid (1948-1965), it becomes evident that the groups investigated viz. the K.D.G., the C.W.U. and the Y.C.W. each responded in their own unique manner. They responded in an indirect manner. Each according to their own needs and circumstances.

Within the K.D.G. the cultural environment they created within their fraternity was one of looking back to when the Church was engaged in the Crusades. This became the period in the Church's history upon which their symbolism within the Order depended very heavily. They emphasised the ritual aspect in their gatherings. This was due to the deep love that Alan Woodrow, the K.D.G. Founder, had for ceremonial and ritual. The K.D.G. engaged in ritual actions that included symbols from the days of the Crusades. These rituals developed a bonding within the group, which helped foster unity among the group members. They also adopted a strict protocol in the conducting of their sessions. The K.D.G. were aware of the negative impact that some of these rituals tended to have on recruits from other cultural backgrounds. For the most part, members of K.D.G. were also aware of the detrimental treatment that black people experienced under the apartheid regime. However, much of this social context was accepted as being the social order of the day. Since, within the entire Catholic Church in Natal at the time, the separation between English speaking and Zulu speaking Catholics had come to be seen as the norm. Individuals from these various groups had come to accept and feel more comfortable within their own cultural groupings.

The C.W.U. seemed to only recruit members from within the ranks of indigenous African women. It did not set out to be exclusive. However, from the outset Archbishop Hurley had wanted to unite the Catholic African women, among whom there had formerly been

so much division. The C.W.U., however, used the development of a common uniform to help create a spirit of unity among themselves. This helped them to accept each other and to begin to co-operate much more than they had done previously. It also allowed them to feel more dignified, and to be recognised as Catholic women in an apartheid society which did not recognise the dignity of black women. Many of the members of the C.W.U., who were in the teaching professional, made great sacrifices, so as to support the Catholic Church in its attempts to keep the Catholic schools in operation, even when the government began reducing the subsidies given to black schools.

Of the three lay organisations studied, it is the Y.C.W. that responded the best, by facing the issue of the implementation of apartheid. From the outset, the Y.C.W. had the vision of being non-racial. This would cause the organisation to be viewed with suspicion by the apartheid government of the time. Initially the Y.C.W. recruited members from parishes. Later, after the period covered by this study, the Y.C.W. took on the worker dimension of its identity much more strongly. This led to the leadership of the Y.C.W. shifting from being predominantly white (1950'-1960's), to being pre-dominantly Coloured (1960's-1970's) and finally being predominantly black (1980's-1990's). All this within a group that from the beginning did maintain an open policy in recruiting. This indicates that despite the openness of the Y.C.W. to recruit members from any cultural background, there was a tendency in such lay organisation for members to recruit from their contacts. In the apartheid situation very often these contacts would be persons from the same residential area, and since these residential areas were limited to one cultural group, this meant that the persons being recruited came from that specific group. Also, the Y.C.W. became a lot more militant over the years, so it is reasonable to conclude that there were not many white young people who could feel comfortable in that environment. Nevertheless, through the See-Judge-Act methods of the Y.C.W., the Catholic Church received an invaluable resource for the social education of its members.

In investigating the common features of what occurred to these lay organisation between the implementation of apartheid and the Second Vatican Council, three main features emerge. Firstly, all these of organisations suffered detrimentally because of the "cultural confinement" that typified the way most South Africans tended to relate to each other across the colour line. Despite, there being no specific barriers to persons on the basis of racial classification, especially after 1952 with the K.D.G. opening its doors, there still was not a large influx of people to enter these groups. As pointed out regarding the gradually shift in the membership of the Y.C.W. over the decades, mentioned above. Or within the ranks of the C.W.U. for example. Secondly, the struggle between Church and State also took its toll on these lay organisations. The K.D.G. and statements made by the Hierarchy for example, the C.W.U. and the crisis in Catholic education. The Y.C.W. and its wanting to move in a more militant, worker oriented direction. Thirdly, that all these organisations flourished when they enjoyed the enthusiasm and guidance of the clergy and the Catholic Hierarchy. This points out the importance of the laity working hand in hand with the clergy and the Catholic Hierarchy in South Africa.

As we look at the main luminaries of this period, certain individuals emerge within the ranks of the bishops, priests and laity. In Natal Archbishop Hurley was instrumental in supporting the K.D.G., founding the C.W.U, and encouraging the Y.C.W. to be established. This sprung from his enthusiasm to implement Catholic Action in practical ways among the laity. Bishop Khumalo was instrumental in guiding and supporting the C.W.U. from its foundation. Outside of Natal, there was also Bishop Whelan who had over the years been an enthusiast of Catholic Action and had been instrumental in helping the K.D.G. to develop in the Transvaal. Among the clergy in Natal, Fr. Emmet Neville helped to found the K.D.G., and was also keen to start the Y.C.W. However, due to his rather rigid nature and inability to be flexible when things did not go according to his plan, he returned to the United States in 1953. Fr. Albert Danker spent

much of the earlier years of his priestly ministry devoting time and energy to the growth of the Y.C.W., especially in Natal. Among the laity Alan Woodrow made a major contribution by founding the K.D.G. It was an asset for the Church that Alan Woodrow came up with a founding formula to motivate and organise the activities of Catholic men within the Church in Natal. The role of Dr. Frank Proksch in resuscitating the K.D.G. in Natal, and helping to establish it in the Transvaal where it had a greater success than in Natal, also needs to be remembered. Within the ranks of Catholic African women, Ellen Makai and Catherine Gumede helped to bring about solidarity among Catholic African women at a time when the apartheid government was doing its utmost to keep black people apart. They also developed programmes within the C.W.U. which helped African women to cope with the damage done to their self-esteem and dignity because of the discrimination that they had endured at the hands of the State, as well as in the normal social intercourse of everyday living. Eric Tyacke, although not from Natal, did much to establish the Y.C.W. in Natal and to get Archbishop Hurley to allow Fr. Albert Danker to make a contribution to the growth of the Y.C.W. Theresa Mthembu and Martin Dlamini, the Y.C.W. workers employed by Eric Tyacke in the early days, also made their contribution in helping the Y.C.W. to spread among the indigenous African people here in Natal.

Some of the recurring issues that emerge when looking at the dynamics within the Church in Natal 1948-1965:

1. Indirect response of laity to apartheid.

Catholic laity in Natal 1948 - 1965 did not develop a definite and direct response to apartheid. They coped as best they could within the limitations of their given situations. Since, much of the prejudice present in South African society was also present in the Church, this was treated as something acceptable. The social order of the day was replicated within the Catholic Church. However, each of the Groups developed specific aspects within their organisations which helped them, to cope with the trauma of

apartheid, as well as their changing identity within the Church.

2. The significance of the micro-environment.

This study has endeavoured to show the significance of the micro-environment in which people found themselves. It has also shown through examples of situations and events, how this micro-environment affects the mentality of ordinary people. And how when these ordinary people gather in small groups like lay organisations, these ideas and convictions about society are confirmed. That in fact, these same convictions also become the motor that turns the wheel of history as these ordinary people base their choices on the strength that these ideas about society ring true. Therefore, it presents to us a challenge take seriously the ordinary everyday experiences of the person in the street or in the Church, as the case may be.

3. Laity challenging authority.

Within this study, it has been shown that Catholic laity in Natal during 1948-1965 did not cope very well with the social changes effected by the implementation of apartheid. However, they also had to cope with the changes occurring within the Catholic Church prior to the Second Vatican Council. This meant that they were no longer prepared to participate in the Church merely as extensions of the Hierarchy, but that they wanted to be recognised within the Church, within their own right. Having a stake in making decisions because of their being laity, since they constitute the majority of the Body of Christ, the Church. Nevertheless, they also showed that in the face of conflict, they tried to the best of their ability to be obedient to the will of the Catholic Hierarchy.

4. Cross-cultural problem that ensued.

During the period covered by the study, the lay groups considered were plagued by the cross-cultural problem that existed in a multi-cultural society. This problem was further exacerbated by the fact that the government of the day did not officially recognise as citizens, persons who

were not white. This created a whole myriad of problems resulting from the non-recognition of the indigenous African people of South Africa. And since some of these people were members of the Catholic Church in Natal, it therefore had an impact on the way Catholics in Natal related to each other across the colour line.

Progress has been made to simplify some of the rituals in the K.D.G. This is to allow the original intention of these rituals to once again have an impact. So as to achieve this aim, the K.D.G. has already started simplifying the rituals within the Order. This demands a certain degree of sacrifice from the older K.D.G. members, who have a deep love for the rituals that they have grown accustomed to over the years. However, this transition is important, if the K.D.G. hopes to recruit members for within the indigenous African sector of the South Africa population. Hopefully, the inspiration that Alan Woodrow had, may find a broader base in the future. In whatever form the Spirit inspires within the ranks of Catholic men in Natal.

The uniform that created unity among C.W.U. members, is now a stumbling block to achieving a greater unity within the Church among other Catholic women. Some of whom would have joined the C.W.U., if only it had there was no insistence on wearing the uniform. This issue is complex, as Catholic African women view the uniform as an expression of their sacred bond as an organisation. They are therefore, not ready to dispense of the uniform at this stage. However, they are aware that many other Catholic women from other cultural backgrounds do not have the same enthusiasm and understanding of the significance of the uniform, as do Catholic African women who presently constitute the C.W.U.

The importance of Y.C.W. and its method was not readily accepted in Natal at the time of the implementation of apartheid. However, this method has over the course of time proved itself the best method for engaging in Gospel and social enquiries. As

it has helped the faithful to make that important connection between the realities of their everyday life and their faith.

Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that the Catholic Church in Natal can no longer continue to have English speaking and Zulu speaking Catholics operating in separate departments. It was not the preferred state in the past, when this was the accepted social order of that period. It is even less acceptable now, since operating along separate lines is no longer the accepted social order. The challenge becomes more imperative that the Catholic Church in Natal put right the wrongs of the past, and endeavours to the best of her ability to take up the challenge of living in a multi-cultural society. An insurmountable task, as it is difficult to reverse mentalities within society that have evolved over decades.

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