Mental Health Education for Religious Women

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MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

FOR RELIGIOUS WOMEN

by

Sister Maureen O'Keefe, S.S.N.D.

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

February

1962
LIFE

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She has served both as classroom teacher and as principal in elementary schools, taught English in Senior High School, was Superior of the Juniorate in the Mankato Province, instructor in Education at the College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, Minnesota, and Community Supervisor of Elementary Education.

In September, 1958 the author was granted leave of absence for full time graduate study at Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois.
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PART ONE

AN ESTIMATE OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

FOR RELIGIOUS WOMEN
CHAPTER I

RATIONALE FOR MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOR RELIGIOUS WOMEN

Each year hundreds of young women seek admittance to religious communities in the United States. These young women come to the cloister from the hypertense, competitive environment of a world intent on acquiring and maintaining status and possessions according to the standards of a predominately materialistic and highly industrialized society. Thus the virtues of obedience, modesty, dependence, and submissiveness as they were defined by the norms of past generations are displaced now by the competition, self-reliance, frankness, and aggression stimulated by a cultural milieu which is ambitious, but not necessarily wholly unchristian in fostering personal autonomy and self-expression. The radical external change of garb made at entrance into most religious communities is symbolic of the more drastic psychological adjustment young women must make to the conventual world in which they will live. The day is gone when religious superiors can presume naively that the "good" girl will adapt with unquestioning docility to conventual surroundings and to the demands of religious life without specific understanding and education. Young women are not disposed to abandon their values and attitudes blindly in favor of conventual formalities; but they are tractable in responding to formative influences which have genuine ascetic and intellectual appeal for them. They have a freshness of originality, a spark of idealism, and a core of generosity which makes
them look for concrete truth, Christian congeniality, and purposeful dedication in which they can invest their best expectations and substantial efforts.

Veteran in-service sisters, seasoned by the realities of experience in religious life, also eagerly welcome opportunities for additional knowledge and understanding, the prerequisites for the acquisition of Christian maturity in religious life. They desire to build the natural sphere harmoniously into total human personality by living a spiritually healthy life, as they consciously come to terms with their internal irrational forces, incorporating them into the total life of the soul.¹

Sisters must be taught the elements of complete and healthy personality development in religious life—it is not an intuitive gift. This pertinent reflection should motivate religious women to place more concentrated emphasis on the preventive, rather than on the rehabilitative aspect of psychological health or total human well-being. Detection of neurotic tendencies or character defects in young women aspiring for religious profession should be the cue for superiors to make a reliable investigation and if necessary, to act unhesitatingly in counseling these candidates to other vocational avenues. Superiors will be adamant in vocational discrimination, not allowing pity for these women to temper principled resolution. At the same time, utmost kindness and understanding interest should be offered to the women who leave the community ranks, whether by dismissal or by voluntary withdrawal. It is well to remember that the personal integrity of these individuals does not depend on their affiliations.

tion with a religious community. In fact, often, women who cannot adjust to the more restrictive atmosphere and to the added duties of religious life, find in the lay state, the release from tension necessary for them to love and serve God in peace of soul. Secularization is a grave course of action which merits the most serious deliberation of the one contemplating it; but properly authorized, it is not a disreputable act. It does not brand those who obtain it with incompetence or unworthiness. On the contrary, it may be the result of a heroic act of honesty which deserves consummate respect. God invites, but does not command, His creatures to serve Him through the evangelical counsels, so a religious vocation is not a moral obligation. It is a personal commitment of love made to God with total volitional freedom.  

On the other hand, the executive independence, mental alertness, healthy candor, and adult initiative so often evident in modern candidates for religious life should be astutely appraised as the stuff of which saints are made, and therefore, be channeled advantageously in community living. Neophytes in convents, as well as experienced professed sisters, should be provided with adequate education for integrated religious living. Undoubtedly, a great percentage of neurotic and immature behavior among religious women can be prevented if the introductory and subsequent training programs in religious communities are based on sound doctrine, and furnished with a strong foundation in the theology of the ascetical life, which will lead sisters to the practice of solid Christian virtue, rather than to the merely superficial rituality of devotional pie-
tism. This should be supplemented by common-sensed teaching of the psychology of personal adjustment which is vital to the formation of the mature Christian personality in religious women.

Heretofore, the basic preparation of women for religious life has proved partially inadequate because of the general imbalance it suffered from the influence of negative, and even Jansenistic, tones. Too often, this preparatory indoctrination has been rather severely divisive in divorcing the natural from the supernatural in religious life. In many instances, the tendency has been to segregate and over-accentuate the exterior religious and disciplinary aspects of conventual living as an all-important entity, without concurrently explaining the foundational role of human nature, and clarifying its interactive and practical relationship with the supernatural in religious life. Consequently, community unity and individual uniqueness often have been sacrificed in favor of a group uniformity and the typical conventual character acquired principally through observation of external rules and regulations, the accepted essence of religious perfection. This false emphasis created a gulf between theory and practice, and many sisters have been inclined to bridge the gap by pietistically covering the actuality of religious living with supernatural rationalizations. The psychological havoc in the lives of these sisters caused by unrealistic thinking and misdirected action has made them mere automatons in religious life. They have missed the crucial fact that religious life and its institutional externalities become efficacious only when they are inspired and substantiated by a staunch and devoted love for Christ as a person—a unique spirituality by which each sister develops and enriches her human nature
as she relates intimately and personally to the Incarnate God, Who is the matrix of her personal holiness.

During the last decade religious women have been more pointedly alerted to these discrepancies, principally through the repeated exhortations of Church officials, particularly the late Pope Pius XII, the recent increase of publications by specialists of current thought relevant to religious life in a modern world, and the research and recommendations of the Sister Formation Conference. Likewise, the increased incidence of mental illness and emotional instability among sisters, which has been so forcibly manifest in religious life during the past twenty years,\(^3\) has signaled attention to the urgency of the mental health problem and the necessity for adaptation in religious life.

The Units of Study in Mental Health presented in Part Three of this treatise re-emphasize the recognized need for mental health education for sisters; and offer practical and specific aids in following the well-advised directive of the Sister Formation Conference that positive assistance in the psychology of personal adjustment be given to religious women.\(^4\) Furthermore, this program aims to be a constructive effort to prevent psychological distress in the lives of sisters, to alleviate it in those who are either uninformed or misinformed about the elemental facts of human living in religious life, and to augment the potency of maturity for those who have already attained it.

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Since sisters rely principally on the initiative and ingenuity of their superiors to arrange opportunities for education in mental health, the understandings and attitudes of superiors relative to this aspect of sister formation are pertinent to the efficacy of the program. An attempt has been made to determine the present status of mental health instruction for sisters, and to critically examine the opinions of a representative group of major superiors of religious women. In Chapter II, the summary of this survey, conjoined with an evaluative commentary on relevant issues, forms an enlightening background in understanding the compelling urgency and underlying purposes of mental health education for religious women.

The Philosophy of Conventual Living, An Ideal Concept, delineated in Part Two is a fundamental and indispensable prelude to the formal units of study in mental health proposed in Part Three. In any human endeavor, if direction is to be established and success assured, the desired goal of achievement must be succinctly defined and honestly apprized in advance. Thus, before mentally healthful living can be guaranteed generally for sisters, it is essential that not only a frank exposition and a careful assessment of the status quo of conventual living be made by superiors and subordinates, but also that a meaningful blueprint of an ideal concept of religious life be distinctly diagrammed and clearly comprehended. Unless they meticulously design a personal philosophy of life based on the truth of substantial values and attitudes proper to a life of dedication, there is the danger that sisters may become complacent with a psychological lassitude which blinds them in accepting unreliable and unrealistic norms of life in the religious state. The Philosophy of Conventual
Living in Part Two, therefore, purports to be a motivating force for religious women in forming and focalizing their life objectives, and in implementing the principles outlined in the units of study in mental health education in Part Three. Ultimately, it is proposed as a determining agent in activating sisters to strive for the maximum fecundity of religious life.

It would be facetious to expect to solve all human problems; most of them can only be understood. But the elements of all problematic or divergent situations in religious life are so singularly common that sisters can pool their resources profitably in defining corporate solutions, when this is possible, or in developing a type of understanding which will be psychologically lucrative for members of all religious communities. With this viewpoint, it is believed that the details of both The Philosophy of Conventual Living in Part Two, and the formally structured Units of Study in Mental Health Education in Part Three, which have been consciously slanted to the needs of teaching sisters in a large religious community, are flexible enough to be adapted readily and advantageously to circumstances in any community of religious women.

In considering mental health education for sisters, it must be understood that it is suggested, not as a panacea for all personal or community complications in conventual living, nor as a substitute for current developmental practices, but only as a necessary adjunct to the traditional doctrinal, ascetical, and professional aspects of sister formation and in-service development. It is anticipated that this specialized orientation will be prognostic of more meaningful balance for sisters in living the religious life as the richly rewarding venture it is meant to be.
CHAPTER II

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION OF INFORMATION RELATIVE TO MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOR SISTERS SUBMITTED IN QUESTIONNAIRES BY RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS

In making a study of the present status of mental health education for sisters, and of the attitudes of superiors to this important aspect of sister formation, questionnaires, identical with the sample in Appendix I, were sent to the Mothers General of one hundred religious communities in the United States. Twenty-one questionnaires were returned without information, and sixty-seven were returned with information according to the community membership indicated in Figure 1 on page 11. These reports represent a fairly equalized cross-section of opinion among sisters in communities of various enrollments. Fifty-nine, or 88 per cent, of the communities responding have teaching as one of their major apostolic activities.

Thirty-seven communities, 55 per cent of the core group, have testing programs in their postulancies, distributed according to size of the community as shown in Figure 2 on page 12. It is interesting to note that the number of testing programs varies directly with total community membership. In Appendix II, the names of tests are listed with the number of times they were mentioned in the questionnaires.

Two communities in each membership category engage psychiatrists or psychologists to administer the tests to the postulants. In most cases, the test
results are used for purposes of guidance; although, in two communities, one in each of the "Below 100" and the "500-1000" categories, these tests are given to young women before they enter the community, and the test results influence the evaluation and screening of these applicants for entrance to religious life.

As shown in Figure 3 on page 14, eight, or 12 per cent, of the sixty-seven communities providing information have formally structured mental health education for sisters at this time. In these communities, the mental health training is organized in a college course taught to the young women preparing for religious life, either by a member of the college faculty, a mistress of a training department, a sister who is a TV lecturer in mental health, or a sister who is a psychiatric nurse. In six of these eight courses, students earn college credit towards their undergraduate degrees. Units of study taught in these curricular programs include the following topics:

- Mental health principles
- Personal and community hygiene
- General introduction to personality studies
- Basic concepts of personality
- Personality structure
- Nature and dynamics of personality
- Analysis of behavior patterns
- Management of personality
- Normal adjustment patterns
- Dynamics of personality adjustment
- Types of personality disorder
- Neurosis
- Psychological mechanisms

The texts used in teaching these courses are:


Magner, James A., Mental Health in a Mad World, Milwaukee: Bruce, 1955.
Communities responding to questionnaire

FIGURE 1

TYPE AND MEMBERSHIP OF COMMUNITIES RESPONDING TO QUESTIONNAIRES
Communities responding to questionnaire

Communities with testing programs

FIGURE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF TESTING PROGRAMS


In the comparative illustration in Figure 3 on page 114, it can be seen that forty-one communities, or 61 per cent, of the total submitting information, have made specific attempts to provide general orientations in mental health for in-service sisters by offering them:

- Lectures on mental health for religious
- Mental health courses
- Workshops in mental health
- Directed reading in mental health
- Community educational conferences devoted to the study of mental health problems in religious life
- Institutes in mental health

It can be noted in Figure 3 that the general programs considerably exceed those of a more formal nature, and that the total general programs in each classification of communities varies proportionately with the size of the community sponsoring them. Undoubtedly, this can be attributed, in part, to the fact that larger communities are in more favorable circumstances financially and personnel-wise, and consequently, are in better position to provide these advantages for sisters. There is the possibility, too, that in having more members, large communities also have more sisters with problems of adjustment who need the benefits of mental health education.

These opportunities for mental health education, though they have been
Communities responding to questionnaire

FORMALLY STRUCTURED PROGRAMS

GENERAL ORIENTATIONS

COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP

FIGURE 3

MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOR SISTERS
general and incidental, have been carefully arranged with particular insight into the needs of the sisters. It has been reported, that in each case, the persons responsible for leadership in conducting these activities by giving lectures or demonstrations have been assiduous in their efforts to communicate to sisters, in practical terms, many phases of mental health education.

Since these programs have been established only recently, and are in the embryonic stage of their development as yet, it is difficult to make a reliable appraisal of their results at this time. However, even at this early date, they have been productive of many blessings for sisters and give promise of more fertility in the future. Two Mothers General indicated that, through both the pre-service and the in-service orientations to mental health, sisters have developed more understanding of themselves as human beings, and therefore, have experienced better emotional adjustment, more personal happiness due to the building of correct attitudes, and happier community life.

Fifty-nine, or 88 per cent, of the sixty-seven superiors replying to the questionnaires feel that there is a definite need for mental health education for sisters. Five Reverend Mothers, three of whom are superiors of contemplative communities, agree that there is no need for mental health training for sisters. Several superiors qualify their responses with specifications as follows:

not yet
not as formally structured mental health programs--are interested rather in the integration of the principles of mental health taught in over-all training of sisters
have not considered it
not now
not at present
not possible at present
just beginning to discuss possibility of such training

It seems significant that, of the four superiors of contemplative communities who provided information on the questionnaires, only one feels that there is a need for mental health training for sisters; and that all of them are uninterested in establishing specialized training in this area for sisters. These superiors seem to be in agreement that sisters in cloistered communities need not be concerned about mental health. They explain that since religious women, who are contemplatives, are freed from the pressures and distractions of the active apostolate, and are provided with an intensified training in the religious aspects of community life, they are able to adjust satisfactorily in community living without special attention to mental health.

Forty-one, or 61 per cent, of the superiors are interested in providing mental health education for sisters. In comparing the data in Figure 4 on page 17, it is observed that in each category of religious communities, the number of superiors who expressed recognition of the need for mental health education for sisters is decidedly greater than the number who also are interested in arranging this opportunity for them.

There is no doubt that religious women are aware of the presence of a gradational variety of neurotic and psychotic behavior in some members of their communities. Psychological illness is not a new problem in religious life; but very definitely, it is a progressive one. This observation is corroborative of the rather alarming statistics describing the status of mental disorder among religious women available in the unpublished doctoral dissertation of Sister Mary William Kelley, I.H.M. This is a continuation of the
Communities responding to questionnaire.

Recognize need for mental health education

Interested in providing mental health education

Community Membership

FIGURE 4

RECOGNIZED NEED FOR AND EXPRESSED INTEREST IN PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOR SISTERS
study completed by Thomas Verner Moore in 1936 relative to mental illness among religious women, and describes the situation as it was in 1956. The research done by Father Moore in 1935 revealed that 327.6 civilians per 100,000 required hospitalization for mental illness as compared with only 248.9 for Catholic sisterhoods. The parallel study done in 1956 indicates that in the 21-year interim the civilian rate rose to 358.3 per 100,000 while that for the sisters rose to 319.6, the increase for civilians being 30.7 per 100,000, and that for the sisters, 70.7 per 100,000. Research figures in this study also disclose the fact that in 1956 the percentage of teaching sisters requiring hospitalization for mental illness was larger than that of any other specific occupational category of religious women.1

The attention of religious superiors has been rather abruptly arrested by the appalling evidence prompting these statistics and also by the indisputable manifestation of emotional abnormalities of varying types in sisters who are never hospitalized. Superiors are confronted with the stark emergency of making objective evaluation of particular community circumstances which may be precipitating or contributing causes of mental illness and personality inadequacies among religious women.

While the need of providing conditions in conventual living which are more conducive to the psychological health of sisters is generally acknowledged, the initiation of measures for improvement often is blocked, at pres-

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1 Sister Mary William Kelley, I.H.M., 68, 74.
ent by many factors in religious life. Formal mental health education for sisters is a comparatively new consideration in sister formation circles; and some religious women, probably a few of those who refrained from commenting on this point in the questionnaires, may not yet be ready to accept the idea of mental health instruction as a possible aid in promoting the psychological well-being of sisters. In other cases, this idea has thus far only been adopted by sisters as a plausible proposal, but has not yet matured to the implementation level. On the other hand, superiors who admit the advantages of mental health training and are desirous of providing it for sisters, frequently are hampered by a dearth of sufficiently trained or well-disposed personnel, and adequate funds and facilities to operate such a program. Since the demands of the apostolate always far exceed the supply of personnel available, other superiors are harassed by the adjustments entailed in extending the time limits of the training program and in refining its quality. Again, the lack of willingness to inaugurate or to accept a formally structured program in mental health education for sisters, may be due, in part, to a hesitancy which stems from the belief that psychological adjustment is a peripheral benefit which will be issued automatically to sisters from their status as religious. Logically, then, for these sisters there is a stigma attached to emotional or mental imbalance in religious women and to the obvious efforts to assure psychological efficiency for them. This thinking usually is the result of inadequate understanding of the true meaning of religious vocation and of the implications of mental health education for sisters in fulfilling their vocation. Often religious women cling to the hallowed, but superficial, concept of con-
ventual living which regards psychological disturbance as undignified interference in the sublime matter of religious vocation. In other words, psychological illness poses for them a probability foreign to the sphere of effective religious living; and its presence becomes symptomatic of infidelity to prescriptions of religious life, and is, therefore, an indictment on the sister concerned. They contend that the proper "spiritual" development and intense religious activity of sisters obviates the need for education in the psychology of adjustment. In general, they tend to be suspicious and self-conscious about discussion of mental health for sisters. It is understandable, then, that religious women with these attitudes would feel obligated to protect themselves or others who are psychologically ill from the embarrassment of admitting their complications, or of accepting therapeutic treatment for them. Furthermore, there may be communities like the two whose superiors conceded that they are not interested in establishing formal programs of mental health education, because their sisters have no outstanding emotional problems to warrant it.

Occasionally, sisters do not recognize or understand the intrinsic merits and integrational nature of a mental health program, and tend to be fearful that it will take precedence over the traditional religious training. So they are wary in facing the probability of exposing sisters to mental health education, and deem it prudent to avoid it as a basic requirement for all. Therefore, they are inclined to offer it only to a selective group, for instance, the superiors in the community.

A genuine mental health orientation can not be used competently in
complete isolation, since its essential value for sisters depends on its purposeful correlation and integration with other facets of the total formation program. Incidentally, the quality and effectiveness of the integration will be influenced, in large part, by the skill and understandings, and personal philosophy of the persons exerting the leadership in initiating and administering these programs. It is not necessary that mental health instruction be offered to sisters as a separate body of study; it can be incorporated into the general preparatory programs, if this seems a more propitious procedure. The important element is that sisters are given the opportunity to learn the principles of mental health and to absorb them integrally and practically into their daily living.

The numerous discussion topics which the Mothers Superior considered expedient for mental health education for sisters are categorized in Table I on page 22.

The keen awareness of the existence of psychological problems in religious life is reflected by the superiors in their suggestions for topics in possible mental health courses listed in Table I. The consensus of opinion is centered in three principal areas; namely, emotional maturity and its allied ideas, the practice of charity in community living and apostolic activity, and the understanding of emotional disorder or mental illness and the preventive or rehabilitative therapy proper to it. This unanimity among the superiors is evidence that similar and typical problematic circumstances are prevalent in religious life in general, irrespective of particular community regulations. Apparently, many superiors recognize the difficulties involved,
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<td>Practice of Charity in Community Life—love in religious life—affective life of sisters—particular friendship—anger—forgiveness—profiting by criticism—human relations—community life—attitudes to authority—interaction with the laity—friendship—accepting young religious into community life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychological Disorder—day-dreaming—worry—anxiety—depression—withdrawal—nervousness—fear—hypochondriacal attitudes—scrupulosity—mechanisms of adjustment—therapy for emotional illnesses—psychoses and neuroses—understanding and interacting with mentally ill or emotionally disturbed in community life</td>
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<td>Nature of Mental Health—spiritual value of mental health—connection with effective religious living—preventive and remedial measures in mental health—relationship between mental and physical health—need for mental health—principles of mental health</td>
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<td>Need for Recreation—relaxation</td>
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<td>Marriage and Family Life</td>
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<td>Mystical Body</td>
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<td>Use of Psychological Tests</td>
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<td>Use of Drugs—sedatives—tranquilizers</td>
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<td>Problems of menopause and menstruation—personal hygiene</td>
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have deliberated about the need for overcoming them in their communities, and have speculated about the consequences of improvement which will be enjoyed by the sisters. It is heartening to observe that horizons in religious life are expanding so that now many sisters are willing to admit their community problems, and to discuss them constructively with sisters of other religious communities. More and more, sisters learn to view the difficulties within their groups, not as defections peculiar to certain communities, but as part of a common denominator of current conventual life which needs adjustment. The wholesome inter-community sharing of mutual concerns will give sisters the courage necessary for productive consideration of their difficulties and the opportunity to combine their assets in surmounting them.

The major superiors who evidenced interest in mental health education for sisters agree that the benefits accruing to the sisters and to the communities from a vital program in mental health would be those itemized in Table II on page 24.

The benefits anticipated by superiors from mental health training for sisters enumerated in Table II, dovetail very logically with the content proposed for mental health instruction recorded in Table I on page 22. Superiors have presented a rather comprehensive list of the identifying characteristics of effective religious life, and these have been incorporated into the ideal concept of conventual living in Part Two. Emotional maturity and its related aspects are viewed by the superiors as the greatest advantage sisters could derive from mental health education. The preponderance of responses in this area mirrors the urgency of need for emotional maturity in conventual living. In
TABLE II

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS OF MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOR SISTERS

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<td>better integration of all aspects of nature into</td>
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<td>composite according to temperament and talents--</td>
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<td>understanding and controlling emotions--wholesome-</td>
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<td>ly integrated personalitics in religious life--personal</td>
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<td>security--less tension--greater insight and</td>
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perusing the list of sub-points under "Emotional Maturity" in Table I and Table II, it seems clear that superiors realize that understanding of human nature is an absolute prerequisite for complete living in the religious life. Religious life is an undertaking so grave and so adult in stature that only the truly mature can manage it proficiently. In committing themselves to personal sanctification and apostolic activity in religious life, sisters must possess a greater degree of emotional maturity than ordinarily is required to perform the precepts of Christianity obligatory to the lay state.

Religious life, of itself, does not militate against emotional maturity in sisters. In fact, it is a way of life which can be a prolific stimulant to personal adjustment and mature adulthood. However, inexact instruction and inadequate understanding of the basal concepts of religious life, as it must be lived by human beings, often make sisters psychologically helpless and inert so that, functioning on an immature aspirational and performance level, they do not assume personal responsibility for the self-directed development of their personalities.

"Grace builds on nature" is a truism which is hackneyed, but its glib use has not obliterated or altered its implications of sublime truth. Unless the natural is accepted, understood, and developed in a normal manner by sisters, it will not automatically become efficacious soil in which the graces of religious consecration can fructify. This conception not only conforms with, but emanates from, the dignity of the religious vocation itself. Sisters need special education in developing their natural resources, and in understanding that the dimensions of their humanity largely determine the mode
of their service to God. An intelligent understanding of the dynamics of personal adjustment will enable sisters to handle the reality of their lives to better advantage, thus eliminating or reducing much of the emotional immaturity in religious living. Rich personality development offers no threat to religious vocation, but rather, serves as a constructive stabilizing factor in conventual life.

The "correct perspective of religious living" suggested in Table II as one of the benefits of mental health education implies that sisters should be taught to see religious life, not as sentimental devotion whose final criteria is externalism, but as an identification with Christ which penetrates all personal attitudes, values, thoughts, desires, affections, volitions, and actions.

In Table I and Table II there is a concentration of opinion on "the practice of charity in religious living" as another significant area to be improved in religious life through mental health education for sisters. Basic understanding of the importance of God's first law, that of charity, is not superseded or supplanted by the conventionalities of religious discipline; but rather, charity is the skeletal structure on which religious discipline is built. Meaning in religious living emanates from the degree of perfection attained in the complete practice of charity.

Superiors seem to believe that the sister-training programs as they are constituted now do not sufficiently equip all sisters with the basic qualities of emotionally healthy and integrated living in religious life. Therefore, they are confronted by the imperative need of careful planning and organized action in providing for sisters a thorough doctrinal training, supplemented by
adequate instruction in personal adjustment.

In contemplating the necessity of designing a revamped formation program to meet the needs of contemporary religious life, superiors are faced with problems in selecting specific content and procedural approach which will be beneficial to the sisters. Orientations to religious life must be chronologically and ideologically aligned with current living conditions and essential human requisites. Sisters must ponder the reality of the existing situation and acknowledge its prime importance as the point of departure in establishing better formation programs. They look to mental health education as a possible channel of positive approach in improving the quality and renewing the standards of sister formation procedures at pre-service and in-service levels. With penetrating insight superiors have expressed their definite expectations of the advantages for sisters accruing from this auxiliary developmental opportunity.
PART TWO

A PHILOSOPHY OF CONVENTUAL LIVING

- An Ideal Concept -
CHAPTER III

MATURE CHRISTIAN PERSONALITY: THE GOAL IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

The mature Christian personality, which is the goal of the religious life, is identified by two closely related types of maturity, spiritual and personality. In this treatise, "spiritual" denotes the realm in which a sister employs her natural powers of intellect and will, supported by the supernatural aid of grace and the practice of the theological virtues, to accomplish both personal and community goals in attaining union with God. This is the commonly accepted connotation of that term as used by ascetical writers, and is most familiar to sisters. It is possible to achieve maturity in one of these aspects of human living and not in the other; but when the process of mature development takes place in both areas simultaneously, they become mutually complementary and sustaining. By sharpening the focus on these phases of the goal, total personal maturity, it is hoped that sisters may be strengthened in their pursuit of it. In striving for the complete perfection of the religious life, sisters aspire to reproduce in themselves the maturity of Christ, Who is their Model, and Whom they come to know through meditative study of His words and actions. Without destroying personal individuality, they absorb the attitudes and values of Christ and function in a uniquely operative way of life. With their efforts polarised in Christ, they aim within the concentric limits of religious vows and specific community rules and customs for the integration
of the mature Christian personality.

Spiritual perfection is directly dependent on the increase of sanctifying grace in the soul through worthy reception of the sacraments, especially Holy Eucharist, and on the fruitful practice of virtue, particularly charity. Charity, the supernatural love of God and of neighbor, is the essence of Christian perfection and includes and motivates the practice of all other virtues.

Theoretical knowledge of God is acquired by study of philosophy and theology; and while it is a helpful foundation, it is not an essential constituent of spiritual perfection, nor an indication of the degree of perfection possessed. Unless sisters make a conscious effort to translate formal education in philosophy and theology into practical terms, they may derive little pragmatic benefit from this knowledge. Practical knowledge of God leads to sound judgment and solid convictions which are applied in day-to-day living. The union with God attained through functions of the intellect and the will is increased by study and prayer; but the union which results from will activity, that is, from the practice of love, is much more important, since spiritual perfection is gauged by the intensity of active love.

Sisters must desire spiritual perfection so sincerely that they earnestly make every feasible human attempt to increase their supply of sanctifying grace, and to acquire the highest degree of love of God and of neighbor possible to them in consideration of their particular circumstances of nature and grace. Action must necessarily follow volition and resolution. Will to perfection is characterized by supernatural motivation, supplemented by natural incentives by which sisters seek the glory of God, their own sanctification, and the spir-
irtual good of their neighbor. This desire for perfection is all-embracing, including all aspects of life and affecting all times and places.

The conventual life prescribed for religious women is the observance of a common rule under the authority of a common superior in community life, which is essentially the expression of fraternal charity. Christ has been succinctly definitive in specifying the nature of the extensive and intensive practice of Christian charity. He commanded: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."¹ There can be no doubt that charity is the controlling factor in Christian life, and therefore, that living this love within the boundaries of rules and vows is the spiritual perfection of the religious state.

The process of mature personality development is a dynamic continuum which is not, ipso facto, collateral with chronological age, vocation in life, or protected social climate. It is the result of assuming the responsibility of self-development and self-management by coupling knowledge of human nature with purposeful direction and consistent exertion to cooperate with the grace of God in using the natural means available. Mere exterior conformity to prescriptions of religious life is not sufficient to produce the understanding and adjustment necessary to the complete well-being of the woman, who as a religious, strives to make her life a rich experience for herself and for those with whom she lives and for whom she works.

If these attempts to attain maturity are to be productive, it is imperative that sisters take cognizance of the meaning of mature Christian personality. The developmental process of personality growth will not produce the same number or kind of characteristics in each person. No two religious women will mature at precisely the same rate or to exactly the same degree. Yet, even though the dimensions of maturity defy the confines of exact description because of the varied degrees of qualitative and quantitative personality differences, there are certain definite features by which the mature Christian person in religious life can be distinguished from the immature.

The mature sister has an adequate and firm sense of reality and the honesty to face it consistently in herself and in her environment. The way in which she sees and evaluates herself has important implications for her adjustment to life. "The whole personality develops around the concept of self. The concept we have of ourselves determines to a considerable extent the goal for which we are willing to work and the effort we are willing to expend."  

It takes insight to know oneself. In attaining self-knowledge, every sister considers that she is a human being, a woman, created by God and blessed with the common prerogatives peculiar to humanity in general and to femininity in particular. Fundamentally, she has a nature with multiple phases: intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social, moral, and physical. In normally functioning human nature there is no divorcing of these elements, but rather a coordination and integration which make a unique human entity. As a woman, a sister "is

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nearer to the sources of life and of elementary realities, more humbly given over to daily occupations. She has also an instinctive sensibility which allows her to grasp things in a more concrete, simpler, more comprehensive fashion, to see things as wholes. She gives herself more simply, and perhaps more irrevocably, in committing herself more thoroughly and totally to these things."³ As a Christian, endowed with the supernatural life of grace through Baptism, the religious woman is one who "in the desire to belong totally and irrevocably to God leaves the world and enters a life built up and organized for the service of God...."⁴

Insight into the reality of self is necessary for intelligent development and change, but obviously, it is not the complete answer in self-actualization. It does not suffice for the religious woman to acquire self-knowledge; she must also be willing to accept and to love herself as she is. "Essentially, acceptance of self is a condition of emotional maturity. It is definitely not smugness, conceit, or underplaying of responsibilities. The self-acceptant person is better able to work, to create, to gamble for a cause and to make choices with full awareness because he is not consuming valuable mental energy in kidding himself about himself."⁵ The attitude a sister has to others is directly

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⁴Ibid., 21.
proportionate to her personal feelings of self-esteem and self-respect. There can never be a contradiction between true self-reverence and genuine humility.

Enobling self-love—knowing, accepting, esteeming oneself and recognizing one's human characteristics as the natural foundation of sanctification—is an act of virtue and the psychological starting point for a life of perfection.

The concept of self formed by a well-adjusted sister harmonizes quite accurately with the objective observations others make of her. Personality studies have shown that the greater the agreement between the individual's self-description and objective descriptions of him, the more adequate is the person's adjustment to life. 6 Other studies indicate that while intelligence and age are not always significantly related to maturity, 7 there is a positive correlation between the congruence of the self concept and adequate personal adjustment. 8

It is an awesome thing to be human—to have been created by God to His own image, to have an intellect and a will which permit, with the help of grace, the giving of a reasoned and a free service to Him, thus meriting an eternity of unadulterated happiness. Motivated by this basic understanding,


7 Sister Richarda Peters, O.S.B., A Study of the Intercorrelation of Personality Traits Among a Group of Novices in Religious Communities. (Catholic University Press, 1942), 17.

the sincere religious woman endeavors to pattern her particular potential according to the ideal image of Christ. God, in His wisdom, does not expect the same type of perfection in each person He creates, nor does He expect the same degree of holiness in each religious consecrated to Him, even though they approximate this goal through the similar channels of religious vows and community rules. It is important that every sister is appreciative of her natural endowments, for these are the truth of reality for her, and the substance from which she harmoniously constructs an authentic Christian personality. In the process of sanctification, which is the attainment of the mature Christian personality, grace operates in nature as a foundation, but does not transform it automatically.

The sister with the adequate personality regards herself in a positive manner. She is prudently self-reliant and believes she is liked, wanted, and accepted by others because she perceives and evaluates herself and others in correct perspective. This assurance of security and belonging makes her relatively immune to inferiority feelings, fear, anxiety, worry, and egoism which are so typical of immaturity. The ability to engage in independent and creative thinking is another attribute of maturity which helps a sister to make decisions when the need arises and to assume the responsibility for the consequences of those decisions.

The sister who is psychologically well-organized has a sense of equilibrium in regulating the various aspects of her life. She realizes that she need not trichotomize her spiritual activities, her professional pursuits, and her leisure interests. She is aware that her perfection is attained through
her ability to incorporate all the phases of her life into a well-integrated and self-controlled composite.

The mature religious woman has powers of adaptability which give her an elasticity in accepting change. Her resiliency allows her to remain basically calm and unruffled in turmoil, disturbed only moderately and temporarily by turbulence which would daunt the immature rather severely. She is not always free from conflict and frustration, but she honestly considers all aspects of her difficulties. And since she unselfishly seeks the best course of action regardless of her personal feelings, she learns wisdom rather than bitterness from her struggles.

This total integration of thought and conduct enables the mature sister to carry on even when she is emotionally upset, to be consistently temperate in her emotional reactions, and to exemplify regularly a healthy balance between aggression and adaptability in her daily living. This implies an advanced measure of personal autonomy and self-discipline.

The sister who possesses emotional adulthood transcends the pettiness and trivialities of life to devote her time and energies to tasks and problems outside herself. She is selflessly interested in others, entertains a profound regard for their human dignity, respects their opinions and their rights, and readily establishes satisfying social relations with superiors, equals, or subordinates. She loves life and people heartily, and is enthusiastically happy—and this does not suggest levity or frivolity—in her personal interaction with others. She derives reasonable happiness from her daily work. Thus she successfully liberates herself from the dominance of discouragement or depres—
sion. Since she is free of the shackles of neurotic self-centeredness, she feels privileged to contribute to the common good, and can sacrifice personal benefits and comforts for the sake of an equal or a greater good of the community.

The sister who is mature appreciates social approval, but is not childishly dependent on it. Popular disapproval does not deter her persevering pursuance of what she objectively determines as the most prudent action in any instance. So if she is criticized or misunderstood because of the loyalties involved in acting on principle, she can bear it with patience and fortitude. A mature sister is always wonderfully human and usually is sensitive to the psychological hurt involved in opposition; but she is not overpowered or incapacitated by it. She is open-minded, and blessed with faith in the human capacity for betterment. Therefore, she profits by criticism and learns from her mistakes. She can be wholesomely impersonal and optimistic in her judgments about herself and others, or about circumstances with which she is intimately concerned. She is willing and able to make significant changes and orientations when necessary. Through the virtue of Christian hope, operative in her life in conjunction with filial fear, she is guided by healthy guilt in acknowledging herself as a sinner and in performing necessary acts of repentance and reparation.

The mature religious is a woman of conviction who is eager and ready to assume responsibility, and does so in a competent and reliable manner. It may well be noted here that often the pursuit of maturity is blocked for sisters by false notions of religious obedience which label initiative and ingenuity
as insubordination, or brand inertness and lethargy as docility. This faulty thinking may be disconcerting to sisters in accomplishing certain aspects of their development as human persons. The mature religious attitude makes sisters patient with this philosophy, but constant in attempting to alter and overcome it.

The psychologically balanced sister habitually maintains sexual poise. She is secure and self-possessed in knowing who she is and how she must relate to God and to His creatures. She knows that in order to take a vow of chastity in religious life, she must understand not only the ordinary physiological, psychological, and moral aspects of sex, but also the larger implications of a life of charity as commanded by God, which embody the true essence of a life of vowed chastity. She knows that she must be a true Christian before she can be a genuine religious; therefore, she views a life of chastity, not puritanically as endless prohibition, but rather joyfully as the loving sacrifice to God of a wonderful gift, which provides for her additional opportunity to universally practice unalloyed love as exemplified by Christ Himself. She comprehends that proper understanding of her human powers and her Christian commitments is necessary if she is to be qualified sufficiently to make a vow of chastity, and free enough to live completely the love that is the keynote of her magnanimous dedication to God. This is the secret of her joy, an emblem of her intimate association with Christ. The religious woman who is not possessed of this Christian joy is a human tragedy.

Every religious woman should formulate a personal philosophy of life for herself which will be a directive force in determining her attitudes and re-
actions to life. A philosophy of life is "an interpretation of life, a view, provisional at least, of the purpose of life and a body of principles to govern conduct in the more or less serious problems and difficulties of life." Implementation of this organized system of values will inject a core of solidity into the daily living of a sister; it will be a natural base on which grace can operate. Through her philosophy of life she will establish principles, standard directives of action, which will be a keystone of stability for her. The philosophy of life should be amply flexible so it can be modified intelligently according to changing values and current needs. If this philosophy is to be valuable in the total pattern of living, it must be practical, so it can be applied readily to situations in actual life. Integrative adjustment does not imply stereotyped behavior even in the convent where women live communally according to an identical rule. The philosophy of life aids a sister to preserve her uniqueness, a distinctive feature of maturity, and to make it operative within the scope of religious life, so that it can add to the fullness of her personality, and thereby increase the fruition of her apostolic work.

It is possible that a religious woman could live in a rather aimless, routine fashion if she is deluded in thinking that change of garb, protected environment, increased spiritual aids, or well-defined rules of life, of themselves, produce maturity. Usually the victim of this deception does not grasp the idea that each sister must assume the responsibility of personality deve-

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opment, and earn it through diligent, persistent, and guided efforts in co-
operation with the grace of God. Consequently, she may resort to rigid exter-
nal conformity to convention as a substitute for substantial principles of vi-
tal action. Conformism, the deification of a means, is not conscientious fi-
delity to duty; neither is it responsible evidence of energetic community spir-
it. Exterior faithfulness to rule and customary is an instrument, not an end,
of religious perfection. It may become a facade which is socially commendable
in community living when measured by the standards of externalism, but which
often covers unrest, insecurity, and even hostility in sisters who are not psy-
chologically free enough to express their true feelings. The sister who has
mature discernment is reserved in emphasizing surface adaptability in religious
living. Incidentally, a religious woman may need guidance and assistance in
avoiding these pitfalls of delusion, and in forming a reliable system of direct-
evives for herself. As she grows in maturity, her convictions should be the
result of her reflective and critical thinking, rather than merely the passive
acceptance of the opinions of others.

Only a sister who enjoys adult maturity can really tap the depths of sig-
nificance in the intimate sharing of life with Christ which is the essence of
the religious state. Since she is basically oriented to future goals, she has
learned that some of her greatest satisfactions are derived by foregoing im-
mediate comforts and pleasures in anticipation of more enduring rewards.
While she plans and organizes her life with the future in mind, she concen-
trates on the present, engaging in current activities eagerly and purposefully.
As a result, the mature sister habitually enjoys emotional serenity and peace
of mind which are firmly anchored in solid confidence in God.

It is evident from consideration of a verbal portrait of a mature religious woman that psychological health makes a representative contribution to her total adjustment. Normal mental health, like normal physical health, is relative. Just as there are rules for attaining and preserving physical health to which sisters adhere with reasonable accuracy, so there are principles which, if applied regularly, will insure either the development of or the continued enjoyment of good mental health.

It may be a bit startling to suggest that a religious woman should give priority to a meaningful spirit of faith in and love for a personal God as her chief equipment in acquiring the mature Christian personality. Ordinarily, it is taken for granted that this is the basic motivating force in her life, but occasionally this directive is reduced to a nominal status, since it can occur that even a well-meaning religious woman unwittingly becomes entangled in the sentimentalities of devotion and misses the substantial benefits of genuine contact with God. It is beyond the scope of human efficiency for any person to love something or someone, including God, in total abstraction. God must become personalized for each sister if her imitation of and union with Him are to be functional.

Wholesome interpersonal relations with others are essential to the mental health of sisters. The religious vocation legitimately expands the scope of personal love for others in the work of the apostolate to encompass the entire world, since that is the extent of the Kingdom of God. However, for a sister, active participation in the Mystical Body of Christ usually is narrowed to
smaller areas of human activity. Since her life is focalized in Christ, the mature religious woman easily makes a warm, virile approach to people, because she understands how to confine her human contacts in true perspective within the bounds of religious propriety.

A true sense of humor is a redeeming faculty which is essential to adult adjustment to life situations. This humor is not slapstick hilarity which, in adults, denotes protracted adolescence. It is, rather, the ability to see discrepancy in the reality of what is and the truth of what ought to be. It is the quality of being courageous and honest enough to laugh at oneself.

The cultivation of cheerfulness, expressive of abiding joy, promotes emotional tranquillity. Happiness is generated within the heart of each person; therefore, it is in the power of each sister to make herself happy. People and environmental factors can make a sister uncomfortable, but technically, no person or circumstance can rob her of peace and joy of heart unless she wills it. Happiness is found in a good conscience, in a right order of things. For a sister, this implies attitudes and actions systematized by good judgment within the framework of her religious rule of life. Every mature sister realizes that perfect happiness is attainable only in Heaven, and that while she remains here on earth, she can expect to experience occasional suffering. Besides meritoriously accepting the pain which is providentially unavoidable in human living, she will avail herself of the purgative and regenerative effects of well-directed self-denial and penance. Suffering, when borne with Christian purpose, is a great purifier which expedites personality development.

Reasoned thinking rather than emotional thinking spells self-control, an
essential component in personality growth. Mental mastery, which rules the
domain of the mind, is a compelling factor in forming habits of virtuous con-
duct. In every instance, a religious woman must aim to control the situation
by conducting herself and her activities in a Christian manner, not crushing
her nature, but enobling it by forming and moderating it in imitation of the
example set by Christ, her Ideal.
CHAPTER IV

THE EXCELLENCE OF CHARITY IN COMMUNAL LIVING

Living in community is one of the distinguishing and indispensable features of religious life, and one of the most compensatory for sisters. This is not merely the gregarious situation created when people aim to promote the organizational or functional purposes of the group by pooling their endeavors in any project. The objective of communal life in convents is the promotion of supernatural charity. Charity is always theoretically elevated as the predominating element in religious life, but sisters must not be content to pay verbal homage only. They must regiment the forces of charity into practical dynamic action. Personal interaction among sisters in a religious community is one of the most consequential and exacting obligations of religious life, and can not be accomplished mechanistically by the faithful application of rules and regulations. Sisters are unique personalities deserving individual consideration, and their mutual duties of charity will be appreciably facilitated by knowledge and esteem of each other as people. Sisters must, then, have certain insightful understanding of human nature, especially human nature mantled with religious habits, if they are to be successful community members.

Sisters are women—human beings created by God with individual and unique patterns of personality strengths and limitations. Each sister, no matter what
her age or experience, has intrinsic basic psychological needs to which reli-
gious superiors and subordinates must be alerted so they can cooperate in pro-
viding circumstances in convents which are conducive to the general mental
health of sisters. Sisters will be initially equipped to face this challenge
if they recognize and understand these basal needs in themselves. Too fre-
quently, religious women are influenced by the crippling belief that the sub-
stantial requirements of human nature are unworthy of the special dedication of
religious life, and therefore, are somehow mechanically liquidated by the
"grace of vocation." This conception is the seed of disaster. Mental health
must be of as great concern to sisters as physical health; in fact, perhaps it
is not an overstatement to say that sisters should be more directly solicitous
about mental health because of its thoroughly penetrating consequences in com-
plete religious living. If sisters become as highly sensitized to their psy-
chological needs as they are provident of their physical and spiritual welfare,
profits will be gained by individual sisters, by the total community, and by
all the peripheral contacts made by sisters through the work of the apostolate.

Sisters have the same essential human characteristics as all other human
beings. There is nothing miraculous about a religious vocation which propels
all personality forces into strategic positions for balanced living without the
application of the normal rules of mental health. The application of these
principles is an art, not an innate capability, and therefore, must be learned.
Good adjustment to life is reliable insurance of personal happiness, and con-
sequently, of community happiness. Religious women must be free to live in an
emotionally relaxed manner. In order to affect responsible community inter-
action, sisters must have the self-discipline which enables them to think of, to understand, and to react to life realistically. This means that sisters understand and accept themselves and others as human beings, choose strong value-goals, and enforce their efforts with thoughtful study of Christ and cooperative action with grace. Sisters must be women of principle, fortified by the courage of their convictions, who influence people and events by living habitually in intelligent equanimity, fearless honesty, prudent insight, patient consideration, and genuine love.

Religious superiors are largely responsible for regulating the emotional temperature of community living. They will consider that it is a human calamity to subject sisters to circumstances in the common life which violate their rights as people, or deny them the opportunity to meet mature obligations. This depersonalizes sisters. For some religious women, this is sufficient driving force for them to seek unwarranted social contacts outside the convent in compensation for the emotional poverty they face in community life. However, the efforts of the superior to provide suitable living conditions in the community must be supported and supplemented by the contributions of each sister in the group. Favorable environmental atmosphere does not automatically transmit emotional solidarity. Sisters must consistently exercise the self-control identifiable with adult emotional tranquillity. Sisters who suffer continual emotional tension cannot prudently project complete responsibility for it on extraneous sources. When they are at peace with themselves, sisters usually can retain their psychological balance in withstanding the ordinary human inconveniences in communal living. Emotional equilibrium is not equi-
alent to absence of pain or conflict. Many emotional tensions or explosions can be prevented, or routed to socially acceptable outlets in community living, if sisters are permitted the freedom of being human and of courteously ventilating their feelings and voicing their opinions. If undercurrents of annoyance or variance of opinion are released in wholesome interchange of thought, antagonism can be dispersed without marring the spirit of charity in the group. Mature exposition and discussion of problems and disagreements are the surest path to clarification or solution.

Too often, however, there is a gulf of fear and hesitancy separating sisters which inhibits free exchange of ideas and comfortable social communication. If all sisters, unsuppressed by the pressures of human respect, experienced a firm sense of personal security in the group, elements of threat would be eliminated from healthy argument or consultation. Offensive and defensive techniques would be abandoned in social articulation, whether it be between equals or superiors and subjects. Sisters need not be in agreement to accept each other as people. Diversity and multiplicity of ideas contribute to the growth of the group and of individuals. Problems are never solved by pretending that they do not exist. They must be scrutinized fairly, and considered cooperatively with deferential attention to all the circumstances involved. When religious women, regardless of status, approach one another in interpersonal relations in community life, whether it be to compliment or to complain, to ask advice or to offer suggestions, to transact business or to exchange the pleasantries of good fellowship, they must be activated by the conviction that sisters always deserve the thoughtfulness and respect proper to the dignity of
human beings. In all their contacts, sisters owe one another the honesty of straightforward and aboveboard relationships tempered by sincere sisterly love. It is not unlikely that there may be occasions in community living when sisters observe the better part of fraternal charity by loving others enough to hurt their feelings, if this is inevitable to their personal well-being or necessary for the common good.

There are times when sisters have a right, and perhaps, a duty to engage in healthily spirited or intense argumentation about items of mutual interest. This is an adult prerogative to which they are entitled in justice. Sisters should enjoy this privilege without anxiety of thereby becoming anathema in community life. Religious women are the religious community. Their ideas, reactions, feelings, desires, and expectations represent the psychological wealth of the community. When sisters who bear the responsibility of administration in religious life are prudent in promoting this freedom of expression among the sisters, the progress and prosperity of the community are protected against stagnation and deterioration.

Mature sisters readily and confidently approach impartial and understanding superiors who are women of principle. Superiors should not only welcome this adult relationship, they should stimulate and encourage it, even though differences of opinion be involved. They should invite sisters to present their problems, to explain their needs, or to share their joys and triumphs, directly in frank discussion, unhindered by apprehension of misunderstanding, requital, or betrayal of confidence. But this commendable procedure is not sufficient. Superiors, likewise, should be persistent and punctual in reliev-
ing unpleasant or unprincipled situations for sisters where this is needed; or be gentle and forthright in leading them to a more accurate and happy interpretation of and adjustment to their circumstances. Motherly superiors exert intellectual leadership, and are primarily concerned about the well-being of the sisters as human beings. They are self-sacrificing in loving and serving their sister-subjects generously and wisely.

Sisters desire to be loved members of their conventual family, and should take time for thoughtful analysis of the manifestations of Christ-like love which should be evident in religious life. Much is written and philosophized about family spirit in communal living. This is an elusive term, however, and is frequently considered by sisters only in its superficial overtones. The concept of "doing things together" has been overemphasized in describing family spirit in religious life. It is possible for a group of people to live communally, praying, living, and working together, without enjoying even the initial semblance of family unity. Since family unity, whether it be in the natural or the conventual order, has more substantial roots than physical presence or common activity, it seems that a literal concept of family spirit in conventual living could be derived from a comparative study of the identifying elements of an ideal Christian family group. A true family is composed of people of various ages, talents, and personality traits whose shared love is characterized by patient understanding and unqualified acceptance of each other. Each person is interested in the other members of the family without infringing on their privacy or their rights. Family members enjoy communicating with each other and spend considerable time together. There is mutual readiness to
praise the good in others and to acknowledge their accomplishments, and reciprocal forbearance with personal idiosyncrasies or weaknesses. Good family members are loyal to one another, sharing joys and sorrows, and always willing to give assistance when the need arises. Due to personality differential, they are privileged to have diverse opinions, to be honest in expressing them, and intelligent in arriving at satisfactory conclusions. The intense bond of union in a good family gives freedom for disagreement without fear of condemnation, eliminates the secrecy and suspicion issuing from mistrust, and permits the liberty to love and to be loved in warm familial interchange.

This has profound implications for the practice of charity in community life. The service of love which duplicates in the conventual family the exemplary natural familial traits is humanly difficult at times, and demands of sisters a mature self-mastery. Admittedly, the absence of consanguinity in a conventual family is partially responsible for this; the affectonal atmosphere of community living in religious life will never be identical with that of the natural family. But enlightened by faith and encouraged by supernatural motivation and receptive attitudes to human nature, sisters rather easily surmount these complications, and are ready for the reciprocation of love with their spiritual sisters in the religious family. There are sisters who are not emotionally ready to participate in this reciprocity of charity. But mature religious women are capable of giving love to these sisters also, because they accept and understand them as they are, not as they ought to be. They learn that detachment from selfishness is the substructure of efficacious love of God and of neighbor.
Sisters have difficulties in human living, varying in kind and degree, and as a result, may become involved in conflicts and frustrations which impede their effective interpretations of reality, and amplify their affective responses to it. They may appeal to superiors or to fellow sisters for help in accepting and adjusting with self-possession to this psychological obstruction. In assisting others to make this adjustment, sisters will take cognizance of the fact that the details of the conflictive situation are not proportionately as important as the emotional reactions they cause in the disturbed sister. The seriousness of the conflicts may be mirrored in the responses the sister makes to them; but due to personal or circumstantial factors, sisters often attach unfavorable emotional tones to apparently insignificant occurrences, so their reactions to these are fairly disorganized and exaggerated, and therefore, misleading. They may lack sufficient insight to make adequate connection between cause and effect. Sisters who are frustrated are best able to acquire true self-evaluation and clarification of difficulties in an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding which does not nurture dependency, but rather stimulates reasonable thinking and constructive action. Generally, these sisters are not searching for Utopian escape from problems, or for a magic panacea for troubles. They are seeking help in gaining realistic comprehension of life so they can arrive at mature conclusions and assume the responsibility for them. It is true, supernatural motivation will be appreciably powerful in the life of a religious woman. But to presuppose that, because a woman is a religious, the supernatural has priority over all other aspects of nature at all times, frequently leads to underestimation of the import of the emotions in the lives
of sisters. Any distressful situation must be considered in its basic constituents, and approached from its proper source if it is to be handled successfully. When sisters are mistakenly guided or directed immediately with advice of a predominately spiritual nature without attending to the facts of the case, there is danger that the otherwise staunch religious recommendations will become platitudinous and operationally impotent, because they are extraneously imposed rather than self-initiated by the sister concerned. Then sisters are inclined to add complications to the original problem by masking their true feelings with artificial acquiescence or pietistic generalizations. This often engenders hostility and bitterness, affords ample stimulation for discouragement and resentment, and leaves the sister in a state of relative emotional turmoil. Even in instances where the frustrating circumstances in question are beyond the direct control of human regulation, sisters need to be fortified in making orientations to their difficulties by the mature sympathy of their sisters in religion, especially their superiors, which assures them that they are loved, accepted, and understood. Very frequently, the art of intelligent listening is a great asset in helping sisters to cope with the ordinary pressures of life. Verbal communication with a human person, who is blessed with understanding, usually is a key necessity in hurdling psychological barriers. It is well for sisters to possess or to develop keen powers of perception in recognizing and accepting reality, so they can help themselves, and others, if necessary, to make prudent appraisal and satisfactory adaptations in painful life situations.

Religious women who live in community, like most normal congregations of
human beings, represent the entire gamut of human goodness. Yet, from time to time, they experience in their social relations some forms of contradiction or incongruity. In living closely with each other as sisters do in community life, the temptation to judge the normal human reactions of others hastily and superficially is humanly enticing at times. Incorrect knowledge of facts and basic motives for action usually prompts unreliable conclusions about others. Sisters who understand human nature know that even conspicuous exterior details may not represent the truth of a person or a situation, and that, in every instance, it is presumptuous to pass judgment with absolute certainty. In lieu of pronouncing judgment, these mature sisters curtail temptations to uncharitableness by loving and understanding their sisters in religion. They distinguish real from imaginary troubles, and are unprejudiced in attributing worthy motives to the actions of others, and in making kind interpretations of their conduct, even when manifest evidence would indicate otherwise. In relating to others, adult religious women realize that human actions, influenced by innumerable, and often uncontrollable, constitutional and circumstantial components, are not always comparable or equal to the motives which prompt them. In regard to themselves, they understand that disordered self-love is clever in disguising itself as righteousness, and that unleashed self-pity is adroit in magnifying the actual dimensions of personal misfortune or hurt. A penetrative combination of love and faith gives sisters the perceptual clarity to view the suffering or inconvenience inherent in human interaction as an opportunity for enlargement and enrichment of spirit. It invests them with the practical wisdom to barter it for benedictions for themselves and others.
Since security is a basic need for all human beings, sisters also need to know that they are personally loved with a warm, gracious love, and valued as people in their own right by those with whom they live, particularly by superiors. This personal appreciation must be expressed obviously if it is to bear favorable effects. It signifies more than the superficial demonstrations of social diplomacy involved in "just being nice to people." Sisters want the appreciative love of a genuine mother for her mature daughters and warm-hearted sisterliness from their companions; and superiors need the testimony of filial affection from the sisters. This two-way traffic of love, which transcends personal attractions and antipathies, is strong and supportive because it is solidified by supernatural charity manifested through the warmth of human communication.

Sisters want to count on the approachability and stability of their confreres in religion. Consistency of attitude and action on the part of superiors is an especial treasure for sisters. They can be composed in overlooking the occasional instability of colleagues, but unpredictability and temperamentalism in superiors is difficult to endure, and may tempt some sisters to distrust and even to cynicism. The deep-seated need for security is not satiated by the physical and material hundredfold which superiors in justice provide in sufficient quantity for the sisters. Often superiors consider their duty to subordinates adequately dispatched in this regard when they make generous provision for temporal needs. Generosity in this area, even if profuse, will never satisfy the need sisters have for the loving interest and understanding of a motherly superior, or the genuine fellowship of sister compan-
It is possible that sisters who are physically close may suffer psychological loneliness. This is an acutely painful experience for sisters, and frequently stems from misunderstandings provoked by unsatisfactory social interaction in community life. Congenial companionship and benevolent group spirit are cardinal factors in the adjustive processes of religious women. Common use of living facilities in community life does not assure the presence of charity; when love is absent, this proximity may be only a source of irritation or heartache. When love permeates it, however, community life is a cause of tremendous joy and a medium of emotional security for sisters. St. Paul leaves little room for misconception when he tersely sketches the foundational elements of this neighborly charity: love is long-suffering, noble-hearted, humble, courteous, self-forgetful, patient, forgiving, just, trusting, hopeful, modest, and unpretentious.\(^1\) Sisters have a duty to cultivate in themselves these earmarks of charity in a positive and intense manner. Because of the capacity for deep love, the spirit of sacrifice, and the dispositions of selfless devotion peculiar to women, sisters are psychologically well-equipped for this task. Yet, in spite of natural and innate readiness for a life of dedicated love and service in the religious life, it happens that some sisters never attain real feminine fulfillment. Their efforts in striving for this goal seem to be stymied continually by contorted conceptions of the implications of a religious vocation. These sisters have freely sacrificed all that is closest to the heart of every woman—husband, children, home—so that they may love

\(^1\) I Cor., XIII: 4-6.
Christ undividedly and all others through Him. Then in precise contradiction to their alleged desires, they crusade in admitted attempts to crush their humanness, becoming cold in their aloofness and hard in their indifference. Further, they become ensnared in the infinitesimal details of selfishness, almost hopelessly restricting their womanly powers of love. They misconstrue the facts of the Gospel narrative, and err in the belief that this emotional destitution is a fitting predisposition for close affinity with Christ. Often sisters are afraid to love. And in filling the emptiness of their lives with fear, they are driven to the comforts of externalized devotion, or to the protection of psychological withdrawal, or to the pleasures of sensual gratifications.

These false notions and unworthy practices have sad consequences in the lives of religious women.

Every sister should be enriched by contemplating her propensities as a woman. If she is to function normally according to the nature God gave her, a woman cannot work for others in callous objectivity or complete retirement. She must give of herself, injecting an element of warmth into all her activities. She must be recognized and accepted as a person in her own right—for what she is rather than for what she does. She must be needed so that she may lavish her love and her services on others with compassionate tenderness. She must love and be loved in order that she may live fully in intensified womanhood. She must abandon useless details, that she may be unfettered in selfless devotion to situations demanding magnanimity and courage which are her domain. She must forget personal concerns and project her attention to people and things outside herself. As a channel of love, she must participate in crea-
tion, functioning maternally in a physical and/or a spiritual sphere. With this self-realization as her vocation of love, the noble woman, whether she is in the religious or the lay state, achieves enormous satisfaction, and radiates joy and serenity in all her contacts. Meaning in religious living precedes from and is determined by the degree of personal love for Christ attained by sisters, and the facility with which they dispense it to others.

Faith merged with love equals the power of giving legitimate affection to others in religious life. Ardent religious women who love are hearty in their approach to others, distinguishing shallow sentimentality from unaffected warmth. They are habitually joyful, differentiating empty hilarity from the deep happiness which is not only compatible with, but augmented by pain, sacrifice, and labor. These sisters are sensitive to the feelings of others, are willing to help without being meddlesome, generous in offering praise and encouragement, loyal in retaining confidences, fearless in defending reputations, grateful for kindnesses received, and truthful in evaluating people. Also, they are refreshing in their humor, humble in accepting criticism and opposition, prompt in forgetting and forgiving injuries, and constant in performing the ordinary courtesies proper to Christian living.

Religious women ordinarily are inspired by a spirit of generosity, so they willingly anticipate and accept reasonable deprivation of material goods and comforts in the convent. But they expect to be received kindly by their superiors and sisters, and they are not willing to surrender this portion of their birthright. Sisters need to be convinced that they are loved because of their personal worth—because they are Sister Alpha or Sister Omega. Sisters
must be respected as individuals. Psychological catastrophe occurs when superiors become so overtaxed by concentrated administrative responsibilities that they do not have time to know sisters as persons. Even though an efficient exterior machine may result, working with sisters en masse damages their integrity and violates the essence of religious spirit. Sisters must be assured that they enrich the community resources because they are fine people, not merely because they can accomplish an amount of efficient work, and thus fill a utilitarian purpose in the community. No sister will accept the impersonality of a status-role as entrant number 603 who teaches Class B in School Y. Neither does any sister enjoy being subtly or obviously measured against things, whether it is the dollar bill, a new statue for the corridor, or a set of books for the school library. Nor can sisters be questioned for their deprecation of the preferential treatment of lay people, including students, which often cheats them of the best affection and first considerations of their superiors and colleagues. Often sisters feel this extrinsic evaluation very keenly because they cannot reconcile the apparent coldness of the system of values employed in this conduct with the right to intrinsic evaluation inherent in all individuals. How repeatedly the unintentionally frequent references to the dearth of vocations falsely impresses sisters with the idea that quantity supersedes quality—that their prime importance hinges on their ability to increase the ranks of occupational manpower.

Sisters are conscious of their need for security, particularly when they experience ill health. Sisters should cultivate a special sympathy for the community members who are ill. They can never afford to regard lightly either
the psychological or the physiological illnesses of sisters. When sisters say
they are ill, others can safely believe it is true. Prudent sisters will not
be hasty in concluding that the sick sister is concentrating unduly on her
health, or exaggerating her physical ailments as an attention-provoking medium.
Certainly, the superior must be guided by realistic observations of the situa-
tion to a course of action which is best for the sister concerned. But any in-
timation of suspicion from anyone is an unfair and an unjustifiable blow to the
security of the ailing sister. Emotional reactions can, and often do, have re-
percussions in the body. Sisters who have physical pain or other symptoms
which stem from psychological causes may be as severely indisposed and as ur-
gently in need of competent medical assistance as those whose illness is or-
ganic in origin. More often than not, sisters with psychosomatic illnesses
are aware only of the actual physical disturbances, but not of the psycholog-
ic causes of them. A skilled physician can alleviate the physical aspects of
these illnesses, and bring sisters to an intelligent understanding of the fact
that they have emotional origins.

Obtaining the services of a reliable physician only partially obviates the
obligation of a superior to sisters who are ill. She should willingly supply
the reasonable needs of these sisters, whether this means medicine or hospi-
talization, special diet or an alleviated horarium, dispensation from prescrib-
ed conventual exercises or generous measure of human understanding. Sisters
may refrain from reporting an illness if they know that the medical expenses
involved are regarded as economic burdens, and the necessary mitigation of the
daily program as self-indulgence. Sisters are deeply grateful for the thought-
fulness and the graciousness of superiors and fellow sisters who lighten the weight of illness by willingness to understand and to oblige. These factors assume enormous psychological importance for sisters who are ill, and directly contribute to their regaining physical health.

Generally, most sisters give themselves unselfishly and demand little. When they are ill, their emotional life is affected to a great extent. Ordinarily, discomfort and pain tend to make people more self-centered. Even though they do not express it, sisters will be very aware of the fact that their incapacity to work may be imposing added inconveniences on the community. They will also suffer a varied combination of sensitiveness, irritability, depression, loneliness, fear, and aridity of spirit. Sisters may have some of the same general reactions when they endure heartache of any kind. It is well to remember in judging the problems of sisters, that even when they seem essentially and objectively trivial, they are deserving of respectful attention because of their import to the sisters concerned. Sisters are obliged in charity to cushion the impact of these painful situations for their companions by genuine warmth and friendly interest. This is particularly true for superiors. If ever a superior should use her mother potential, it is when her daughters need the solace of her loving understanding to strengthen them in bearing physical pain or emotional distress. Often it takes only a reassuring smile, a few minutes of time cheerfully given, or a small act of thoughtful kindness to fill the need for security, since psychologically, the sister is more in need of understanding interest than of actual relief from her pain.

Most sisters take reasonable precaution in preserving their health, and
they are humble in appealing to superiors for care when they are ill. Well-balanced sisters are not infantile in their desires for attention, but are grateful for the congeniality and solicitude shown them. Calm acceptance and uncomplaining endurance of physical, emotional, or spiritual suffering, particularly if it is chronic, call for indomitable valor. Sisters learn that meaningful participation in pain is a purification which chastens the powers of love, and clears the soul of the debris of selfishness.

Emotionally disturbed sisters also require special attention. Unfortunately, some unstable individuals have been admitted to religious life, and while they may give the impression of being capable in some areas, they have not attained a convincing degree of maturity. Neurosis is emotional illness which is a partial separation from reality, and is motivated largely by factors which frequently are either subconscious or unconscious. Manifestations of neurotic conduct in sisters are characterized by assorted degrees of inability to recognize and accept reality, unreasonable guilt and anxiety, exaggerated egocentricity and its entourage of consequences, infantile behavior and dependence, rebellious and hostile attitudes to authority, escape to physical pain and debility, compulsions and obsessions, social inadequacy, rigid adherence to purely conventional formalism, misconceptions concerning sex, irritability, or depression. Neither the toll of personal unhappiness suffered by these distressed individuals, nor the disruptions they cause in common living can be measured in mathematical terms. Living with these sisters poses a try-

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ing problem for the mature members of a religious community. Subordinates in religious life are not ultimately responsible for obtaining professional help or of initiating proper treatment for these sisters who are psychologically ill. Nevertheless, mature sisters must marshal their efforts, and generously accept the duty of charitable understanding and patient forbearance in interacting with their maladjusted companions. Such practice of love can provide valuable opportunities for sisters to demonstrate the qualities of their mature Christian personality.

It is not enough for superiors to know that these conditions exist and to be passively tolerant of their presence. They must take positive action to prevent or to eliminate, or at least to alleviate these symptoms and their causes in as far as this is possible. These sisters are emotionally ill and need the advantages of psychological counseling or other specialized care. Superiors have an obligation in charity and justice to provide adequate help for them. In desperation, well-meaning superiors sometimes resort to pampering sisters who are neurotic, since that seems to reduce, at least temporarily, the disturbances caused by them in communal living. Generally, this is a mistake. Often neurotic individuals unconsciously wish for the discipline which they need, but are unable to exert on themselves. In many cases, even though they seem to resent it when it is imposed by another, they are made more secure in themselves by reasonable restraint kindly imposed. When sisters are influenced in their attitudes to emotional inadequacies by implications of morality and culpability, they are inclined to feel that sisters who have pronounced neurotic symptoms could overcome these "bad habits" if they had more will pow-
er, or if they intensified their prayer life. Disordered emotions admit of a wide range of severity, but ordinarily, religious women who have predominate neurotic tendencies are incapable of helping themselves, just as sisters who suffer from cancer cannot cure or arrest the diseased condition of their bodies without expert medical care. Unfortunately, an aspirin, or a series of X-rays, or an extra fifteen minutes of meditation daily will not cure the emotionally unsettled person. Even frequent changes of residence or several weeks of relaxing vacation at a country mission are not proper therapeutic treatment for sisters with neurotic difficulty, although these may, in some instances, be instrumental in precipitating a temporary remission of neurotic tensions. Admonitions, reprimands, or instructions also are of little avail with these sisters, because actually they are in need of a thorough revaluation of fundamental attitudes and understandings. No degree of intellectual capacity or professional training, or solid home background, although each of these is a salient contributing factor, can, of itself, give proficiency in self-management. This is accomplished by an organized process of learning, understanding, assimilation, and application.

Sisters need social recognition. Every human person likes to feel that he is "somebody." Sisters desire to be recognized as capable, successful people because of their personal worth and activities. Respecting sisters as individuals with rights and privileges, as well as duties and obligations, partly satisfies this human need for recognition and self-esteem. Honest commendation and praise of the ordinary capabilities and accomplishments of sisters is often neglected, not because of malicious motivation, but merely be-
cause its importance is not recognized. Sincere praise from co-workers is a powerful stimulant for sisters to continue working diligently. Recognition from their peers fills only a portion of this human need, however; they also need and want to know that their superiors heartily approve them for what they are, not only for what they do. Cordial approbation and mutual encouragement pave many an otherwise rough road for sisters. Sisters who are liberal in lauding others find that it redounds abundantly in their own lives. Sisters who have reached adult emotional stature are wary of flattery, shunning its hyperbole and dishonesty. Since human applause is not absolutely essential, but only accessory to the happiness of sisters, their integrity does not crumble when they are unnoticed or censured occasionally, or even when they are subjected to more prolonged spells of disfavor. However, when a sister is manifestly rejected continuously for a long period of time by a group or an individual, especially a superior, undoubtedly, her self-esteem will be damaged, or perhaps, even destroyed. This deprivation of the love proper to the ideal of charitable living in community life is one of the most agonizing types of psychological pain a sister can endure.

Presuming a fairly reliable screening process during the probationary years in religious life, it can be concluded logically that the majority of in-service sisters possesses the potential necessary for attaining mature womanhood. Superiors, in systematic leadership, will not only permit, but constructively assist sisters to recognize, to evaluate, and to actualize their unique abilities in maximal fruition. Superiors will realize that the social service activities of the apostolate, whether these be direct or supportive,
are the means by which individual sisters accomplish self-realization and personal sanctification. Whether the work is skilled or professional matters little if the sisters are intelligent in accepting and utilizing their duties as media for self-advancement. There need be no conflict between vital spirituality and intense professional or occupational proficiency. In fact, they are complementary and parallel developmental processes. Sisters should be encouraged to strive for complete integrity in their militant role as professional religious women, a goal which represents the consolidation of professional efficiency and spiritual fertility.

Sincere sisters who really need advice or counsel seek it from reliable persons, candidly depicting their predicament and humbly assuming the task of self-integration. Useless confidences precipitated by impetuosity or emotionalism may be a ruse for concealing inability or unwillingness to face and control issues frankly. Sisters can not be too prudent in choosing their confidantes, since intimate sharing of the secrets of another is a liability which can be accepted only by trustworthy individuals. On occasion, sisters confide their personal difficulties either to their superiors or to their colleagues. This is a gesture of trust which places a serious responsibility of loyalty on the sisters who receive the confidences. They must be respectful enough to honor these sacred commitments with dignity, and to safeguard them with absolute silence as far as divulging them to others is concerned. There is nothing which hurts sisters so keenly, disillusion them so readily, and shatters their respect for others so completely as betrayal of confidence. These breeches of secrecy may be unintentional, but they do immeasurable harm to sisters and re-
place their trust with prejudice. For conscientious sisters, honoring the
privacy of confidential matter always is an indubitable duty of charity and
justice to others.

Sisters need to experience achievement. A sense of accomplishment pre-
vents feelings of frustration, uselessness, and discouragement. Sisters should
be allowed to develop their abilities and to know the satisfaction of adequate
performance in work. They enjoy working when they are assured that their suc-
cess in any field is recognized and estimated as something honorable and com-
mendable. It is psychologically necessary that sisters have an area of compe-
tency in which they experience a significant amount of personal adequacy. Ma-
ture religious women are not juvenile in their dependence on the approbation of
others, because they can supernaturally motivate themselves to efficacious per-
formance of duty even when they are deprived of it; but it is an important nat-
ural lubricant in human relations. Any semblance of pettiness in attributing
ignoble motives such as vanity, ambition, self-glorification, or worldliness
to the occupational successes of the worker blights healthy attitudes to work,
and diminishes the normal drive to achieve.

Sisters resent being subjected to treatment which is appropriate for chil-
dren or adolescents. They must be permitted the privilege of living as mature
women, making their own decisions in the hundreds of instances where this can
be done within the legal confines of religious obedience. Often superiors, or
sisters with administrative jurisdiction in particular areas of activity, find
it more efficient to take things in their own hands autocratically, rather than
to permit sisters to do the planning and executing of affairs within the scope
of the work assigned to them. Conversely, some sisters are so childishly reliant on the direction of superiors and/or administrators that their dependence reduces their obedience to a farce. There is much need for balanced and correct thinking about the meaning and implications of religious obedience. Obedience, conceptualized in terms of "giving up" of will power, is a negation which would be a dehumanizing process if it were possible at all. In contrast, religious obedience is the free conformation of a subordinate to the legitimate directions of lawful superiors for the ultimate purpose of fulfilling the laws of charity commanded by God. There is nothing in obedience to indicate that superiors need make all decisions in conventual living. In fact, the competent superior will delegate authority discriminately, and once she has done this, she will be wise in granting sisters the marginal freedom necessary for the exercise of their adult capabilities of decisive thinking and executive action. To confer authority without also giving the power to use it, is to create figureheads who must rule in self-defeating mockery. Sisters who share community authority, either on the provincial or the local level, have a responsible duty to exercise it judiciously. In the event that some sisters are not ready for the exercise of adult independence, arrangements should be made for them to learn it. Misunderstanding of the meaning of religious obedience and misinterpretation of the significance of conventual authority may lead to practices which almost demand that sisters lose their individuality and succumb to the role of automaton. Obedience does not deprive sisters of their unique human qualities of thinking for themselves, forming opinions, making judgments, and expressing them with propriety; nor does it exempt them from the obligation of
using these powers of adult womanhood. The shrewdly critical appraisement made by principled women in religious life is precisely distinct from the irresponsible grumbling of those who are disgruntled, and its value as a potent commodity in community life cannot be overrated. Sisters can be paralyzed intellectually and emotionally when attempts are made to cast them in a community mold; as it were, pressing them until they can be released as identical patterned forms of thinking and acting. This debilitating passivity, which often parades as the epitome of meekness, saps the vitality of individual personalities, and deprives sisters of part of their heritage as children of God. Nothing so deadens the initiative and ingenuity of sisters, and hinders their growth in maturity as denial or refusal of the courtesy of being treated as capable women.

This is devastating also to the life blood of the community and is fertile soil for neurotic disorder. The latitude of mature living advocated here is not to be confused with license. Any fears that this type of freedom of expression, of itself, will jeopardize the status of obedience or threaten the authority of superiors can be discarded promptly. Sisters who are really mature understand the meaning of true obedience and respect the authority invested in religious superiors. And since the goal of sister formation is the development of the mature personality, it is presumed that sisters are afforded every available opportunity to approximate this goal.

If sisters are to achieve maturity, they must be given responsibility. This does not mean that, in order to become mature, all sisters must have at least one appointment to a major post of authority, such as community superiority or professional administration. It means that superiors should release
sisters from enforced adolescent dependence in daily living by refusing to do for them what they are competent and eager to do for themselves. Efficient superiors will arrange their executive and managerial duties in such a manner that they will tap the capabilities of the sisters to maximum advantage. If there is need, sisters can be given a gradual introduction to the responsible acceptance of cooperative duty. Sisters will respond by exercising their competence successfully, knowing that their superiors trust their executive ability. It is very important to appoint sisters as superiors who are maturely secure, and who know how to wield authority justly without interpreting every display of initiative by the sisters as a threat to their authority. Authority and initiative can be federated so strongly in religious life that they serve as a leaven which raises sisters to the level of intelligent government and submission.

The vow of poverty taken by sisters is founded on charity, and should be reflected in their lives by a sincere spirit of detachment from material things. This renunciation does not indicate indigence or destitution, nor does it preclude the genuine appreciation for and communal use of temporal goods according to current standards of living and the spirit of community rules. It is an act of faith in the love of God by which religious women emancipate themselves from mundane concerns in order that they may be free to pursue the love and interests of Christ. Sisters should shun the philosophy which links the practice of conventual poverty almost exclusively with the expenditure of money, so that the amount of money accumulated becomes the axis of poverty in a community. At times, adherence to this theory induces sisters to be shockingly inconsiderate
in imposing on the time and resources of their relatives and friends. Often these lay people are forced to make costly sacrifices to oblige sisters in their thoughtless and repeated requests. Other sisters may be mistaken in thinking that the bulwark of poverty for religious women lies in deprivations which, in some instances, may be harmful to physical health, detrimental to psychological well-being, or impedimentary to apostolic works. It is undeniable that wise manipulation of community funds and reasonably imposed or self-chosen mortifications are salutary, and within the province of religious poverty. However, unless sisters are well-informed in this area, misbeliefs about conventual poverty can lead to rather flagrant violations of charity, justice, and honesty in community living and in contacts with the laity. The prescriptions of poverty in a community are obligatory for both superiors and subordinates. If superiors manage community assets and grant permissions to the sisters in the spirit of charity, the greatest good of the individual religious, the community, and the apostolate will be effected. Sisters should not have to suffer the effects of miserliness in community living—it can not, in any manner, be identified with either the spirit or the letter of religious poverty. Prudent superiors generously and willingly provide money and supplies needed by sisters to function normally as human beings, without undue embarrassment or restriction in community living and apostolic activity. Sisters, possessed of accurate knowledge and the true spirit of poverty, know what is legitimate, and will be maturely responsible in their attitudes and reactions relative to permissions and the use of material resources. Mature religious women recoil from the domination of hedonistic desires and avoid superfluous
and extravagance in using materials. In this way, they enjoy increased competence in fulfilling their commitment to love God and their neighbor unreservedly.

Mature religious women take an interest in the preservation and/or the extension of community resources. So often the general administrative and financial concerns in community life are enclosed in an aura of mystery, and relegated in laissez faire fashion solely to the sisters who are superiors or bursars. The broad aspects of these problems are pertinent to all community members, and should be shared family business. It is distressing to discover that, when sisters are deprived of all knowledge and participation in bearing community burdens, they readily become disinterested in the progress of community affairs and easily lose realistic grasp of the standards of current living.

Too much security in this regard dulls the sense of personal obligation to the community, and may make sisters presumptuous in their expectations and impractical in their demands. As educated adults, sisters have a duty to know something of such community realities as the cost of daily living, the expenses involved in operating apostolic activities, the principles of internal community organization and government, the legal and financial maneuvers of building construction and maintenance, the tuition rates in colleges and universities, speculations relative to prospective community projects, tax rates, the price of air and land travel, or the facts and figures of loans and debts. These are typically significant matters of apostolic living in contemporary society, and thus are rightly included in the adult responsibilities of religious women.

In pledging themselves to a life of vowed chastity, religious women do not
surrender the privilege of loving and of being loved. These concepts are not incongruent. Actually, since God created women for motherhood, He has blessed them not only with physical potential, but also with the emotional and spiritual powers necessary to this feminine fulfillment. Sisters recognize and respect the tremendous endowment by which they were given the potency to participate in the creative power of God through physical motherhood. In vowing religious chastity, they freely renounce the prerogative of using this gift in lawful marriage, not because they deem it unworthy, but because in knowing its merit, they consider it a noble offering by which to prove their personal love for Christ. Further, they understand that in relinquishing the responsibilities and joys of marriage and maternity, they have not circumvented the obligation to practice benevolent love as God commanded it. Rather, they can intensify their womanly capabilities of selfless love, self-surrender, tender compassion, and understanding sympathy, and expand their possibilities for becoming more deeply and truly maternal. Love is the central motivating factor in religious life; and if sisters deprive it of prime position in their lives, their attempts at religious living become contradictory and enigmatic. Sisters should acquire an intelligent balance of knowledge and action in the "give and take" of loving in the religious life. In fact, "religious women should be taught how to live the fullness of their mother-virtues—loving, giving, sharing—so they can experience total development of their womanhood. The woman who does not have the qualities which would make her a good mother will never be a good nun."³

³Karl Stern, M.D., "Mental Health in Religious Life," St. Louis University, 1958.
The degeneration of the true meaning of love so prevalent in large portions of modern society seems to have filtered, to some extent, into religious life. In conventual living, the need for love peculiar to every human being is sometimes confounded with romantic love or with sensual affection, or even with ignoble concepts of love, and therefore, considered as opposed to the vow of chastity taken by religious. This ideology presents love in religious life as a suspicious operation. Some sisters, therefore, become apprehensive, and conclude that congenial and affectionate interpersonal relations are suspect for religious women. Religious chastity is posed as an uninterrupted series of negations which stagnate the emotional reactions of religious women. In some instances, rigid and vague instructions on "particular friendship", which is a perversion and not real love at all, perplex sisters. These bleak and inimitable representations of love make for confusion and fear, and because of numerous doubts and misconceptions, leave sisters unenlightened as to the beautiful practice of positive charity in religious life.

Supernatural love is the distinguishing quality and the influential keynote of the religious vocation. It is the nucleus of close and prolific association with Christ which produces humility to see the truth of reality and the patience to live accordingly. It is the cohesive force unifying sisters in a single bond of purpose. The principled practice of kindness, the crystallization of supernatural love, is not soft condescension, but a convincing demonstration of the durability and vigor of charity. Sisters should be taught by a positive approach how to live in a mature, virile, warm fashion, thus giving them the liberty to love in a happy, relaxed way. There is a price to pay
for mystic marriage with Christ, so these adaptations are not accomplished
without human effort and pain. But if they are understood, admitted honestly,
and regulated prudently, they become the core of peace and happiness for sis-
ters. Prudential limits control dignified human interaction, but the details
of these limits are always determined by the wisdom of charity, not by the se-
verity of fear. Religious women come to realize that the lawful, and even ob-
ligatory, interchange of love within the celibacy of religious life expressed
in mutual understanding, appreciation, loyalty, forbearance, trust, and joy are
rewarding compensations which fill their lives. Sisters owe these marks of af-
fection in a special way also to members of their natural families and to their
friends. Religious profession does not liquidate the obligations and implica-
tions of the fourth commandment.

Every religious woman needs the fullness of personal enrichment which is
part of noble friendship. Friendship is the mutually spontaneous overflow of
love—a meeting of minds and hearts—between two people who are so emotionally
poised that they can be self-forgetful and generous in experiencing the depth
and intensity of psychological unity necessary if this relationship is to flour-
ish. The affectionate esteem, common understanding, shared interests, total
confidence, and deep respect communicated in loving another profoundly in
friendship are rooted in the strong love of Christ. Friendship is a special
gift of God to human beings, and can be equalized only by the stability of ma-
ture persons, who are independent and have no need either to dominate or to
possess others. In the hands of diffident or insecure persons this union de-
generates into a self-centered inordinancy which thrives on insipid sentimen-
tality and suffocation of spirit.

The silence provided for religious women by conventual prescription is not primarily a penitential exercise, but affords sisters the time and opportunity for psychological retreat from environmental pressures in which ideas are created, future advancement is envisioned, and responsible command of life situations is planned. Prudential thinking is always the precursor of intelligent operation, and is particularly fundamental for sisters in developing mature Christian attitudes and habits of charity in community living. Recollection of spirit, so essential to total personality maturity, is more than spasmodic attention given to God through repeated ejaculatory prayers. It is an activity of love, a constantly stimulating contact with the reality of Christ, which penetrates and strengthens every aspect of religious living. Recollection of spirit is fructified in productive silence. It is possible that periods of undisturbed external silence in convents may be invaded by the internal noise of insurgent hostility or the clamor of defiant desires and rampant fantasies. Thus the purpose of conventual silence often is defeated because it becomes only an exterior and technical correspondence to rule, unaccompanied by regulated imagination and emotions. It takes humility and reasoned self-control to eliminate distractions and to remain alone with oneself in meditative quietude. Only those sisters who have earned peace of heart can comfortably and profitably accept and use the silence in which greatness is generated.

Recreation, a prescribed form of relaxation in conventual life, should be one of the most notable aspects in the daily schedule of every convent. Formal recreation periods in convents are, more or less, at the mercy of supe-
riors. If they realize that the recreational outlets for sisters are fairly limited, superiors will anticipate the needs of the sisters by providing stimulating, enjoyable activities which really have power to re-create and revivify. The type of recreational diversions should not always be dictated by the personal preferences of the superior, an individual sister, or a group in the community. Any formal programming of the daily community recreational sessions, such as card games on Mondays, ping-pong on Tuesdays, mending on Wednesdays, even though it be arranged by "democratic" methods, usually tends to defy the purpose of recreation for sisters. There is considerable relativity in the matter of recreation in religious life because activities which prove relaxing for certain sisters may be penitential for others. Or what may afford complete recreational joy to a sister under certain circumstances may, in a new setting, be pure penance for her. If recreation is to accomplish its obvious aim, sisters must enjoy the freedom of choosing from a variety of activities which are really relaxing and enjoyable for them. It is deplorable that recreation periods in some convents are regularly utilized as opportunities for accomplishing work which has not been done previously, thus violating the purpose of this necessary human respite. Uninterrupted work can never be virtuous or commendable for human beings, even in religious life. Superiors who cultivate an understanding regard for sisters as people will adequately attend to the recreational needs of their sisters. Sisters will promptly collaborate with their superiors since they realize their need for physical relaxation and for gratifying social contacts with other community members. Leisure time enjoyed together is a re-enforcement of the bond of charity which unites sisters in
community life. It is regrettable that sisters occasionally become so involved in their work that they do not take time to know, love, and appreciate each other through pleasant conversational intercourse. The art of conversation needs to be revived and refurbished in conventual life. Sisters should be preferential in selecting a speaking vocabulary which is appropriate for cultured, educated women. When used by religious women, the jargon of adolescents and the speech tactics of children are inexcusable improprieties. Receptivity of new ideas, respect for varied points of view, cultivation of aesthetic and cultural tastes and appreciations, development of intellectual curiosity, and expansion and elevation of range and level of interests will enlarge their repertory of conversational wealth, and thus eliminate the trivia which, all too frequently, clutters the conversations of religious women. The esteem with which sisters regard the importance of daily recreation, which in most communities is an incumbency of Rule, should be analogous, in a way, to the reverence they give to the recital of the Office, for both can be superb acts of worship of God.

In manifesting their maternal love, superiors will occasionally find it necessary to employ corrective measures in interacting with sisters. When this emergency arises, they will be ready to concede that every sister has a right in justice to be trusted. Social frigidity is employed on occasion in the hope of rectifying a real or an apparent wrong. This coldness is a cowardly, immature approach to a problem, and can be a cruel mental torture for the offender. The heart injuries inflicted by this indifference can scar sisters irreparably. Such unkindness is usually an indulgent demonstration of per-
sonal indignation or prejudice, or of insecurity in handling a problem openly. And in spite of the fact that this approach is devoid of malice, it will never satisfactorily remedy any person or situation in need of adjustment. This conduct is unworthy of the dignity of the one who is guilty of it, and of the one who is victimized by it. When there is apparent need for disciplinary action, superiors should completely discount the probability of malicious intent, and face the sister honestly in a private set-up as a mother addresses a loved daughter. Public embarrassment of any kind is always indefensible, and can be only an abortive attempt to accomplish a desired goal. Superiors must make proper investigations, and substantiate their conclusions with reliable evidence. They will never accuse sisters of errors without granting them the privilege of personally stating the facts as they see them. This eradicates the possibility of magnifying the importance of essentially neutral situations by undue implications of morality or by over-stressing minor points of regularity. Wise superiors do not allow themselves the luxury of being shocked, and they do not take the mistakes of sisters as personal affronts. Motherly superiors give the erring one the benefit of the doubt, even when it seems marginal; and aim, not for the sordid satisfactions of retaliation, but for the improvement of the sister. If retribution on the part of the sister is indicated, the superior will be extremely deliberate in choosing the course of action to be taken, regulating it according to the temperament of the offender, and the extenuating circumstances of the offense. The discerning superior will be considerate, even though firm, in administering discipline, so that it may have a corrective, rather than a lethal, effect on the sister concerned. In
these matters of conventual discipline, it is well to remember that "punish-
ment gives people a sense of value, if it is inflicted because we want those
who offend to be more worthy of their own true self." Sisters must realize
that it takes courage for superiors to evince this maternal solicitude for
their daughters in religion. Sisters are obliged to respond courteously to
these corrections, receiving them open-mindedly with gratitude and humility.
No criticism, whatever its source or its content, should be rejected without
scrutinizing it for the truth which may be the prelude to self-improvement.
This is not an easy task. Disapproving commentaries of a personal nature are
not readily accepted by human beings. Realistic self-knowledge and well-nur-
tured honesty are assets for sisters in accomplishing this feat effectively.
When kindly maternal or fraternal correction is used adeptly by mature women in
community living, the excellent rapport of charitable interpersonal communi-
cation is strengthened, rather than damaged or disturbed.

Effective superiorship is a herculean assignment which demands of each
superior the prudence to put wisdom and truth into action in attaining the
personal virility and valiancy of a reasonable facsimile of Christ. It is the
personification of love through selfless service of others, and a pregnant op-
portunity for the loving exemplification of the maternal qualities of the Moth-
er of Christ. Wise choice of personnel for leadership positions in conventual
living is mandatory, since the quality of leadership exerted in religious life
has broad and penetrative consequences in the lives of individual sisters, and

\[1\] Ferdinand Valentine, O.P., All For the King's Delight, (Newman Press,
1958), 248.
significant effects on the complete structure of religious living. The magnitude of superiorship requires above-average personality and spiritual maturity in those who assume its arduous obligations. The dignity of superiorship can be dishonored, and difficulties for sisters in religious living can be created or aggravated if appointments to superiorship are used compromisingly as psychological sedatives to tranquilize the insecurity of the appointees, or as status rewards to camouflage their personal inadequacy. It is a mark of the munificence of God to sisters, however, that superiors remain human, and that they are not mystically transformed by the "grace of office." Superiors have the same rights, privileges, and needs as subordinates. They deserve, want, and need the fraternal affection and cordial respect of the sisters in the community. The complex responsibilities of intellectual, religious, and apostolic leadership entailed in the superiorship make it an unenviable task. The impartiality of being "all to all" is a challenging obligation. Subordinates owe love and loyalty to their superiors; their filial fealty can relieve the pressing demands of office which continually tax the personal resources of superiors. Sisters are united to their superiors by an alliance of charity—a daughter-mother relationship. Communication with authority figures poses no insurmountable difficulties for mature religious women. They understand the elements of religious obedience and accept the authority of God as it is manifested to them through the mature direction of their religious superiors. They have a sense of proper relational order of things, so they are as comfortable and self-possessed in interacting with a superior as with an equal. If they are confronted by a superior with a suggestion, or a reprimand, or a request,
they are calm, well-mannered and accommodating. Sisters give superiors credit for being sincere and for operating according to convictions and principles, so they can quietly submit even when they do not agree, cooperate affably in projects they did not originate, and habitually maintain evenness of temper in diversity of opinion.

Sisters, like all normal human beings, regard their good name as one of their most valued possessions; and therefore, they have the natural right to expect that their reputations will be jealously guarded and protected by community members. This presumes the Christian duty of loving each other loyally, a relationship stipulated by Christ as the insignia of His close affiliates:

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."5 Sisters can understand reasonable vigilance and concern for the preservation of religious discipline, but they are rightly insulted and hurt by suspicion, intolerance, and disloyalty. Such grossly unjust attitudes leave no leeway for human weakness, and sisters can suffer ravaging atrophy of spirit under the pall of misunderstanding and consequent rejection in community life. Sisters should be allowed to live in peace of mind, unhampered by fear of being the target of glib conjectures or false accusations. If sisters are guilty of errors, they should not have to live constantly to the end of their lives in the shadow of their mistakes. Only rancor and ill-will are propagated by cold contempt. Amendment and redress are born of understanding acceptance. The serious obligation of Christian forgiveness in dealing with the transgressions

5 John, XIII: 35.
of sisters binds superiors and subordinates alike. It demands that they forget the blunders, love and trust the transgressors as fully after their deviations as before; and if necessary, provide opportunities for them to regain self-confidence and to correct their inaccuracies. Loyalty to others is an unparalleled mark of love embodied in kindly interpretation, sincere forgiveness, patient forbearance, brave defense, and prudent trust. Sisters appreciate and thrive on the kindness of great-souled superiors and companions who show them these hallmarks of Christ’s devotion to others, so often cited in the Gospel story.

Worldliness is one of the most pernicious enemies of community living. It is not synonymous with a geographic area, as is erroneously supposed, but is associated with dispositions of mind and will which oppose God and His law of charity. Convent walls, no matter how high or how thick, are not impervious to the penetration of this malignancy. Respecting neither climate nor creed, worldliness is affrontive enough to make irreverent and disruptive attacks even in religious life. If religious women are forewarned, they may protect themselves more easily against this crafty intruder. Worldliness disguises its entrance into conventual living with several favorite masks. Chronic negativism is accompanied by a retinue of rash judgments, uncharitable thoughts and words, discourteous conduct, and grumbling discontent. Gossip revels in exaggeration and misrepresentation, often blossoming into calumny and detraction. Envy and jealousy usually operate in conjunction, shriveling magnanimity of soul and choking the spirit of charity in hypocrisy and meanness. Besides the personal misery involved in this addiction, the disloyalty and cruelty to those who
should be loved most make it particularly odious. Self-pity breeds hypersensitiveness, and is quick to take offense, seeing slights where none were intended, and feeling coldness in prudent reserve, insult in teasing jest, or rejection in stable propriety. Pharisaism shields incongruities in actual living with pious theorizing, regresses to puerile behavior, such as pouting spells and temper tantrums, in order to escape unpleasant realities; or retreats to the ivory towers of fantasy to enjoy unreal, egotistic pleasure. Earnest sisters are aware of the dangerous possibilities of worldliness in religious life, make every practicable attempt to offset its entrance into community living, and are instant in recognizing its trademarks and in curtailing its influence in themselves and others. Sisters should persist in rejecting it, not by harsh opposition, but by the firm censure manifested in the determined and invigorating practice of charity. The cogency of love always blasts the virulence of worldliness. Mature sisters cherish peace and love in community living too much to be deprived of even a portion of it by the impositions of worldliness. Sisters need not fear the consequences of disturbing the pseudo-peace sometimes established by the reign of certain brands of worldliness in community living. They should definitely assert their rights in proclaiming worldly and picayune conduct both unchristian and immature, and refuse to allow it ever to set the pace for community living. Strength is never found in fury, and the noisy aggression of worldliness is a barrage which can be punctured by unyielding resistance. To make this confrontation is a service of charity which preserves the integrity of the religious life. Cooperation with grace strengthened by fervent prayer, purposeful self-denial and mortification, the stability of even-
tempered human living, and the faithful implementation of the tenets of Chris-
tian love are powerful counteractant forces against worldliness in religious
life.

In suggesting the expediency of concentrated emphasis on the coordination
of spiritual and personality forces in religious life, it is hoped that the
process of development towards the Christ-like personality will be facilitated
for sisters. It is reasonable to anticipate that mature religious women, who
know and understand their nature and its relevancy to the realization of a full
happy life, will be temperate in controlling and satisfying their natural needs
and desires, and persevering in their quest for perfect charity. They know
that God is the ultimate source of all human security, and that unless they
seek it in Him, they will be subject to the myriad evils of emotional and spir-
ital mutiny. These sisters can accept and respond to the demands of their hu-
man nature with an equanimity which is stabilized in an understanding of human
psychology united with an active faith in the Omnipotent God. Their contacts
with their neighbor and their environment in community life and in the apos-
tolate are distinctively marked by universal and habitual love, patience, kind-
ness, understanding—the standards of excellent human relations employed by
Christ, the Perfect Teacher.
CHAPTER V

RELIGIOUS WOMEN AS MILITANT APOSTLES

The modern concept of the apostolate, which originated in the sixteenth century connotes the activity of those who are commissioned by the Church to proclaim the message of the Gospel.\(^1\) The practice of virtue which necessarily accompanies this missionary function presupposes a manner of life reminiscent in the fundamental aspects, at least, of that instituted by the Apostles in the early days of the Church. Charity is today, as it was at the time of the Apostles, the energizing force of the apostolate. "The apostolic life as thus conceived is the perfect form of human life wherein a man consecrates the use and intent of human powers to the loving contemplation of divine truth and from that fullness lovingly serves his fellow men by the communication of the great mysteries of salvation.\(^2\)

Supernaturally motivated love is supremely superlative, and possesses an unparalleled flare for totality. It is in this spirit of whole-heartedness and absolute consecration to the cause of charity that sisters gain an expansiveness in their love which not only includes God, but all He loves, as well. Ser-

\(^1\)Albert Fle\(^1\), O.P., Ed., Apostolic Life, (Newman Press, 1958), 44.

vice of the neighbor need not be a threat to the perfection of religious women, but can be an activity of the apostolate which completes the contemplative life. It is the externalization of the public and official nature of the religious-apostolic vocation. Apostolic love is ecumenic, and marked by the prodigality of God. It confers to apostles a panoramic extensity in ministering to the neighbor—an indispensable proof of the love of God.

The activities of the apostolate are an intrinsic element in the lives of religious women in active communities. These endeavors are not artificially superimposed on the religious life as enterprises of an avocation, nor do they operate independently in juxtaposition as something having only peripheral relationship to the central function of religious life. Ideally, they will be fused with the duties of the religious state in such a way that sisters can effectively accomplish the theological purpose of the apostolate, the diffusion of charity. The personal love of Christ, activating the lives of sisters, makes this fusion possible and fruitful. If they are to be faithful to their commission in the Church, sisters must consciously award primacy to their status as Religious, whether they function as teachers, cooks, nurses, secretaries, social workers, or catechists. This differentiates their obligations from those of lay apostles who engage in identical activities.

Dedicated women in religious life are characterized not only by the attributes of adult maturity, but also by particular qualities of apostolic militancy. Fervent sisters approach the tasks of the apostolate with a vigorously energetic spirit, the overflow of love. Every earnest apostle, no matter how humanly unostentatious his contribution, is a significant worker in the Church.
Sisters do not, however, confuse personal prestige with headline popularity since they understand that the prominence a sister earns as an apostle is gauged chiefly by what she is rather than by what she does. Religious apostles are mature women impregnated with a vibrant love of Christ, the prime source of their efficiency. First, they make their lives influential manifestations of the Christian virtues, which, because of warmth, practicality, and sincerity, attract others to imitation. Apostolic action, though it be extrinsically brilliant, becomes "tinkling cymbal and sounding brass"\(^3\) unless it is substantiated by a life-giving attachment to the Mystical Body of Christ. Secondly, intellectual development and professional training of apostles are indispensably aligned with spiritual strength.

Apostolically oriented religious women exert initiative, even though the realm of their activities is comparatively restricted. Dominated by an all-inclusive charity, they view this leadership in the apostolate as the power to choose ideals, to cooperate with people, and to organize materials into a vitally integrated unit to attain immediate and ultimate goals.

Apostolic sisters love people with a special benevolence, respect their innate dignity, regardless of possible unattractive accidental human qualities, manifest interest in their welfare, and inspire them to live the two great commandments of love. In commanding Christians to love their neighbor as themselves and to consider whatever they do to each other as done to Him, Christ has established the criteria for the measure and the motive of apostolic com-

\(^3\) 1 Cor., XIII: 1.
cern for other people. Religious women, incited by genuine love, form the habit of observing the good in others, and of identifying each person with his virtues. This does not eliminate objective recognition of reality, but it diminishes natural annoyance with human shortcomings, and forestalls the entrance of intolerance. Thought control is extremely important in the practice of charity. This positive attitude in human relations acts as an armor against unkind thoughts and judgments which might otherwise grow into personal antipathies or patterns of habitual behavior. Sisters owe an unaffected love of benevolence, shorn of pretense and condescension, to their co-workers in the religious family. Also, their charity must include, in a particular way, the members of the devoted laity with whom they share the labors of the apostolate. Lay people make valuable contributions in all professional and occupational fields, and sisters should expend every effort to unite forces with them in a charitable manner. Sisters will endeavor also to give special kindness to the people whom they serve in the apostolate. Occasionally, women who are sheltered by the material hundredfold and the spiritual wealth of religious life find it difficult to grasp the significance of the struggles contingent to economic survival and moral goodness which lay people encounter daily. As a result, their attitudes to and interactions with the laity in the apostolate often betray their inadequate understanding of Christian principles. Recurrently, an uncomplimentary sister-image, mosaiced in the minds of many lay people by their observations of and experiences with sisters of limited sociological and psychological perspective, may harm the apostolic effectiveness of all religious women. Sisters need to cultivate a realistic appreciation for the spiritual, moral, mental,
physical, economic, or social problems which so often are common ingredients in the lives of the laity. The human pressures involved in these reverses are not easily borne, and cannot be dismissed thoughtlessly as inconsequential. In actuating people to Christian integrity, sisters employ supernatural compassion in understanding these conflicts. Religious women who are apostles should personify the love of Christ in such a warm and attractive style that others will be induced to copy it. This means, among other things, that religious women, who presumably are in love with Christ, must take pride in their personal appearance, wearing the religious habit with the regal grace and feminine dignity becoming the spouse of a King. This is not vanity, but healthy self-esteem and recognition of true status. In Christ, sisters have unfailing assurance of fidelity, an absolute essential to the happiness of a woman. They have limitless security in the promised temporal and eternal hundredfold. They are blest with a plenitude of grace and the gifts of life. All this gives sisters priority on joy—a magnetic tool of charity. Sisters who champion the cause of joy are agents of unprecedented influences in apostolic enterprises. In contrast, sisters, who refuse their Christian legacy of unfeigned joy, become classic contradictions and barren instruments in the work of the apostolate.

This impartial and selfless love which sisters are directed to communicate to others is not equivalent to indulgence or sentimentality, but is as virile, supportive, and true as the love of Christ, Who is the source of genuine personal influence. True apostolic leaders cultivate a personal magnanimity by which they spread love and peace in their sphere of activity, and thus inspire others with self-confidence and desire for deeper self-realization.
Prolific leaders in the apostolate possess a remarkable foresight in establishing attainable goals which reflect the needs of the present and anticipate those of the future. They have penetrating discernment in selecting and utilizing means to fulfill these objectives. Likewise, they have keen perception in comprehending situations in their entirety, and clear-sightedness in profitably manipulating the realities for which they are responsible.

Success in the apostolate hinges quite directly on the ability of apostles to be uniformly tranquil and unperturbed in their daily living. They can patiently face the realism of life circumstances, even when these are undesirable or painful, because they have learned unquestioning confidence in God and optimistic acceptance of His Providence. This placidity of spirit does not, in any way, intimate timidity or irresolution; for, when the need arises, truly militant apostles are fearlessly assertive in performing their vocational obligations and in defending persons or causes. Unfaltering courage is one of the sterling virtues of genuine apostles.

There are several areas of concern in the apostolate which sisters need to consider. Specific aspects of adaptation in religious life are principally within the jurisdiction of superiors; however, every intelligent sister needs to deliberate these problems also. The efforts of superiors can be counteracted by subordinates who do not understand the necessity of reconciling the observances of religious living with the demands of the apostolate. Unconsciously, certain religious women, superiors and subordinates, become so wedded to traditions in a religious community that it is difficult for them to understand that the practical implementation of the spirit of their religious com-
munity in a modern setting does not mean the sacrifice of essentials. Reli-
gious life can become a maze of minor technicalities which are not prolific
apostolic factors, but which demand of sisters useless expenditure of time and
energy. Simplicity should characterize all the internal ordinances of conventual living. Customs which involve only externals often become so sacrosanct
in the minds of sisters that they assume a value far beyond their true merit.
The spirit of a religious community is not enshrined in detailed items, such as, the number of pleats in the habit, the rules controlling enclosure, the
starched lining in the veil, or the number of prescribed vocal prayers. If it
is evident that the needs of the apostolate will be furthered by eliminating or
adjusting these typical regulations, even though they appear in the original
rule of the community, sisters need not worry that the fervor of the basic commu-
nity spirit will deteriorate. Contrariwise, they, rightfully, can hope that
it will be invigorated. If careful study is made of the biographies of the
noble-souled women who founded religious communities, it is readily evident
that the same keen foresight, honest acceptance of reality, and consuming zeal
which directed their actions in originally defining community spirit decades
ago would motivate them now to surrender, or to adapt community customs if this
seemed expedient in promoting the Kingdom of God. They did not become so en-
tangled in details that they missed the notable aspects of life. They knew
how to transform static elements of community living into agents of dynamic
action. These valiant women would understand that the spirit of the community
must grow and prosper, unstifled by a constricted translation of customs and
rules. They would realize that regulations which were apropos at the incep-
tion of the community, now may be inappropriate, and possibly even detrimental by defeating the purposes of the apostolate. It behooves religious women to allow the apostolic spark of their Foundress to ignite in their hearts so that they, while maintaining a steadfast love of their community spirit, have a more enlightened and informed understanding of problems of adaptation. Sisters must be on guard lest the effects of their work be curtailed by their reluctance to relinquish community customs or ideologies which may have been beneficial in another era, but now are obsolete and unproductive. They must be cautious that their efforts are not negated by their hesitation in adopting practices which, through the evolvement of societal attitudes and utilitarian values, have become significantly relevant to the contemporary apostolate.

It is almost paradoxical that some religious women who readily accept the technological advances of modern American civilization, concurrently resist changing sociological standards. By this resistance sisters create impediments to their role in the twentieth century apostolate. For instance, these sisters seemingly forget that the family is not the same stable societal unit with rigidly defined limits of filial respect and obedience as it was a generation or two ago. Or they overlook the actuality that current mores allow for freedom and independence in social interaction unknown at the beginning of the century. Or they fail to consider that the spirit of competitiveness and ambition which is so inherent in American life today drives people to forms of initiative and aggression unperceived in the past. While it is unwise to denounce unreservedly these cultural changes, it is unnecessary for religious women to concur completely with all of them. But if they hope for victory in the apostolate, they
must admit and understand them, and be alert to the undisguised power they exert in apostolic spheres. Sisters should anticipate that the students they teach, the sick they nurse, the orphans they mother, and the poor they feed will be deeply influenced by these transformations in society. They must prepare to meet this challenge gallantly with open-minded honesty, converting the contributions of an age of progress into gain for the apostolate.

Sisters must acknowledge, also, that the influences of revolutionized social proprieties necessarily have penetrated conventual confines. In this vibrantly progressive age, religious women write books, organize science fairs, and substitute reduced yardage and simple patterns for the complications of archaic modes of conventual attire. They chairman national committees, operate ham radios, swim in the modest seclusion of private pools, lecture on TV, and experiment with Geiger counters and isotopes at government expense. Besides, they appear on speakers' platforms at civic and professional meetings, perform as concert pianists, and renew long-expired drivers' licenses to chauffeur community cars. Twentieth century sisters, likewise, sculpture prize-winning Madonnas, compete in graduate classes in foreign universities, travel via jet-propelled Flagships, and know the amenities and etiquette of convention hall banquets and college-sponsored formal teas. These and all other similar procedures peculiar to the contemporary religious-apostolic vocation are intrinsically wholesome, even though they are brazenly deviant from the prosaic traditions of religious life. They can be magnificently employed for the glory of God and the furtherance of His kingdom on earth. If sisters who work in this constantly changing milieu are to brook the tide effectively, they must be flexible in maintaining operational contact through intelligent adaptation.
Some traditions of conventual living regard age and position with hierarchical respect inversely proportional to their actual deserts. It is important for the interests of the apostolate that religious women aim to liquidate this source of perennial concern by equalizing their thinking relative to status in conventual living. Clearly, sisters are not responsible for, or qualified to change, their chronological age. It is an inevitable accident about which they can do nothing. Sisters who assume administrative responsibilities in a community either have been elected or appointed to serve in that capacity. Sisters who have reached the age of fifty or sixty, or who share authority in the community, or who teach courses in a Senior College, are not necessarily more adept in the practice of virtue or more competent in professional business than sisters who are twenty or thirty, or those who are subordinates, or who teach Kindergarten children. Neither physical age, nor community office, nor level of professional activity or achievement, per se, gives sisters an option on wisdom or impeccability. It would be lamentable if arbitrary regard for these conventions cheated the community and the apostolate of the talented personal contributions of the sisters. In any event, religious women do not respect each other primarily for measures of proficiency which might be the natural expectation of age, position, or experience. Basically, sisters, irrespective of age, rank, or accomplishment, are deserving of mutual deference by reason of their origin, purpose, and destiny as dignified human beings, and of their consecration as religious women. The display of deferent love to all persons in community life is deadlocked for sisters who are addicted to the worship of protocol. Sisters should epitomize the courtesies of gracious and cultured living.
This is a duty of charity they owe in justice to their sisters in religion as well as to those with whom they work in the apostolate.

The Sister Formation Conference has made many enlightened suggestions for implementing more effective training programs for young women in religious communities. This is a hopeful sign of adaptation and advancement typical of the Church. Sisters should avail themselves of the means to know and to understand the purposes of the plans of the Sister Formation Conference for preparing young religious for participation in the apostolate. They should endorse this movement wholeheartedly, viewing it, not as a threat to their security, but as an opportunity for growth in the religious community in particular and in the Church in general. In the past, each religious community gave its members the best it had to share. Recently religious superiors have identified and studied the needs of sisters in the perspective of the modern apostolate, and have organized means of fulfilling these needs. Consequently, now they are in position to offer young sisters a more thorough and complete education than was available formerly. This should be a source of joy, rather than envy, for those sisters who have not had equal advantages. The amplification of probationary preparation for religious women is not a formal pronouncement of disparaging judgment on the professional performance of experienced in-service sisters, but is indicative of the healthy advance imperative to the progression of apostolic causes. Older sisters can and do, without a doubt, make increasingly worthy contributions to their communities. Years of experience cannot be substituted by theory and initial training alone. While providing more adequate opportunities for apostolic training for young sisters, religious superiors also have
been mindful of the in-service sisters by generously affording them the professional benefits of workshops, summer school sessions, lectures, and special studies financed by grants of money from the government or from philanthropic organizations interested in education.

The plans of the Sister Formation Conference for improved sister education are not designed to produce immediate perfection in young religious women. Young sisters have many of the imperfections of all normal human beings, but these are far outweighed by their qualities of eagerness to learn, generosity, enthusiasm, and creativity. They will make mistakes in the gradual process of learning concomitant to the acquisition of mature Christian virtues and ample professional competency. Young sisters should be encouraged to think through their problems, to do some interpreting of emergency situations, and to accept responsibility. When they succeed, their efforts should be acknowledged; if they fail, they should be helped to face their blunders and to begin again. It should be a privilege for older sisters to love their less experienced companions, and to aid them to derive profit from their errors and satisfaction from their successes. This fraternal assistance will undoubtedly become more meaningful if older sisters reconstruct the past, recalling the countless instances when superiors and companions ministered patiently to them, and contemplating what might have transpired if those kind sisters had faltered in their charity.

Young sisters, realizing that learning is a life-long process which does not terminate with the Juniorate, will gratefully seek and accept advice and support from older sisters who can share experiential benefits with them. Professional articulation among sisters of all ages and levels of apostolic train-
ing is an impelling exchange of ideas, beliefs, and principles which produces salutary results in the apostolate.

Young sisters today, as in the past, have just recently come from intimate living contacts with a social milieu which is quite different from that of the previous generation, but this has been true through the years. The proponents of the "good old days" in every generation have looked wonderingly at the "moderns" who have just joined the ranks of the religious community. Naturally, these young women have absorbed many of the values and attitudes of contemporary society, all of which are not undesirable or disadvantageous to religious living, even though they vary in rather sharp contrast from those of preceding generations. If the greater advancement of the apostolic work of the community requires it, older sisters have as stringent an obligation to the apostolate to abandon or to revamp their attitudes and methods as young sisters have to conform and to adjust to the culture and environment of religious life.

The nature of the apostolic work of a religious community presumes that professional preparation and intellectual development are as essential for sisters as spiritual maturation. The fact that religious women are regarding these areas of competency with new interest and appraisal is due, in large measure, to two factors; namely, that the sisters have come to a more profound realization of the pertinence of solid intellectual and professional advancement, and that pressure is urgently exerted on sisters by professional agencies representing all levels and types of apostolic work. In responding to this professional coercion, superiors have performed veritable economic miracles in generously giving opportunities to many sisters to prepare themselves more thor-
oughly for their apostolic obligations. In-service sisters have evidenced adult cooperation in accepting this emergency call to prolonged and intensified professional preparation by diligently pursuing formal advanced studies or informal private research, often at considerable personal disadvantage. Mature religious women find spiritual and mental enrichment and revivification in vital intellectual and professional training, and look forward to translating it into practical terms in the apostolate. Sisters who profit most from this special readiness for the apostolate usually are blest with intellectual inquisitiveness, capacity for learning, and capability for intense mental concentration. They also are anchored firmly in a personal relationship with Christ through a fertile prayer life, exemplifying humility, initiative, perseverance, and common sense in daily living.

There are common misconceptions which oftentimes permeate conventual attitudes to intellectual formation or professional development. There is a rather prevalent fear that sisters will be less spiritual if they develop professionally, or there is the tendency to deny the compatibility of humility and intellectual development. These notions are structured around pietistic thought patterns which are as indiscriminating as they are incorrect. Humility is truth; and when sisters recognize truth in themselves, they can, with spiritual and mental balance, admit their capabilities and utilize them creatively in the particular task to which they are assigned.

Work is a gift of God to man, and obviously, there is no paucity of this beneficence in the apostolate. Apostolic sisters are the recipients of manifold blessings because they find joy and satisfaction in their work, and pru-
dently regard it in its proper place in the scheme of daily events. They work consistently, but not fanatically; diligently, but not feverishly as they pursue their apostolic activities. The external works of the apostolate are efficacious in furthering the cause of Christ only in so far as they are motivated by Christ-like zeal on the part of those who accomplish them. On occasion, some sisters propound the fallacy which associates the virtue of humility with a particular type of work, rather than with a specific value-attitude system relative to it. In an attempt to spiritualize their approach to work, they look to Nazareth and misinterpret what they see. All sisters need not be carpenters or housekeepers because those were the occupations sanctified in Nazareth. They must study and imitate the virtues of the worker as typified by the members of the Holy Family, and understand and absorb the reverence for all noble work symbolized by the humble employment of Nazareth. There is nothing in the essence of menial tasks to insure the automatic transmission of humility to those who perform them. Likewise, there is nothing in the foundational aspects of intellectual ventures which generates pride in those who engage in them. Since the operative fields of vice or virtue are not determined by types of work, it is as possible for a sister who sweeps floors or washes dishes all day to suffer from advanced forms of neurotic egocentricity, as it is for a sister engrossed in full-time doctoral study to practice perpetual and virtuous self-effacement. The conclusion that a sister gardener is humble because she is satisfied with a modest formal education, and does not ask to work for a university degree in horticulture is as unfounded as the inference that the sister principal is proud, because instead of volunteering for service in the
kitchen, she asks to attend a workshop in school administration. The degree of personal virtue practiced by sisters is not coincident with the kind or amount of work they perform, but is dependent on their ability to "see work from God's point of view; that it is not only doing and making, but chiefly a means whereby they themselves are worked upon, made and sanctified by God."\(^1\) It is indicative of healthy adjustment, not pride, when sisters enjoy their work and are interested in it because of aptitude, preference, and experience. This appreciation for work increases efficiency in accomplishing a job.

Activism is one of the heresies of the modern apostolate in religious communities of women. Unwittingly, in some cases, sisters regard the amount of work undertaken or accomplished as the precise measure of the apostolic worth of the community or of individual sisters. The schools or hospitals staffed by the sisters, the public school children instructed in catechetical centers, the children cared for in orphanages and foundling homes, the classes taught daily, the students registered in schools, or the total number of sisters enrolled in the community are the yardsticks applied to the apostolic endeavors of the sisters. These statistics often make an impressive quantitative picture of apostolic labor. It would seem, however, that there is an inversion of values in these unreliable speculations of apostolic fervor, since the personal competence and fervor of the apostles, and their influence of love exerted on the publics they contact, which should be given prime consideration, are relegated to subordinate positions. Sisters, influenced by this unorthodox philosophy,

\(^1\) Ferdinand Valentine, O.P., 72.
are tempted to eliminate or to abbreviate spiritual exercises or other responsibilities of community life to provide more time for predominately apostolic efforts. This is dangerous. Work becomes a god, a sort of fetish for these sisters. They estimate their value to the community, and that of fellow sisters, by quantitative yield of work, counting as virtue their attempts to transcend the limits of humanity by executing multitudinous duties in a manner befitting the strength and spirit of angels. They justify this conduct by giving unwarranted emphasis and precedence to action and production in the apostolate. Consequently, since there is minimal time, they usually become physically debilitated because they neglect to take sufficient food, rest, and recreation. They are emotionally frustrated because they pressurize themselves beyond reasonable limits of human endurance, and spiritually anemic because they do not take time to make efficacious contact with God in prayer and meditation. Apparently, they are comparatively oblivious of the jeopardy to their personal integrity, and the hazards to a fertile apostolate involved in this precarious situation. Activism usually is motivated unconsciously by selfishness, and can be rationalized so satisfactorily by its adherents that agitated movement and productive output become synonymous with purposeful advancement in the work of the Church. This typical delusion injures the cause of the apostolate in religious communities more than sisters realize or admit.

Lack of personnel in religious communities and the constant demand that more sisters be supplied for growing professional activities create urgencies in the expanding apostolate. If sisters choose the supremacy of numbers, whether it be of professional engagements or of community membership, as the
apex of apostolic success, there is the possibility that, in reaching for this goal, they may, on occasion, lose sight of professional ethics. Sisters cannot risk damaging the work of the apostolate or the morale of the community by resorting to procedures which are tainted by falsity. Therefore, in enlisting new members in a congregation, considerations of quality always take precedence over those of quantity. Superiors, in charity to the community and sincerity to the individuals concerned, will be resolute in refusing admission to young women who do not have physical health, psychological aptitude, character fitness, and intellectual acumen compatible with religious life. Likewise, sisters who are unqualified to meet the responsibilities of a profession or an occupation should not be assigned to those positions until they have been adequately prepared. Time was when lay people fondly heralded religious women as "the good sisters" and were willing to give them wholesale approbation on that basis alone. But norms of acceptance have narrowed, and religious women now are judged and rated starkly according to their actual merits as professional women. Formal preparation for duty, specific capability to perform, and total personality development determine the degree of prestige enjoyed by sisters. In these aspects, sisters must, in all instances, at least be comparable to their professional counterparts among the laity. It is justly expedient that religious women attain high preparation and performance quotients by meeting current standards of professional excellence. To aim for success in apostolic work, according to their possibilities, is a conscience responsibility for sisters. Under no condition may failure or mediocrity be exonerated; they always deserve prompt remedial attention. While religious obedience affords new impe-
us to the work of the apostolate for religious women, it does not give them competence in any field. Appointing religious women to tasks for which they are spiritually, psychologically, or professionally ineligible is exploitation from which sisters suffer keenly. Such procedures are deceptive. They may cause lay people to lose confidence in sisters, and the actual apostolate to suffer from inferior service, thus impeding apostolic progress in the work of the Church. Besides the initial formal preparation, sisters need to devote themselves conscientiously to the immediate readiness essential to skilful operation in the apostolate. It does not suffice, for instance, for a religious teacher to have an academic degree, or even two; she must also apply her efforts to constant self-improvement and assiduous daily planning for teaching in the classroom. Further, in the content and method of teaching, she will follow the general stipulations of Community or Diocesan or State educational authorities, and enliven them with her originality and creativity. These obligations are as grave for religious women as the community mandates relative to spiritual exercises.

Loyal sisters who love their community are interested in its progress, and eager to promote religious vocations; but, at the same time, they know the inadvisability of high-powered tactics of coaxing or coercion in recruiting entrants. Some sisters who are compelled by indiscreet zeal in advertising for religious vocations, unintentionally make a caricature of religious life by glamorizing the aspects of material security and protected climate or by romanticizing the spiritual life. Procedures of this caliber decry the basic nature of religious vocation. Interested young women are entitled to an honest delin-
ation of religious life in its true proportions as a redemptive enterprise.

All sisters should clearly understand that God, in ordering all Christians to be saints by reaching the perfection of the theological virtue of charity, has offered the alternate approaches of either the observance of the precepts which is indispensable, or the fulfillment of the counsels which is optional. Consequently, every young woman must be free to make this momentous decision for herself, without undue persuasion from others. Not every good girl belongs in the convent; although, it is not inconceivable that, at some time or other, many Catholic girls feel an inclination to the religious life. When girls express these sentiments, it is imprudent for sisters to capitalize immediately on these statements without allowing the girls to think and decide for themselves. Attraction to religious life is not always a sign of a vocation, but may be prompted by some unrelated consideration, such as a need for escape from an unpleasant and imminent reality. In seeking refuge from the responsibilities and confusion of the outside world, certain types of vacillating or withdrawn individuals may be fascinated by the security and seclusion of the religious life. These women who have been unable to adjust successfully in the lay state, ordinarily can not accomplish it in conventual living. Often the routine and restrictions of religious life are the ignition by which their constitutional predispositions are exploded, with varying intensity, into definite psychological illnesses. Superiors must test the validity of young women's aspirations to and qualifications for the religious life. Sisters can facilitate this intricate screening problem for them by exercising moderation and discernment in encouraging religious vocations. Ultimately, the habitual practice of
Christian love and fervent prayer by the sisters in a community is the most influential recruitment procedure in religious life. This vivifying power supersedes all surface publicity, no matter how original or clever. The harmonious symphony of daily community living by the sisters resounds loudly in the apostolate, and is a most convincing advertisement for religious life. Without the support of this influence, efforts to publicize religious life become futile propagandizing. Usually, young women form their opinions of the ideal of religious life as they see it personified in the lives of the sisters they know. And youth can perceive and evaluate adults with embarrassing accuracy. Modern young women have been reared in a society which nurtures an almost incomprehensible scientific progress, provides phenomenal educational and cultural advantages, and glorifies social status and competitive advancement. Due to the pressure of these societal forces, young women are strongly influenced in their choice of a religious community by the type, quality, and scope of the apostolic preparation provided for the sisters.

Religious women must be convinced that, in doing the work of God, they cannot afford to make the mistake of substituting their apostolic achievement for their prayer life which gives them direct and immediate proximity to the Source of apostolic power. It would be just as erroneous for religious women to believe that they could succeed in the active apostolate by supplanting actual labor with a vigorous program of prayer and penance. Ordinarily, sisters are acutely aware that there must be an intelligent amalgamation of these salient aspects of religious life. They understand that contemplation and action permeate each other in significant synthesis, and that over-emphasis or negligence
in either area is ruinous.

Sisters are sharply conscious that they have accepted a sacred commitment to harmonize their multiple obligations in religious life and in the apostolate. But often they are plagued with guilt feelings and discouragement when they are confronted with the disproportionality of numerous tasks, assigned to them in Obedience, and the meager time allotted for their performance. Or they suffer rather severe emotional stress when their obligatory apostolic engagements infringe either on their elemental rights as human beings, such as rest and relaxation, or on their privileges as religious, such as adequate time for meditative thinking and prayer. For sincere sisters these incongruities in conventual living are poignant experiences, fraught with conflict and frustration. These conditions in modern conventual life, so harmful to sisters, occur much too frequently. They focus attention on the problem of time, probably one of the most urgent current issues for active religious women.

Growth in specialization and augmentation of the scope of the apostolate imply particularized training and additional assignments for sisters which prove to be time-consuming. Superiors assume the serious responsibility for conveniently arranging the daily horarium for sisters so they can be reasonably relieved of undue pressures in discharging their duties as professional religious women. Even in this age of automation, sisters need time daily to be mindful of themselves as human beings. They require ample rest, relaxation, and rewarding professional and social contacts. A worldly relaxed atmosphere is not the solution; but there can be partial relief, at least, in a daily schedule which is organized in view of the fact that sisters are a composite of a body
as well as a soul. Sisters owe it to themselves and to the community to use common sense in preserving their natural resources. Tension, which prompts much of the lack of emotional composure in accepting daily happenings in community life, is often induced by over-fatigue which could have been avoided by timely diversion or rest. However, no matter how relaxed or happy the community atmosphere may be, certain sisters may be tormented by anxiety if they are emotionally incapable of experiencing interior joy and serenity, the reward of vital charity. Intermittent respite from the ordinary friction of apostolic living, even though it be as simple as an extra recreation at a community meal, an additional hour of rest, quiet study in the solitude of a private room, a brisk walk in the fresh air, time devoted to reading or to the appreciation of beautiful music, private prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, a periodic day of relaxation from the regular routine, or a vigorous game of ping-pong or tennis, is a restorative and regenerative power for sisters. They also benefit immeasurably from a short vacation, as part of the summer program, arranged leisurely within the confines of religious decorum. It will be a happy day in conventual communities dedicated to professional activities when sisters are liberated from the parochial and professional minutiae of custodial, clerical, and domestic services with which so many now are burdened, and which could be done as effectively by lay aides or automatic devices. The mitigation of these conditions, besides providing time for basic apostolic requirements, will allow for the assimilative digestion of more spiritual, professional, and recreational reading, for periods of thoughtful reflection, and for exploration of personal creative possibilities; all of which are not luxuries for sisters, but
actual human necessities.

Religious superiors who are anxious about problematic situations caused by acute shortage of personnel and persistent demands of the apostolate, must be vigilant of the changing conditions in apostolic centers. For the sake of clarification, if twelve teachers adequately staffed a school ten years ago, perhaps the increase in school enrollment necessitates that now the faculty include eighteen or twenty teachers. No amount of good will or industry on the part of the original twelve teachers will suffice to control the increment in school population. Or if the number in the community family in the Motherhouse has doubled in the last ten years, superiors may find it necessary to appoint eight or ten sisters to do the work in the kitchen which formerly was done well by five. Change of residence from one convent to another, with the blessing of religious obedience, is routine procedure for sisters in religious life. Women consciously commit themselves to this arrangement when they enter a convent. Yet, accidental circumstances can be so diversified in various convent homes that often sisters find this aspect of religious living difficult to withstand.

The fact that this feature of conventual living may be problematic for some sisters does not insinuate a lack of religious spirit or good will on their part. Instability of residence may be for them an actual threat to their feelings of psychological security, and they need the personal consideration of understanding superiors. These transfers of personnel must be dispatched with warm regard for individual persons. At best, they are earnest—and often, painful—insevitableties of religious life, and deserve more than capricious or cavalier treatment. Such representative conditions in the apostolate have serious im-
pact on the lives of sisters, and merit the honest deliberation and resolute action of superiors.

Superiors will be responsible for priceless benefits for individual sisters and for the community if they are considerate in permitting the sisters to express their preferences for types of work, and are diligent in considering the occupational aptitudes of sisters in making assignments in the apostolate. In allocating duties to sisters, superiors will avoid professional "sins" against distributive justice by recognizing that sisters are not equally equipped mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally, or professionally to assume identical responsibilities. Occupational maladjustment can wither the spirits of even the most stalwart characters. Happy application to daily tasks not only satisfies a basic need for achievement, but it automatically increases the productivity of sisters in working for others. Occasionally, it may be instrumental in provoking the initial interest in religious vocation for some young women, especially those taught by sisters.

Many superiors meet the demands of duty and charity in appraising the aptitudes and capabilities of sisters in apportioning work-loads in the apostolate. Sisters have parallel obligations to be generous and unselfish in making themselves reasonably expendable for the furtherance of the apostolate according to the needs of the community. When sisters rivet their attention on the common good, they are able, if necessary, to relinquish personal convenience in the ordinary course of adjusting to these appointments. Religious obedience is not slavery; it is freedom with responsibility. Sisters accept this responsibility by giving, in a spirit of justice and of poverty, the faithful
and mature service their superiors have a right to expect from them. In equalizing assignments, it would be preposterous to expect superiors to cater indiscriminately to the whims of subordinates who had forgotten their role as religious apostles. Now and then, the over-protection of conventual life which shields sisters from bearing the brunt of financial or occupational burdens, has retrogressive effects on some individuals by engendering in them a spirit of self-complacency which narrows their span of interest to their own sphere of action, and curtails their efficiency as religious women. Sisters who emancipate themselves from the direction of superiors or from the observance of the spirit of the Rule, setting up an individualistic pattern of living foreign to that of the community, are in danger of laicizing their devotion and their activity.\(^5\)

Frequently, in contemplating their religious-apostolic vocation, sisters indulge the fallacy of abstractions by thinking and speaking in meaningless terms of "loving and laboring for souls" or of "loving the community and the apostolate" or of "living for God alone." This terminology is well-intentioned and mistaken for fervor. But it is cold in its impersonality, and cramped in its constriction, and may be damaging to the cause of the apostolate. Sisters cannot love discarnate entities in the apostolate, nor can they dissociate themselves from their fellow men. They must love human beings who have souls, or who comprise the community and the apostolate. They must understand that love for God is sterile if it does not encompass all human persons whom He has

\(^5\) Albert Pfaiz, O.P., 170.
given as neighbors. Sisters sham piety when they avow love for Christ and then proceed to ignore their fellow man or to treat them with frosty tolerance. True love of neighbor is unflagging evidence of genuine love of God. Philosophizing about life can be vague, and attempts to evangelize can be vacuous unless sister-apostles are detached from selfishness, so they can establish warm human attachment to God, and through Him, to all His human beings. When warmth in human associations stems from the personal love of Christ and is structured within the propriety of mature religious living, it is enabled by the grandeur of God. This dignified human interaction is totally devoid of the insanities of saccharine sentimentality.

The views and dispositions of true apostles are ardent and cosmic. Their love and devotion are compassionate and universal. The significant renovations in perspective and procedure inspired by enlarged concepts of conventual and apostolic living will reanimate the activities of the apostolate, and rejuvenate sisters as they go forth to participate in the Christianization of the world. Apostolic strength is nurtured in unity, not in isolation. So instead of compartmentalizing their apostolic resources by working as autonomous units, sisters will catholicize their attitudes and operations by blasting rigid lines of demarcation in the apostolate. In removing these barriers to apostolic communication, sisters expand the horizons of cooperation by combining their zealous efforts with those of the clergy, the sisters in other religious communities, and the laity to promote the Christian perfection of charity, the central theme of the apostolate.
PART THREE

UNITS OF STUDY IN MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOR RELIGIOUS WOMEN
CHAPTER VI

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITS OF STUDY

A. Learners

The human learning process in any area hinges on the self-activity of the learner by which he employs the fruits of his past learning experiences to effect change in his attitudes and behavior. Since learning is continuous, and therefore, dependent on the previous acquisition of knowledge, insights, skills, understandings, and appreciations, learners in every educational situation must be taken at their present plane of development. Hence, in view of more prolific implementation of mental health education, it is advisable to give thoughtful attention to sisters as human beings who are the learners.

Even at the risk of belaboring the obvious, it must be reiterated here that each human being is unique, and hence, cannot be categorically classified within the arbitrary confines of a rigid personality pattern. Too often the casually defined personality traits traditionally attributed to or expected of the good religious woman form a static concept which discredits human variability. When these characteristics are comprehensively presupposed in all religious women, the idea of a conventual character results, and the best interests of the sisters are sacrificed. Sisters, like all human beings, cannot be categorized according to personality types, but there is merit in mental health
education in considering their differential as individual human beings. It is expected that there will evolve from this appraisal a more respectful and understanding attitude to sisters as human persons, which ultimately, because of its verity, will effect frustration for them in mental health education.

Ideally, mental health education for religious women should be initiated as part of the formal formation program in the Postulancy, the Novitiate, and the Juniorate. In this commendable arrangement, the initial preparation for religious life can be integrated logically and beneficially with the psychology of adjustment. Young women are introduced to the meaning of complete religious living. They learn to understand and to follow their religious vocation in totality. From the beginning of their religious life, they find assurance in the conviction that a reasonable, even though relative, degree of maturity in conventual living is not only a possible, but an imperative goal for which all sisters must strive. Young women entering religious life today are products of their cultural and environmental experiences. They have been reared in a highly progressive society. The consequent positive and negative impressions made on the personalities of aspirants to religious life by American society today are fertile material which should not be crushed, but extended and transformed into facets for good. Sisters who direct the training programs in religious communities must be wise women of understanding and perception who are mature students of human nature and solid spirituality. They will know the secrets of capitalizing on the general good will, initiative, generosity, vigor, flexibility, and resiliency of young women in assisting them to develop their capabilities into adult womanhood in religious life.
In addition, special consideration is due to the many in-service sisters who have not had the advantages of mental health training in their formative years in religious life, but whose eagerness for these benefits is sharpened by the reality of their experience. The Units of Study in Mental Health are presented in Chapter VII in the hope of providing a means of more profitable personality adjustment for the religious women actively participating in the apostolate.

Besides specific and unique personal qualities, every religious woman acquires to some degree, the distinctive group characteristics of her community, and the vocational earmarks which identify religious women in general. Sisters are people engaged in the apostolic dedication of religious life, who represent the average span of human qualities peculiar to a normal group of learners. These abilities range from those typical of highly intelligent, exceptionally gifted, and maturely adjusted women to those possessed by sisters of average capabilities and mean or sub-average accomplishments. Comparatively speaking, the incidence of below-average ability, particularly in religious communities devoted to professional apostolic services, is reduced to a minimum by the necessarily rigorous entrance and screening requirements. It must be noted, too, that some young women who enter religious life with evident native ability may have rather clearly defined predispositions to immaturity. Since these are not always apparent on the surface, they are not recognized unless technical screening devices are employed; but they may be responsible for a below-average caliber of religious living by these individuals in the future. In spite of the rather widespread variation of personal capabilities among sisters, there seems
to be a common personality component which marks women in religious life, whatever their measure of native ability, acquired competence, or personal maturity. This feature is a compound of sincerity, earnestness, assiduity, cooperation, and idealism, and has multiple ramifications in the lives of those women who nobly devote themselves to the truth of a religious vocation. In the event that this composite quality has not matured in particular religious women, it can be anticipated that its potential exists, and that it can be challenged in working with sisters.

There are many mature, talented women who have not only realized personality fulfillment and spiritual enrichment in religious life according to their native potentiality, but who also have the vision, imagination, and courage to exert a type of apostolic and religious leadership which influences both the Religious Community and the Church as a whole. Since the cause of Christ has significant magnitude and personal import for these religious women, they are correspondingly intelligent and consistent in striving for its promotion through specialized areas of activity. It is safe to theorize that these well-adjusted sisters who understand life and its meaning will receive mental health education as an opportunity for progress—a challenge for perfecting their already mature approach to life, and for increasing their efficiency as instruments in the work of the apostolate. They will explore the advantages of mental health education with confidence and enthusiasm.

There are sisters who never thoroughly utilize their promising personal potential beyond a point of acceptable mediocrity, in spite of rather persistent and serious efforts in that direction. They do not reach a level of per-
formance which correlates positively with their personal capital, even though they possess generous measure of innate goodness and establish a certain operational facility in living their religious vocation. They are capable of being and of doing much more. They seem to lack creativity and originality; and in many instances, they tend to be immaturely reliant on and dominated by group procedures common to the dynamics of communal living in religious life. In succumbing to this over-protection, they accept the blessings of community life as terminal advantages rather than as a means to complete self-development as religious women. Many of these sisters have latent powers of initiative which, to a great extent, remain unstimulated or under-developed. Others are burdened with the feelings of inferiority generated by a false humility, which main their self-confidence and reduce the positive impetus of healthy aggression. These sisters, often, are diffident about developing or asserting their individuality, and rarely become religious women of real conviction, in spite of their fundamental competency for this mature stature. They are too concerned about the opinions of others, and too naive in accepting reality unquestioningly. They need encouragement and opportunity to do more independent and constructive thinking. They need to deepen their understanding and perception, to revamp their attitudes, and to face situations honestly. They must be given responsibility and taught to resolve problems with imagination, or to accept them with understanding. They need to correlate human nature and religious life in more harmonious relational perspective. Sisters whose effective personality development has been arrested or hampered by inadequate or unfortunate experiential backgrounds, must be taught that these are not impregnable obsta-
cles to the formation of mature adjustment habits in religious life. Sisters may establish rather habitual defensive reactions as protective devices against the psychological insecurity which results from these conditions.

Equipped with the personality component common to religious women mentioned above, these sisters generally are eager to learn, and are receptive of assistance in integrating life forces into a more unified and balanced entity. They can be motivated by mental health education to assimilate and to convert the principles of mature adjustment into more adult living in religious life.

Although they have ample personality equipment and specialised training for religious life, there are sisters who inadequately implement in their lives the implications of a religious vocation. In general, they attempt to live the religious life as if they were disembodied, or they neglect the specifics of cloistered life and function on a purely natural plane. Since they do not develop maturely in conventual living, they can not enjoy the profound personality and spiritual rewards which can be expected reasonably from the pursuit of a religious vocation. Their major human satisfactions are alien to the spirit of religious living. Apart from an undercurrent of personal discontent, they are harassed by unnecessary difficulties and disappointments in community life and in professional work. Sisters who suffer these vocational maladjustments are not motivated by malice or ill-will, however. In some instances, these problems stem directly from basic vocational unsuitability and should be investigated competently and treated correctly. The causality of these adjustment problems is varied. But frequently, sisters who suffer them are impeded in a proper direction of their lives by misconceptions of the meaning and relation
of human nature and religious vocation, and by insufficient motivation in practicing self-management according to principles of responsible conventual living. They need assistance in developing a psychological acuity by which they will be enabled to refine their present adjustment procedures.

Fundamentally, these sisters are good women; but in being stimulated by unrealistic idealism or by psychological compulsions which, often they do not understand, they have established norms of achievement which are neither practical nor possible for them. They may have formed habits of working with reality as it appears to be, or as it could or ought to be, rather than as it is in actuality. Thus they have become increasingly confirmed in defective patterns of living. Some of these sisters recognize their inadequacy and sincerely desire liberation. Others, lacking sufficient insight to understand their condition, are quite superficially satisfied with their status of living, and resist suggestions of change. Sisters with these difficulties may have erected psychological blockades of defense. They can not readily submit to self-examination or self-correction because it is a painful emotional experience for them. They need particular kindness and understanding in mental health education, so that they may be enlightened to perceive the truth of reality, at least partially, and inspired to command a degree of self-improvement.

B. Organization

The keynote of mental health education for sisters is a combination of information and integration with emphasis on practicality. In-service sisters,
tempered and mellowed by experience, gravitate rather naturally to practicality. Therefore, in arranging the Units of Study, effort has been made to emphasize the pragmatic and integrative aspects of mental health, in the hope that learning will be more significant for sisters, since it is geared to their needs and abilities. In striving for unity of content and purpose in these Units, the accent has been placed on understanding the essence of human nature as it functions in religious life. The content of the Study Units has been consciously selected in such a way that it can be applied directly to current situations in conventual living.

Group rapport is a salient factor in mental health education for sisters. An atmosphere of understanding and acceptance will create an unthreatening environment in which sisters can be comfortable psychologically in learning the facts of mental health with profit. Classes and activities will be characterised by a spirit of informality, congeniality, diligence, and seriousness proper to professionally trained religious women. Sisters must be well-disposed to understand the need for and benefits of mental health in religious life, and to assume the responsibility of Christian self-realization in the full sense of the term. It is hoped that sisters will realize that mental health education is as important for them as a knowledge of the principles of the spiritual life, of the Rule and Customary, or of the History of the Community. Furthermore, it is optimistically expected that sisters will respect this orientation as a basal subsidiary agent of the introductory or in-service conventual formation prescribed for religious women.

Genuine learning activities in mental health will be accomplished more
readily when they are steered towards goals which are valuable and attainable to the learners. If complete self-development in religious life—personality and spiritual maturity, apostolic productivity, and the numerous supplemental benefits—can be delineated in such a graphic manner that sisters will exert effort to acquire it, mental health education will be a remunerative endeavor for them.

It is assumed that the six broad areas of study in mental health outlined in Chapter VII cover a body of knowledge necessary for sisters in attaining normal personality adjustment in religious living. The outline presented in each Unit is skeletal, thus allowing for adaptation to the specific needs of various groups, or for the personal preferences of the instructors in mental health. When points of the outline have been quoted directly, the source is acknowledged in parentheses. The teaching methods suggested in the Study Units are optional. According to the arrangement of these Units, no single text is used; but basic and related reading from a number of sources is indicated. The following texts have been used quite consistently as a core of reference:


The use of technical vocabulary should be avoided in mental health education for sisters whenever the content can be presented as well without it. There is the danger that clarity of thought may be forfeited if lectures in mental health are needlessly heavy with technical verbiage. Professional periodicals, supplementary texts, and books dealing with the spiritual life which are pertinent to the topics suggested for study are recommended to the students for thoughtful and critical reading. Extensive reading should aid sisters in expanding their perspective and in procuring substance for worthwhile discussions.

Specifications of time apportionment in teaching the Units have been omitted deliberately. Time limitations will be determined partially by the formal organization of the course. The instructor will guide and direct the teaching and learning procedures to the prime advantage of the learners concerned.

There are several feasible organizational alternatives for teaching the principles of mental health to sisters. It can be absorbed substantially into the instructions on the religious life usually given in sister formation departments. Or it can be organized into a two-credit or a three-credit college course if this best accommodates the requirements of the Community. It could, therefore, be offered in the College during regular semester classes or summer sessions by the Education Department as Mental Health or Mental Hygiene and/or by the Psychology Department as Psychology of Adjustment. It might conveniently be incorporated and elaborated into a workshop when sisters would devote their concentrated efforts to this project during a two-week or a three-week period. There is the possibility, also, that a group of sister students would
be small enough to be structured effectively as a seminar. It is not difficult to envision the feasibility of teaching this content material to a homogeneous group of sisters, such as superiors, or sisters with considerable knowledge of or appreciation for psychology; or sisters who are professed ten, fifteen, or twenty years, who in many communities now are offered a special opportunity for renewal of spirit; or sisters who are making concentrated preparation for the pronouncement of Final Vows; or sisters who share common enthusiasm for attaining deeper understanding of total religious living.

There is a general continuity in the chronological sequence of the Units of Study, but they could be presented gainfully in an inverted order if it were more apropos to the needs of the group.

The Study Units may be treated thoroughly through a variety of media, such as panels, lectures, forums, extensive reading, small group discussions, guest speakers, reports, committee work, dramatizations, and role-playing. Group counseling or guidance, under the leadership of a person well-oriented in the psychology of human nature and the requirements of balanced religious living, would have fertile possibilities for stimulating understanding of life situations. Often the insight resulting from this type of corporate activity is remarkable, and is usually a successful venture with religious women. The question-box technique is effective with sisters, since they can maintain a desired anonymity. This offsets the hesitancy and chagrin inherent in public identification with difficulties. Time should be allotted regularly for the discussion of these questions. Definite out-of-class time for consultation, counseling, or guidance should be made available for those who need individual
assistance, or find it a more facile means of communication.

In order that an inauspicious expenditure of time be avoided in viewing the suggested films, it is recommended that, if they are considered at all profitable in clinching or clarifying issues, they be used as extra-class activities whenever this is practicable. The educational value of films depends, principally, on the readiness of the sisters to understand and interpret them accurately.

C. Evaluation

The estimate of accomplishment for each sister student will be the result of a diversified approach in appraising the learning activities in mental health education. If scholastic grades are required for college credit, written examinations will be in order. These may be the essay and/or the objective type similar to the sample provided in Appendix III. Students should be advised that they also will be evaluated for the oral work entailed in the course: reports, panels, and discussions. Appraisal will be based on poise in facing a group, power to make an effective delivery, a convincing representation of a problem, independent research, and organization, interpretation, and assimilation of content material. Prudent and kind consideration must be given to individual differences among sisters.

Many sisters have taken tests of mental ability, scholastic achievement or personality evaluation during their initial conventual formation or at some time during their professional development. Ordinarily, these tests are used
for administrative or screening purposes. The results are confined to the files in the College or Provincial offices, and restricted as confidential material, accessible only to one or other religious superior, college administrator and/or instructor, or Mistress of a training department. There is no doubt that this acceptable procedure has a very definite place in sister formation programs.

However, if sisters are to implement the specific objectives of mental health education, particularly those referring to the integration of personality and spiritual maturity in religious life, it seems logical that their efforts be preceded and supported by an assessment of personal assets and liabilities through the use of formal measuring agents. In the light of presumed profit, it is considered expedient, therefore, that sisters take personality tests which would help them approximate perceptive and responsible self-evaluation.

It is suggested that the Mental Health Analysis, the Gordon Personal Profile, and the Gordon Personal Inventory be administered to the sisters before they begin the study of mental health. These particular tests have been chosen with deliberation and design. First, they are statistically valid and reliable instruments of personality measurement. Second, they indicate

1 Louis P. Thorpe, Willis W. Clark, Ernest W. Tiegs, Mental Health Analysis, 1959 Revision, Adult Form, (Los Angeles: California Test Bureau).


and measure aspects of mental health and personality qualities of people who are reasonably adjusted to life, and thus supply the basis for a positive approach in mental health education. Third, this specific kind of test serves as a practical guide for sisters in recognizing their capabilities for making better adjustment, or in determining areas in which more self-direction or competent help is needed for adjustment. Fourth, these tests are easily administered and readily interpreted by teachers who do not have advanced training in psychology or psychometry, but who have had experience with administration and analysis of educational tests. Test manuals provide clear, simple directions for administering, scoring, and interpreting the tests.

After the tests have been scored, a profile will be completed for each sister which will graphically illustrate her mental health status and the aspects of her personality in terms of percentile rank. These profiles will be particularly salutary as reference during the study of mental health, especially during the organization of a philosophy of life in Study Unit V.

In as far as possible, elements of threat must be removed for sisters in taking the tests; and pressures or fears of exposition and consequent embarrassment must be abolished. The fact that there is no direct, external personal confrontation involved in taking the tests, usually eliminates undue sensitiveness, and disposes most sisters for more ready and open-minded acceptance of the evidence of their positive and negative personality resources. Test results will be used solely for the personal benefit of each sister. Any sister who is psychologically unable to take the tests, should not be coerced to do so.
Test data can be explicated for sisters during periods of class discussion or group guidance, or by psychological counseling or educational direction given in individual and confidential conferences. Counseling interviews, guidance consultations, or group therapy may furnish a legitimate and favorable opportunity for emotional ventilation or insightful understanding for sisters who may need either of these prerequisites for establishing or regaining mental health. It may be profitable for certain sisters to discuss the test results with a group of fellow sisters who experience the same typical reactions. Undoubtedly, the homogeneous groups will be most receptive of this procedure.

The particular approach pursued will be determined by the discretion of the instructor in considering the wishes, attitudes, and needs of the sisters in the group.

The evaluative dimensions of mental health education for sisters cannot easily be translated into mathematical terms. Massive and sudden movements of individual transformation or group adaptation will not materialize in religious living simultaneously with the efforts of sisters to understand the principles of mental health. The process of human maturation is always gradual, so habits of many years or of a lifetime are not uniformed or reformed or fortified rapidly. And when changes do occur, they cannot be expressed with arithmetic precision because they are neither pretentious nor spectacular in a worldly sense. Ultimately, complete personal growth of sisters is a long-range benefit realized by them through continuous refinement and integration of personality resources in coaction with grace. If sisters envision new horizons in religious living and establish a closer and more meaningful liaison between nature and
grace in striving for total human fulfillment, unequivocal triumph can be char-
ted for mental health education for religious women.
CHAPTER VII

LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

The following are the general objectives for the Units of Study in mental health education for religious women:

1. To acquire a knowledge of the fundamental facts of mental health and personality adjustment

2. To gain practical understanding of human nature which will facilitate adjustment in conventual and professional living

3. To relate and to apply mental health principles in daily living

4. To attain greater happiness in religious vocation through mature personality adjustment

5. To prevent or to alleviate personality maladjustments and thus to reduce consequent personal or group conflicts

6. To augment the satisfactions and joys of maturity in religious living

7. To broaden psychological perspective through extensive reading of mental health literature

8. To utilize opportunities for readjustment to community living in religious life
Study Unit I. Introduction: Basic Concepts

Specific Objective

1. To recapitulate or to acquire the basic factual knowledge relative to human nature and the essence of religious vocation which will serve as a backdrop in the study of mental health.

Rationale of the Unit

Effective study of mental health for sisters has its basis in an intelligent understanding and a realistic acceptance of human nature as God made it, synthesized with an exact comprehension and accurate evaluation of the meaning and requirements of a religious vocation. It depends, fundamentally, on the realization that religious vocation does not substantially transform the essence of human nature, but only prescribes and facilitates its utilization and direction, not in an unnatural, but in a supernatural course of living. Union with God, attained through the voluntary pursuit of evangelical perfection in religious life, is accomplished by sisters according to their nature as human beings, supernaturally supported by grace.

The content of Section A in this Study Unit intentionally comprises only a very general survey of some pertinent facts of Rational Psychology which will either refresh the minds of those sisters who previously have studied them thoroughly, or supply a summarization of essential knowledge in an organized way for those sisters who may not have had formal orientation in this field. The time devoted to this section, and the detail with which it is considered will be determined by the past learning experiences of the sisters concerned. From a study of the topics in Section B of this Study Unit, sisters should
structure a practical ideational and attitudinal framework relative to religious vocation in which they can apply the principles of mental health.

Outline of Learning Experiences for Study Unit I

I. Introduction: Basic Concepts

A. Nature of Human Beings
   1. Man as whole
   2. Nature of human life
      a. nature of human soul
      b. unity of human organism
      c. nature and function of intellect and will
      d. nature and function of human knowledge and motivation
   3. Man's ultimate purpose and goal

B. Nature of Religious Vocation
   1. Theology of religious life
   2. Meaning of religious vocation
      a. expression and testimony to consciousness of God
      b. way of perfection through the counsels
      c. invitational nature—volitional freedom
   3. Requisites for a religious vocation
      a. physical
      b. emotional and psychological
      c. intellectual
      d. moral
   4. Need for development of mature Christian personality in religious life

Basic Reading

Section I. A.


Section I. B.


Related Reading


Suggested Teaching Procedures

1. Lecture on I. A. — 1. Man as a whole
   3. Man's ultimate purpose and goal

2. Individual class reports on:
   a. nature of human soul
   b. unity of human organism
   c. nature and function of intellect and will
   d. nature and function of human knowledge and motivation

3. Lecture on points in Section B — followed by class discussion and questions.
Study Unit II. Mental Health

Specific Objective

1. To assimilate the meaning of mental health and to understand the principles which govern it in specific relation to personal living in religious and apostolic life.

Rationale of the Unit

The possession of mental health is a goal for which sisters strive in religious life. In Study Unit II sisters will learn the meaning and implications of mental health and its relevance to complete human living. They will understand that it totally involves all human forces and completely permeates all aspects of Christian and religious activity. Consideration of specific criteria for determining the state of personal mental health, and of the definite directives for the preservation of mental health should simplify for sisters the process of translating this learning into terms of practical living. Further, by defining and emphasizing the concept of mental health early in the course, and by assessing their personality equipment through standardized tests, a readiness will be established by which sisters are enabled to relate and to refer the content of subsequent Study Units to the final achievement of personality and spiritual balance in religious living.

Outline of Learning Experiences for Study Unit II

II. Mental Health

A. Meaning of Mental Health
B. Importance of Mental Health

1. Relevance of mental health to total human living
2. Extent of mental disorders

C. Criteria of Mental Health as Applied to Religious Life (Schneiders, 88-96)

1. Adequate contact with reality
2. Healthy attitudes
3. Control of thought and imagination
4. Mental efficiency
5. Integration of thought and conduct
6. Integration of motives and resolution of conflicts
7. Feelings of security and belonging
8. Adequate concept of self
9. Adequate ego-identification
10. Healthy emotional life
11. Mental tranquillity or peace of mind

D. Relation of Mental Hygiene to Mental Health

1. Meaning of mental hygiene
2. Mental hygiene movement
   a. origin and growth
   b. objectives
   c. accomplishments

E. Requisites for Preserving Mental Health (with specific references to sisters) (Schneiders, 520-530)

1. Physical well-being
2. Conduct in conformity with nature of man
3. Integration and self-control
4. Knowledge of self
5. Healthy self concept
6. Continuous striving for mature self-development
7. Adaptability and resiliency
8. Intelligent dealing with conflict and frustration
9. Wholesome interpersonal relations
10. Adequate job satisfaction
11. Honest and consistent facing of reality
12. Dependence on God
13. Communication with God through personal homage

F. Meaning of Terms Used Frequently in Mental Health Education

1. Adjustment
2. Maladjustment
3. Mental efficiency
4. Normality
5. Abnormality
6. Maturity
7. Immaturity
8. Psychometrics
9. Psychology
10. Clinical psychology
11. Dynamic psychology
12. Abnormal psychology
13. Developmental psychology
14. Psychiatry
15. Psychosomatic medicine
16. Homeostasis

G. Mental Health and the Professional Educator

1. Importance of mental health for the religious teacher
2. Teacher-student relationship in the classroom
3. The religious teacher and contacts with the clergy and the laity

(Note: If the sisters are not teachers, Section G can be substituted by general content suitable to the nature of their apostolic work.)

Basic Reading


Behrmann, Elmer H., "Mental Health in the Classroom," Hospital Progress, Vol. 11, November 1960, 67-69.


**Related Reading**


Magner, James A., Mental Health in a Mad World, Milwaukee: Bruce, 1953.

Magner, James A., Personality and Successful Living, Milwaukee: Bruce, 1945.


Suggested Teaching Procedures

1. Testing Program

   a. administer tests:  Mental Health Analysis
       Gordon Personal Profile
       Gordon Personal Inventory
   b. score tests and make profiles of test results
   c. interpretation of test results
      (1) group explanations, discussions followed by questions  OR
      (2) counseling and/or guidance interviews
      (3) group guidance and/or counseling
2. Lecture on: II. A. Meaning of Mental Health  
B. Importance of Mental Health  
D. 1. Meaning of Mental Hygiene  
G. Mental Health and the Professional Educator

3. Appoint a committee of five or six persons to explain, compare, and show the interrelation of  
   C. Criteria of Mental Health  
   and  
   E. Requisites for Preserving Mental Health  
Make all applications to religious life.

4. Assign class report on D. 2. Mental Hygiene Movement  
   a. origin and growth  
   b. objectives  
   c. accomplishments

5. Prepare definitions for terms in II. F. -- discuss in class.

6. Prepare students to view these films:  
   Learning to Understand Children (Two Parts)  
   Problem of Pupil Adjustment (Two Parts)  
   Meeting the Needs of Adolescents  
   Meeting Emotional Needs in Childhood  
   Problem Children

Materials Needed

1. Personality Tests

   330 West 42nd St.  
   New York, N.Y.  
   Learning to Understand Children (23 min.)  
   Meeting the Needs of Adolescents (19 min.)  
   Problem of Pupil Adjustment (23 min. each)  
   N.Y. University Film Library  
   20 Washington Place  
   New York, N.Y.  
   Meeting Emotional Needs in Childhood (33 min.)  
   Problem Children (20 min.)
Study Unit III. Personality

Specific Objectives

1. To understand and to appreciate the complexity of human personality as a dynamic and unique organization and unity of psychophysical forces

2. To synthesize a specific concept of personality maturity and normality aligned with religious life and personal assets and liabilities

Rationale of the Unit

Emphasis on the dynamic nature and unique organization of the constituents of human personality will focus the attention of sisters on their individuality as human beings. This will be a foundational impetus for each sister to understand and to explore her personal possibilities, as she has been alerted to them through the personality tests, and to assume the obligation of appreciating and developing her human nature within the structure of religious life. It is important that sisters analyze the concept of maturity so they can utilize it functionally in their lives. The study of the components of personality and the standards of normality and maturity should aid sisters to determine a specific pattern of personality growth. This will be the basis for the formation of an operational philosophy of life in Study Unit V.

Outline of Learning Experiences for Study Unit III

III. Personality
A. Definition

1. "The dynamic organization within man of those mental, physical, and psychophysical systems which, under the influence of intellect and will, shape the individual's unique adjustments to his environment." (Loyola U.)

2. "Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment." (Allport, 148)

B. Theories of Personality

1. Physique
   a. Kretschmer
      (1) pyknic: thick-heavy
      (2) asthenic: long, thin, flat-chested
      (3) athletic: well-proportioned
      (4) dysplastic: unproportioned
   b. Sheldon
      (1) endomorph: large body cavity, visceratonic-sensual
      (2) ectomorph: long, thin, flat-chested, cerebratonic-introvert
      (3) mesomorph: cave-man type, athletic type, somatonic-active

2. Temperament—Hippocrates
   a. choleric
   b. sanguine
   c. phlegmatic
   d. melancholic

3. Jung—introvert-extrovert

4. Adler—will-to-power

5. Freud

6. Dynamic theory of normal personality (Nuttin -- 159-204)

C. Structural Elements of Personality

1. Constitutional
   a. endocrine system
   b. nervous system
   c. organic

2. Affective states
   a. feeling
   b. mood
   c. sentiment
   d. emotion
   e. temperament
3. Habits
   4. Intellect and will

D. Dynamics of Personality

1. Motivation (Schneiders, 216)
   a. basic principles
      (1) motivation has dynamic nature
      (2) motivations influence life and objective behavior
      (3) close interrelation of motivating forces
      (4) motivational forces affected by environment
      (5) motivation varies with individual differences
      (6) motivation not always specifically recognized
   b. theories of motivation (Schneiders, 172)
   c. influential factors (Schneiders, 182)
      (1) conscious
      (2) unconscious

2. Human needs (Nuttin, 205-249)
   a. physiological
   b. psychological
   c. social
   d. ego-integrative

3. Interrelation of needs and motives

E. Factors in Personality Growth and Development

1. Heredity
2. Environment
3. Differentiation
4. Maturation
5. Integration
6. Learning
7. Free choice
8. Parent-child relationship
   a. omnipotent stage
   b. satellization
      (1) status—self-concept
      (2) unhealthy types of satellizer
         (a) over-dominated person
         (b) over-protected person
         (c) under-dominated person
         (d) under-appreciated person
   c. de-satellization
   d. rejection
F. Normal and Mature Personality

1. Definition
2. Characteristics of normal personality (Royce, 53-54) (Allport, 213-231)
   a. adequate and efficient contact with reality
   b. adequate bodily desires and ability to gratify them in the manner and to the degree called for
   c. reasonable satisfaction from daily activity
   d. adequate self-knowledge
   e. adequate security feelings
   f. lack of pretense—naturalness of behavior
   g. adequate life goals and ambitions
   h. adequate philosophy of life
   i. adequate emotionality
   j. adequate affection—ability to love and to be loved
   k. consistency and flexibility
   l. conformity and individuality

Basic Reading


Related Reading


Harmon, Francis L., Understanding Personality, Milwaukee: Bruce, 1948.


Suggested Teaching Procedures

1. Lecture on all sections of the outline except F: Normal and Mature Personality

2. Students work in small groups to discuss the identifying qualities of a specific concept of personality maturity for the religious woman. Pool the results in group discussion. Provide each student with a list of the qualities agreed on.

3. In either essay or outline form, each student will personalize the concept of personality maturity compiled in Exercise 2 by aligning it with her personal assets and liabilities. This is for personal reference and need not be submitted for observation.

4. Oral report comparing the points in
Study Unit IV. Personal Adjustment

Specific Objectives

1. To comprehend the relationship between mental health and personality adjustment

2. To identify and to understand the psychological mechanisms of adjustment

3. To develop a pattern of living with only a normal involvement of adjustment mechanisms

Rationale of the Unit

Religious women know that, due to the effects of original sin, they can expect pain and discomfort of various types in life. They realize that a religious vocation is not a guarantee of freedom from this normal expectancy of human living. On the other hand, they do not believe that conventual living should be an unabridged and unalleviated path of suffering. They must learn to accept conflicts and frustrations in religious life realistically, and to handle them with Christian understanding and psychological aptitude. They cannot make this approach unless they grasp the meaning and motivation of human conduct, and visualize possible avenues of adjustment. In the succeeding Study
Unit, sisters will be expected to organize a personal and explicit philosophy of life. But before they can contemplate the organization of this body of directives, they must understand the nature of normal adjustment, the influence of conflict and frustration in daily living, and the adaptive mechanisms employed in dealing with life situations. Sisters will never be able to solve all problems in life, or escape all unpleasant realities, but they will approximate an understanding of them through the study of Personal Adjustment in this Unit.

Outline of Learning Experiences for Study Unit IV

IV. Personal Adjustment

A. Normal Personality Adjustment (Schneiders, 274-276)

   1. Meaning of normal adjustment

   2. Criteria of adjustment (Schneiders, 71-87)
      a. self-knowledge and insight
      b. self-objectivity and self-acceptance
      c. self-control and self-development
      d. personal integration
      e. well-defined goals and goal direction
      f. adequate perspective, scale of values, philosophy of life
      g. sense of humor
      h. sense of responsibility
      i. maturity of response
      j. development of worthwhile habits
      k. adaptability—adequate orientation to reality
      l. freedom from disabling or symptomatic responses
      m. ability to get along with and take an active interest in other people
      n. wide range of interests and satisfactions in work and play

   3. Patterns of normal adjustment (Schneiders, 277-282)
      a. direct, frontal attack
      b. exploration
c. trial and error
d. substitution
e. exploitation of personal capabilities
f. learning
g. intelligent planning
h. healthy inhibition and self-control

4. Types of adjustment (Schneiders, 429-508)
a. physical
   (1) rest, relaxation, recreation
   (2) regularity in physical habits
   (3) personal and community hygiene

b. emotional
   (1) adequacy
   (2) maturity
   (3) control

c. sexual
   (1) adequate sex information and knowledge (provide here unless
       has been recently
       given in another
       situation)
   (2) development of wholesome attitudes to sex
   (3) integration of sex desires and inclinations with moral principles
        and responsibilities of vowed chastity
   (4) attainment of sexual poise and maturity
   (5) heterosexual poise proper to religious women

d. religious
   (1) adequate knowledge of truths of religion and an understanding of the personal implications of
        these truths
   (2) understanding the nature of religious vocation
   (3) awareness of the apostolicity of religious vocation
   (4) understanding the integration of evangelical counsels into human living

e. social
   (1) wholesome interpersonal relations in community life and in the apostolate
   (2) acceptance of the authority of religious superiors and respect for rules of the community
   (3) capacity to assume responsibility and to accept restrictions
   (4) ability to strive to attain common good of the group or community goals
   (5) ability to maintain individuality and to develop mature independence structured within the limits of religious obedience
(6) sympathy for and interest in others
(7) ability to establish substantial social relationships and friendships
(8) practice of vital Christian charity

B. Relationship Between Adjustment and Mental Health

C. Personal Adjustment and Frustration

1. Meaning of frustration
2. Types and signs of frustration
3. Frustration tolerance
4. Results of frustration

D. Adjustment Mechanisms

1. Definition: "Dynamism (or mechanism) is any habitual behavior inadvertently used, due to a failure to solve problems realistically." (Royce, 174)
2. General nature and characteristics of mechanisms
   a. function unconsciously
   b. are motivated
   c. spiral in effect
3. Purposes of mechanisms
   a. adaptive in nature
   b. aim to satisfy unfulfilled needs
4. Types of mechanisms
   a. defense mechanisms
      (1) definition: means used to defend oneself psychologically against personal weakness and limitations or the liabilities of a threatening environment.
      (2) nature and determinants of defense mechanisms
         (a) protection against real or imagined failures or inadequacies
         (b) psychological inferiority feelings
            (1) definition
            (2) causes
            (3) symptoms
               (a) sensitivity to criticism
               (b) over-response to flattery
               (c) hypercritical attitude
               (d) tendency toward blaming
               (e) ideas of reference and persecution
               (f) poor reaction to competition
               (g) general tendency to seclusiveness, shyness, timidity
(c) feelings of inadequacy, failure, guilt
   (1) definitions
   (2) affects on people

(3) defense reactions (Royce, 130)
   (a) negativism
   (b) incapacitation
   (c) dissimulation
   (d) rationalization
   (e) chronic failure
   (f) accident proneness
   (g) reaction formation
   (h) irradiation

b. evasion mechanisms
   (1) definition: means of escape against the demands, stresses, or threats of life—an attempt to avoid facing reality.
   (2) nature and determinants of evasion mechanisms
      (a) permeated by seclusiveness, timidity, anxiety, etc.
      (b) consistent frustration and conflict
      (c) fear of reality and sense of oppression
      (d) emotional impoverishment

(3) types of evasion mechanisms
   (a) procrastination
   (b) fantasy and day dreaming
   (c) flight into past—retrospection
   (d) total absorption in work and activity
   (e) refusal to see reality as a whole—"yes, but"
   (f) repression
   (g) regression—childishness
   (h) alcoholism
   (i) drug addiction

c. compensation mechanisms
   (1) definition: attempt to overcome or substitute for some real or imagined defect—effort to offset personal weaknesses and limitations by the development of qualities or responses that reduce tension and frustration
   (2) nature of compensation mechanisms
      (a) can be healthy adjutitive reaction—need not be neurotic
      (b) substitution for achievement
      (c) direction of attention away from deficiency
      (d) maintenance of status, self-respect, and integrity
(3) types of compensation mechanisms
(a) perfectionism
(b) overdevelopment in function where deficiency exists
(c) substitution of activity
(d) identification
(e) projection
(f) development of particular abilities
(g) superiority attitudes
(h) egocentrism
(i) sublimation
(j) transfer of sex drive from its proper object to another object—homosexuality, sadism, etc.
(k) spirit of righteousness or reform which covers personal guilt

(4) criteria of healthy psychological compensation (Schneiders, 313-314)
(a) reduce frustration and tension without damage to self
(b) be consciously and deliberately developed
(c) be based on a clear awareness of personal limitations
(d) not interfere with, but promote achievement
(e) not function as a substitute for worthwhile effort
(f) promote general psychological welfare

E. Aggression as an Adjustment Technique

1. Definition: Aggression is essentially a form of response that aims to reduce tension and frustration through demanding, overpowering, or possessive behavior. (Schneiders, 331)

Aggressiveness leads to determined, successful attack on a difficult problem—represents determination and feeling of security.

2. Characteristics of aggression
   a. abusive language, quarreling, etc.
   b. resistance to discipline and direction, etc.
   c. aims merely to relieve tension, not to reach a goal or solve a problem

3. Types of aggression
   a. self-assertiveness
   b. dominance
   c. possession
   d. open hostility and attack
   e. violence and destruction—brutality and sadistic fury
   f. revenge
   g. delinquency
4. Causes of aggression
   a. frustration-aggression theory
   b. inferiority and inadequacy
   c. guilt feelings and need for punishment
   d. frustration of basic needs

5. Determinants of aggression (Schneiders, 348-352)
   a. lack of discipline and self-control
   b. excessive and selfish parental love (or love of surrogates)—
      over-protection
   c. unsatisfactory family relations
   d. negative superior-subordinate relations
   e. restrictive or damaging work conditions
   f. vocational maladjustment

Basic Reading


Related Reading


Moore, Thomas Verner, Personal Mental Hygiene, New York: Grune and Stratton, 1944.


Suggested Teaching Procedures

1. Lecture on material outlined in A. 1-2-3
   B. 
   C. 
   D. 1-2-3
2. Panel discussion: A. 4. Types of Adjustment
   a. physical
   b. emotional
   c. sexual
   d. religious
   e. social

3. If necessary, provide time for sex instruction immediately following the panel discussion.
   Use Christopher Recordings on Sex Education
   Bruckner, P. J., S.J., How To Give Sex Instructions to Youth, St. Louis: The Queen's Work, 1937.

4. Organize four committees to study thoroughly each of the following:
   1. Defense mechanisms
   2. Evasion mechanisms
   3. Compensation mechanisms
   4. Aggression

   Each committee will prepare a corporate report on one of the topics listed and give it to the class orally, followed by discussion and questions. Each group, also, will provide a written summary of their report for each student in the class.

5. Invite a psychiatrist, psychologist, or physician to lecture to the class on drug addiction.

6. Role-playing (if considered profitable for the group)

   This must be employed prudently. Role-playing situations should be specific, limited in scope, and familiar to the group. Sensitive consideration should be given to the feelings of participants in role-playing. Audience should be instructed to observe and analyze the conflict demonstrated in the role-playing, in preparation for making constructive suggestions later. Circumstances depicted in the role-playing should suit the needs and preparation of the group. These are most profitable when proposed by members of the group.

   Possible role-playing situations for sisters:
   1. Religious teacher resorting to rationalization in facing an irate parent
2. Religious woman who is a perfectionist in community life is given charge of the school carnival

3. Religious woman in community life who uses aggression as an adjustment technique

7. Dramatizations

Like role-playing, dramatizations must be purposeful. The content will be determined by the group concerned. Effective positive approaches in actual conventional situations will be advantageous. Possible topics for dramatizations are:

1. Normal adjustment by making direct, frontal attack: a sister who has always taught second grade gets an assignment to teach fourth grade. She prepares herself for this task maturely with emotional balance.

2. Living in community with a sister who is plagued with inferiority feelings—dramatize charitable and profitable social interaction with this sister in community life.

3. Effective relationships between superiors and subordinates in a situation which involves differences of opinion; e.g. faculty meeting in which policies of school discipline are established

8. Prepare the class for these films:

Control Your Emotions
Psychology for Living (Emotional Maturity - 5 films)
Emotional Health

Materials Needed

1. Christopher Recordings on Sex Education New York Society for Mental Health

105 East 22nd Street
New York 10, N.Y.

2. Films from McGraw-Hill Films Psychology for Living (9-15 min.; 5 films)

Emotional Health (18 min.)
Study Unit V. Self-Government

Specific Objectives

1. To delineate in detail a personal and practical philosophy of religious life

2. To evaluate the current status of personal living in terms of this ideal concept of conventual life

Rationale of the Unit

Presupposing basic foundations in theology and philosophy, the Unit on Self-Government presents the continuum of self-knowledge, insight, understanding, self-acceptance, and self-control, influenced by the action of grace as the framework of Christian approach to maturity, the basis for responsible living in religious life. The concentration on the interrelation of these aspects of self-government and mental health with religious living is pertinent.

Many of the facts in this Unit have been learned formally in the initial formation programs or by experience, but too often, they have not been integrally incorporated into the total picture of religious living. For this reason, they may be inoperative, or at least ineffectual, as directives for enriched living for sisters. In organizing a philosophy of conventual living,
sisters must be encouraged to consider it as more than an assignment for a class. Its elements must penetrate the needs of the individual sisters, and be applicable to living conditions. In measuring present performance against the tenets of their philosophy of life, sisters will be in better position to approximate a fair evaluation of their current status of living. Thus they will establish the point of exodus to a pattern of adjusted living or to increased efficiency of maturity.

Outline of Learning Experiences for Study Unit V

V. Self-Government

A. Self-Knowledge

1. Psychology of human beings (Unit I—Introduction and Hagmaler and Gleason, 51-72)

2. Psychology of women (Gallen, 237-256)
   a. characteristics
      (1) motherliness
      (2) made to love and to be loved
      (3) spiritual - religious
      (4) generous - self-forgetful
      (5) strong emotional reactions
      (6) compassionate
      (7) capacity for details
      (8) intense powers of giving and sacrificing
      (9) devoted and loyal
   
   b. feminine physiology
      (1) menstruation
         (a) physical aspects
         (b) psychological implications
      (2) menopause and climacteric
         (a) physical aspects
         (b) psychological implications

3. Recognition of personal assets and liabilities
B. Insight: Interpretation and Evaluation of Self

C. Understanding Human Nature and Self-Acceptance

D. Self-Government

1. Development of will
2. Development of intellect
3. Development of mature attitudes
4. Control of self
   a. thoughts
   b. emotions
   c. imagination
   d. habits
   e. actions
   f. feelings

5. Development of character
   a. life principles
   b. philosophy of life
   c. choice of ideal

6. Role of grace in self-government (Simon, 209-215)

E. Relation of Self-Government and Mental Health to Religious Life

1. Spiritual life
2. Apostolic activities
3. Community life
   a. theology of common life
   b. social psychology of community life
   c. social interaction—charity in religious life
      (1) interaction with various age groups in community
      (2) working with various personality types in community life
      (3) interaction with people in the apostolate
      (4) friendship
   d. vocational adjustment
   e. qualities of group dynamics in religious living
   f. psychological implications of a life of vowed chastity, poverty, and obedience for religious women

Basic Reading


Related Reading


Moore, Thomas Verner, Personal Mental Hygiene, New York: Grune and Stratton, 1944.


Von le Fort, Gertrud, The Eternal Woman, Milwaukee: Bruce, 1954.

Suggested Teaching Procedures

1. Lecture on outline material: A. 1 - 2.a.
   C.
   D.
   E.

2. Invite a Sister-nurse to give the lectures on Menstruation
   Menopause
   Climacteric

3. Assist sisters to delineate a practical philosophy of life—refer to Chapters III, IV, and V of Part II in this treatise. Use as a basis the concept of maturity formed in Exercise 3 in Suggested Teaching Procedures for Unit III, page 146.

h. Forum: Group Dynamics in Community Life
   a. Definition of group dynamics in community life
   b. Theology of community life
   c. Social psychology of community life
   d. Psychological implications of religious chastity, poverty, and obedience (include vocational adjustment)

These lectures will be followed by questions from the group. It is important that the lecturers be qualified by balanced attitudes to human nature and religious life.
Study Unit VI. Personality Abnormality

Specific Objectives

1. To understand the general nature of personality abnormality
2. To develop an open-minded, mature attitude to psychological inadequacy or illness
3. To acquire intelligent relationships with sisters who are suffering from neurotic or psychotic disorders

Rationale of the Unit

Sisters meet manifestations of emotional inadequacy or mental illness either in community life or in their professional social service activities. While it is not necessary for most sisters to delve into the total medical and psychological aspects of personality abnormality, it is essential that they have general knowledge in that area of abnormal psychology. It is hoped that the study of this Unit will enable sisters to form wholesome attitudes to personality disorder, and to be understanding of and patient with people who suffer from it. Sisters should be equipped to deal intelligently with the manifestations of aberrant behavior with which they are confronted in community living or in the apostolic field.

Outline of Learning Experiences for Study Unit VI

VI. Personality Abnormality

A. Influential Factors in Behavioral Disorder (Ausubel, p78)
   1. Genetic predisposition
2. Inadequate constitutional defense factors
3. Magnitude of stress or deprivation
4. Unsatisfactory ego maturation
5. Degree of frustration toleration
6. Objective interpretation of reality
7. Self-critical faculty
8. Current level of psychological integration
9. Insight into adaptive techniques
10. Introversion — extroversion
11. Level of energy
12. Complexity of personality organization

B. Types of Personality Abnormality

1. Psychoneurosis
   a. definition: "..... a minor mental disorder, always primarily psychological in origin, characterized by more or less habitual personality maladjustment without loss of contact with reality or incapacitation of the patient." (Royce, 210)
   
b. nature and characteristics
      (1) chronic
      (2) illness a common symptom
      (3) linked with immaturity, inadequacy, childishness
      (4) connected with development of symptoms
      (5) symptoms adhered to because serve protective purpose
      (6) functional

c. cause of psychoneurosis
   (1) inadequate parent-child relations
   (2) satisfying experiences with illness
   (3) failure to mature
   (4) conflicts, frustrations, emotional tensions

d. traits of the typical neurotic personality (Schneiders, 390-396)
   (typical neurotic personality differs from the normal personality with occasional neurotic symptoms)
      (1) immaturity and sensitivity
      (2) self-centeredness
      (3) unrealistic ego-ideal
      (4) rigidity and anxiety
      (5) social isolation
      (6) asocial traits: petulance, annoyance, readiness to quarrel
      (7) mental conflict: between ideals and action, conscience and impulses, or personal wishes and authority
      (8) lack of control
      (9) suggestibility
(10) irresponsibility
(11) lack of sense of humor
(12) emotional instability

c. types of psychoneuroses
(1) neurasthenia
(2) conversion hysteria
(3) psychasthenia
(4) anxiety
(5) hypochondria
(6) excessive worry
(7) scrupulosity
(8) obsession-compulsion
(9) psychosomatic disorders
(10) traumatic neuroses

2. Psychoses
a. definition: "A psychosis is a grave mental disorder involving more or less loss of contact with reality and usually requiring the patient to be institutionalized." (Royce, 214)

b. nature and characteristics of psychoses (Cavanagh, 314)
(1) temporary or prolonged
(2) disturbed or inappropriate emotions
(3) seriously irregular conduct
(4) personality change
(5) defective insight
(6) loss of contact with reality
(7) lack of orientation
(8) delusions and hallucinations
(9) distortion of psychic functions

c. types of psychoses
(1) psychogenic
   (a) schizophrenia
   (b) manic-depressive
   (c) paranoid states

(2) organic
   (a) toxic psychoses caused by
      (1) alcohol, drug, lead, gas
      (2) acute infections
      (3) malfunction of endocrine glands
      (4) somatic diseases
   (b) involutional melancholia
3. Mental Defection
   a. Definition: Condition of inferior intelligence due to defective development in the cerebro-spinal system

   b. Types
      (1) Idiot (IQ 0-20; MA 0-3)
      (2) Imbecile (IQ 20-50; MA 3-7)
      (3) Moron (IQ 50-70; MA 7-10)
      (4) Borderline (IQ 70-80; MA 10-12)

   C. Care of Mentally Defective Persons

4. Psychopathic or Sociopathic Personality
   a. Definition: "Psychopaths are individuals with deficient personalities due to defective character organization with lack of insight." (Cavanagh, 488)

   b. Symptoms
      (1) Faulty personality organization
      (2) Egocentricity
      (3) Good or above average intellectual capacity
      (4) Pathological dishonesty
      (5) Irresponsibility
      (6) Unpredictability
      (7) Incapability of learning by experience
      (8) Devoid of interest in the future
      (9) Abnormal sex life

5. Sex Disturbances
   a. Homosexuality (Lesbianism)
   b. Masturbation

C. Comparison of Psychoneuroses and Psychoses (Schneiders, 389)

D. Treatment of Personality Abnormalities

1. Methods of Treatment
   a. Remedial
   b. Informational or advisory
   c. Psychotherapeutic
   d. Medical

2. Steps in Treatment
   a. Accumulation of evidence
   b. Diagnosis - prognosis
   c. Actual process of treatment
3. Related professions, theories, agencies
   a. child guidance centers
   b. mental hygiene clinics
   c. psychiatric social work
   d. hospitals for mentally ill and mentally defective persons
   e. psychoanalysis

E. Community Relationships with Sisters Who Are Neurotic or Psychotic

F. Moral Responsibility in Personality Abnormality

Basic Reading


Related Reading


Suggested Teaching Procedures

1. Lecture on all points of the outline except those indicated in No. 5.

2. Direct students to make a comparative chart: Psychoses and Neuroses

3. If possible, visit a hospital for the mentally ill and/or an institution for the mentally defective. These visits should take place at the end of the Unit, and should be preceded and followed by purposeful class discussions.

4. Prepare students for these films: Psychoneuroses
   - The Quiet One
   - Feeling of Depression
   - Feeling of Rejection
   - Feeling of Hostility

5. Class reports on B. 3. b. Types of Mental Defection
   c. Care of Mentally Defective Persons
   D. 3. Related Professions, Theories, and Agencies

Materials Needed

1. Films from: New York University Film Library
   20 Washington Place
   New York, N.Y.
   Psychoneuroses
   The Quiet One
   Feeling of Depression
   Feeling of Rejection
   Feeling of Hostility

   National Film Board of Canada
   1270 Avenue of the Americas
   New York, N.Y.
CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY

Mental Health Education for Religious Women is a formal attempt to emphasize the urgent need for this orientation for women who follow a religious-apostolic vocation in an age of accelerated progress. It is presented, not as a magic cure for all personal or community complications in religious living, or as a substitute for the traditional formation procedures in religious life, but as an indispensable supplemental aspect of the normal development of religious women. It stems basically from the conviction that since religious women are human beings, they must attain total personal maturity by perfecting their nature with the assistance of the grace of God. This presupposes that they understand their human nature, and accept and develop it as a worthy operational field for grace. Divorcing human nature from grace in religious life spells disaster for religious women. In accentuating the preventive aspect of mental health for sisters, this treatise presumes to offer constructive aid for the preservation of mental health to those sisters who enjoy it currently, and alleviative help to those who suffer inadequate adjustment in religious life.

During the last decade, many factors have focused attention on the need for improvement in conventual training procedures. Sister formation, if it is to be effective, must be adapted to the needs of conventual living in a
twentieth century setting. Young women entering religious life today are influence by the culture in which they have been reared. As a consequence, their personality qualities differ in rather sharp contrast from those typical of entrants of another era. These characteristics must be appraised correctly and channeled to advantage in religious life. Adaptations in religious living are pertinent also for in-service sisters who are subjected to pressures of apostolic living which, formerly, were unknown in conventual precincts. But since integrated religious living is not an automatic process, provision for significant learning in this area must be afforded to conventual neophytes and in-service sisters.

It seemed that, before a positive approach to mental health for sisters could be made, three tasks had to be executed. First, an evaluation had to be made of the existing attitudes to and conditions of mental health education for sisters; second, a realistic examination and appraisal of current conventual living was necessary; and third, a practical body of suggestions for more integrated religious living needed to be organized. This treatise is an attempt to actualize these facts, as the prerequisites for the Study Units in Mental Health offered in Part Three.

Part One, "An Estimate of the Current Status of Mental Health Education for Religious Women," contains the rationale for mental health education for sisters, and the summarization and evaluation of the information relative to this aspect of sister formation submitted in questionnaires by religious superiors.

The two general objectives for sending a questionnaire to one hundred
Major Superiors of religious women in America were as follows:

- to determine the general status of mental health education for sisters at the present time
- to survey the attitudes of religious superiors to this aspect of sister formation.

The following is an outline of the information received through the questionnaire:

21 questionnaires were returned without information

67 questionnaires were returned with information according to the following community membership:

- 9 from communities with membership below 100
- 20 from communities with membership between 100-500
- 18 from communities with membership between 500-1000
- 20 from communities with membership above 1000

### Testing Programs

37 communities, or 55 per cent, have testing programs in the Postulancy. The number of programs sponsored by these communities varies directly with the size of the community.

8 communities, 2 in each membership category, engage psychiatrists or psychologists to administer the tests. In 2 instances, test results are used for screening purposes. In all other instances, they serve as directives for guidance and counseling.

### Formally Structured Mental Health Programs for Sisters

8 communities, or 12 per cent, have formally structured mental health programs for sisters

These are organized in college courses, 6 of them for credit, taught by
- College faculty member
- Mistress of a training department
- Sister TV lecturer
- Sister psychiatric nurse

Mental health content taught in these courses includes:
- Mental health principles
Personal and community hygiene
General introduction to personality studies
Basic concepts of personality
Personality structure
Nature and dynamics of personality
Analysis of behavior patterns
Management of personality
Normal adjustment patterns
Dynamics of personality adjustment
Types of personality disorder
Neurosis
Psychological mechanisms

Texts Used in Teaching the Courses in Mental Health

Irala, Narciso, S.J., Achieving Peace of Heart
Magnier, James A., Mental Health in a Mad World
Royce, James E., S.J., Personality and Mental Health
Schneiders, Alexander A., Personal Adjustment and Mental Health
Walters, Sister Annette, C.S.J., Persons and Personality
Walters, Sister Annette, C.S.J., TV Lectures on Mental Health

General Orientations in Mental Health for In-Service Sisters

All communities, or 61 per cent, provide mental health instruction for in-service sisters through these media:

Lectures on mental health for religious
Mental health courses
Workshops in mental health
Directed reading in mental health
Community educational conferences devoted to the study of mental health problems in religious life
Institutes in mental health

Number of general orientations in mental health for sisters exceeds the number of formally structured programs, and varies proportionately with the size of the communities.

Mental health programs have been established only recently, so full evaluation of their worth is impossible at this time. However, two Mothers General indicated that more understanding of human nature, better emotional adjustment, and increased personal happiness for sisters have resulted.

Need of Mental Health Instruction for Sisters

59 Mothers Superior, or 88 per cent, expressed a definite need for
mental health education for sisters

5 Reverend Mothers, 3 of whom are superiors of contemplative communities, agree that there is NO need for mental health education for sisters. (Sisters of "contemplative" communities differ principally from sisters in "active" communities in the manner in which they exercise their apostolic duties. Sisters of "contemplative" communities influence the apostolate chiefly through prayer and penance in community life. Their contacts with the laity are very restricted. Sisters of "active" communities contribute to the apostolate primarily by their direct contact with the faithful through social service and professional activities.)

Several superiors qualify their responses with these specifications:
not yet
not as formally structured mental health programs—are interested rather in the integration of the principles of mental health taught in over-all training of sisters
have not considered it
not now
not at present
not possible at present
just beginning to discuss possibility of such training

Interest in Providing Mental Health Education for Sisters

41 Superiors, or 61 per cent, expressed interest in providing mental health education for sisters

The number of superiors interested in providing mental health education for sisters is considerably less than the number of those realizing the need of this help for sisters.

Topics Suggested by the Superiors for Mental Health Instruction for Sisters (with the number of times they were mentioned)

65 Emotional Maturity
21 Practice of Charity in Community Life
15 Psychological Disorders
10 Nature of Mental Health
7 Need for Recreation, Relaxation
1 Marriage and Family Life
1 Mystical Body
1 Use of Psychological Tests
1 Use of Drugs, Sedatives, Tranquilizers
1 Problems of Menopause and Menstruation—Personal Hygiene
Benefits of Mental Health Education for Sisters
(with the number of times they were mentioned)

1 Emotional Maturity
21 Increased Charity in Community Living
12 Appreciation of Religious Vocation
9 Lessening of Neurotic Tendencies
1 Increased Vocations
3 Greater Tolerance of Mentally Ill

Part Two, "A Philosophy of Conventual Living, an Ideal Concept," is a detailed examination of the status quo of religious living in convents, which also includes practical directives for a functional philosophy of life for sisters. Emphasis is placed on the necessity for sisters to understand and to accept their human nature as they cooperate with grace to form in themselves the mature Christian personality, the goal in religious life. In Chapter III, "Mature Christian Personality: the Goal in Religious Life," this goal is considered under two aspects; namely, spiritual and personality maturity. The qualities of the well-adjusted religious woman are graphically described. Since charity is the motivating force of all Christian life, it also is the central theme of religious life. Realizing that sisters are human beings, who do not relinquish their human prerogatives when they follow a religious vocation, the excellence of charity as it should dominate community living is deliberated in considerable detail in Chapter IV, "The Excellence of Charity in Communal Living." The human needs of sisters, recreation, illness, social interaction in community life, attitudes to the vows, silence, and the relation of the spiritual life with apostolic activities as they apply to sisters, are some of the items considered. Sisters who participate in the active apostolate are confronted by special problems of modern apostolicity, such as the necessity of
adapting rules and customs to modern circumstances, work, professional efficiency, interaction with the laity, and activism. These are appraised in the light of the current needs of sisters in Chapter V, "Religious Women as Militant Apostles."

In Part Three, "Units of Study in Mental Health Education for Religious Women," specific suggestions are made for adequate implementation of the Study Units. A discussion of sisters as human beings is intended to create more understanding and acceptance of them as people, and as the learners in mental health education. It is anticipated, therefore, that the value of mental health education for sisters will be amplified. Also, there are specifications for organization and evaluation in mental health education for sisters as it is outlined in the Study Units.

The Units of Study in Mental Health presented with complete bibliographies and suggestions for teaching for each Unit, and a final examination, are presumed to contain the information in the psychology of adjustment necessary for sisters. This content material can be taught to sisters as a separate body of knowledge, or can be incorporated into the regular instructions on religious life usually given in the formation departments. The Study Units include the following:

I. Introduction: Basic Concepts

II. Mental Health

III. Personality

IV. Personal Adjustment

V. Self-Government

VI. Personality Abnormality
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C. UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS


Stern, Karl, M.D. "Mental Health in Religious Life." Mimeographed Notes of Workshop Lectures. St. Louis University, St. Louis, 1958.

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of Religious Community ...
Address ...
Number of: Professed Sisters ... Sisters in Juniorate ...
Novices ... Postulants ...
Principal Types of Apostolic Activity Done by Community ...

Do you have a testing program for the Postulants? Yes ... No ...
Please list names of tests administered:

Are test results used for guidance or screening purposes? ...

If you have a formally structured mental health program in your community, please answer the following questions:

To whom is the course taught? ...
Who teaches it? ...
Is it taught for credit? Yes ... No ... Text used? ...
What units of study are included in the course? ...

194
What benefits does your Community derive from this program?

Have you available material describing or evaluating your program?
Yes... No...
Comments:

If you do NOT have a formally structured mental health program in your Community, do you feel that there is a need for mental health education for religious women? Yes... No...

Are you interested in initiating mental health education for the sisters in your Community? Yes... No...

What would you suggest as practical discussion topics in a mental health course for religious women?

What benefits do you think should accrue to a Religious Community and to the sisters from a vital mental health program?

Have you made any other special efforts towards training in mental health for your community members? (Lectures, workshops, etc.)
Yes... No...
Comments:
# APPENDIX II

## TESTS ADMINISTERED TO POSTULANTS IN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tests Administered</th>
<th>Times Mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACE (American Council of Education Psychological Exam)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAT (School and College Ability Test)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coop. English Test</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa Silent Reading</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEP (Sequential Tests of Educational Progress)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Qualifying - B</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Mooney Personality Check List</td>
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<td>Bell Adjustment Inventory</td>
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<td>Temperament and Character Tests (Institute Ped., Montreal)</td>
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APPENDIX III

SUGGESTIONS FOR A FINAL EXAMINATION IN MENTAL HEALTH

Presented as One Type of Evaluative Instrument in Mental Health Instruction

I. Give concise, but adequate responses to any five of the following:

A. Discuss the implications of mental health in the life of a religious woman.

B. Show the relationship of human needs to personality development.

C. Define and explain the meaning of personality.

D. Summarize the basic differences between psychoses and neuroses.

E. Describe the characteristic behavior traits of the psychopathic personality.

F. Outline the criteria by which a religious woman can evaluate her state of mental health.

II. Indicate whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE by writing T or F on the blanks provided:

A. The use of psychological behavior mechanisms is not always detrimental to normal personality development.

B. Perfectionism is a coveted virtue of religious women because it is a preview of "order is Heaven's first law."

C. Adequate contact with reality is one of the signs of good mental health.

D. A young woman who has an IQ of 70 ordinarily cannot understand the implications of religious vows, and should not be admitted to religious life.
E. Aggression is a form of behavioral response which aims to reduce tension through demanding and overpowering reactions to life situations.

F. Heredity has no influence on personality growth and development.

G. Compensation mechanisms can be healthy adjustment reactions.

H. Self-esteem is a core factor in mental health.

I. People who are hypercritical usually are motivated by malice.

J. Human motivation is not always conscious.

K. Rewarding friendships contribute to the mental health of sisters.

L. Clifford Beers founded the Mental Hygiene Movement.

M. It is impossible for sisters who are mentally ill to really recover enough to assume responsibility in professional work.

N. Neuroses is always a prelude to psychoses.

O. Regular examen of conscience can promote mental health.

III. Underline the word or phrase which best completes the statement.

A. Aggression is characterized by  
   a. resistance to discipline  
   b. loss of will power  
   c. increased appetite  
   d. lack of interest in people

B. Psychotherapy is  
   a. a type of neuroses  
   b. a means of treating psychological illness  
   c. the contribution of Clifford Beers  
   d. a psychological mechanism

C. The branch of psychology which treats of human motivation is  
   a. clinical psychology  
   b. dynamic psychology  
   c. abnormal psychology  
   d. experimental psychology

D. Schizophrenia is a psychogenetic  
   a. borderline IQ  
   b. psychoses  
   c. neuroses  
   d. psychological mechanism

E. Low Intelligence Quotient is typical of persons who are  
   a. mentally healthy  
   b. psychopathic  
   c. mentally defective  
   d. neurotic
IV. Match the items in Column B with those in Column A by placing the correct numbers from Column B on the blanks in Column A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kretschmer</td>
<td>1. Mental illness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sheldon</td>
<td>2. Will to power</td>
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<td>Psychotherapy</td>
<td>3. Mental Hygiene Movement</td>
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<td>Hippocrates</td>
<td>4. Id - ego - superego</td>
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<td>Jung</td>
<td>5. Aggression</td>
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<td>Adler</td>
<td>6. Choleric-sanguine-phlegmatic-melancholic</td>
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<td>Psychoneuroses</td>
<td>7. Defense mechanisms</td>
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<td>Freud</td>
<td>8. Psychological counseling</td>
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<td>Beers</td>
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<td>Mental Defection</td>
<td>10. Psychopathic personality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11. Introvert - extrovert</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12. Endomorph - ectomorph - mesomorph</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Moron - imbecile - idiot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. Complete the following statements:

A. Five principles of mental hygiene are

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

B. Factors in personality growth and development are

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR ESSAY TYPE EXAMINATION

I. Discuss the factors which significantly influence personality growth and development.

II. Enumerate and evaluate the qualifications a young woman must have for effective living in religious life.

III. How is the mature religious woman distinguished from the immature?

IV. What are the guiding principles which direct a religious woman in preserving her mental health?

V. Discuss the importance of frustration tolerance for religious women.

VI. Show that genuine emotionally controlled behavior in a religious woman means more than exterior fidelity to rules and regulations.

VII. What are the characteristics of aggression, and how might it be evident in the life of a religious woman?

VIII. In general, how do the defense mechanisms compare with evasion and compensation mechanisms? Give three examples of each type as they might be employed by religious women in community living.

IX. How does character differ from temperament?

X. In what ways does the mental health of a religious teacher influence her contacts in the classroom?

XI. What qualities of group dynamics should be found in community living in convents?

XII. How does motivation relate to human needs in the life of a religious woman?
XIII. Prove that compensation mechanisms can be healthy adjustment reactions.

XIV. How does the training of the will and the intellect affect the mental health of a religious woman?

XV. Discuss the responsibilities of religious women to their companion sisters who are psychologically ill or emotionally unstable.

XVI. Explain how a religious woman should relate a personal philosophy of life to personality development and emotional control.

XVII. Comment on the importance of integrating the natural and the supernatural in religious life.
The dissertation submitted by Sister Maureen O'Keefe, S.S.N.D. has been read and approved by one member of the Department of Psychology and four members of the Department of Education.

The final copies have been examined by the Director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education.

[Signature]

Date: [Jan 31, 1962]