



Continuity and change, a function of the spirituality in the charism of a Religious Institute, illustrated through the spiritual traditions of Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition.

Janet Mary Arrowsmith

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Continuity and change, a function of the spirituality in the charism of a Religious Institute, illustrated through the spiritual traditions of Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition.

By

Janet M. Arrowsmith

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the relationship of the Spirituality of a Religious institute with its charism. The charism of an Institute is the unique gift of grace which God has given to the church by calling into being the Institute itself, and for the furtherance of Christ's mission. It is not a simple gift but has three elements, all of which carry something of the uniqueness of the charism. These three elements are the Membership, the Spirituality which the members share and the mission which is chosen and carried out in a way that is consistent with their faith vision. Among these three elements it is hypothesized that the spirituality plays an important role of ensuring the continuity of the Spirit of the Institute in the individual members and over time. This role of the spirituality is examined in relation to the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition.

The study is divided into three parts. In Part One the spirituality of the Foundress, St. Emilie de Vialar, is elucidated and described by referring to documents in archives which she either wrote or otherwise contributed. It is argued that as a Christian she was called to live all the Christian virtues but what distinguished her way of responding to God, was that some virtues played a more prominent part in it. It is likened to a spiritual cocktail which consisted of a particular mix of her spiritual strengths. It is also claimed that it was God who led her to develop her Spirituality with such particular spiritual emphases. Her spiritual strengths were divided into four groups, personal virtues and attitudes, those derived from God's revelation of Himself to her, those which related to her call to a missionary Vocation and those related to the

call to be a Religious. It is argued that those who came to join her were also gifted by God with this particular mix of Christian virtues. Thus, in describing the foundress' spirituality, it also lays the foundation for described the spirituality of the new institute.

In the second part of the thesis the presence of these virtues and attitudes are searched for in three documents, the first Constitutions, the Development of the Rule' and the current Constitutions. This part of the research showed that these same spiritual strengths were found in these documents and especially so in the current Constitutions. It also reveals that while there have been no new spiritual strengths that have emerged but there has been a change in emphasis within certain strengths. This is especially true of a deepening of the influence of Incarnational spirituality and a lesser emphasis on the virtue of Recollection and that of the 'virtue' of 'Works of Charity'.

The third part of the study consists of a questionnaire given to a sample of the current membership of the Religious Congregation. The sample is a convenience one of seventy-one Sisters. The group reflected the age distribution of the Congregation and came from the same geographical areas represented by the whole Congregation. The questions were designed to allow the Sisters to describe their experiences of living their lives as Religious in the Congregation with the Spirituality described in Parts One and Two of the work. Responses confirmed that the elements of the Spirituality, described in the previous two parts of the study, were present in their lives. It also confirmed that there was no change in the spiritual strengths and that all were moved by the mystery of the Incarnation in a way that steered them towards works of charity.

At the end of the thesis it is illustrated that the particular mix of spiritual strengths derived from the 'cocktail' of Christian virtues which characterised the Foundress' personal spirituality, remains the same mix of virtues animating the group

of sisters in the sample of current members. This was despite the many cultural and social changes that had occurred in the life of the Congregation.

The research has clarified the relationship between spirituality and charism. Spirituality is part of the gift that forms the charism of a Congregation and its role is to unite the members and ensure the continuity of the spiritual impetus of the Congregation over time in changing circumstances.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. Account	The <u>Account of Graces</u>
2. Col	Colossians
3. Cor.	Corinthians
4. Eph.	Ephesians
5. ET	Evangelica Testificatio
6. Fn.	Footnote
7. Gal.	Galatians
8. Jn.	John's Gospel or letters
9. LG	Lumen Gentium
10. Lk.	Luke's Gospel
11. Matt.	Matthew's Gospel
12. Mk.	Mark's Gospel
13. P.	Page
14. Para.	Paragraph
15. PC	Perfectae Caritas
16. SPDR	Spirit and Direction of the Rule

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I would not have embarked on this research except for the encouragement of the Maryvale Institute in Birmingham. I had studied for a Masters degree with the

Institute and Petroc Wiley, who was the director at that time, encouraged me to think about undertaking this research. Over the years of study I have been welcomed and nourished by all the teaching staff of the institute and kept comfortable when staying by the Bridgettine Sisters there.

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office about two years into the study. She always encouraged me to continue despite the many difficulties that surrounded me combining study with the management of an elderly Community and oversight of the Associates of the Province. Finally, I would like to thank all my academic supervisors. Over the course of the Study I had five, having to change half way through because of circumstances beyond my control. Each one of them gave me valued advice which influenced my writing. However, Professor Mary Mills and Dr. Andrew Morris, my final supervisors, were the ones whose input has resulted in this final thesis. They were both invaluable aids, respecting my style but challenging me whenever I needed it. I will always be grateful to them both.

CHAPTER ONE

Charism: Members, Spirituality and Mission

1.1 Introduction to Chapter One

This thesis explores the role of the spirituality in the continuity of the charism across the life of one particular Religious Congregation, the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition. St. Emilie de Vialar founded the Congregation as a result of her personal spiritual development in which, as she indicated in a notebook she wrote towards the end of her life, she came to value a call to be immersed in Christ's saving mission by caring for the spiritual and material dimensions of all in need. In 1832 the Archbishop of Albi, Monsignor Brault,¹ endorsed the foundation of the first house in St. Emilie's own town, Gaillac, near Toulouse. His successor, Monsignor de Gualy² oversaw the growth of the foundation as it began to reach out overseas. The endorsement of the local bishop was reinforced by a Laudatory Decree issued from The Holy See by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in 1842. In St. Emilie's lifetime the Congregation established itself in many countries around the Mediterranean and some further afield. The first foreign mission was in Algiers and then followed Tunisia, Malta, Palestine, Greece, Syria, Lebanon, England, Burma and Australia. The apostolates were varied and orientated to the poor. They fell into three main groups of education, healthcare and parish support.

¹ Archbishop Charles Brault 1817–1833.

² Archbishop François-Marie-Edouard de Gualy 1833–1842. He succeeded to the diocese after the untimely death of Archbishop Brault. He became a life-long friend of the foundress.

After her death the Congregation expanded into all the five continents where it was always engaged in a similar pattern of work. The 1835 constitutions were the first constitutions and stem from the time of the first expansion overseas. The present constitutions, from 1982, reflect the experience of a Congregation working in five continents in missionary enterprises, in the post Vatican II ecclesial context. In December 2016 the Congregation still operates in all five continents and has 779 members, spread across countries with diverse socio-political systems and regimes. The questionnaire given to current members as part of the research for this thesis explores how, in today's situation of social diversity a common core of values is expressed and understood.

1.2 Research Positionality

As the researcher for this thesis, I have been a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition since 1978. This creates an 'insider' effect. Justine Mercer in an article on Insider research³ elaborated the growing understanding of the significance of a researcher who conducts research within a group to which they themselves belong. She indicated that in the early part of the twentieth century, white anthropologists conducted research into 'natives' living in exotic locations'.⁴ The researcher and those researched obviously came from different societies, the researcher was not part of the group being researched. After these studies there was an increasing number carried out in fields, such as

³ Mercer J. *The challenges of insider research in educational institutions: wielding a double-edged sword and resolving delicate dilemmas*, Oxford Review of Education, Vol. 33, No. 1, February 2007, pp. 1-17

⁴ Ibid.

anthropology and sociology, where the researcher was not an outsider to the group.

She quotes the following from another paper,⁵

“‘The insider is 'someone whose biography (gender, race, class, sexual orientation and so on) gives her [sic] a lived familiarity with the group being researched' while the outsider is 'a researcher who does not have any intimate knowledge of the group being researched, prior to entry into the group.' (Griffith, 1998, p. 361).”

This defines the ‘insider’ but others would argue that this is a false distinction

as individuals are always unique and while they may have similarities they will

also have differences. DeVault in 1996 stated

‘that identities are 'always relative, cross cut by other differences and often situational and contingent'.⁶

Mullings in 1999⁷ writing about the boundaries between insiders and outsiders that were,

'highly unstable' with the result that we are all 'multiple insiders and outsiders'.

In my own situation both of these points of view are relevant. I entered the Congregation thirty-eight years ago and I began my initial formation in 1979 in the post Vatican II era. Since then I have lived the life through all its stages. All members do the same but time and culture change the experience. For another Sister trained in a different house of formation, even though the syllabus followed is set by the central government, her experiences will have had some differences.

⁵ Griffith, A. I. (1998) *Insider/outsider: epistemological privilege and mothering work*, Human Studies, 21, 361-376.

⁶ DeVault, M. L. (1996) *Talking back to sociology; distinctive contributions of feminist methodology*, Annual Review of Sociology, (p. 35), 22, 29-50.

⁷ Mullings, B. (1999) *Insider or outsider: both or neither: some dilemmas of interviewing in a cross-cultural setting*, Geoforum, 39(4), 337-350.

One of the advantages claimed as an inside researcher is that of acceptance, [called access in Mercer's article], by the Sisters who participate. They may be more ready to respond to one of their own. However, some may take part because they feel compelled to support a fellow Sister. They may even not feel at liberty to refuse. For the researcher there is familiarity with the common practices and specialised 'language' of the group. This could lead to 'familiarity breeds contempt'! It may be difficult to step back and objectively analyse situations.

Over the years I have worked part time in the National Health Service as a Doctor in Elderly Medicine; served in the Congregation in several positions of responsibility; Sister Superior in several houses and as the Sister responsible for the development of the Lay Associates in the Province and on the Congregation's International Commission.

For the Lay Associates, I developed teaching materials to help share the charism of the Congregation. Some associates have had no, or very little, theological training. Issues arose because of the difficulties in sharing with people who do not share 'religious' vocabulary. These materials attracted the interest of several Provinces with novices and juniors who are taught in English even though this is not their first language. They have used the booklets because the language was easy to follow. In this way many Sisters have become acquainted with my work and I have something of a reputation for being able to convey to others the essence of the charism. This 'acquaintance' experienced, either directly or indirectly, could have an impact upon this research.

These considerations affected the choice of a questionnaire as a research tool but this aspect will be further developed in chapter six⁸ which discusses the research findings.

1.3 The use of the word ‘Charism’.

As my own initial formation was post Vatican II, I accepted the concept of charism as an expression of the uniqueness of the Congregation without much question. It was when I had to find ways of explaining it to others that I became aware that the concept, when applied to Religious life, had some ambiguities, especially in relation to the Concept of Spirituality. Research revealed that the word ‘charism’ has only come into use, in relation to a Religious Institute or Order, in the years following the end of Vatican II.⁹ It is a word which was used by St. Paul to describe a spiritual gift given to a person for the up-building of the Church.¹⁰ However the use of the word has not been defined fully in relation to Religious life. There has also been some confusion in the difference between the charism and the spirit of an institute. This thesis argues that they are two different concepts and it is the spirituality that unites all the members and ensures the spiritual continuity of a Congregation. The charism is understood to describe the distinctiveness of each Institute. This first chapter gives a definition of ‘charism’ and that it has three essential elements, one of which is spirituality. In the following chapters the role of these elements is explored by a detailed analysis of the spirituality, and its

⁸ See Ch. 6.1, p.225.

⁹ Although the word ‘Charism’ is used in the Vatican II Documents, it is never used in relation to Religious life. In addition, all papal documents before Vatican II which are concerned with Religious Life do not use the term. This is discussed more fully later in this chapter. See p. 12 ff.

¹⁰ Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 7:7; 1 Cor. 12: 4-7.

relationship to the other elements, as the factor giving spiritual continuity. This is achieved by a critical analysis of its role in the particular Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition.

After Vatican II the term has come to be widely used when referring to the distinctive nature of a Religious 'family'. The use of the word 'family' implies a relatedness that is unique to a group. Its usefulness, at this point, is because it avoids employing the word charism but denote a particular group of people who are 'related' or united so that they have become a distinct group. This 'family' has an identity which is recognised by others even if they do not belong to the 'family'. A Religious Family is brought into existence by the specific call of God, usually through an individual, the founder. There is no suggestion that 'family' is equivalent to the word 'charism' but it can be used as an analogy to denote a group of people who recognise they are bound together. It is their shared 'charism' which has been claimed as distinguishing them from other religious families.

An internet search looking for the websites of religious Institutes will reveal many descriptions of their individual charisms.¹¹ It is also now quite commonly referred to in documents from the Vatican.¹² Despite this the meaning of the word 'charism' is not always clear and it is especially confused with the concept of the spirituality of a Congregation. The thesis argues that the word 'charism' is a valid

¹¹ An example of this is the website of the Marist Sisters where on the page titled 'Mission' it states, 'As contemplatives in action, we are committed to sharing the riches of our faith, our spirituality and our charism with our contemporaries. <http://www.maristsisters.org.uk/Mission.html> accessed 20th March 2016.

¹² In *Verbum Domini*, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI after the Synod on the Word of God in 2010, states in para., 83, "Every charism and every rule springs from it and seeks to be an expression of it" *Verbum Domini* Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI given on 30th September 2010.

concept when applied to Religious Families but to understand its full meaning it is necessary to explore the internal elements intrinsic to it. It argues that the three important elements of a charism are the members themselves, the spirituality that unites them and ensures continuity and the ministerial options they choose to pursue from a shared faith perspective. It will illustrate these elements through a particular religious family, the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition. Understanding the particular gift of God which is the charism of a Congregation, deepens the understanding of the call of God to the Church through that particular gathering.

1.3.1 The word 'Charism'.

In *The New Dictionary of Theology* Wilfred Harrington begins a discussion on the word 'charism' by stating:

'The Greek word *charisma* means free gift, favour. It is Paul who introduced the term into religious language: the word means free gift of grace.'¹³

St. Paul describes the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to individuals to build up the Church:

'There are many different gifts, but it is always the same Spirit; there are many different ways of serving, but it is always the same Lord. There are many different forms of activity, but in everybody it is the same God who is at work in them all. The particular manifestation of the Spirit granted to each one is to be used for the general good.' (1 Cor. 12:4-7).

The term has since come into more general use and gained wider meaning. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

'Whether extraordinary, or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church,

¹³Harrington, W, *The New Dictionary of Theology*, CHARISM, P. 180

ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, [sic] and to the needs of the world (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, #799).

It is only within the last forty years that 'charism' has come to be used in describing the distinctive nature of different Religious Institutes. As in a family members of religious institutes recognize that there is something that distinguishes them from other institutes, something which goes beyond having different names and works, something which is closely involved with the spirit of the Institute but not identical to it, something that also involves the lived experience of the members and even to the individuality of each member. The term has not been used in relation to religious institutes with a clear definition of what it means in this context. For some it has become an ambiguous term. Sandra Schneiders in *Finding the Treasure* wrote the following concerning the extension of the term to religious life:

'One of the most ambiguous contributions of the Council [*Vatican II*] to the renewal of Religious life was its evocation of the theological category of "charism" in relation to that life.'¹⁴

If by this statement Schneiders is implying that Vatican II was the catalyst that brought the word 'charism' to be used so extensively by religious, she does not give any evidence for it. The word was used in Conciliar Documents in relation to other groups. *Lumen Gentium*¹⁵ used the term three times; the first is in paragraph 7 and refers to the charisms of the apostles; the second in paragraph 25 in relation to the Pope's gift of Infallibility; lastly in paragraph 30 it speaks of spiritual gifts given to the Laity. Chapter VI of this document is all about religious life and in this section the word does not appear at all.

¹⁴ Schneiders, S. M., *Finding the Treasure*, p. 283

¹⁵ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, solemnly promulgated by his holiness Pope Paul VI on November 21, 1964.

It was after Vatican II that the term gradually came to be used to convey something of the uniqueness of each Religious Institute but, as Schneiders stated, it is used with a degree of ambiguity.¹⁶ Because this ambiguity can lead to misunderstanding and confusion it is important to advance the understanding of this term which has the capacity to describe God's gift of and his call to a particular religious family.

There are very few papers or books which discuss the question of the meaning of charism.¹⁷ In an article about the charism of Religious Life and the media apostolate J. O. Mills states;

'As the Sri Lankan theologian Tissa Balasuriya said:

"We must be careful to examine well what is meant by the founding charism of a religious family. Its original inspiration is usually evangelical and noble. But its application to a given social condition

¹⁶ On the website of the Brentwood Ursulines they state, 'So although we share the same Ursuline charism and traditions and have many things in common, we also have a century of our own evolution.' <http://www.ursulines.co.uk/brentwood.htm>, Accessed 20th March 2016. In this statement the Sister are discussing why they had not merged with other Ursuline Congregations even though they had a shared Charism. I would maintain that they have a shared Spirituality but the different branches have different charisms as the membership is different. Another example is on the website of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions. On the page label 'who are we' there is a small section labelled Charism. The small paragraph speaks of a major spiritual insight of the foundress, Euphrasie Barbier, and her desire to found a Missionary order of consecrated religious who reach out through contemplation, communion and mission. I would contend that this is speaking more about their Spirituality which is part of their charism, not identical with it. <http://www.rndm.org/charism>, accessed 20th March 2016. There is no criticism meant with these examples, they illustrate that the use of the word is not clear, especially in comparison with spirituality and mission.

¹⁷ There were only two published books specifically on Charism; Tillard, J.M.R., *There are Charism and Charisms*, 1977, and Lozano J. M., *Foundresses, Founders and Religious Families*, 1983. Both of these books give a deep consideration of the term 'charism' in relation to Religious life. However, neither made it clear what was the relationship of the charism with the Spirituality. Sandra Schneider's book, *Finding the Treasure*, is not intended to define the charism but to outline the development of Apostolic religious life. In this book she has two chapters on charism and in the first, p.282-312, she talks of many different gifts being given on different levels. This is speaking of charism as understood as a gift of the Spirit for different situations. The second chapter, p313-358, is an in depth discussion of the charism of prophecy which is fundamental to religious life. Once again charism is being used in the same manner as St. Paul, although it is being applied to a specific group of people. A search through many databases using the word charism has consistently provided little fruit. The earliest paper on this topic was found in the Way supplement in 1971.

may be limited by the prevailing theology and the distribution of power in a society.”¹⁸

The article in which this is quoted, gives a very good argument as to how an Institute's apostolate can change while remaining true to its charism. However, it does not define charism and does not make any distinction among charism, spirituality and mission.

In another article written about *Charism and Constitutions*, Mary Milligan writes about the founders who had drawn up their Constitutions to embody the essence of the charism of the new religious family. In this article, she has written about the founder living a particular interpretation of the Gospel in response to a perceived need of the society in which they are living. The founder responds in accordance with their specific 'faith vision':-

'They were born at the point of intersection of Word and world, at the point where a particular faith-vision was brought to bear on an existential historical situation. It is there that this mysterious reality which resists definition and which we call *charis* or charism was operative. The grace of the Spirit animated the founding persons and enabled them to act according to their own faith-vision.'¹⁹

It is this 'mysterious reality' that is not fully understood and which resists definition that needs to be clarified at the outset of this thesis. It is a God given gift and therefore will always retain something of the spirit of the indefinable giver. However, it is also manifested in real people and situations and therefore can to a certain extent be described. The quotation is also discussing only the founder and God's gift to him/her. Does He give a similar gift to those who come to join this new Religious Family?

¹⁸ Mills J. O., *The Charism of the Religious Order and the media apostolate*, Way supplement 57, 1986 p.66-76.

¹⁹ Milligan M., *Charisms and Constitutions*, The Way Supplement 36, 1978 p.47-48

It is useful to look at Sandra Schneiders who brings up another relevant point,

‘[The] use of the category to talk about the particular character or spirituality or ministerial option of congregations included whether a charism is necessarily individual or could be given to a whole group.’²⁰

This is a valid question which is relevant to this study. Schneider uses the phrase, ‘particular character or spirituality or ministerial option of congregations’, instead of charism. Are these concepts interchangeable terms for charism or do they constitute elements of a charism?

All religious families that have been accepted by the Church, are deemed to have a charism. This applies to the particular Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition. This thesis is not challenging this view nor does it seek to give an in-depth historical account of the development of the Congregation since its foundation in 1832, in order to define the charism. Rather it seeks to understand the concept of charism when applied to a Religious Institute through examining its constitutive elements, as exhibited through the foundress, the constitutions and the membership. Initially, in this chapter, it is important to give a definition of charism.

1.3.2. ‘Charism’ and Religious life.

In the Apostolic Exhortation ‘*Evangelica Testificatio*’²¹, after speaking of the need for a close union with God for each religious,²² the next paragraph is titled, ‘The charisms of founders.’²³ This is the first time, in an official Church document, that the word ‘charism’ is used in relation to Religious Life. *Evangelica Testificatio*(ET)

²⁰ Schneiders, S. M., *Finding the Treasure*, p. 283

²¹ Apostolic Exhortation of his holiness Paul VI *Evangelica Testificatio* on the renewal of the religious life according to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. 29th June 1971. The Document reiterates the call to Renewal for all forms of Religious Life in the Church.

²² Ibid para 10.

²³ Ibid para 11.

was written in 1971 and it deepens the call to renewal of Religious life that was first made in the Vatican II document 'Perfectae Caritatis'(PC)²⁴.

In ET 'charism' is first used as a title before section 11 which commences with,

'Only in this way will you be able to reawaken hearts to truth and to divine love in accordance with the charisms of your founders who were raised up by God within His Church.'²⁵

It is not clear what 'the charisms of your founders' is describing. Is it the particular spiritual gifts that the founders brought to the mission of the Church, or the lifestyle they embraced, or a particular way of witnessing to God's love, or all of these together? It is not explicitly explained and the word is used in a different way later in the same paragraph:-

'In the reality, the charism of the religious life, far from being an impulse born of flesh and blood or one derived from a mentality which conforms itself to the modern world, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who is always at work in the Church.'²⁶

This indicates that the 'phenomenon' of Religious Life itself is a gift or charism from God. In this one section the word has been used three times but each in a slightly different way. It is used in the title of the section, then it is used to emphasise the specific gifts of the founder and finally as Religious life, *per se*, being a gift of God.

The word is used once more in E.T.,

'Along this path a precious aid is offered you by the forms of life which experience, faithful to the charisms of the various institutes, has given rise to.'²⁷

²⁴ Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, *Perfectae Caritatis*, proclaimed by his holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965. This document urges Religious Institutes, Orders and Congregation to review the way they live their Religious life.

²⁵ *Evangelica Testificatio* para11.

²⁶ Ibid. para. 11

²⁷ Ibid. para. 32

This would seem to be the first time that the word has been used as an attribute of the 'various Institutes'. In the previous paragraph to this quotation, Religious²⁸ were urged to live lives which give a witness to the totality of their relationship with Christ. The point being made is that their style of living is a powerful aid in their witness. It acknowledges that each institute has a particular style and it should be in accord with their charism. This fourth use of the word does not clarify its exact meaning. The same word has been used to describe 'something' which is a specific gift to the founder, which has described religious life itself as a gift of God and which has been used as a characteristic which distinguishes Religious institutes. This gives the impression of a gift from God which has the power to distinguish institutes but it is mysterious, unknown even indefinable. Such a concept is open to any interpretation and therefore potentially confusing. However, it is self-evident that Congregations differ and they are recognisable entities with a concrete membership with real aims and life-styles. This concept, whatever it is, must have existed before the term 'charism' was applied to it. The document of Vatican II on Religious Life, *Perfecta Caritatis*, (PC)²⁹ which was written only six years prior to E.T., did not use this term at all. It used the word 'Donationes' which is the Latin for 'gifts',

'The gifts which these communities possess differ according to the grace which is allotted to them.'³⁰

Even in translating the Latin the word 'charisms' was not used to translate 'gifts' for this document. Since the word 'charism' was not used at this time in relation to Religious life, its use here would have been extraordinary. Religious Life was written

²⁸ Ibid. Para. 31

²⁹ Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, *Perfectae Caritatis*.

³⁰ Ibid para 8. (donations secundum gratiam quae data est eis,)

about extensively in several Vatican II documents. In *Lumen Gentium* ³¹ section 45, it is stated

‘It uses its supervisory and protective authority to ensure that religious institutes established from all over the world may develop and flourish in accordance with the spirit of their founders.’³²

The Church plays an important role in regulating and approving these new ways of interpreting the Gospel into new forms of life. It is the phrase the ‘spirit of the founders’ that was used in most Church documents, up to and including Vatican II, instead of charism. In E.T. this changed to the ‘charisms of the Founder’. However, the phrase does not fully define its meaning and what is the relationship between charism and the spirit or the spirituality of an institute? In a more recent document about Religious life, Pope Benedict XVI stated in 2010,

‘With regard to the consecrated life, the Synod first recalled that it “is born from hearing the word of God and embracing the Gospel as its rule of life”. A life devoted to following Christ in his chastity, poverty and obedience thus becomes “a living ‘exegesis’ of God’s word”. The Holy Spirit, in whom the Bible was written, is the same Spirit who illumines “the word of God with new light for the founders and foundresses. Every charism and every rule springs from it and seeks to be an expression of it”, thus opening up new pathways of Christian living marked by the radicalism of the Gospel..’³³

New pathways of Christian living could be talking about new ways of responding to God’s call or new spiritualities. It could also be interpreted as new ways of spreading

³¹ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, solemnly promulgated by his holiness Pope Paul VI on November 21, 1964. This is one of the major Documents of the Second Vatican Council and it describes the Church itself. The word Charism is used three times in this document. The first is in section 7 and refers to the authority of the apostles over even those who had individual charisms; the second in section 25 in relation to the charism of the pontiff for infallibility; lastly in section 30 and here it speaks of spiritual gifts given to the Laity. Chapter VI of this document is all about Religious Life and in this section the word does not appear at all.

³²Ibid para. 45

³³ *Verbum Domini*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church (30 September 2010), Para. 83.

the good news, or it might mean new ministerial options which need a special call and empowerment from God. This brings up the question already enunciated by Sandra Schneiders about the relationship between charism, spirituality and ministerial options. Are they the same concepts? The above quotation from *Verbum Domini* seems to imply that charism incorporates spirituality and mission. The relationship between the three will be developed further in the next two sections of this chapter.

1.3.3 The use of the word 'Spirituality'.³⁴

The word 'Spirituality' is also used in many different contexts and its meaning varies.

In an early edition of the Oxford dictionary this definition is given:

'Spiritual quality: what belongs or is due to the Church or to an ecclesiastic as such'³⁵

In an on-line edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, there are several definitions of the Spirit or Spiritual as the adjective;

³⁴ There is an extensive literature available on this subject and formed part of the necessary reading for this section. Jordan Aumann's two books one on *Spiritual Theology* and the other on *Christian Spirituality in the Catholic Tradition*, are probably the most widely known. Other classical authors were L. Bouyer, *Introduction to Christian Spirituality*, 1961, L. Cognet, *Post-reformation Spirituality*, 1959 and P. Evdokim, *The struggle with God*, 1966. More recent works include those of P. Collins, *Mind and Spirit*, 2006; L. Cunningham, K. Egan, *Christian Spirituality: themes from the Tradition*, 1996; R. Deville, *The French School of Spirituality: an introduction and reader*, 1994. Dupré, D. Sauers, *Christian Spirituality, Post reformation and Modern*, 2000; B. Groeschel, several publications including *Spiritual Passages: the psychology of spiritual development* 2010; C. Jones, G. Wainwright, E. Yarnold, *The Study of Spirituality*, 1986 and there are many more. In addition, this literature includes the reading of the works of masters of the Spiritual life, St. Augustine, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Francis de Sales, Cardinal Berulle and other members of the French school of Spirituality. The aim in reading so widely was to get a greater understanding of different spiritualities. In addition to these works the lives of several founders and foundresses contemporary with St. Emilie; those of Eugene de Mazenod OMI, Jean-Claude Colin, Marist, Jean Jugan, Little Sisters of the Poor, Guillaume-Joseph Charminade, Marianists; Anne-Marie Javouhey, St. Joseph of Cluny and Pierre Bienvenue Noilles, Holy Family. Finally, there are several Publications two of which are *Spirituality and Religious Life Review*, Dominican Publication and *The Way Supplement*, Campion Hall Oxford.

³⁵ 1964 Concise Oxford Dictionary.

‘relating to or affecting the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things;

having a relationship based on a profound level of mental or emotional communion;

not concerned with material values or pursuits’.³⁶

The differences in the two editions illustrate the change in the use of the word over the last two centuries. St. Emilie de Vialar³⁷, the foundress, would never have used the word in her writings as she understood it differently,

‘Until the turn of the eighteenth century ‘spirituality’ did not have its modern meaning, referring simply to the clergy or the ecclesiastical office.’³⁸

Stephen Barton in his book *The Spirituality of the Gospels* gives two definitions, one easily recognized by Roman Catholic Christians and one more easily recognized by Protestant Christians,

‘What is Christian spirituality? For some, especially in the Catholic tradition and those influenced by it, spirituality is about prayer, meditation, confession, making retreats and ascetical practises such as fasting;... For others, perhaps from a more Protestant tradition, spirituality is basically about the joyful experience of justification and conversion along with their consequences for ethics and daily discipleship³⁹.’

This quotation illustrates how this one word can mean totally different things to Christians from different traditions. Jordan Aumann in *Spiritual Theology* states,

‘In its widest sense, spirituality refers to any religious or ethical value that is concretized as an attitude or spirit from which one’s actions flow.’⁴⁰

³⁶ <http://oxforddictionaries.com> ; ‘Spirit’. Accessed 24.02.2010

³⁷ St. Emilie de Vialar was born in 1797 in Gaillac, a small town near Toulouse, in France. She founded the Congregation in 1832 in the same town. She died suddenly in 1856. Pius XII canonised her in 1951.

³⁸ Brook, P. Ed, in *Christian Spirituality: Essays in honour of Gordon Rupp*. p. 205.

³⁹ Barton, S., *The Spirituality of the Gospels*, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Aumann, J., *Spiritual Theology*, P 17.

For Christians this must mean the way they act in trying to live a life in Christ, or how they understand the way God wants them to live the Gospel. Aumann goes on to quote Paul Evdokimov in *The Struggle with God* who stated:

‘the life of man facing his God, participating in the life of God; the spirit of man listening for the Spirit of God.’⁴¹

Aumann comments on this,

‘The spiritual life in this more restricted sense is a supernatural life, and this seems to be in accord with biblical usage, where the word *spiritus* or *pneuma* refers to a divine power and therefore to the supernatural.’⁴²

This would seem to be a definition which would come closer to describing the ‘spirit’ of a Religious Congregation. It is the way the members live the Gospel, in harmony and unity, in response to God’s call.

There are many other examples that could be quoted but this study is not about giving a definitive definition of the word ‘Spirituality’, but when it is used it is important that it is clearly understood. In 1.3.4 of this chapter a definition of spirituality for the purpose of this thesis will be given.

1.3.4 Ministerial Options or Mission.

Schneiders also wrote about ministerial options or missions⁴³ and this concept is often pointed out as encapsulating the distinctiveness of Institutes. The works which are undertaken by members are referred to as their missions or Ministerial options. So how does this relate to the concept of charism?

When I was growing up in the 1950’s we were encouraged in my Convent School to adopt a baby from the missions. The word ‘mission’ meant to us a place

⁴¹ Evdokimov, P., *The Struggle with God*, p. 41

⁴² Aumann, J., *Spiritual Theology*, P 17.

⁴³ See 1.3.1 of this chapter p. 11. fn. 20.

which was poor, remote and ‘undeveloped’ and to which people were called to go and bring the Gospel. This is only one use of the word. Coming from the Latin word ‘missio’ meaning ‘to be sent’, it is used in the sense of responding to God’s call to take up a particular task with no reference to where it is carried out. This is especially so in religious life. ‘*Perfectae Caritatis*’ states,

‘The missionary spirit must under all circumstances be preserved in religious communities.’⁴⁴

The words ‘missionary spirit’ describe a desire to go only in response to God’s sending. There is no suggestion of where or how. Furthermore, this statement is addressed to ‘*religious communities*’ with no specification to what type of religious community, active or contemplative, out among the people or enclosed in monasteries. The sense of the word mission, in this situation, is perhaps closer to the need to ‘witness’ to Christ and responding to His demands by the way life is lived.

There is a third understanding of the word mission when it means taking up a project at God’s behest, such a project, discerned as a call from God, can also be seen as His gift. When undertaken in the name of the Congregation it becomes part of God’s gift to the world given as part of the charism of the Congregation. Each call is unique in that God has called the member or members to do this task and thus it contributes to the distinctiveness of the Congregation.

1.3.5 Comment on this section

Through the discussion in this section it is apparent that there is no consensus of meaning for the words charism, spirituality and mission. However, despite the

⁴⁴ Paul VI, *Perfectae Caritatis*, No. 20.

ambiguities, they are necessary in a consideration of what makes an individual Religious Institute distinctive in the Church. It is in deepening their understanding of the unique gift that the Congregation is, that the members can embrace and live to the full the call of God in their lives. In this thesis a paradigm for understanding the charism of a religious Institute is being proposed. It will be illustrated by analysing the charism of a particular Congregation, the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition. The next section will define these terms for use in this study.

1.4 Understanding the 'Charism' of a Congregation

Since the call of the Church to Institutes of Religious life to re-evaluate their 'founding charism' was issued following Vatican II, the meaning of 'charism' in this context has come into question. As has been discussed above, the use of the concept is new and seems to have been evolving. Sandra Schneider gives four levels at which she feels it can be applied.⁴⁵ The first is using it to describe the gift of Religious Life *per se*, to the Church. The second is in describing the different traditional ways of living this life, contemplative, monastic, eremitical, mendicant and apostolic. Each tradition can be seen as a separate gift or charism. The third way is in describing each religious body with its distinctive characteristics. The final category is to describe the distinctive call of each member of a religious family as having a specific and personal charism. The usage of the word at each of the levels is legitimate but the third category is the one which is closest to its usage in relation to separate Religious families as gifts to the Church. There is a paucity of studies

⁴⁵ Schneiders S. M., Finding the treasure, p. 285

conducted on defining exactly what this term means in relation to Religious life,⁴⁶ and this is part of the difficulty when using the word in this context.

Since the appearance of E.T. in 1971 many members of Religious Congregations have conducted studies on their individual charism and/or the spirituality of their founders.⁴⁷ Most of these works are a mixture of historical description of the foundations, especially the first works, and some discussion of theological elements of the charism. The charism is described through the historical events and the writings of the principal members of the Institute. The characteristics of the charism emerge from these accounts. Although no detailed attempt is made to define what is meant when the word 'charism' is used in relation to the Institute. This is not the method being followed in this thesis. It is proposed to consider the inner 'skeleton' of charism by identifying and discussing the 'ingredients' that make up the charism.

Turning to Schneiders for further illumination,

'Was the charism of the founder precisely the grace "to found," that is, to call a group into existence and stabilize it sufficiently for it to survive? Was it the particular insight into the Gospel that gave rise to a distinct spirituality now characteristic of all the members? Was it a call to exercise a particular type of ministry such as teaching, nursing, or preaching the Gospel in cross-cultural

⁴⁶ See 1.3.1 of this chapter, p. 9 Fn. 17.

⁴⁷ A typical example of this is the PhD Thesis of Sr. Anne Hayden, *The Venerable Pierre Bienvenu Noailles and the Holy Family*. 2004. In this thesis the charism is described through the life of the founder and a discussion of the theological issues related to the Spirituality. It does not attempt to define Charism. There are many others and one in particular had some resonance with this thesis. Brother A. M. Watson, *Perceptions of the Transmission of the Edmund Rice Charism: Changing leadership from religious to lay in Christian Brothers' Schools*, 2009. In this thesis Charism is extensively defined but it is not clear about the distinction between charism and spirituality. Because this is not clear it is hard to understand what is being passed on, the charism or the spirituality. By the definition of charism given in this chapter, the charism of a Congregation cannot be handed over to another group of people, it is an integral part of the original group. What can be transmitted is the spirituality. So that new group has a similar faith-vision to that of the Congregation.

contexts? All of these interpretations have been proposed and investigated.’⁴⁸

Unfortunately, she gives no references for her final remark. The argument in this thesis is that the three elements outlined here, the founder, her/his spirituality and the ministerial options, are separately not the same as the charism but they are ‘ingredients’ of the charism. The founder’s own personal spiritual gifts, his/her spirituality and the ministerial choices he/she made, are the first expression of the charism, that is, the distinctive gift of God given to the Church in this new Religious Family. As others join the founder, the gift that God has given in this family, grows and the three elements, the membership, their shared spirituality and their ministerial choices are what form the ‘ingredients’ or elements of the charism. These elements do not stand alone and there is constant interaction between the three which is the living charism. However, what is also being argued in this thesis is that the spirituality is the unifying factor of the three elements and plays a pivotal role in ensuring the continuity of the charism. The members have all been individually called by God and endowed with a spirituality which is very similar to that of the founder and other members. As a result, they are attracted to the group. Since they all have a similar way of experiencing God in their lives, they are also attracted to projects which correspond to their common faith vision. Thus, their spirituality, also influences their choice of and manner of engaging in ministerial options.

The identification and analysis of these three elements in the particular Congregation being studied, will enable a critical analysis of the charism and thus a greater understanding of its demands and riches. In this thesis the focus will be on

⁴⁸ Schneider S.M., Finding the Treasure, p. 287.

identifying and describing the spirituality of the Congregation and examining its influence in the life of the foundress, its influence in the first and current Constitutions and the lived experience of a sample of the current membership. The other two elements will be considered briefly but not in the same detail as the spirituality. This is because a full analysis of the 'uniqueness of the individual members would require a further thesis and the uniqueness of the mission emerges as the spirituality is discussed. It is proposed that this approach will facilitate a critical consideration of the distinctive gift of God which is the Congregation today.

1.4.1 A Founder or Foundress.

John Lozano lists the following as essential traits of a foundress or founder,

'a) having felt called to create a new religious family, and b) having defined their ends and lifestyle, and shaped their spirit.'⁴⁹

In a founder there is an individual who, in a relationship with God, comes to believe that God is asking them to do a specific task which involves an innovation in Religious life. Religious life has its own characteristics that have emerged in the Church over the centuries: including the profession of the Evangelical Counsels, valid norms of governance, prayer and involvement in the mission of the Church. During its long history various different ways of living the Gospel have been tried, tested and approved in the Church. Behind the creation of these different life-styles was often, although not always as with the Carmelites, an individual who felt called by God to

⁴⁹ Lozano, J. M., Foundresses, Founders and their Religious Families, p. 5. This work was one of only two books available which discusses the charism of a Congregation. This book points out that the use of charism in relation to religious life is a fairly new phenomena which emerged following Vatican Two. However, while it does explore the many different types of Religious life with their different charisms, it still does not give a definition in the word when used in the context of Religious Life.

respond to a need in the society in which they lived. They gave themselves totally to God and supplied the need that was being neglected.

As the membership grows a need arises to describe the lifestyle and the aims of the foundation. Different groups will have different lifestyles yet it is possible that two groups could delineate the same aims and decide on a similar lifestyle. What will differ between the founders of such institutes, is the manner in which they habitually respond to God to accomplish their aims, this is their spirituality. This latter is something that will have developed over time as the person gradually experiences God's presence and action in his or her life.

Therefore, in a foundress there is an individual who is called by God to start a new religious family. It is God who takes the initiative, in line with the biblical text where Jesus tells us, 'You did not choose me, no, I chose you', Jn. 15:16. In this Congregation the foundress is St. Emilie de Vialar, born in France in the middle of the French Revolution in 1797. As founders grow into a realization that God is calling them to found a new institute, they will also develop a certain manner of responding to God's initiatives and an expectation of how God will act in their lives. They will develop a sensitivity to what God is calling them to do, through their prayer, worship and life experiences. Certain Spiritual strengths will develop and become habitually active in their lives, such as a need to pray and in a certain manner; to go to help the materially or spiritually poor; to evangelisation; to live a particular form of dependence on God and other aspects of living. This habitual way of experiencing and responding to God, can be called their spirituality.

All these Spiritual strengths are Christian virtues and attitudes and every Christian is called to live them. However, it is the particular mix and strengths of

these virtues which makes the distinctiveness of a person's way of responding to God. In a way it can be likened to a 'cocktail' of virtues. Different cocktails can be made up of the same ingredients but in different proportions, so that they will taste different even though their constitutive elements are the same.

The particular mix of Spiritual strengths of a person 'colours' the way they see the reality of their lives and influences their choices in service to God and others. So if, in their journey with God, they have become aware of the needs of the very poor, they will choose to work to alleviate the plight of the poor.⁵⁰ If in addition they feel also a call to devote the majority of their time to prayer, then they will develop a lifestyle which gives them the possibility of many hours of prayer for the poor.⁵¹ The spirituality of a person is quite a complex entity but because it is a habitual way of relating to God, it can be analysed and described. It is made up of Christian virtues and attitudes which, if just listed, could be said to be the gifts of every Christian. These are called, in this thesis, as Spiritual strengths because God has made them the virtues which are strongest in that person. It is their manner of living them, their sensitivity and emphasis on these Strengths, that creates the uniqueness of their spirituality. Since it is also a relationship with God there will always be something of the mystery of God attached to it which will defy absolute definition.

⁵⁰ This particular emphasis is one of the most famously attributed of St. Francis of Assisi. On the website of The Society of St. Francis it states the following, 'Poverty is a central Franciscan value; as such it is about far more than money, but it does of course affect how we handle our financial affairs. Francis and Clare found in their chosen poverty a joyful and liberating way of following Jesus, who 'became poor to make us rich'. <http://www.franciscans.org.uk/living-as-franciscans/money-matters>. Accessed 28th October 2014.

⁵¹ The call to prayer in this way is a characteristic of the Carmelite order. On the website of the Carmelite Nuns in the United Kingdom state, 'Their lives are dedicated to prayer in silence and solitude.' <http://www.carmelnuns.org.uk/> Accessed 28th October 2014.

In a founder there is an individual who has a specific spirituality, feels drawn to live a particular lifestyle while participating in the mission of Christ. Every member of the Church can rightly be said to be a 'gift' to the Church, yet in the founder a particular gift is given. They have been prepared by God to fill a void or to emphasise a value to the rest of the Church. So in addition to their basic call as a baptised Christian, their distinctive calling and response is a gift of God to the Church. Their existence witnesses to God's care and His response to human need. This gift of God comprises their own personal gifts from God, their spirituality or their habitual way of responding to God and their ministerial choices. Thus, for a short while the charism of the Religious family, not yet born, resides in the one individual, the Founder/ress. This will become the founding charism when the founder begins to attract followers. There are three elements of the charism, the person, their spirituality and their manner of service in the Church. The founders witness by their life to their spiritual values and others are moved, by God, to join them.

1.4.2. The first followers.

What attracts another person to a group in the Church, only each one could reply but it may be the personality of the founder, the mission they are carrying out or the lifestyle they have decided to live. Whatever the reason the 'followers' who stay will feel 'comfortable' with the founders approach to God's call because they feel that the charism of the founder attracts them and that God is leading them to it. Thus the numbers of people living the lifestyle and the aims of the founder increases. In this thesis it is not being proposed to study any of the early members of the

Congregation of St. Joseph of the Apparition, who aligned themselves with St. Emilie, as the aim is first to identify the spirituality of the foundress and then seek to see if these same spiritual strengths are being lived by a sample of the current membership. In this way to demonstrate that the spirituality is the element that ensure continuity of the charism over time and place.

These first followers will have a very similar manner of thinking and acting to that of the founder but they will not be like 'clones'. They have all been called by God to be a part of this new religious family. They will have some gifts from God which will match those of the founder, but they will have other gifts that the founder may not have. So now instead of one person living this particular lifestyle of religious life and accomplishing the particular mission or missions consistent with the aims of the new 'family', there are several people trying to do the same. In addition each of these people is unique and a distinctive gift to the Congregation and through that to the Church. Their belonging to the new Congregation has expanded the gift of God, the charism, in the Church.

1.4.3. The Members

Every member contributes to the distinctiveness of the Institute by just being themselves. Each is an individual deliberately called by God to join the membership. No-one can be a member of two institutes. Thus, part of the richness and uniqueness of each institute resides in the membership. Individuals have particular talents to be used in the missionary choices of the Institute. They are not 'clones' of each other or their founder. There will be something in each one which will draw them and keep

them in this 'family'. This is a type of 'distinctiveness' in diversity. Moving from principle to reality in the current Congregation of St. Joseph of the Apparition, there were eight hundred and twenty four professed members in July 2013,⁵² they have thirty-three nationalities and live in one hundred and forty-six communities in all five continents. To undertake an analysis of every member's personal gifts would be an enormous task. It is not proposed to undertake such an analysis in this thesis. Many of the Sisters are very elderly and could not take part in such an enquiry. A study of this nature would undoubtedly illustrate that the members have unique qualities, although they will have some things in common. However, In the third part of this study a questionnaire has been given to a sample of the current membership.⁵³ In the questionnaire the first and the last question included the possibility of the respondent expressing their own particular talents and aspirations. All the questions were written as open-ended, so there is no detailed question asking specifically for their own talents. In their answers, however, to the various questions their preferences and talents become apparent. From this some information of the uniqueness and diversity of the respondents emerged.

It could be argued that every time a member is accepted or leaves, the charism is changed in that the uniqueness of a person is added or removed from the present day Institute. Part of the heritage of every Institute is its history and tradition and an important part of that is the members that lived their lives in the service of

⁵² This was the year of the last General Chapter and all the statistics of the Congregation have been taken from the report of the Congregation produced for that Chapter, except where explicitly stated.

⁵³ In the beginning of Chapter 6 there is a discussion of the method of choosing the sample for the questionnaire. In this discussion some of the difficulties associated with the aging population of the Sisters is discussed more fully. See Chapter 6.2.2 p. 227f.

the Institute. They have all been and, in a very real sense, still are part of the unique gift that the Institute is in the Church.

Another analogy is helpful here to understand the nature of the ‘changing’ charism. If the initial charism lived by the founder can be likened to a small sapling. As others come and the charism becomes that of the Institute, the tree grows and as it grows it thickens and strengthens. Each person adds to this growth but when someone leaves, the tree does not shrink. It retains the contribution of that Sister. In the literature on religious life this importance of the individual member is not often highlighted. Sister M. Coffey in *a Future Full of Hope*, when speaking of the development of the founding inspiration of an institute states,

‘The founder may be understood as interpreting a particular divine impulse in a way that is analogous to a reader who participates in creating the meaning of the text through interpretation. The founding generation—indeed also subsequent generations—‘participate in inspiration in this way.’⁵⁴

This is a very succinct way of illustrating the growth of a charism as new members come. Further on in her text she states explicitly,

‘The suggestion [is] that those who enter an order subsequently can draw out something that is not radically new’⁵⁵

The author is making the point that new members can ‘draw out’ further development of the charism. Both these quotations recognise the importance, of each member, chosen by God for this institute. No-one comes to an Institute by accident, God has called them, He has formed them and He has gifted them with talents and Spiritual gifts that He wants used within the Institute.

⁵⁴ Coffey M. F., The Complexities and difficulties of a return ad fontes, from *A future full of Hope*, edited by Gemma Simmons. Kindle E-book loc. 519

⁵⁵ Ibid. Loc. 687.

The question that needs to be asked is what is it that binds or unites all these individuals together so that they become a recognisable and distinct body in the Church and the world? This thesis argues that it is their common, shared spirituality.

1.4.4. The Spirituality

When speaking about the founders it was suggested that, over a period of time, a person in a relationship with God, develops a habitual way of responding to God and an expectation of how God has and will manifest Himself in their lives. It is proposed that this habitual way of responding to God is the definition of spirituality being used in this thesis. Because this is a learned way of response to God, it can be described and once matured it does not vary, except in being deepened, from day to day. As a person grows and responds to God's grace, it becomes more and more ingrained and the reality of the world is seen through it like a filter. It is this habitual way of responding that primarily distinguishes that person's spirituality from others. This was compared to a mix of Christian virtues in different proportion, like a cocktail of virtues. These virtues can be identified from studying the individual through their spoken word, their action, their writings and close witnesses. The founder will also enshrine in the Rule or Constitutions his or her aims for the institute and the values underpinned by his/her spiritual orientation.

The founder's spirituality is a specific manner of interpreting the Gospel demands and translating them into a particular actions or responses. Mary Milligan expresses the same idea,

'The grace of the Spirit animated the persons and enabled them to act according to their own faith-vision.'⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Milligan M., Charisms and Constitutions, The Way Supplement 36, 1978, p. 48

Anyone who is led by the Spirit to a particular Institute will have a similar spiritual orientation, or faith-vision, as that of the founder and the other members. Although individuals are unique and have different gifts, they can develop a spirituality that can be similar. They will be attracted to and be at ease with anyone else who has a similar spiritual orientation. This harmony of spiritual orientation unites the members of an Institute. It is a shared spirituality. Once again Mary Milligan puts it succinctly,

‘The spirit of a congregation originates in a sharing of the same fundamental faith-vision. It is the ‘collective attitude’ essentially related to the gospel perception of the founding person and, therefore, to his or her charism. ‘Spirit’ is the way members of a congregation relate to one another out of their common faith-vision and tradition, their common values and ideals.’⁵⁷

This ‘common faith-vision’ is what creates the ability for diverse individuals to walk side by side in response to God’s call. Because it is a particular mix of Christian virtues it is also part of God’s distinctive gift to the Church. It is therefore the second element of the charism, the first being the individual members.

Each individual’s spirituality will not be totally identical because of the uniqueness of the members, but it will have sufficient similarity that they all feel comfortable with each other. The shared elements of this spirituality can be analysed and described. However, there will always be some aspects of each person’s spirituality that will not be shared by the whole group. As an example, any person called by God to be a founder will have some elements of their spiritual orientation that will be given to them to enable them to found the Institute and other members will not have these gifts.

⁵⁷ Ibid p. 50

The spirituality they share leads the members to be sensitive to some aspects of the mission of Christ which He has formed them to fulfil and which He has confided to the Congregation. This is the mission, or ministerial options, of the Congregation. It is through the filter of the spirituality that the members respond to the needs of the Church and the world.

1.4.5. The Mission.

In some Institutes the call from God has been to be involved in one particular area of mission like education, or preaching, or the marginalised, or a neglected medical need. The particular ministerial options will be chosen in line with the founder's aims and lifestyle. However, even when the field of mission is narrowed to one particular type of apostolate, such as education, there will be some variation in the projects which the members may undertake. They may have schools for the rich, schools for the poor, adult education projects, university level education, education for people with learning difficulties and special needs. Whatever is undertaken is influenced by their spiritual orientation and the aims of the Institute. Because the spirituality affects the choice of mission, there is often a high degree of unity visible in the mission of each community. This unity is there because the members were attracted to the mission by their shared spiritual orientation. The missions of the Institute are part of the grace filled gifts of God to the Church and the world, therefore they are part of the charism of that Institute. In the third part of this thesis, from a questionnaire given to current members, it is possible to give a summary of the various missions with which the respondents have been involved. Although the sample is a convenience sample, the Sisters missionary endeavours

allows a glimpse of the missionary choices of this particular Congregation, the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition. The mission in this Congregation is not limited to any one field of endeavour, however there is an underlying motive which underpins all choices and that is a call from God to reach out to people with diverse Works of Charity (love). Wherever people are unable to live to their full potential in God's plan for them, the Sisters are called to try to redress their needs.⁵⁸

1.5 The structure of the Thesis

In this thesis, it is proposed in part one to analyse and describe the 'core' or 'basic' spirituality of the foundress, St. Emilie de Vialar⁵⁹. The 'core' spirituality is that which developed in her life before she embraced the call to Religious life. Identifying this 'basic' spirituality establishes her unique mix of Spiritual strengths: that is the particular mix of Christian Virtues which she distinctively embraced and lived by. It is not proposed to list all her virtues but those which she wanted to be continued in the Congregation.

This thesis will also not be discussing the part of the spirituality which appertains to the Religious Life, in particular the Evangelical Counsels and Community. This route is taken primarily because the thesis is trying to establish the uniqueness of the Institute's spirituality and the virtues associated with Religious Life are common to all Religious Institutes. It is acknowledged that the 'unique' spirituality of the Institute will influence the 'interpretation' of living the virtues of Religious Life.

p. ⁵⁸ The 'Works of Charity' is so important a concept in the Spirituality that there are numerous reference to it in several Chapters. See 4.3.1.3 p. 128; 5.4.8 p. 196; 6.4.2.6 p. 258.

⁵⁹ See 1.3.3. p. 16. Fn. 37.

There are two reasons for excluding this aspect of the spirituality from consideration in this thesis. The first is that there are difficulties in understanding the Foundress' attitude to the vows. In the documents which have survived and which are the primary sources for this thesis, there is a lack of comment by the foundress on the vows. In the first Constitutions there are four vows listed, poverty, obedience, celibacy and dedication to the Works of Charity.⁶⁰ Each has a very short paragraph attached to them. This is virtually all that the Foundress wrote about the three evangelical counsels although she had more to say about the 'works of Charity'. In her letters there is no further comment at all on Chastity. There is a lot of mention about loving others, the Sisters and the people the Sisters serve but she does not relate this to being, in some way, part of the vow of Chastity. As regards poverty she gives a lot of witness to her personal experience of becoming poor,

'the uncertainty in which God leaves me, from week to week, as to ways and means, troubles me greatly, but without discouraging me. The Lord takes care to let me see some meagre resources.'⁶¹

However she does not relate this specifically to the vow. There is one quotation that has been passed down in the Congregation but it does not come from her own letters. Mother Cyprienne,⁶² one of the early sisters, wrote a testimony about the foundress after her death. In it she stated that St. Emilie said,

⁶⁰ See chapter 5.4.11. p. 213. for a fuller discussion of the vows.

⁶¹ St. Emilie, *Letter 252* to Father Bourgade, 21 June 1848.

⁶² Mother Cyprienne Bonneville joined the Congregation in Gaillac on 22nd December 1845 when she was 21 years old. In her testimony she is said to have given witness to two sayings of Saint Emilie. The first is what St. Emilie said to the Sisters going to Burma, 'go and with all you have or receive do all the good you can.' (Picard L., *Une Vierge Française* p.241). This is a 'much loved' and often quoted 'saying' of St. Emilie. However, Mother Cyprienne is unlikely to have heard this admonition spoken because in 1847 when the Sisters went off to Burma, Sr. Cyprienne, as she would have been then, was in Gaillac until September when she made her first vows. The Sisters opened their first Mission in Moulmein Burma in 1847. They left from Malta and it took them months to arrive. Mother Cyprienne has dated her testimony as 2nd February 1881, so she is writing thirty-four years later and giving a mixture of what she herself witnessed and her knowledge of the witness of

‘If I had not become poor, I would not have been able to found the Congregation.’⁶³

Because this is not from a document written by St. Emilie herself, it has to remain as the interpretation of a witness. Certainly a good witness but one aim of this study was to limit the research for the sources of St. Emilie’s opinions, to documents she wrote herself or was involved in producing.

When it comes to obedience there are several instances in her letters when she condemns Sisters who refuse to obey. In a letter to Bishop Dupuch⁶⁴ she stated,

‘The removal of this sister has also become necessary because she is no longer willing to submit to the authority of her own Superior, and so she needs to be re-immersed in the spirit of her vocation in the bosom of my community in France.’⁶⁵

There is nothing in this statement that reveals how she understands the inner meaning of this vow. Her solution to the problem is to take this disobedient Sister and re-immers her in the Spirit of the Congregation by sending her to the Mother House in Gaillac. It illustrates, however, that she views this vow as important for anyone who is a religious. This thesis does not deny this but there is very little available to write with evidence of her belief of what the vows mean in her life.

others. The second phrase which is often quoted as spoken by the foundress when speaking about poverty is, ‘I would not have been able to found the Congregation if I had not become poor.’ (Picard L., *Une Vierge Française* p.230 see chapter 2, 2.5.2.). Both of these ‘sayings’ were used by Fr. Louis Picard in his biography but on both occasions he is quoting from the Mother Cyprienne’s testimony. In the archives there is a testimony of Mother Cyprienne and it does contain the second quotation but it does not have the first, which was allegedly said to the Sisters going to Burma. It is possible that there was another testimony which was consulted by Father Picard but it is not in the archives. In this thesis the primary sources have been those documents attributed to St. Emilie. Other sources have only been used to establish or confirm a statement made by the foundress. These quotations are therefore outside that remit but they have been accepted by the majority of the Sisters following Father Picard, so they are frequently quoted.

⁶³ *Mother Cyprienne’s Testimony*, Central Archives.

⁶⁴ Bishop Antoine-Louis-Adolphe Dupuch (born 21 May 1800, died 11 Jul 1856) Bishop of Algiers 1839 - 1846

⁶⁵ St. Emilie, *Letter 43.*, to Monsignor Dupuch, 17 .12. 1839.

The second problem is that in the 1982 Constitutions there has been a great increase in the understanding of the meaning of the vows. This gives the opposite problem in that there is too much information which has become understood about the vows today. Much of this understanding is due to the increase in the last century of a deeper theological and experiential living of the vows by religious.⁶⁶ There have been considerable changes on the interpretation of their meaning and this contemporary scholarship means that there is so much information that could be discussed, that another thesis could be written on this topic. However, this would have to include a review of the literature and the conclusions would be greatly influenced by these contemporary works. Such a discussion is not part of this particular thesis. In this study the 'unique' or 'core' spirituality of the foundress and its influence in the contemporary membership is the primary focus of research. At the conclusion of this research the particular spirituality which has emerged, could be used for further study to examine the vows through the 'lens' of the faith-vision. There is one caveat to this in that St. Emilie had a fourth vow. This will be discussed⁶⁷ in later chapters as it is part of her unique spiritual response to God.

⁶⁶ Even before Vatican II the meaning of the vows were being questioned by religious but after the Council there was a flowering of books on the emerging of renewed or new forms of Religious life. One of the earliest books is *On the Religious Life* by Dom Prosper Guéranger, 1885: Sandra Schneiders three volumes, *Finding the Treasure*, 2000; *Selling All* 2001 and *Buying the Field*, 2013, give a detailed consideration of the vows and new theological and experiential ideas. Thomas Merton as Novice master gave weekly talks to the Novices, these talks have now been published under the title of, Thomas Merton, *The Life of the vows: Initiation into the Monastic tradition*, 2012. This is a very comprehensive volume which covers the whole of monastic Life, including the vows. Diarmuid O' Murchu in his book *Poverty, Celibacy and Obedience: A Radical Option for Life* 1999 and his later book *Consecrated Religious Life: the Changing Paradigm*, which does not treat the vows separately but frequently refers to new ways of thinking and living them. Sr. J. Merkle wrote *A different Touch, A Study of vows in Religious Life*, 1998. There were also some books written on only one vow such as, *Neither escaping nor Exploiting Sex: Women's Celibacy* by J. Gray, In addition there are articles in various journals. In 2014 the *Review for Religious*, Dominican Publication ran a series of the vows which including several contributions on different aspects and interpretations of the vows today.

⁶⁷ See 4.5.3.1 p. 153 ; 5.4.11. p. 213.

After identifying these Spiritual strengths, in Part Two, their presence, or absence, will be traced in three documents. The first Constitutions, written by the foundress herself in 1835, and in a document called 'the Development and Spirit of the Rule' (SPDR), also written by the foundress, in 1841, and the current Constitutions, which date from 1982. These will be searched to assess how they express the spiritual virtues of the foundress. It is not proposed to do an in-depth textual analysis of any of these documents but a content analysis will identify the presence or absence of the foundress' spiritual strengths.⁶⁸ The different ways in which they are described in the documents will be contrasted in order to illustrate continuity and discontinuity and the development of understanding of these spiritual values over the years.

In the Third Part of the thesis, these same Spiritual strengths will be the basis of nine of the twelve questions in a questionnaire. The first and last questions aim to give some information of the Sisters' backgrounds and desires for the future. There is one further question centres around the type or tradition of Religious life to which the Sisters feel called.⁶⁹ Through the responses an assessment was made of how the Spiritual strengths of the Foundress are being lived today in the members of the sample. In this way it was established if these elements of the spirituality are being lived in continuity between the foundress and the present membership as represented by the sample.

The final chapter will give a description of the findings of each part and the relationship of the spirituality to the charism that has emerged.

⁶⁸ See Chapters 2 and 5 for a description of the method of Study for parts 1 and 2.

⁶⁹ See chapter 6.

1.6. Summary of this Chapter.

In this Chapter the use of the word 'charism' in relation to Religious Institutes in the Catholic Church has been discussed as being an appropriate term because each Religious Family is a unique gift of God, given in the Church for the up-building of the Kingdom. It is a relatively new use of the word over the last fifty years. It has never been fully defined by all those who have adopted its use but its popularity illustrates that it fulfils a need. Each Institute has the sense of being called into being through the initiative of God and with a shared spirituality and for a particular missionary endeavour.⁷⁰ The charism of the Institute is a grace filled gift of God to the Church and then to the world. It is a complex gift which has three essential elements which each, in different ways, carry the distinctive and unique character of the Institute. These three elements of this charism are, the membership, past and present, the spirituality which is the unitive factor and the ministerial projects embraced by the members. Of the three elements the spirituality is the one which permeates and unites the other two. God calls and gifts and nurtures the founder with this unique

⁷⁰ Since Vatican II there have been many people who have written about Religious life and the radical changes that this appears to be undergoing. Sandra Schneider is one of the most eminent and she is most interested in Apostolic Religious life. J. Chittester, G. Arbuckle, D. O'Murchu and J. Merkle are among the most well known. Others such as G. Agamben, D. J. Billy, A. Carey, D. Coghlan, B. Fiand, M. J. Cunningham, J. Cristo Rey Garcia Paredes and P. Wittberg have all written or edited books in which Charism is used to acknowledge the distinctiveness of Congregations. In addition to these books there are the proceedings from Conferences of the Major Religious Superiors and the considerable number of documents on Religious life that have come from all the recent Popes. These documents confirm that the word 'Charism' is used extensively since Vatican II. There are many of these works that have been consulted listed in the Bibliography although most were not quoted in the text. Sr. Gemma Simmons and her team at Heythrop College in London have also produced recent works and she has conducted a recent study of how Sisters in several Congregations live their religious life, the Vitality Study 2014. This is interesting in that it is a qualitative study with current members of several Congregations but it is not about Charism as such. The team from Heythrop presented their findings at a Symposium on Religious life in London in 2015. At that symposium there were many papers offered on aspects of present day living of Religious Life. There is no doubt that there is currently much scholarship being conducted into Religious life but not on the 'internal workings' and meaning of Charism in relation to it.

mix of Christian virtues and attitudes and this produces a unique way of interpreting God's demands and of choosing and implementing the mission. God also calls and nurtures others with a very similar spirituality and He calls them to join this new Religious family. The members are unique in themselves but they all share this common spirituality and it results in them choosing ministerial options which further the aim of the institute. Thus, the mission they choose also carry something of the unique gift of God which is their manner of responding to Him.

Because of the importance of the spirituality, in embarking on a critical analysis of the charism of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, it is proposed to concentrate on defining the particular mix of Spiritual Values which describe it. These values were first lived by the foundress who enshrined some of them in the first Constitutions with a hope to pass them on to those who followed her. The reasons for concentrating on the analysis of the spirituality is because it is the one element of the charism that changes the least over time, it is common to each member, it is a source of unity and it deeply influences the way of living. In saying that it changes the least, this does not mean that it cannot be understood better or defined in a way which is more consistent with the contemporary scholarship. The membership changes every time there is a new Sister or one leaves or dies. Yet every member has a spiritual approach to God which is consistent with the shared spirituality. The missionary choices are made through the 'filter' of the spirituality. They also have to change according to the needs of the world in which the Sisters are living their vocation. It would make an interesting study to research the changes in the missionary projects that the Congregation has been involved in, but this would give enough information for another doctorate. Thus, it

is the spirituality which largely preserves the continuity of the Spirit of the Congregation over time. However, it remains only one element of the charism. In all the parts of the thesis the elements of the spirituality will be defined and evaluated in the different contexts, the lived experience of the foundress, their presence in the first and current Constitutions and the lived experience of the sample of current members. In the final chapter a description will be made that includes the three elements of the charism as they exist today.

PART ONE

CHAPTER TWO

The Primary Sources and methods of study.

2.1 Introduction to the Chapter

The last Chapter discussed in detail the use of the word charism when it is used in the context of referring to the uniqueness of Religious institutes. It was argued that a Congregation's charism is a complex Gift of God which has three major elements in it, the Members themselves, the spirituality they share and which unites them, and the ministerial options they choose and carry out in a manner consistent with their Spirit.

The element which unifies the members and can ensure continuity over time and place, and which can be analysed in detail, is the spirituality⁷¹ shared by the members of the Congregation. It is therefore very important to understand the unique mix of virtues and attitudes which comprise the spirituality. In this thesis the constituent elements of the spirituality of the Foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, will be elucidated by analysing the documents that can be attributed to her.

St. Emilie had all her personal papers destroyed when she knew she was about to die.⁷² After her death the Sisters sent out an appeal to her correspondents

⁷¹ See 1.4.4. p. 29.

⁷² St. Emilie became ill with a strangulated hernia. It was in an era before surgery for this condition was available and therefore it was untreatable. She died several days after having symptoms.

to donate any documents written by her to the Archives. The appeal brought in 550 letters and a very few other documents, one of which was an account of her vocation. In addition, there were some documents that had not been destroyed, the early Constitutions, a book written for those Sisters who were teaching and some reports to either the Hierarchy of the Church or political leaders. These are the sources available for analysis.

These primary documents will be subjected to different types of content analysis rather than a full textual analysis. Holsti (1969) offers a definition of content analysis as,

‘any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages.’⁷³

The aim of the analysis of these documents is solely to note any data which describes her relationship with God. In the first chapter a definition of spirituality was given as a person’s habitual way of responding to God and an expectation of how God has and will manifest Himself in their lives.⁷⁴ It is signs of this relationship that will be the object of the content analysis.

In addition to these documents there are a number of biographies. After her death, the Sisters invited several priests to write her biography. However, the role of the biographies in this study will be a secondary one, as the aim is to concentrate on the foundress’ own words.

⁷³ R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*, p. 14.

⁷⁴ See 1.4.4. p. 29.

2.2. The Letters

In the central Archives there are a group of documents labelled as the letters of St. Emilie. These documents consist, in the majority, of letters written by Emilie herself and are in her handwriting. Most were returned to the Congregation after her death. At some stage in the past transcripts of these letters were made. These transcripts were produced on pre-electronic typewriters. In the present collection some of these transcripts are all that remains of the original letters as the manuscripts have been lost. Among the complete letters there are a few which are mere fragments of letters and some which it is doubtful if they were the work of St. Emilie, personally, but had to have been seen by her as they were written when she was the person of ultimate authority among the sisters. In the 1990's a company was engaged to put the known works of St. Emilie on to a website.⁷⁵ The aim was to have the original handwritten manuscripts and their French transcripts available with an English translation for each one. At the beginning of this task an appeal was made to the English speaking Provinces for any collection of the letters of St. Emilie in English.⁷⁶ This resulted in a small number of letters appearing for which there was no French Manuscript, and these letters were added to the central Archives. All the letters in this collection whether complete or not were numbered in date order and then published on the website. In addition a scanned picture of the original manuscript is attached to each letter, if it was available. In this thesis most of the letters quoted will be those in the Foundress' handwriting. When citing a letter which

⁷⁵ <http://gilse.emiliedevialar.org>

⁷⁶ Approximately one hundred letters were already translated into English by an unknown person or persons.

has some doubts attached to it, its provenance is discussed. On the website the letters were numbered from 1 to 550. It is by this numbering that the letters are quoted in this study.

When the Sisters, who followed the foundress, made the appeal for documents, this did not result in a complete set. Because most of them are dated they can be arranged in date order, but there are many gaps. Furthermore, there are no letters which were sent to St. Emilie herself, so there is only one side of the conversation. St. Emilie refers to other letters that she sent and which are not in the archives, so there is also a discontinuity. The letters vary considerably in their subject matters and even the style of writing. Sometimes they are very formal letters to various officials, other times they are much more familiar in style. None of the letters set out to give a formal discussion of a spiritual topic, but within the text there are often small 'nuggets' of her spiritual outlook expressed.

In this thesis it is not proposed to do an in-depth analysis of the letters. The concern for this study is to use them to help elucidate her spiritual strengths and especially those she wished to be passed on in the Congregation. The letters were analysed with a form of content analysis which specifically sought for signs of the foundress' spirituality.

O. R. Holsti's⁷⁷ has already been quoted, 'any technique' which 'objectively and systematically' identifies 'specified characteristics' from the required text. However, the method must provide 'validity' to the data. K. Krippendorff stated in his book on validity in content analysis,

⁷⁷ see p. 42. fn.73.

‘Following CAMPBELL⁷⁸ I will distinguish between’ internal and external validity. Internal validity is best designated by the term "reliability" while external validity may be considered "validity" proper.’⁷⁹

He goes on to add

‘When assessing the reliability of a method of analysis one assesses the degree to which variations in results reflect true variations in data as opposed to extraneous variations stemming from the circumstances of the analysis.’⁸⁰

He goes on to list some extraneous variation;

‘ambiguous recording instructions, observer's fatigue, changes in scale, punching and computing errors.’⁸¹

In this research the instructions for the analysis are not complicated and easily understood. There are two steps to the analysis. The first is a general content analysis of each letter. When any topic is mentioned it is recorded under a suitable code generated from the content of the text. For example, if the letter is discussing financial matters the phrase which indicates this is coded under ‘finance’ on a spreadsheet. The same phrase can also be recorded under another code, for instance, poverty, if it also indicates it should be. The same letter may have other topics like concern for her family, this would be coded under family. Although the analysis cannot be free from the researcher's bias, the codes are broad enough that interpretive bias should be low. A further instruction is that anything which appertains to the experience of God in St. Emilie's life is coded under ‘Spiritual Matters’. Each phrase is recorded on a spreadsheet by either a short quotation or by

⁷⁸ CAMPBELL, Donald T., "Factors Relevant to the Validity of Experiments in Social Settings." 1957 Psychological Bulletin, 5M: 297-311

⁷⁹ Krippendorff, K., Validity in content analysis. In E. Mochmann (Ed.), Computerstrategien für die Kommunikationsanalyse, p. 71, from http://repository.upenn.edu/asc_papers/291 accessed 25th Aug 2016.

⁸⁰ Ibid p.71-72

⁸¹ Ibid p. 72

a summary of the topic, if the quotation would be too long. There is no limit to the codes which can be generated as they depend on the content of the letter. The codes are concepts which most people would recognise without need for explanation. This method was applied to every letter no matter what its original purpose. The purpose of the analysis is to elucidate the elements of the foundress' relationship with God.

The second part of the analysis is to examine further those topics which have been classified under Spiritual Matters. Each quotation or summary under this coding is transferred to another coding document and each one examined for the spiritual attitudes, virtues, aspirations or any aspect of the relationship between the foundress and God. These are all coded according to their spiritual content. If a statement has evidence of such topics as the foundress' faith, her hope, God's love for her, then that quotation would be coded three times under 'faith', 'hope' and 'God's love'. As with the first analysis the codes are explicit and easily understood. This is not to claim that it would be totally free of interpretive bias. In this section of the analysis there are times when decision have to be made about the meaning of the text and if it illustrates a virtue or attitude. It is at this level that the researchers bias would be most influential. This would be a major problem if the concepts used for coding were obscure and difficult to understand. However, the concepts, such as prayer, recollection, love of God, which are used as the codes of this final document are concepts which are well understood by those interested in spiritual matters. The purpose of the analysis is to establish the presence and 'popularity' of all such virtues and attitudes which could constitute the elements of the foundress' spirituality. Using this method, the constituent elements of the foundress' relationship with God which are expressed in her letters, have been identified. Because the letters are

incomplete it can only be claimed that this is true of the letters available for analysis. It cannot be claimed that they give a definitive list of her virtues and attitudes.

In this way their content was searched for statements which illuminated her response to God. Because of the difficulties that can arise in translation the French transcript was the benchmark but the English translation is always used in the text.⁸² However whenever there was a need to cite a letter the French transcript was compared with the original hand-written letter which is available on the website as a scanned page in order to check the veracity of the translation.

To come back from theory to practice, the letters were first examined for their basic content. The question being asked at this stage was simply, what are the concepts which are mentioned in this letter. Using a spreadsheet codes were produced from the reading of the text. For example in the first letter the following codes were generated from the content: 'Medical', she wanting to attend several hospitals to observe their methods of treatment; 'The poor', she spoke about the desperate plight of the poor in the city; 'St. Sulpice', she spoke about this church and attending its courses as often as she could; 'formation' became another code as she spoke about other courses she could attend and finally she gave two statements which spoke about her relationship with God and they were placed under the code 'spiritual matters. In letter One these were two phrases, the first being,

'I try to lead the same kind of life as I do in Gaillac, going to church as often as I can, generally twice a day.'⁸³

⁸² The Sister who translated the letters for the website is from Malta and one of the Senior Sisters in the Congregation. At times the language she has used is in less use today in England. On other occasions I, personally, found the translation to be misleading. On those rare occasions when I disagree with the translation I have indicated that it is my translation and placed the French original in the footnotes.

⁸³ St. Emilie, *letter 1*, to Françoise Pezet 1826.

And the second was,

‘But do not think I am utterly deprived of hearing the word of God, as there are sermons given at times when I inconvenience no one, so I go wherever I think I shall get some kind of instruction.’⁸⁴

These were recorded on a spreadsheet and extra codes were added as necessary as each letter was read. To give another example, below is a small sample of the analysis of Letter 63.

The attitude of the Sisters	Apostolate	Conflict	Spiritual Matters	Suffering
They are totally devoted to her and would follow her anywhere	A new Mission	There is a great deal about the activities of Bishop Dupuch and his efforts to discredit her.	Speaks of God being her husband, Also speaks of how God uses suffering. See code suffering	She speaks of how God uses hardships to open her to new ways to work for Him

Illustration 2. 1

This letter is written to her long time friend and confidant, the Parish Priest in Gaillac, Father Mercier.⁸⁵ It can be seen that there is a column called Spiritual Matters. It was in this column that either direct quotations or a summary of a spiritual attitudes was recorded. In this example two attitudes are listed and the second is also inserted under the code suffering. Thus, the spiritual attitudes of the foundress can be drawn out from her letters.

Giving a further example, there are instances in the letters when she expressed an opinion that certain spiritual attitudes were important for religious. In a letter addressed to an apostate priest she states,

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Louis Mercier was born in Aveyron in 1793. He was ordained in 1817 and appointed curate in the Parish Church of Gaillac in 1822. It is believed that he became her first true Spiritual Director and also a life-long friend. He was the person who ‘tested her vocation’ and then became involved with the first foundation and the formation of the novices there. He was also involved with the management and finances of the original foundations. He died in 1845.

‘you know that simplicity is the first quality of a good Catholic, and even more so of a good religious.’⁸⁶

This full text was placed under the code of ‘Spiritual matters’, also under a code labelled ‘Religious life’ and finally under a code ‘Simplicity’.

In the next stage of the analysis any statements or summaries listed under spiritual matters were entered into a further document which was also a coding document. This time it was a word processing document with a table of three columns. The first column was the code, the second the full quotation or summary and the third the reference for the quotation. Looking back at letter One the statements listed started off this new coding document in this way,

Codes	Quote	Reference
Formation		
	But do not think I am utterly deprived of hearing the word of God, as there are sermons given at times when I inconvenience no one, so I go wherever I think I shall get some kind of instruction.	L1 to Fransçoise Pezet, 1926
	Speaks about wanting to go to visit hospitals in Paris to observe treatments. The knowledge needed for the future.	L1 to Fransçoise Pezet, 1926.
Lifestyle		
	I try to lead the same kind of life as I do in Gaillac,	L1 to Fransçoise Pezet, 1926

⁸⁶ St. Emilie, *letter 162*, to ex-Father Camilleri, 26th August 1843.

	going to church as often as I can, generally twice a day.	
	But do not think I am utterly deprived of hearing the word of God, as there are sermons given at times when I inconvenience no one, so I go wherever I think I shall get some kind of instruction.	L1 to Fransçoise Pezet, 1926
Word of God		
	But do not think I am utterly deprived of hearing the word of God, as there are sermons given at times when I inconvenience no one, so I go wherever I think I shall get some kind of instruction.	L1 to Fransçoise Pezet, 1926

Illustration 2.2

As can be noticed the second statement is coded three times, once under 'Formation', then as 'life-style' and finally under 'Word of God'. This is because it has more than one spiritual concept in it and therefore belongs under three codes. This means that multiple concepts can be coded without having to lose some aspects of the text. It is the attitudes, practices, insights and commitments involved in the relationship between the foundress and God which is being explored. The Codes, in this second document, are the concepts being expressed by the foundress. If a statement contains more than one concept, it can be classified multiple times as it is the concepts that are more important than the wording of the statements. The concepts looked for included spiritual attitudes expressed; emotional responses to situations, people and God; quotations of Scripture or other spiritual works; attitudes

to people and events; and religious life and its living and anything which describes some aspect of the relationship between God and the foundress.

As each letter was read the codes in both document were added in alphabetical order. Gradually those concepts which were more frequently used in the letters began to emerge. This method of analysis achieves its primary aim by identifying the Foundress' Spiritual attitudes which are expressed within them. However, the letters have many omissions and therefore cannot be claimed to give a full picture. In addition, there is another problem with the letters in that they all have different aims. St. Emilie wrote them with different ends in mind. Because of this it is usually not possible to make claims about a topic being comparatively more important than another, merely because of the frequency it may occur in the letters. If a word or concept occurs frequently it is an indication that this may be something that the Foundress emphasised in her spirituality and it, therefore, needs to be examined further. However, several concepts which are strongly put forward in the Constitutions and other documents may not feature greatly in the letters.

An example of this is the concept of 'Recollection'. St. Emilie strongly emphasises this in the first Constitutions where she stated that,

'in order to strive unceasingly to attain recollection, which must be like the soul of this Congregation.'⁸⁷

Recollection is alluded to only four times in the letters. By contrast another concept, 'Providence' is not mentioned at all in the Constitutions but is referred to seventy four times in the letters. In chapter four, the Spiritual strengths which have emerged from the analysis of her documents will be discussed.

⁸⁷ St. Emilie *1835 Constitutions*, Art. 2 section 2

The different letters had different aims and the topics they contained related to what needed to be communicated. The letters, therefore, give an insight into her attitudes to many aspects of her life but they do not deliberately outline her spiritual attitudes. This thesis seeks to identify those attitudes. In using the letters for assessing her spiritual strengths, it is important that the significance and presence, or absence, of spiritual concepts should be interpreted in conjunction with other documents she wrote.

2.4 Other Documents of the Foundress 2.3 The Account of Graces.

This document is unique in the Archives as it is the foundress' own witness to her growth in faith and the spiritual graces of her vocation. It forms the basis for the emergence of the Religious Congregation she later founded and which bears the marks of her personal experience in living out her Christian vocation. It exists as a small note book, the sort of exercise book a school child might write in. The copy of this document in the Central Archives has 15 pages, no gaps, no crossings-out or margins. It has not been bound in any way. It is called an 'Account of Graces' in English.⁸⁸ The notebook was written by St. Emilie between 1843 and 1848 and looks back over her life. The document in the archives is especially significant in that it is the one surviving copy which can be attributed to St. Emilie. It is dated Toulouse, 13th May 1848. Emilie stated that she began this document in 1843 in Carthage in Africa.⁸⁹ It consists of her memories and it written in a chronological manner, but it is not a

⁸⁸ '*Les relation des Graces*' in French,

⁸⁹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 1.

diary. It was written when she was a mature woman aged forty-six to fifty-one, yet it begins with a memory from her childhood. Since it was written over a period of years, one would expect that the entries would have been made with varying spaces between them and with different pens. The document in the archives does not bear these hallmarks. It is in St. Emilie's handwriting. To illustrate this are photocopies of the first full page and the last full page of the *Account*.

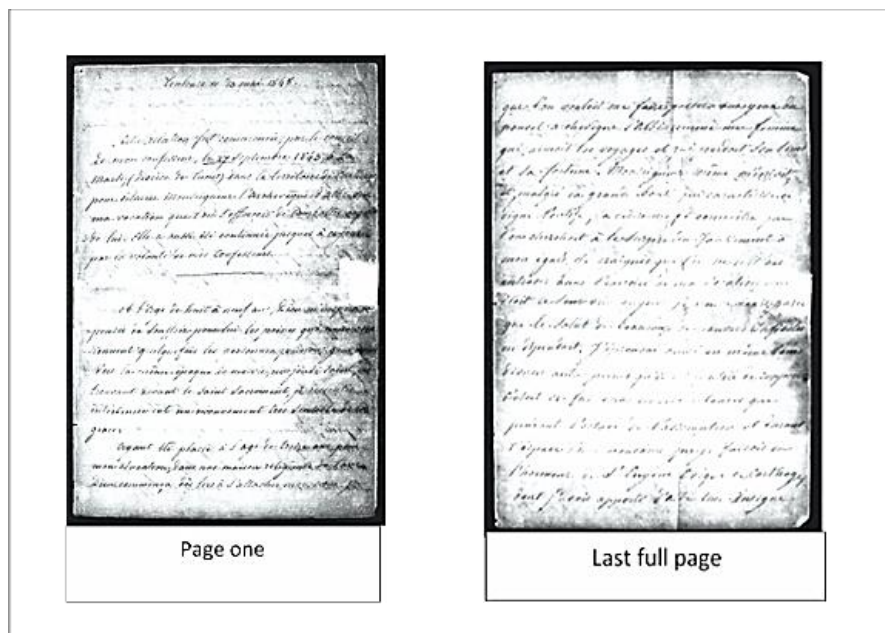


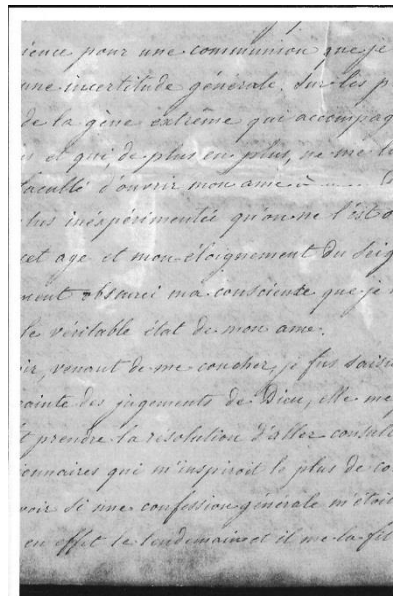
Illustration 2.3

It is not easy to see the words but the writing is very even and very clear with no margins and no crossings-out. This is the situation throughout the whole of this notebook. It is, therefore, most likely that this is a copy of the original which has been written out in one or two sittings. In Emilie's time this was the only way to copy such a document.

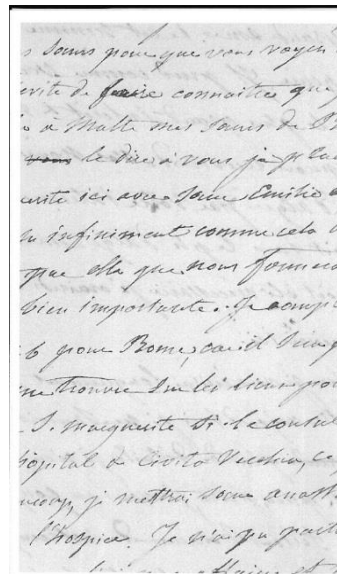
The next question has to be, did Emilie herself do this copy? Comparing a page of the *Account* to a letter St. Emilie wrote:-

Illustration 2.4

The first example is part of the fifth page of the *Account of Graces* and the second is



Fifth page of the
Account of Graces



Part of letter 153
written in 1843

a part of a letter written to Father Bourgade⁹⁰ in 1843, the same year she began writing the *Account*. The writing seems to be by the same hand.

The *Account of Graces* has never been published except by the Congregation in small booklets in various languages. The English version of this was translated many years ago and no-one remembers by whom. However, there were some small discrepancies from the French transcript. The first of these was that for years it was called in English 'the Account of Interior Life'. Since the French is 'Les relations de

⁹⁰ Father Bourgade was a missionary priest who was funded by the Propagation of the Faith. St. Emilie met him first in Algeria and kept contact with him when he moved to Tunis. He became her long term Spiritual Director. In St. Emilie's letters there are 135 instances of either letters to him, or mention of him in other letters.

Graces' it has been changed to 'The Account of Graces'. Who effected this change is also not known but it does seem to be more accurate, so it will be used in this thesis. In the discussion in the thesis it is proposed to refer to the document simply as the 'Account'.

The discrepancies in translation were not major and have been remedied in the study by myself. As an example St. Emilie describes a vision she had in the Parish Church in Gaillac. She saw a figure of the crucified Christ. In the earlier translation in English it said she saw this 'on the altar'. The French phrase is 'Tout à coup, je vis Jésus-Christ dans le tabernacle,' This should be translated as 'all of a sudden I saw Jesus Christ in the tabernacle' [The underlining is mine]. It is not a major change and there is one other minor amendment I made in the translation. In the original English there is no mention of a curl of His hair on His neck, 'j'aperçus sur son cou une boucle de ses cheveux.'⁹¹ I have added this to the English version. Otherwise I have kept the original translation. One further change I made, several years ago, was to number the paragraphs in the *Account*. This was in order to reference quotations. In the French version there is no such numbering. For the purpose of this study I worked primarily with the French version but used the existing English translation in the text with amendments if necessary.

The *Account* begins, "To Sister Baptistine⁹², secret paper to be burned."⁹³ This was a document that was private. St. Emilie relates in the first paragraph why she wrote it.

'This account was begun at the request of my Confessor for the purpose of enlightening the Archbishop of Albi, with whom I had to

⁹¹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 16

⁹² Sister Baptistine, is one of St. Emilie's companions and was with her when she died.

⁹³ Emilie, *Account of Graces*, para. 1

contend on the subject of my vocation. It has been continued to this day at the wish of my confessors.⁹⁴

Following the death of Monsignor de Gualy in 1842,⁹⁵ the new Archbishop of Albi, Monsignor Jerphanion⁹⁶ did not know her and he had heard some very unfavourable reports. Father Bourgade, her confessor and friend, persuaded her to write the *Account* in order to give a copy to Archbishop Jerphanion. She gave her *Account* to the Archbishop, around 1848 but there is no documentary evidence of this. Unfortunately, there is no copy in the Archives of the Archdiocese.⁹⁷

There is evidence of the existence of one other copy. In the Central Archives there is a typescript of a letter written by a Father Bargès⁹⁸ to Father Brunet,⁹⁹ who was the first priest to write a biography of St. Emilie. The original of this letter cannot be found but this copy is among a group of similar letters which, at some point in the past, were transcribed using a typewriter. The letter, which is of interest, is one that is replying to a request that Father Brunet had made to Father Bargès, for any letters or documents he may have from St. Emilie. Father Bargès replies that he had already sent all he had to Canon Bouchon¹⁰⁰ four or five years previously. He goes on to say,

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Archbishop François-Marie-Edouard de Gualy, 1786-1842, first Ecclesiastical Superior of the Congregation. see fn. 2.

⁹⁶ Archbishop Jean-Joseph-Marie-Eugène de Jerphanion, Archbishop of Albi from 1843 to 1864. Second Ecclesiastical Superior of the Congregation.

⁹⁷ The Archivist of the Archdiocese, Jeanne-Françoise de Beaucorps, replied to an email request about the existence of this copy in their archives, that they do not have a copy and there is no record of one being there. This reply came on the 3rd March 2014.

⁹⁸ J.J.L. Bargès, 1810-1896, ordained in 1834 in Marseille. He studied Hebrew and Arabic. He went to Algeria to continue his studies in Arabic and also of Islam in 1839 where he met St. Emilie. He eventually became Professor of Hebrew at the Sorbonne in 1842. There are three letters in the Archives from Emilie to Father Bargès and he is mentioned by name in two others.

⁹⁹ Father Brunet wrote the first biography but his work no longer exists. An elderly Sister who had had responsibility for the Congregation's Archives told me that she had been told as a young Sister that the work by Father Brunet was in three volumes. She, in her nineties when I spoke to her, had never seen a copy.

¹⁰⁰ Canon Bouchon was a Canon of Marseilles in 1880. The Mother House of the Congregation had been established in Marseilles in 1852 by St. Emilie.

‘The most important of these is the notebook written by the hand of the Blessed Mother Emilie, containing the story of her vocation and the first favours she received from heaven. Before dying, she gave me this document, telling me that I could consign it to the flames if I thought it should be. She even expressed this desire in writing on the envelope which contained the notebook.’¹⁰¹

Is the notebook in the Archives the same one that Father Bargès sent to Father Bouchon? There is no evidence available which explains how and when this notebook came into the hands of the Congregation. Father Bargès also confirms in his letter that this document is in St. Emilie’s handwriting. He was a regular correspondent of hers,¹⁰² so he would be able to affirm this. In addition, he said that St. Emilie herself gave it to him just before her death. Since she died in 1856 he had had it in his possession for about nineteen years before he sent it to Canon Bruchon in perhaps 1875. He says in this letter that, “I did nothing as you can imagine.”¹⁰³ He has just been talking about her desire to have it burnt. St. Emilie was not at ease in leaving this document for just any person to read. In giving it to Father Bargès, she had submitted it to the judgement of a theologian.¹⁰⁴ He also wrote about knowing that a copy of this document was given to Archbishop Jerphanion.

As we have already stated the copy in the Archives is unlikely to have been the original. The original document may have contained more information and the copies were edited versions. She did not want everyone to read it because to both Father Bargès and Sister Baptistine, she wrote that she thought it should be burnt. It must have taken some time for her to write out copies herself. She was a busy

¹⁰¹ Letter from Father J.J.L. Bargès to Father Brunet 1880, Central Archives, 9 A 24 a.

¹⁰² There are two letters to Father Bargès in the Archives and mention of him and St. Emilie having consulted him in several other letters.

¹⁰³ This is a ‘free’ translation, ‘Je n’en ai rien fait comme bien vous pensez.’ Letter from Father Bargès to Father Brunet 1880 9 A 24 a.

¹⁰⁴ Before his death he became the head of the faculty of Theology at the Sorbonne. From the biography of Agnes Cavasino. p. 292.

woman but she chose not to give this task of copying to another. This would have meant that there could not be too many copies done. When she died suddenly, she would have had no time to call back any copies of the *Account* she may have given to others. The manner of her death, a condition that was always rapidly fatal in her time,¹⁰⁵ meant she would have realized she was dying and so insisted that her personal papers were burnt. Sister Baptistine did what she was asked to do and destroyed the original and any other copies that were in the Mother House. However, St. Emilie had already given a copy to Father Bargés and this copy survived. This is only a hypothesis as there is no corroborating evidence except that the notebook exists and has always existed in the Archives within living memory.

Over the life of the Congregation there have been no academic studies based on this document. No-one has ever questioned its provenance. The early biographers quote from it freely and base much of their arguments on it.¹⁰⁶ In the next chapter this 'notebook' will be used as a basis to examine the emerging Spiritual strengths of the Foundress. The *Account* will be examined in detail with a particular focus on its internal language of Christian spirituality. Since it takes a chronological attitude to the graces received, this analysis will follow a similar pattern. However, it is not intended to be an historical account.

Other documents in the Archives, consist of five reports of the activities of the Congregation that St. Emilie wrote to the Pope and some Civil Authorities; a timetable

¹⁰⁵ This information comes from my own training as a Medical Practitioner. Without appropriate surgery and antibiotics, a strangulated hernia results in the rapid death of the patient.

¹⁰⁶ The Biographies are discussed later in this chapter.

of a day of retreat she made before founding the Congregation; a small booklet for those Sisters called to be teachers; the first Constitutions and two documents supplementing them. All give insights into the Foundress' spiritual attitudes and responses to God. They have been analysed in a similar way to the Letters, using a simple form of content analysis. As with the letters the documents were searched for the presence of anything which reflected the relationship between the foundress and God

2.4.1 The 1835 Constitutions

The *first Constitutions, 1835*, was written three years after the foundation in 1832, by the Foundress. It was written to encapsulate the way of life for the Institute and to encourage the growth of those virtues she felt she wanted to mark the attitude of the Sisters. It was also a requirement to obtain the approbation of the Church.¹⁰⁷

2.4.2 The Spirit and Development of the Rule

In addition to the first Constitutions, a second document called the *Spirit and Development of the Rule*, (SPDR) was written around 1841. It was written to be presented to the Holy See as a supplement to the Constitutions, when St. Emilie was seeking the Approbation of the Congregation by the Church. There are two copies of this document. One is dated 1841 and signed by Archbishop de Gualy,¹⁰⁸ the Ecclesiastical Superior of the Congregation, and the original of this document is in the Vatican Archives. The other is not dated and appears to be a draft from which the dated version was derived. The two documents are not identical as many of the

¹⁰⁷ This is still a requirement today. Code of Canon Law, Canon 587.

¹⁰⁸ See 2.3. p. 56. fn.95.

articles are inserted in different sections and order, and both have a very few articles which are not included in the other. This document is not a new set of Constitutions but appears to augment and clarify St. Emilie's intentions with the Constitutions. It was written six years after the Constitutions and may be the result of her experience of five years living the 'rule'.

In the fifth chapter of this thesis, these two documents and the current Constitutions from 1982, will be examined to illustrate how the elements of the spirituality are expressed in these documents.

2.5 The Biographies

There are five important biographies that were written and several small versions in different languages. Since the stated intention of this study is to use primarily the documents which can be attributed to the Foundress as the primary sources, the biographies can only be used on occasions to contextualise the foundress' documents, if it is felt to be necessary.

The first biography was commissioned by the Congregation shortly after St. Emilie's death in the late nineteenth century, and the most recent was published about one hundred years later in 1986. The first Biography written by Father Brunet has been lost. There are no copies still extant. However, in an undated letter there is a note attached to it from Father Brunet,

'N.B. A handwritten copy by Fr. Brunet accompanies this letter and bears the following note: "We are adding here this little, undated note of the Foundress to Fr. Bourgade, but the whole makes us believe that it was written around that time; he completes the information."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ St. Emilie. *Letter* 222 1846. This is an undated part of a letter and Father Brunet felt it should be placed following another letter to Father Bourgade, L221, which was written in August 1846.

This is just a one-off occurrence but it is a small piece of evidence that Father Brunet may have been involved in the very first collection and cataloguing of the letters.

The next biography, still available today, was published in 1901, forty six years after St. Emilie's death, by Canon Esprit Darbon¹¹⁰ of Marseilles, called '*Souvenirs et Documents*'. The first part of the book is a biography of Emilie and it merges seamlessly with the second part which is an account of the foundations up to 1897.

The next was written, twenty five years later, by Father Louis Picard¹¹¹ and was published in 1926. Father Picard was an author and scholar who wrote a number of books. His biography was called '*Emilie de Vialar, une Vierge Française*'. In reality it is two books in one volume. The first is the biography of the Foundress. His writing style is enthusiastic, florid and even hagiographical. He quotes extensively from the Foundress' writings, the letters of the early witnesses and also letters acquired from his own research. His second book is his personal reflection on the virtues and spirituality of the foundress. It is written in a totally different style to the first book. He does not use very florid language and an overabundance of praiseworthy adjectives. It reads more like an academic paper than a biography. He goes into some detail on her spiritual qualities and he quotes from her works to illustrate his arguments. It is his reflection on her virtues and gifts and it is heavily imbued with his own scholarship.

In 1955 almost one hundred years after the death of St Emilie and four years after her Canonisation, there was a biography written in English. It was by Father

¹¹⁰ Canon Esprit Darbon was a Canon in the Cathedral of Marseille. St. Emilie had established the Motherhouse in Marseille in 1852.

¹¹¹ Fr. Louis Picard, a titular Canon of the Cathedral in Lyons who wrote the biography in 1926. He wrote at least two other books, one of which can still be obtained, *La transcendance de Jesu-Christ*. No biographical details were found.

Malachy Carroll¹¹² and it is called '*The Seal of the Cross*'. It consists of eight chapters; the first six are the biography. Chapter seven is a reflection on the personal virtues and qualities of St. Emilie. The last chapter is a very short description of the Spirit of the Congregation. Father Carroll acknowledges that he has had recourse to the work of Father Picard and the documents in the Archives. Like the other biographers he quotes frequently from Emilie's writings, especially the *Account*. He writes in a very readable way and usually references and elaborates on his citations. His final chapter is entitled the Spirit of the Congregation and it picks out certain Spiritual elements of the Congregation's life. In this section he seems to quite closely follow Picard, especially beginning with the name of the Congregation and thus into a detailed reflection on St. Joseph.

In 1986 a new biography was published by Sister Agnes Cavasino.¹¹³ This was the first such work written by a member of the Congregation. It is a very thorough historical account of the Foundress' life and to some extent the subsequent development of the Congregation. There are small additions to the historical account, such as the presence of two schools for girls in Gaillac after the Revolution, but none really affect an assessment of the spirituality. There is no systematic attempt to analyse the latter but it is left for the reader to imbibe through the various incidents related. She scrupulously gives her references and she quote frequently from Picard. It is to this latter work she turns when describing those years of the foundress' life which are not described by St. Emilie. She also makes use of some

¹¹² Father Malachy Carroll was an author who wrote several books of his own and also translated other works from French. He wrote this biography in 1956. Several of his books are still available today through rare book sites. Once again it was difficult to gain any biographical details.

¹¹³ Sister Agnes Cavasino is still alive today (2015), although she is very elderly.

testimonies of Sisters who lived with the Foundress¹¹⁴ and of other Sisters who followed the first members of the Congregation.

In this thesis there is no intention to attempt to do an in-depth analysis of these biographies as the particularity of this research is to focus on those documents that can be attributed to the foundress. There is also no intention to write a further biography or to provide further knowledge for such an endeavour. The use that the biographies can occasionally provide is the possibility of contextualising the foundress' writings, and then only if this is necessary to witness to elements of her spirituality. The objective is to show that the shared spirituality is the element of the charism that binds the members, even across time. In practical terms this means elucidating the distinctive elements of the spirituality and how they are lived today by the Members.

2.6 Conclusion of the chapter

In this chapter the primary sources which are being used for this part of the study have been described and their provenance and importance discussed. As has been said, the main emphasis is to be on the writings which can be attributed to the foundress herself. If other documents or books are cited the strength of their provenance will be discussed in the text. In the next chapter there is a content analysis of the *Account of Graces* with regard to how it sheds light on the elements of the spirituality.

¹¹⁴ There are six of these in the central Archives.

CHAPTER THREE

The Account of Graces.¹¹⁵

3.1 Introduction to Chapter Three

This thesis has three parts to its research. In this first part the aim is to describe the Spirituality of the Foundress. This chapter contributes to this aim by examining a unique document, *the Account of Graces*, that the foundress wrote about some of her experience of God in relation to her vocation. In the previous chapter the provenance of this document was discussed.¹¹⁶ It is not a theological treatise or a complete statement of her spiritual outlook. She wrote to defend her vocation, that is to defend her belief that she had been called by God to found the Congregation. The value of this document for the understanding of her spirituality is that it highlights her own assessment of what is important in her relationship with God.

This chapter, therefore, examines the foundress' own witness to her growth in faith and grace which is the basis for the emergence of the religious congregation. It is not proposed to do a textual analysis but to search for the marks of her personal experience in her relationship with God.

She felt that she had a duty to God to defend her vocation.¹¹⁷ This means that she wrote in a very selective manner. She did not want the document to be widely read and she did not include every aspect of her relationship with God. One

¹¹⁵ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, Central Archives.

¹¹⁶ See chapter 2.3. p. 52.

¹¹⁷ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, Paragraph 36.

more important factor needs to be emphasized. St. Emilie began writing this when she was forty-six. Even though she wrote in a chronological order, she was writing from memory. It is the spiritually mature woman who chooses each incident. Her choices must be affected by her spiritual growth and maturity and by the motive that caused her reluctantly to write it. From the point of view of this research this is an advantage, as it should give an insight into the values of the mature woman rather than the immature girl. On occasions it will be necessary to supplement the notebook by letters of the foundress which appear to help understand the values being addressed.

3.2 The Early Years

3.2.1 The First Memory.

The second paragraph opens with,

‘God inspired me with the desire to endure, for His sake, the pain we sometimes suffer from those who govern us.’¹¹⁸

This statement states that from her earliest year, age eight, she has had to endure suffering from those who had authority over her. It is God who has shown her how to endure this for His sake. She thus stated one of her reactions to suffering, that God can use it to bring her closer to Him.

This is a very strong statement to open this *Account* and it testifies to God’s direct intervention in her life. This direct experience of God’s action is the first aspect

¹¹⁸ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 2.

of her relationship with God that she raises. The second is that she has learned to undergo suffering and has been sustained in it by His grace.

Immediately following this she wrote about experiencing God's grace while at prayer

‘It was about this time also on a certain Holy Thursday, that, while kneeling in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, I felt interiorly deeply moved by Grace.’¹¹⁹

This must have been a strong memory for her, perhaps the first time she felt touched, deep within her being, by God's consolation as opposed to His inspiration. To both suffering and consolation St. Emilie attaches the virtues of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

This opening paragraph has raised some of the elements of her spirituality. She began by her affirming her conviction of God's presence in suffering and it is followed by her commitment to personal prayer and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. These are the only incidents she speaks about from this part of her life. She was confirmed when she was ten in 1807 but she mentions nothing of this event. Throughout the *Account* there are omissions of special events in her life which must have had a spiritual impact on her. This is the first such omission and is mentioned here to illustrate how selective was her choice of incidents.

¹¹⁹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 2.

3.3 School Years in Paris

The next two paragraphs cover the time that St. Emilie spent in Paris from the age of thirteen. She had been admitted to a Convent School just after her mother's untimely death in 1810.¹²⁰

3.3.1 A House of Religious.

In Paragraph three St. Emilie wrote,

‘Having been placed at the age of thirteen, for my education, in a house of religious in Paris, God began from that moment to attract my heart.’¹²¹

Despite her mother's death, this statement shows no emotional turmoil but instead speaks of developing a definite heartfelt attachment to God. The mature Emilie looking back felt that this was the beginnings of her personal love for God.

It is during this time at school that she felt a definite call to intimacy with God.

She is beginning her spiritual journey, she wrote,

‘I resolved to correct a habit of lying - the only vice I was aware of in myself and a vice I had contracted through fear of being scolded by my parents. Since then, there is nothing I have held in such abhorrence as lying.’¹²²

This remark in the context of defending her vocation states unequivocally her commitment to telling the truth.¹²³ She is affirming that lying is, in reality, ‘abhorrent’ to her. Truthfulness is one of the virtues which she values. It also acknowledged that

¹²⁰ St. Emilie's mother died unexpectedly five days after St. Emilie's thirteenth birthday. Before the French Revolution of 1789, it was very common for young women of St. Emilie's class to spend two or three years in a Convent school around the age of eleven to thirteen. It would seem that her parents were following this tradition. There are several books which discuss the education of young women of wealth in both France and England. An example of this is Christina de Bellaigue, *Educating Women: Schooling and Identity in England and France 1800-1867*.

¹²¹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 3.

¹²² Ibid

¹²³ From the biographies and hints in some of her letters her enemies had accused her of being a deceitful woman.

she had imperfections and needed to grow closer to God. This gives witness to what St. Emilie saw as the purpose of this document. It was not to boast about her spiritual favours. It was written to reassure the Archbishop that, like all who genuinely want to follow God, she had had to journey with Him and needed to repent and conform her life to His call. It also witnesses to her conviction that God is merciful and actively works with her by providing the grace necessary for true repentance.

This statement attests her commitment to truthfulness and her rejection of any kind of compromise with expediency in dealing with people and situations, no matter what the cost. Her integrity and her word should be considered as beyond doubt. Her motivation for adopting this attitude is secondary to the inspiration and grace of God. It is also evidence of her growing interior life. Those skilled in Spiritual Direction could see it as indicating a person in the purgative stage of Spiritual growth.¹²⁴ She is informing the Archbishop that she is a person on the journey of interiority. This reveals a further virtue which is important to her, that of the desire to live a life closer and closer to God. She is giving witness to it being part of her life since she was a young teenager.

¹²⁴ Many of the well-known teachers of the Spiritual life describe different stages that a person passes through on their journey to union with God. One of the most recognised divisions is the three stages of Purgation, Illumination and Union. Jordan Aumann states of the purgative phase, "When a soul begins the journey to holiness, it is already in possession of sanctifying grace, without which it could not even begin.....But, in spite of these graces, the soul is laden with imperfections and defects" *Spiritual Theology*, p. 177. Benedict Groschel, *Spiritual Passages*, stated of this beginning phase, "Pain and pleasure, virtue and sin, belief and unbelief swirl round the person as he or she emerges from the awakening into the long journey of the spiritual life." p. 103. How extensive St. Emilie's knowledge was of these stages is not known. St. Emilie would have guided many young Sisters and may have recognised the stages.

3.3.2 A Response to Grace.

In the following paragraph St. Emilie's reinforces the effect of Grace leading to obedience to God's inspirations,

'At this period of my life the Grace of the Lord urged me to practise a certain mortification; I obeyed and enjoyed, as recompense a delicious sense of union with God which filled my heart with a sweetness so intense that I cannot find words to describe it. I voluntarily undertook other mortifications, which were likewise rewarded with a similar, if less intense experience.'¹²⁵

She does not state the nature of the mortification. It is a time in her life when her experience of God was very direct, intimate and demanded her response. The practice of acts of mortification is a well-recognised attribute of those seeking to live a serious spiritual life.¹²⁶ What she emphasised here is the initiative came from God and He confirmed her actions with consolation which drew her even closer to Him.

It reveals that her memory is of a very close experience of His presence. The acts of mortification, following God's urging, were a part of her response to Him. She is becoming a person to whom the direct touch of God is not an unusual experience.

3.3.3 Final days in Paris.

In paragraph five she speaks about her mother for the first and only time in her *Account*,

¹²⁵ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 4.

¹²⁶ Huxley A., in his work on Mysticism, *The perennial Philosopher: Interpretation of the Great Mystics, East and West*, stated the following, 'for the more areas of self, that the less there is of God. The divine eternal fullness of life can be gained only by those who have deliberately lost the partial, separative life of craving and self interest, of egocentric thinking, feeling, wishing and acting. Mortification or deliberate dying to self is inculcated with an uncompromising firmness in the canonical writing of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and most of the other major and minor religions of the world.' P. 96

‘At the age of fifteen, I left the pious school atmosphere which my mother had chosen, and for which very reason she had come to Paris. I lost my good mother before I had even entered this school, and two years later my father called me home.’¹²⁷

This factual description of the end of her stay in the Convent School in Paris omits another spiritual event in her life. All the biographies state that during her time in this school she made her first Communion.¹²⁸ All she shared is that she has left ‘the pious atmosphere’ of the Convent school. It was this fact that she saw as having significance for her vocation. It witnesses to her recognising the importance of the milieu in which people live, especially in relation to the development of a spiritual life.

3.4 Back home in Gaillac

3.4.1 First days.

St. Emilie’s begins, in paragraph six, with a judgement on the state of her spiritual life,

‘I was too young to be left without a guiding hand, and as a result I soon lost sight of the great graces with which God had favoured me, and my former piety was so weakened that my spirit and heart were occupied with nothing but vanities.’¹²⁹

She wrote about her spiritual journey, not about her personal situation.¹³⁰ This statement reveals that she had no spiritual guide at this time. She did try to get guidance from a local priest,

‘Having put myself under the direction of an over-rigorous confessor, I rarely approached the Sacraments, and the apprehension which this priest caused me to feel hindered me from

¹²⁷ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 5.

¹²⁸ Picard, Louis. *Une Vierge Française*, p. 17.

¹²⁹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 6.

¹³⁰ The biographies all relate that her homecoming was not a happy experience. Her father did not want a pious daughter and his housekeeper, who had run the household in the two years she had been in Paris, resented her presence, as Emilie was now the mistress of the house.

making a clear confession of my sins, not on account of their gravity, but because of my extreme timidity.’¹³¹

She was trying to grow closer to God who had touched her so deeply. Yet she questioned the ‘validity’ of some of her confessions and confessed she had had doubts about the real presence in the Eucharist,

‘I had even the misfortune to receive Holy Communion after having assented to serious doubts regarding Our Lord’s presence in the Blessed Sacrament.’¹³²

She is sharing her unfaithfulness to the urgings of grace, although she qualifies it by saying that she was ‘too young to be left without guidance’. Despite the doubts she was trying to live a sacramental life in the Church. Growing within her is the need to walk closer with God.

However, she ran into problems with her confessor who discouraged her reception of Holy Communion. It may be that this priest was influenced by Jansenism.¹³³ St. Emilie does not specify that this is the case but she stated that her confessor was ‘over-rigorous’. Her first Spiritual guide had been her mother,¹³⁴ who also began the education of her children. This included their religious formation and

¹³¹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 6.

¹³² St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 6.

¹³³ Cornelius Jansen 1585 -1638, was born in Holland but came to the University of Louvain where he became a life-long friend of Jean du Vergier, a French student. They both became disciples of a professor in Louvain, Baius whose works were condemned by the Church. Both Jansen and Vergier went to Paris and studied together there for twelve years and then Vergier was made the Abbot of St. Cyran. They developed an attitude to Free Will and Grace that was contrary to the Church’s teaching. St. Cyran was very influential in the French (Gallican) Church. In *Christian Spirituality: post Reformation and Modern*, Louis Dupré stated, ‘between its arid beginnings and its controversial end lies a movement of spiritual reform that left an indelible mark on the religious life of France and the Low Countries. Even after its organized existence had practically collapsed, it continued to exercise its influence as an undercurrent of religious austerity within the Catholic Church of these areas.’ p. 121.

¹³⁴ All the biographies relate that St. Emilie’s mother was her first teacher and imply that this brought her to experience God as loving. St. Emilie does not give us any information about this time in her life except for the second paragraph already discussed where she says at the age of eight she was kneeling in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and was filled with grace. It shows she was used to prayer at the age of eight.

it seems that her experience of God was that he was loving. This would imply that her mother was not affected by Jansenism as one of the hallmarks of the movement was that most people are not worthy of redemption and therefore it is difficult to experience God's love. In the Convent School in Paris the impression she portrayed in the *Account*¹³⁵ is that this was also a positive experience. She had developed the habit of frequenting the sacraments as often as she could. Jansenistic clergy rarely allowed their directees to receive the Eucharist with any frequency. Once again this would argue against a Jansenistic influence before this incident. This appears to be the first time she has come across a negative approach to spirituality in a priest. The immature Emilie did not know anything of different opinions among the clergy. She endured this confessor for some time, but marginalised the experience because she did not reveal to the priest what had been happening through the direct guidance that God had been giving her. The mature Emilie would have recognised the spirituality but the inexperienced Emilie did not. Jansenism had touched her but it had not played a part in forming her relationship with God.

3.4.2 Life at Home. paragraph 7-8.

This section comprises paragraphs 7-8. She stated,

‘My heart was strongly inclined to friendship, and these affectionate attachments - though good in themselves – occupied me, nevertheless, too much.’¹³⁶

She recognised friends as good in themselves, but they can ‘occupy’ a person, limiting the development of a commitment to God. She stated next,

¹³⁵ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paras. 4 and 5.

¹³⁶ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 7.

‘This state lasted three years, during which grace had just about disappeared.’¹³⁷

However, this lessening in her experience of the direct touch of God is followed by,

‘One time, however, I was in the country and alone in my room, when I was suddenly filled with joy by God: I found myself suddenly seized and almost blinded by a bright light around me. It seemed to me to come from the heavens, spontaneously I lifted my eyes and sank to my knees. This continued for several moments, but the ecstasy accompanying this visitation of grace did not cause me to lose completely the use of my faculties.’^{138 139}

This was a gratuitous gift from God. She described her reaction to it,

‘the extraordinary favour which God had just accorded to me, made me resolve to belong to Him entirely.’¹⁴⁰

The mature Emilie must have recognised this as a mystical experience. The ‘younger’ Emilie probably did not and as she had no real spiritual advisor, she would have kept the experience to herself. It leads her to express for the first time the idea of

¹³⁷ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 7.

¹³⁸ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 8.

¹³⁹ This is an extraordinary mystical experience, it was not sought after, it came unexpectedly, it came with a sensation of being covered in light and St. Emilie was utterly convinced it came from God. Jordan Aumann in *Spiritual Theology* stated, ‘The extraordinary mystical phenomena; This term refers to those extraordinarily psychosomatic manifestations that sometimes occur in authentic mystics but do not fall within the normal manifestation of the mystical state. They proceed from a supernatural cause distinct from sanctifying grace, the virtues, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they are classified as epiphenomena or paranormal manifestation. Like the Graces gratis datae, they could be given for the good of others or they could be interpreted as a divine witness to the sanctity of the individual for the edification of the church.’ p. 424-425. How much St. Emilie was familiar with the available literature on such phenomena is very hard to judge as she only rarely refers to books that she has read. In her time there were the writings of St. Augustine of Hippo, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and Father Scaramelli, who all wrote on mystical phenomena. There would also have been biographies of other Saints who experienced these phenomena. However, books were expensive and not easy to get hold of and she would not have felt any need to question this vision at the time she received it. There are several authors from the early part of the 20th century who write about such paranormal phenomena in the context of theology; Evelyn Underhill, *Practical Mysticism* and *Mysticism*; Alois Wiesinger O.C.S.D., *Occult Phenomena in the light of theology* and Herbert Thurston, *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism*. However, such works do not help with this thesis. No attempt needs to be made to verify the authenticity of her experiences. The question is more what did this vision engender in relation to her developing Spirituality.

¹⁴⁰ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 8.

‘belonging to God entirely.’ The initiative came from God and, for the first time, He was calling her to be His alone and this was also becoming her desire.

Yet immediately, in the next paragraph, she stated,

‘I soon forgot this promise, however, and I did not escape from my fatal error until towards the end of the third year.’¹⁴¹

Despite what she described as ‘a fatal error’ it did not prove to be such. It shows that she has had to struggle for faith.¹⁴² It also witnesses to the fact that God’s direct intervention was still being experienced in her life despite her lukewarm attitude.

At this stage in her life St. Emilie did not have a spiritual director¹⁴³ she could confide in. The teenage Emilie probably did not know that the mystical experiences she had been having, were unusual. The young Emilie believed that this could happen, because she had had previous experience of God’s contact in this way. The mature Emilie, writing this document, would have recognised it for what it was, a direct call from God to which she was slow to respond.

This would seem to be the first signs of growth in a spirituality which includes an intimate and personal relationship with God. There is also a growing attraction to ‘belong to Him entirely’.

¹⁴¹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 8.

¹⁴² This ‘coming and going’ in her response to God is a phenomenon noted by writers describing the growth of the Spiritual life. Benedict Groeschel in his book *Spiritual Passages*, draws a diagram of the growth of the spiritual life and on this diagram he has two lines but they are wavy lines as they depict the ‘coming and going nature of the changes in a person’s understanding. Benedict J. Groeschel, *Spiritual Passages*, p.118

¹⁴³ As had been said her first guide was her mother, following this she had the Sisters in the Parisian Convent, but back in Gaillac she had no-one. The Church in France had nearly been destroyed in the revolution and Napoleonic era [a book which deals well with these changes is J., McManners, *Lectures on European History 1789-1914*]. Parishes were in chaos. In Gaillac the Parish Priest had been a priest who sided with the revolutionary regime. After the revolution he had to leave because the people did not want him. So for most of Emilie’s teenage years the Parish was only beginning to recover. It is therefore very unlikely that, at that time, she would have known a great deal about the lives of these saints and even less about the growth of a spiritual life. Even this *Account* cannot really tell us, as it is being written by the mature woman who was very familiar with the development of spiritual lives, both her own and those of the Sisters.

3.4.3 A conversion experience.

In next two paragraph St. Emilie described what appears to have been a 'conversion experience'. She related that about three years after her return to Gaillac, one of the Churches there had organised a mission and she decided to go to it. She confessed,

'I followed all the exercises in it without devotion and even without paying attention'¹⁴⁴

Despite what she stated, inwardly there was still a need making her attend and continue attending the mission. Something touched her and she next declared,

'I felt a sting of conscience concerning a recent Communion I had received, and a general uneasiness about previous Communions.'¹⁴⁵

This 'sting' of her conscience must mean that she was a regular communicant. She goes on to state,

'I was immature for my years, and my estrangement from God had so completely clouded my conscience that I did not know what was the true condition of my soul.'¹⁴⁶

Her memory of this time, which despite God's favour, is that she had not lived it well.

It was a time of struggle for her which included some serious doubts over the presence of Christ in the Eucharist.¹⁴⁷ Despite this God urged her even more,

'One evening, as I was retiring, I was seized with a chill fear of the judgments of God. It took hold of me and led me to resolve to consult one of the mission priests - the one who inspired me with the greatest confidence and to ask him whether I should make a general confession.'¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 9.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid

¹⁴⁶ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 9.

¹⁴⁷ See section 3.4.1 p. 72. fn. 132.

¹⁴⁸ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 10.

She admitted to experiencing directly the fear of God's judgement. She says this fear 'took hold' of her. Once more she affirmed that it was God's initiative that led her to repentance. She made her confession and stated,

'The Lord enlightened me so effectively that, without any preliminary examination of conscience, all my sins came readily to my mind.'¹⁴⁹

This was a very particular experience of grace, gratuitously given by God: the growing awareness of the need for repentance accompanied by an increasing awareness of a growing love of God. She stated,

'Once or twice in the course of this confession I felt a very keen sorrow for my sins because of the offence they gave to God.'¹⁵⁰

Her description of a 'keen sorrow', witnesses to the experience as being more than an intellectual enlightenment, but one which provoked an emotional response. She further affirmed,

'When I had completed my confession and was assisting at Mass with the intention of going to Holy Communion, the same motive of having offended God gave me such a detestation of sin that I shed abundant tears and I felt a complete change of heart.'¹⁵¹

This paragraph, number ten, is one of the longest in her *Account*, perhaps reflecting the importance she herself gave to this event.

'Now, I was overflowing with love for God, and filled with strength to avoid every offence against Him, so that I felt I could have stood up bravely to any persecution.'^{152,153}

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid

¹⁵² Ibid

¹⁵³ The phrases she used to describe her reactions, 'such a detestation of sin' and 'shed abundant tears', are very like the descriptions given by many modern people when they are describing their 'born again' or 'conversion' experiences. For a very good discussion of Conversion see Raniero Cantalamessa OFMS, *Sober Intoxication of the Spirit; Born again of water and the Spirit*, Part Two. Chapter one. Such experiences recount a deep sorrow for sin especially in the light of 'hurting' a loving God, and they also attest to a sense of spiritual empowerment to resist further sin.

This would seem to be a classical conversion experience where she was enlightened by God to her sins, given the gift of true repentance, drawn closer to Him and filled with the sense of His love for her and an enormous increase in her love for Him. The mature Emilie would, almost certainly, have read works which would have included conversion experiences, such as St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Ignatius of Loyola. Reading such accounts would help her as a guide to others who are trying to follow her in the Congregation. In one of her letters she does refer to religious books,

‘I have given you several spiritual books and some others on religious instruction. Read them. The Perfect Religious was written by St. Liguori. It contains some excellent lessons. I have found an excellent explanation of the catechism in a single volume. I would like you to take your readings from this book before reading the big catechism from Rodez which I gave you. I have a precious book which can lead you all towards perfection if you possess as I think you do the right intentions to strive for it. It is Father Surin's Catéchisme spirituel.¹⁵⁴

Two of the authors quoted here are Jean-joseph Surin 1600-1665 and St. Alphonsus Liguori 1696-1787. They are evidence of the type of books she read and recommended to others. As the young Emilie she would not have had much knowledge, if any, of these works, but the mature Emilie obviously did. This letter was written in 1852 which is the year before she started writing the *Account*. By then St. Emilie had had years of personal spiritual guidance from several clerics. She had a regular correspondence with Father Bargés,¹⁵⁵ Professor of Hebrew in the Sorbonne, Father Becquet,¹⁵⁶ a Jesuit from Toulouse and Father Bourgade,¹⁵⁷ a

¹⁵⁴ St. Emilie, *Letter 345*, To Sister Eugénie Laurez 9th July 1852.

¹⁵⁵ See Ch. 2.3. p. 56. fn. 98.

¹⁵⁶ Father Pierre Becquet, initially a priest from St. Sulpice in Parish, he became a Jesuit when the Jesuits were reinstated in France in 1814. Sr. Agnes Cavasino states that St. Emilie knew him from the time he was in St. Sulpice, (Cavasino A., *Emilie de Vialar: Foundress*, p.292). He was sent as a Jesuit to the house in Toulouse. He helped with the drawing up of the first Constitutions.

¹⁵⁷ Ch. 2.3. p. 54. fn. 90.

missionary priest from France working in Tunis. Over the years she had shared her own spiritual journey and become a person who had much experience in guiding other Sisters developing an interior life. As a spiritual guide, she would know the importance of this experience of a change of heart.

The awareness of the need for repentance, the graced confession, an increase in abhorrence for sin, her new awareness of the grace of Holy Communion; all these are signs of an authentic change of heart leading to a much closer walking with God. In looking at the elements of her spirituality this incident has not introduced new elements but has deepened those which were beginning to blossom. The strong inclination to walk close to God, to do what pleases Him, to belong to Him alone, to spend time with Him in private prayer, to meet Him in the sacraments, all these elements have been deepened by this experience.

Surprisingly she followed in the *Account* by relating another weakness in her character, that of seeking the approval of others, and which, as a result of her conversion, she now feels she can overcome. She affirmed,

‘Moreover, I was filled with zeal to fight against human respect, which was the stumbling block I most feared and the one which I was constantly striving to overcome in order to accomplish what I believed to be in conformity with the will of God.’¹⁵⁸

She has shared that God has directly led her to repentance and deepened her love for Him. In addition she has felt empowered to respond without fear to whatever God asks of her. At the end of this paragraph she wrote,

‘From this moment God made Himself my Director, inspiring and guiding all my actions. Each week I received the Sacrament of Penance with simplicity and devotion, but my confessor heard only

¹⁵⁸ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 10.

my faults, since it never occurred to me to make known to him the intimate communications with which God was favouring me.’¹⁵⁹

At this period of her life she still had no-one to guide her in her spiritual journey. She felt no loss in this because she did not know that having such direct communications with God was unusual. It was her experience and it did not occur to her to share it with the priest she normally went to for confession. There is a simplicity about this relationship. God is guiding her. She expects to feel His guiding hand, she does not doubt that it is Him,

‘I seemed to know in so clear and precise a manner what God expected of me that as a rule, I had not a shadow of doubt concerning His wishes in my regard. I might compare this assistance given me by Almighty God to the gentle and loving guidance of a mother who ceaselessly instructs her child.’¹⁶⁰

It describes a relationship which is resulting in a growth in faith. It is all about her interior changes, that it was not superficial but fundamental and irreversible. She obeyed whatever God told her to do. Each week she examined her conscience for things which may be offending the Lord she followed. These faults are what she shared with the priest in the Sacrament of Confession. She acutely felt the need to remove from her life anything which may have offended God. Her relationship with God has deepened and become very direct. She had absolute faith in His presence and His authority. In looking at these disclosures for signs of her growing spirituality, it can be seen that here are the beginnings of three strong elements which all involve a growth in faith. The first is the conviction that God leads and she follows. Her faith in His existence and interaction in her life has become second nature. The second seems to be a growing strong faith in God’s word. She believed and acted on

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

whatever he told her to do. A further conviction that has developed is that this way of following is possible because He will always make His Will known to her in many different ways. In the quotation above she said 'she seemed to know what God wanted of her in any given circumstance.' At the end of the paragraph she went on to state,

'Sometimes God made known His will to me by words I distinctly heard.'¹⁶¹

Locutions are part of what is known as mystical phenomena. As the young Emilie it is unlikely that she wondered about their frequent occurrence. This was the way God reached out to her. The mature Emilie writing this account would have shared these experiences with her spiritual advisors and they may well have directed her to writings on the subject available in her time.¹⁶² Her experience of other people's spiritual lives would have informed her that such events did happen, although infrequently, and that they needed to be subject to discernment. When they occurred in this incident she did not have anyone to relate them to and probably was not aware of the need for discernment. She just accepted them as coming from God.

It seems almost out of character with her wish not to boast to recount these extraordinary graces which are occurring frequently. However, by recounting them she conveyed the enormity of God's blessings to her. She did not seek them, she did not deserve them, God chose to lead her in this extraordinary way. Her vocation came from His choice and He has formed her for it.

¹⁶¹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 10.

¹⁶² Such works as the writings of St. Augustine, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Bernard of Clairvaux and nearer her time Father Scaramelli, would have been possible to obtain especially through scholars. Being a Spiritual Guide was not her main call but she did oversee the training of new Sisters.

These two paragraphs have underlined that under God's initiative she has gone from being a young girl in need of repentance to one who is being flooded with God's Graces and is developing a dominant love for Him. This has brought her to commit her life to Him and has resulted in her experiencing His constant presence and guidance. Her relationship with God has become one marked by intimacy, love and trust. Her faith is such that she has no doubt that he is leading her and she trusts Him absolutely and therefore does whatever He asks of her.

3.5 Learning to live intimately with God

3.5.1 Life with God.

In the next paragraphs St. Emilie gave some examples of her life under this intimate tutelage. She first described a message from God,

‘At first I felt an inclination towards bodily mortification and was inspired to practise a kind of fast. This was succeeded, after a few weeks, by a spirit of sacrifice which prompted me to immolate my will at every moment to that of Our Lord, and for this purpose to do violence to myself in order to do always what I believed would please Him.’¹⁶³

She wrote, once before, about being led to mortification.¹⁶⁴ Here it as a ‘kind of fast’. What would seem to be the most significant phrase is, ‘a spirit of sacrifice’, as this was to develop into a strong trait in her spirituality as it was strengthened over many years because of the suffering she encountered. At this point in her life God is leading her to prepare for the future. The mature Emilie recognised God's first moves in preparing her for what is to come.

¹⁶³ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 11.

¹⁶⁴ See 3.3.2. p.70. fn. 126.

There is a 'simplicity' in St. Emilie's relationship with God at this time in her life. She implied that she did not find it strange that He should be her director and even guide her, at times, with actual words. The last statement would seem to take this relationship even deeper. She appears constantly to be aware of His presence and her desire is to 'immolate' her own will in order to do His. This resulted in several practical actions, she related,

'Inspired by Divine Grace, I refrained from all vain titivation in dress; and, in obedience to inspiration, I ceased wearing jewellery and other luxury items. Our Lord made me feel that I must avoid all efforts to please men.'¹⁶⁵

What seems to be developing here in her relationship with God is a deeper giving of herself, a deeper awareness of His constant presence and a constant spirit of Sacrifice. She is led to adopt a simplicity of dress and a growing understanding that she is not called to attract men. Her commitment would have become obvious to her Father and friends, as she no longer dressed as was expected of a young, rich and unmarried girl. She stated,

'I did not, however, behave with any singularity and, though I no longer gave myself to any worldly pleasures, I continued to appear at social functions in order to accompany my father.'¹⁶⁶

Her next entry describes her second 'message',

'From the first few months following my return to fervour, Our Lord developed in me a spirit of recollection, and initiated me into interior meditation by making me feel His Presence even in the midst of my occupations.'¹⁶⁷

This raises questions about what does she mean by 'a spirit of recollection' and 'interior meditation'. It is the first time she has written about any particular form of

¹⁶⁵ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 12.

¹⁶⁶ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 12.

¹⁶⁷ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 13.

prayer. She has illustrated well the closeness of her experience of God but now she says He 'developed in me the spirit of recollection and interior meditation'. This is therefore a new experience for her in her spiritual journey. She gives no further explanation of either of these virtues. Both 'Recollection' and 'prayer' are major elements in the first Constitutions. These characteristics of her spirituality will be explored in more detail in the next chapter which picks out and develops the important spiritual elements that she wanted to be continued in the Congregation. This is the first mention in the *Account*. This changed her relationship with God,

'As a result of this, I entered into very close union with Him.'¹⁶⁸

She reported another mystical intervention which reinforced this,

'Desiring that I should cultivate this union to the utmost, He said to me one day : "'Remain in my presence. If you stray from my presence I shall recall you.'"¹⁶⁹

What is to be noted here is that there seems to be a gratuitous gift from God but also it requires a response from her. This is a call to a close union with God and to strive to be constantly aware of His presence.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ There is a body of Literature associated with living in the constant awareness of God's presence. The most famous is that of Brother Lawrence, 1614-1691, who was a discalced Carmelite Brother in Paris. After his death a book was written containing his thoughts on the constant presence of God, *The practice of the presence of God*. Emilie spent some time in Paris as her maternal Grandfather lived there. The first letter in the Archives was written in 1826 from Paris. She was 29 years old and would go on to found the Congregation six years later. At this time her spirituality would be more mature but the letter shows that she is attending several Churches where there are spiritual courses being held. She had a spiritual director at this time and it is possible that she could have been guided to read the words of Brother Lawrence, as the book is a small volume and reflects her own experience of God.

A second famous writer on this subject was Father Jeanne Pierre de Caussade, 1671-1751, who was director of Jesuit studies in Toulouse. He died only less than fifty years before she was born. His works were well read in his time and he wrote a book called *The sacrament of the Present moment*. This book is still available today. Because St. Emilie does not share her spiritual reading, there is no evidence that she knew either of these two works. However, one of her advisors, Father Becquet, see p.79, fn.156, was a Jesuit from the Toulouse community, so it is very likely that he was well acquainted with the works of Father Caussade.

It would seem that her relationship with God is so close and intimate that nothing could mar its further development. However, St. Emilie related in the next sentence,

‘Unhappily I was none too faithful in following my attraction for recollection, and although I obeyed the Voice of God inspiring me to make certain sacrifices, I cannot cease reproaching myself for having made such feeble efforts to remain united with Him in the depths of my heart.’¹⁷¹

However, she followed this by revealing that she has developed certain ‘habits’ which helped her to return to doing God’s will,

‘I felt an attraction for prayer and I would retire several times a day to my room in order to pray.’¹⁷²

Here is another of the ‘elements’ of her spirituality, a developing ‘habit’ of prayer.

She did not specify what kind of prayer she practised. She also stated,

‘This spirit of piety which it pleased Almighty God to foster in my soul made me avoid anything which would prevent me from assisting at Holy Mass daily.’¹⁷³

In the same paragraph, she related going back to the Parish Church in the evening, ‘to spend a few moments in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.’ This is the first sign of her growing devotion to prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. In these four paragraphs, there have been some very important developments in her way of responding to God. First of all, she was led to further acts of mortification which gradually led her to ‘immolate her will’ to that of God. At the same time, she felt the call to a ‘spirit of sacrifice’. In addition, she felt led to adopt a modest style of dress and to turn her heart away from dressing ‘to please men’. Shortly after this she spoke about being ‘initiated’ into ‘the spirit of Recollection and interior meditation’. This

¹⁷¹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 13.

¹⁷² St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 14.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

time is full of mystical phenomena, especially locutions one of which told her to remain close to God, if she strayed He would recall her. Despite all of this she did not feel she responded sufficiently but she was helped by a growing call to spend time in prayer and to attend the Eucharist. As can be seen there is a growing intimate relationship with God and it is fed by prayer and the sacraments.

3.5.2 A Vision of the Incarnate Lord.

The third 'message that she relates came when she was praying before the tabernacle,

'Suddenly I saw Jesus Christ in the tabernacle. He was lying with His head on the Gospel side and His feet on the Epistle side. The arms of the Saviour were in the form of a cross. I could distinguish His face and His hair falling on His shoulders. I saw on his neck a curl of his hair. A shadow hid part of his sacred body, but his chest, his stomach, his side, his legs and feet were visible -- whether to the eyes of my soul or to those of my body, I do not know, as visible to me as a person in front of me. That which really caught my attention was the five wounds, which I observed quite distinctly, especially the wound in His right side; I fixed my gaze on it.... from which came out several drops of blood. This vision of Jesus Christ lasted for a short time, but I could not determine how long.'¹⁷⁴

This is a long quotation but it needs to be seen in its entirety.¹⁷⁵ If St. Emilie had been presenting this vision to a spiritual director just after she had received it, her director would be obliged to help her to discern its origin.

The need to discern such visions comes from the possibility of such events being engendered from the person's own imagination or from the influence of an evil

¹⁷⁴ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 16.

¹⁷⁵ Jordan Aumann in *Spiritual Theology*, p. 425 gives the classification of visions which was first given by St. Augustine of Hippo. A Corporeal vision is one in which the bodily eyes perceived an object normally invisible. An imaginative vision is the representation of an image supernaturally produced in the imagination. The intellectual vision is a simple intuitive knowledge supernaturally effected without the aid of any sensible image or impressed the species in the internal or external senses. This vision of the foundress comes into the first category.

spirit. This 'problem' has been commented on by the writers from the time of St. Augustine of Hippo. Jordan Aumann comments on St. Augustine's classification of such visions;

'The greatest difficulty lies in the discernment and verification of the imaginative and corporeal visions. Here there is always the possibility of diabolical influence or one's own imagination, and sometimes the only criterion is to judge by the fruits or effects caused by the vision in the visionary.'¹⁷⁶

The idea of seeing to what end the vision leads is a well-established criterion for discernment of spiritual experiences. In the *Account* St. Emilie makes no effort to explain what this vision meant to her. At the time of writing she must have known that its validity of originating in God could be challenged. In a sense she risked being labelled as an 'hysterical' woman herself when she revealed the many mystical interventions of God in this *Account*. This vision seems to be a 'highlight' of these experiences. It must therefore have been very important to her defence of her vocation that she included it in this document.

Probably, at the time when it happened, she did not know what it meant or that it needed discernment. She must have spent many hours recalling this vision over the years. It is described with attention to small details, like a curl of His hair on His neck, and the wound in His side oozing blood.

This would seem to be a vision of the Incarnate and Crucified Saviour. She may have received it when she was in her late teens but she wrote about it in her *Account* when she was in her late fifties. Her description of it shows that it was a treasured memory. She was by now a woman of considerable experience and knowledge of the Spiritual life. She would have been familiar with the signs of

¹⁷⁶ Aumann J., *Spiritual Theology*, p. 426.

authenticity for ‘supernatural’ events. At least one of her spiritual advisors had been a Jesuit, Father Becquet, and one of St. Ignatius’ teachings was how to discern Spirits. However Jordan Aumann puts it succinctly,

‘At first the visions that come from God cause fear in the soul, and this later gives place to love, humility, and peace. The soul energies are increased, and it gives itself more generously to the practice of virtue. Visions that are diabolical in origin begin with a sweetness and peace but soon fill the soul with turbulence, presumption, and pride. Visions caused by one’s own imagination lead to Vanity, curiosity, superficial virtue, and contradiction in the descriptive account of the experience.’¹⁷⁷

Why did she not give an explanation for its meaning? God has shown her a vision of the Incarnate, Crucified Lord in the tabernacle. This was His gift to her, she was called to respond to it, yet she does not explain. It must have meant something about her vocation for her to have included it in the *Account*. Earlier she had said that she had been led to a spirit of sacrifice.¹⁷⁸ Did this vision call her to unite herself to the crucified Lord? She said that the wounds particularly struck her. Was she saying she felt called to suffer the wounds of unjust judgement, just as He did? From the *Account*, itself, there is no indication at all. She also makes no mention of this vision in her letters. One aspect, from this vision, that she alludes to in the future was ‘the wounds of Christ’ as they are mentioned in the *Spirit and Development of the Rule* ¹⁷⁹ which she wrote in 1841 as a supplement to the first Constitutions. This will be examined in the next chapter.

This vision seems to be a kind of conclusion to the early part of her life. She has been led by God himself to a dominant love for Him, to live with Him in deep

¹⁷⁷ Aumann J., *Spiritual Theology*, p. 426-427

¹⁷⁸ See 3.5.1. especially p. 83.

¹⁷⁹ See 2.4.2. p. 60.

intimacy. At this 'apex' of her relationship, He gives her a vision of Himself as a very 'real' person, bleeding, dying and in the Tabernacle. From this point in the *Account*, she immediately goes into specifically talking about her concern to choose the way of life that God wants for her.

3.6 Discerning a Specific Vocation

3.6.1 Choosing a Way of Life.

St. Emilie began this section in paragraph 18,

'The spirit of piety made me anxious not to make any mistake about my choice of a way of life. I was then eighteen years of age. To prayer I joined appropriate reading in order to enlighten me, but nevertheless, I remained unenlightened, and this state of uncertainty was very painful to me.'¹⁸⁰

It was only a few paragraphs before this that she had stated that she always seemed to know what He wanted her to do in any circumstance. It seems that this was no longer the situation. Her relationship had changed. She admitted that the uncertainty disturbed her peace. It also shows that she had not yet decided on a way of life. She wanted that choice to be made by God and she was prepared to wait on His word. She did all she could to open herself to hear His will, by prayer and appropriate reading. This is one of the few times when she described using 'appropriate reading' although she does not tell us what it was.

In all that she has shared, up to this point, she has always been careful to show that the initiative came from God. Here she states that she became anxious in

¹⁸⁰ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 18.

herself not to make a mistake. Her solution is to go to Him, listening for His word through prayer and reading. God answered her,

‘God had compassion on me and told me formally these words “In two years you will know your Vocation.” No sooner had I received this assurance than I found myself in a state of perfect tranquillity regarding the future, my only desire being to do the Will of God.’

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Instantly her peace returned, she was happy to wait on the word of the Lord. This is another characteristic of her relationship with God, her trust in Him. She has a growing sense of faith in God and his overall plan for her life. She accepted that there will be times when she did not know or understand His purposes, but this does not matter as her faith is that He will be faithful and keep her in His care.

3.6.2 Responding to God’s lead.

In the next paragraph, number nineteen, St. Emilie told how she responded to His words,

‘I gave myself up to the inclination He had inspired in me to practise charity towards my neighbours, either by visiting the sick in their own homes and caring for them in their needs, or by labouring for the conversion of sinners and of heretics.’¹⁸²

As a young woman from a wealthy family, she would have been expected to do ‘some’ charitable work. Susan Foley in *Women in France since 1789*, states,

‘Women were expected to devote one or two afternoons per week to charity work, and they spent many additional hours producing items for sale at charity bazaars. Girls began to take part in this work from adolescence, generally as part of their religious education.’¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 19.

¹⁸³ Foley, S. k., *Women in France since 1789: the meanings of Difference*, p. 52.

St. Emilie extended this activity to take up all her free time. For the first time she lists a summary of the 'works' which were to become so important in the mission of the future Congregation. Practically this consisted of visiting and tending the sick poor in their homes and working for the conversion of those not living a Christian life. She stated that she was following the Lord's inspiration and she has taken this charge very seriously, devoting all her spare time to it. Here is perhaps the second most important attitude in her life. The first is her love and relationship with God and her commitment to letting this grow. The second is the impulse to go out to the neighbour and do what good she can, both materially and spiritually.

This work was accomplished despite the opposition of her Father. St. Emilie inserts here her first statement about this,

'I suffered very much from the distorted influence which a person of our household was able to exercise on my father against me. This form of suffering lasted for twenty years, it began from the time I left the boarding school until shortly before I founded the Congregation.'¹⁸⁴

This is only the second time that she referred to any personal difficulties she had in her life, other than her own lack of response to God. It lasted for twenty years so this was not a minor irritation. She related how she coped with it,

'The Lord sustained me so that I was able to accept with patience and resignation the sufferings which were repeated at every moment. The thought that I would find the Vocation that God willed for me was my sole consolation.'¹⁸⁵

It testifies to another strong aspect of her spirituality. She approached suffering with the conviction that God allowed this as part of His plan. There is no doubt that the

¹⁸⁴ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 20.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

way St. Emilie accepted and endured suffering was a strong element of her spirituality. She ended this paragraph with the words,

‘Sometimes, the Lord deigned to encourage me with these words: “my daughter suffer this for love of me,” and very often I heard His voice in the depths of my soul asking me if I loved Him.’¹⁸⁶

This implies that this was the beginning of her finding God’s presence in what she suffered. A kind of bitter sweet compensation because through it her love for Him grew. It should also be noted that she received constant consolation from Him in the midst of the emotional suffering she is experiencing at home. This consolation is so great that she can also speak of experiencing great peace.

3.6.3 God directly moved her.

St. Emilie began the next paragraph, twenty-one, with,

‘Grace directs most of my actions,’¹⁸⁷

This is followed by three instances of God’s direct intervention.

In the first she felt urged to go to church and see her confessor when he would not normally be there. When she got to the Church, he was there and she spoke with him.

The second was when she was visiting a local shrine with friends, she felt the Lord say to her to stay longer and she obeyed. She only left after He said to her, ‘Now you may join your friends’.¹⁸⁸

The third incident was when she was asked to pray for someone over a lawsuit. She wrote

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 21.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

‘I knelt to pray, and then heard a Voice saying to me: ‘But what about the other person?’¹⁸⁹

Because of this she does not pray for the petitioner as it was against God’s will.

The phrase which links all these paragraphs is, ‘Grace directs.....my actions’.¹⁹⁰ Each situation illustrates her interior disposition to do God’s will in all circumstances.

The elements of her strengthening spirituality that are revealed by these incidents is that she is ready and open to his inspirations, no matter when they come and acts on them with confidence. If He indicates that He does not want her to do something, she refrains. This shows her complete submission to the will of God and her expectation that He will communicate it to her.

3.6.4 A Vowed Missionary Life.

At this point she wrote about two important decisions that will grow into her future vocation. The first of these is a call to evangelisation; especially to those she calls ‘infidels’,

‘I felt a strong attraction for the Foreign Missions, and my heart went out spontaneously to infidel regions.’¹⁹¹

After this she discussed her devotion to St. Francis Xavier¹⁹² and she stated,

‘At the age of eighteen years, I made a vow to invoke this great saint daily, by reciting certain prayers in his honour.’¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, Paragraph 23.

¹⁹⁰ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 21.

¹⁹¹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 24.

¹⁹² In the seventeenth century, there was a lot of very bad weather in Gaillac. A storm destroyed the vineyards, hailstones ruined the wheat harvest and a flood destroyed the river piers. The citizens decided to choose a Saint to intercede for the protection of the area. In 1690 the Archbishop of Albi was asked to choose this patron and he chose St. Francis Xavier. The mayor and all the citizens made a vow to ask for the intercession of the Saint and established a chapel dedicated to Him in one of the local Churches. Twice a year there was a procession to honour him. St. Emilie would have taken part in this devotion. St. Francis is the patron of the foreign Missions and St. Emilie felt called to the missions. *The Revue du Tarn*, a local newspaper in Gaillac. No author is given but it is taken from the Archives of the region and is in N° 165; Spring 1997.

¹⁹³ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 24.

This vow was the first of three private vows she made.

In the next paragraph St. Emilie related how she felt drawn to remain unmarried. She suggests that it was the time when the Lord had promised to reveal her vocation,

‘I had even lost sight of the period of time He had indicated to me. Without being aware of it, when the time came I was spontaneously seized by the thought that if I left my father’s house, the laws of the Church would no longer be observed there. In fact, it was only with the utmost care that I succeeded in having them practised. This conviction took hold of me and I made the resolution never to marry, in order to remain with my father. My thoughts followed this direction because for some time past my hand had been sought in marriage.’¹⁹⁴

Her concern is more for her father’s spiritual ‘health’ than any sense of being called to Religious Life. It is more her call to help the spiritual growth of others, than becoming aware of her own vocation to Religious Life. This decision provoked an unexpected deep response from God,

“As I reached this resolution, sensible grace flooded my soul and enlightened me regarding the advantages of virginity, upon which I had never reflected.”¹⁹⁵

Her response was a private vow of chastity.¹⁹⁶ She did not consult anyone about it. It was a direct and personal response to the Lord’s prompting. She has added two new strands to her relationship with Him: that of feeling called to ‘Infidel’ countries and the call to celibacy.

In her next statement, she is very concerned with what she has called ‘recollection’, she stated,

‘At the same time, I reflected upon my inconstancy in the practice of recollection, and resolved to make a vow about this matter also.

¹⁹⁴ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 25.

¹⁹⁵ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 26.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

I promised Our Lord to remain in His presence as faithfully as I could.’¹⁹⁷

This shows that this gift of ‘recollection’ was not just a passive gift but something she had to ‘work’ at. This is her third vow in this section and it is actively to seek to remain aware of the Lord’s presence in all circumstances. All of these three vows were to play a part in her foundation of the Institute and each was a value she wanted those who followed her to embrace.

3.6.5 A withdrawal of Sensible Grace.

In paragraph Twenty-seven St. Emilie stated,

‘Throughout this year, the third since my return to God, I still preserved for a considerable time the grace of sensible devotion. However, it was weakening from day to day, and my conscience was disquieted because of my failure to preserve recollection.’¹⁹⁸

This was a gradual process and she described the ‘downward’ trend,

‘I tended, perhaps, to exaggerate my guilt in this matter, and thus fell into almost habitual feeling of discontent in myself. Besides involuntary omissions, I developed a habit of formal resistance.’¹⁹⁹

Furthermore she continued,

‘Insensibly, I ended by no longer hearing the Voice of God, not only in the distinct words which He had clearly spoke to me from time to time; but even I no longer possessed the interior knowledge which I had previously enjoyed, of what God’s will was for me in my daily actions.’²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 27.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid

²⁰⁰ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 27.

This must have been a very disturbing development for her as she had no one who could advise her about times when God seems to withdraw.²⁰¹ As Saint John of the Cross says,

‘God desires to withdraw them from this base manner of living and lead them on to a higher degree of divine love. And He desires to liberate them from the lowly exercise of the senses and of discursive meditation..... and lead them into the exercise of spirit,’²⁰²

For the inexperienced Emilie this withdrawal of consolation must have caused severe anxiety. It drove her to confide the grace filled events she had been receiving to her Confessor. She reported,

‘I went to find him, but no sooner had I begun to reveal to him some of the singular graces given me by God, than he interrupted me sharply, refusing to believe what I was saying. Timidity and the fear of not being able to convince this priest, hindered me from making any further confidences, and once again I was thrown back upon myself.’²⁰³

Previously when she had experienced confusion, God seemed to step into the void.

This time that did not happen. She ends this paragraph by stating,

‘Throughout the following twenty-three years, I continued to love God with a tender and dominant love, but I was not satisfied with my interior life, and the constant sorrow I felt of being unfaithful to God led me to fall more easily into divers faults, so that, even while loving Him, I did not stop offending Him.’²⁰⁴

This last statement is made, in a way, out of place as it attests to the future. She related that this experience of spiritual dryness lasted until she was about forty three years old. Through it all her motivation did not change, her commitment to God remained absolute and strong, but that did not mean that she was without fault.

²⁰¹ The most famous examples of these ‘*the Dark Night and in the Ascent of Mount Carmel*’ by St. John of the Cross.

²⁰² St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night*, Chapter 8 paragraph 3.

²⁰³ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 28.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

At this point she returns to the story of her vocation. Her need for guidance led her to seek a priest that she could relate to. The Lord led her to feel drawn to go to a young priest, Abbé Mercier, a junior priest of Saint-Pierre de Gaillac.²⁰⁵ He became her first clerical spiritual guide and a life-long friend.

In this part of her *Account* she has moved into a deeper phase of her own Spiritual Journey and she has finally acquired a Spiritual Director. What has changed is that she no longer judges her relationship with God by the sensible consolations she receives. She is able to accept his presence in faith and walk with Him in darkness as well as in light.

3.7 The Foundation of a Religious Institute

3.7.1. Called to found an Institute.

The next entry in the *Account* changes the subject from her own Spiritual experience to her developing sense of ‘mission’. The use of the word ‘mission’ here is deliberate in that it describes what she feels God was sending her to do. She began by stating,

‘I continued to render charitable service to the poor and these labours became the source of many domestic trials.’²⁰⁶

This single sentence is all there is to this paragraph, which is the shortest paragraph. It seems to sum up her time at her home. Following this she stated what she was increasingly becoming aware of, a call to leave her home and her father,

‘The devoted care which I lavished upon the sick poor in their homes aroused in me the idea to establish a work which would ensure their being assisted day and night and where we could be

²⁰⁵See chapter 2.2 p. 48. fn. 85. Father Picard says, “Another essential element is the guidance of one of his ministers. Our Lord led St. Emilie to feel drawn to go to the Abbe Mercier, a priest of Saint-Pierre de Gaillac, and request assistance.

²⁰⁶ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 29.

occupied in preparing foods and remedies that might be necessary.’²⁰⁷

There must have been constant difficulties in doing these things in her own home. She felt the need to develop and continue this work with those who had so much need. There is no mention of her worry for her Father’s spiritual care which she had stated on taking her vow of celibacy. Her mind seems to be on the people she is serving. At this point her age is not known. There is a document in the Archives which is a report to the Pope, Gregory XVI. It is a copy because the original document cannot be found. Its existence is only known because Father Darbon quotes it in full in his book, *Souvenirs and Documents*.²⁰⁸ In this report St. Emilie explains the history of the foundation and she stated,

‘I had conceived this plan more than ten years before I could put it into effect.’

These events may be taking place when she is about twenty-five. She has to wait another ten years for the time to be right to found the Institute.

3.7.2 The New Institute.

St. Emilie opened this section by stating,

‘Through the charitable activities to which I devoted myself, my Vocation became more and more convincingly defined, owing to the attraction which I felt for this work and the success with which Almighty God blessed my efforts.’²⁰⁹

This demonstrates her sensitivity to discerning the will of God. She waited for God’s confirmation of her inclinations. There followed a list of the variety of ‘works’ she had been engaged in,

²⁰⁷ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 30.

²⁰⁸ Fr. Esprit Darbon, ‘*Souvenirs et Documents*’, p. 43 English Edition.

²⁰⁹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 31.

'I was instrumental in bringing about the return to the Church of young girls and women leading sinful lives, and in the conversion of several Protestants and restore health to the sick poor abandoned by several doctors.'²¹⁰

St. Emilie affirmed that these activities were God's call to her personally. Furthermore, God confirmed this mission by giving her a measure of success. She brought all this to her confessor and he put her through a time of testing. As she stated,

'Once again, I approached my confessor, and spoke to him of the conviction I had of being called by God to found an Institute. He thought it his duty to do his utmost to try me, and for a whole year he raised every possible objection to my ideas; but this opposition did not shake me.'²¹¹

An event gave her financial independence from her Father,²¹² thus enabling her to buy a house in which to start the first Community. She made a comment about her feelings as she left her father's house,

'In 1832, having inherited the dowry left to me by my mother, I was able to undertake the projects on which I had meditated for some years. Despite the fact that for twenty years existence in my father's house had been so unhappy that only my conviction that I was doing God's will enabled me to remain there, it was nevertheless only by doing great violence to my feelings that I decided to leave my father, because of the anguish I knew it would cause him.'²¹³

Once again this statement shows both her vulnerability but also her strength. She had suffered much because she loved her father and he could not understand why she persisted in her vocation. Yet despite this suffering, she did not waver from what she thought God was asking of her. She finished this entry with the following,

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Her maternal grandfather died in July 1832 and left her a substantial amount of money. Up until then she had been financially totally dependent on her father, who did not agree with her ambitions. She was 35 when her grandfather died.

²¹³ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*' paragraph. 32.

‘With God’s help, however, I rose above my natural feelings and I left my father’s house in order to found, in my own town, the Institute which I believed to be for the greater glory of God and the helping of my neighbour.’²¹⁴

This could have been the end of this *Account*. She had come to the moment of foundation and she had explained all the graces she had received and her motivations which led her to this point. She had made it abundantly clear that she believed, in all of this, that God had been the one who took the lead, who gifted her with many graces to enable her to follow His lead and who guided her into the missionary choices she had made. She had had a long time to wait for the ‘right moment’ and circumstances. She was now thirty five years old and she had known God was calling her for something since she was eighteen. This long wait illustrated forcefully her absolute commitment to wait in faith until God made it clear what He wanted her to do.

3.7.3. A declaration of intent.

At this point St. Emilie inserted a paragraph, thirty-three, which affirmed what she sees is the purpose of the *Account*.

‘This account has but one aim in view, and that is to manifest the singular and intimate graces with which God sustained me in my extreme frailty. Neither shall I speak of my foundations.’²¹⁵

This clear statement witnessed to her gratitude and awareness that God has sustained her all her life. She recognised that these graces are both ‘singular’ and ‘intimate’. She regarded them as particular to her needs and private in that they spoke of her personal relationship with God. For her the sole purpose of this *Account* is to witness to God’s Grace. Her intention was to describe God’s actions which were

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 33

still continuing to ‘sustain her in her frailty’. She then, rather abruptly, declared that she is not writing a history of her foundations. It is almost as if she had lost patience with the need to write this document. At the outset she had stated that she regarded it as a secret document, not to be read by just anyone. However, at the end of this paragraph she abruptly leapt forward several years.

‘I made a long and difficult crossing, having almost nothing to eat and unable to rest except in a sitting position. It was during this voyage that it pleased Almighty God to grant me a great facility in uniting myself to Him in the depths of my heart, and I spent eight days, as it were, in retreat.’²¹⁶

She explains in the next paragraph that she was on a journey to Tunis.

3.8 The final Paragraphs

3.8.1 Tunis.

At the start of this paragraph paragraphs thirty-four she joyfully stated,

‘On arriving in Tunis, I was overjoyed at having regained those precious graces of recollection.’²¹⁷

This is the final mention of Recollection and she emphasised that she regarded this as a ‘precious grace’. God had restored to her a spiritual experience she had been missing and which she treasured.

In the rest of this paragraph she praised her spiritual director, Father Bourgade,²¹⁸ who was the Parish Priest in Tunis. She also shared how much the Sisters are appreciated by the Moslem authorities. Her final remark in this penultimate paragraph returns to her prayer life,

²¹⁶ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 34

²¹⁷ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 35

²¹⁸ See section 2.3, p. 54. fn. 90.

‘I remained in solitary adoration of our Eucharistic Lord, and I spent as much time as possible in this way.’²¹⁹

In the final paragraph of the *Account* she again gave her reasons for writing it. She stated,

‘Letters coming from France informed me that I was being represented to the new Archbishop of Albi as a woman who liked to travel, squandering my time and my fortune.’²²⁰

She went on to say that letters from the new Archbishop to her had increased her fear of being misrepresented to him. She stated,

‘I feared that their activities would hinder me in the exercise of my Vocation, the only attachment I had, because the salvation of many poor infidels depended upon it.’²²¹

Her fear was not so much for herself but for the mission of the Congregation, that is ‘the salvation of many poor infidels’. By this time she had made foundations in Algeria and in Tunis. Her next statement is the last words in her *Account*,

‘It was in these circumstances, during the Octave of the Assumption and while making a novena in honour of St. Eugene, Bishop of Carthage, whose relic I had brought from Albi, that God once more showered on me an abundance of precious graces which enabled me, from that time onwards, to enter into a way of love for Him which, if necessary, I shall try to recount.’²²²

Unfortunately, this document does not exist. It is here that she finished this *Account*.

3.9 Summary of this chapter

In this chapter there has been an examination of the unique document, *The Account of Graces*, for evidence of the foundress’ emerging spirituality. The contribution of this chapter to the thesis is that it is using the foundress’ own words

²¹⁹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 37

²²⁰ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph. 38

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

to explore her developing spirituality. It has given a deep insight into her own spiritual journey from her own perspective. Following this journey has illustrated how God gradually forms an individual in the virtues and attitudes He wants them to develop in order to accomplish His plan for their life. The chapter has highlighted the emergence of some of the most important elements of St. Emilie's spirituality. These elements can be divided into three groups.

The first of these is her personal relationship with God. She has given witness to how God led her into a deeply personal and intimate relationship with Him which is characterised by a sense of His constant presence. This relationship was nurtured by prayer and the sacraments. From this group, such virtues as a commitment to absolute truthfulness, to practising recollection, to repentance and conforming to God's will, to a total gift of herself, commitment to prayer and the sacraments and an expectation and willingness to wait on God's word before action, all are developing strongly.

The second group of virtues are concerned with the reaction to God's gradual unfolding of Himself to her. During the years covered by this document God gradually made His presence and His call apparent to her. Through many extraordinary interventions and through insights in prayer, He revealed His love and stimulated her reciprocation with a dominant love for Him. He gradually drew her to give her life to Him in love. He came close to her in times of suffering and helped her through the difficult times and enabled her to see His presence in all circumstances. This personal revelation culminated in the vision He gave her of Himself crucified, bleeding and being offered in sacrifice for humanity.

The third group is her growing sensation of being called to go out to help those who are in need, materially and spiritually. As the document nears its final stages this push from God emerges with more and more emphasis. This 'inclination' gradually becomes more of a passion and it emerges that one of her greatest fear, 'her one attachment', is that the good the Congregation is doing amongst those most in need, will be stopped. She is utterly convinced that this would be against God's will.

However, she did not set out to describe her spirituality in the *Account*. Those elements that we have highlighted are, in essence, only the early expression of them. In tracing the emergence of some of her basic Spiritual strengths in this chapter, there has also emerged some evidence to support their further development and understanding which will be described in the next chapter. In the coming Chapter there will be a discussion in depth and a listing of the Spiritual strengths of the Foundress, which seem to form the basis of her unique spirituality which she wished to continue in the Congregation she founded.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Major features of St. Emilie's Spirituality.

4.1 Introduction to Chapter Four.

In the last chapter some of the important elements of the Foundress' spirituality were highlighted by following her choice of what was important for her vocation from her *Account*. The emerging spiritual strengths were divided into three areas, those that related to her personal relationship with God, those that concerned her reaction to God's gradual revelation of Himself and those which conveyed her sense of 'being sent' by God. The finding from the analysis of the *Account* did not encompass the totality of her spiritual attitudes.

In chapter one a definition of what the word 'charism', when used to describe a Religious Family in the Church, was given and which described it as a gift from God but with an inner structure of three vital elements, the membership, the spirituality and the mission.²²³ However, it was also claimed, in the same section of Chapter one, that the spirituality was the unifying factor and that it played a pivotal role in establishing the distinctiveness of the charism.²²⁴ In this thesis the role of the spirituality as this unifying and pivotal factor is being explored.

This chapter deepens the understanding of St. Emilie's unique spiritual 'cocktail'.²²⁵ Like all Christians she is called to live the Gospel by embracing all the Christian virtues which form the basis of a life lived in Christ. Inevitably the practice

²²³ See 1.4. p. 19.

²²⁴ Ibid

²²⁵ See 1.4.4. p. 29.

of some of those virtues is stronger than others. If God's grace sensitises a person to be very aware of the needs of the poor, then those virtues which enable the reaching out to the poor, will be strong in that individual. They become their Spiritual strengths. In this chapter the Spiritual strengths of the Foundress will be discussed.

The primary sources for this are all the documents she wrote; the letters, reports to various authorities, the *Account* and early Constitutions and the leaflet to teaching Sisters. The documents have been analysed for her spiritual attitudes with a form of content analysis, similar to that described in chapter two.²²⁶ To evaluate the importance of the virtues described the following criteria were used, the context in which they were written, the strength of the statement, the frequency which this topic is mentioned and if there is corroboration of their importance in the other documents of the Foundress, such as the Constitutions and reports she wrote. From this emerged a group of Christian virtues, attitudes and devotions which were a strong influence in the Foundress' life.

Because the understanding of words can change over time, some secondary resources were also used to establish what a particular concept may have meant to the foundress and how it differs from the understanding given to it today.

At the end of the last chapter the Spiritual strengths from the analysis of the *Account* were summarised in three groups. In this chapter the three groups, Personal, Revelation and Mission, will also be used in describing the different strengths, but a fourth group, a way of life, will also be added as this contains virtues associated with Religious life.

²²⁶See 2.2 p. 43f.

4.2 Personal Virtues

4.2.1 'Recollection'²²⁷.

This is the first of the virtues which emerges as a result of the analysis of the documents written by St. Emilie. It was shown to be important to her in the *Account* in the last chapter. It does not appear greatly in the letters but it is strongly emphasised in the 1835 Constitutions and a document which supplements those Constitutions, the Spirit and Development of the Rule (SPDR).

4.2.1.1. Recollection and St. Emilie's writings.

From the evidence of the previous chapter the concept called, in French, 'Recueillement', in English translated as 'Recollection'²²⁸ was of great importance to St. Emilie. From the *Account* she recorded a call to Recollection which she treasured and cultivated, even if she had a shaky start.²²⁹ By the time she wrote the first Constitutions in 1835, she wrote,

The principal means the Sisters practise to achieve the first aim

The observance of the established rules, particularly the rule of silence, in order to strive unceasingly to attain recollection, which must be like the soul of this Congregation.'²³⁰

As the 'soul of the Congregation' each Sister is to be nourished and moved by it. Each was expected to desire and strive for it. It was not an optional extra for some but to be cultivated in each Sister.

²²⁷ A review of literature following this specific word of 'Recollection' only produced a small result. St. Teresa of Avila, St. Francis de Sales and Father Chaminade the founder of the Marianists. All these writers are mentioned in the text as they were extant either before or during St. Emilie's era. However, if the word was changed to 'the Presence of God', many more writers could be included. This was discussed in a footnote, fn. 160 in 3.5.1. p.81.

²²⁸ See chapter three, 3.5.1. p. 82.

²²⁹ *Account of Graces*, paragraph 13.

²³⁰ 1835 Constitutions Chapter 1 Art. 2:2

There are two documents, in the Archives, which underline the importance of this concept. They both have the same title, the *Spirit and Development of the Rule*, (SPDR).²³¹ One of them was presented to the Holy See, in 1841,²³² dated and signed by Monsignor de Gualy as the Ecclesiastical Head of the Congregation.²³³ In 1841 St. Emilie prepared to present the Constitutions to the Pope for his approbation. The Constitutions and the SPDR were submitted together.

Both versions of the SPDR begin with a section titled 'Recollection'. In the first article under this heading it says;

'It is essential that the greatest care be taken so that all the Sisters who form this Congregation have the spirit proper to it.'²³⁴

The second article states:-

'To enter into and live the spirit of recollection, the Sisters frequently recall the holy presence of God, doing their best to think only of Him and of what He ordains.'²³⁵

St. Emilie wrote these documents about two hundred years ago. It is important to attempt to understand what the word meant to her. It appears several times in her

Account of Graces. The first in Paragraph 13,

'Our Lord developed in me a spirit of recollection..... making me feel His Presence even in the midst of my occupations.'²³⁶

Immediately this was followed by God saying to her directly:

²³¹ See chapter 2.4.2 p. 60.

²³² St Emilie had had to go to Rome to seek the approval of the Church for the Constitutions of the Congregation after she had reached a deadlock with the Bishop of Algiers, Monsignor Dupuch (Bishop of Algiers 1838-1845), who wanted to take control of the Congregation. .

²³³ St. Emilie, The Spirit and Development of the Rule. Which states at the end of the document:

Seen and approved by us, Archbishop of Albi,

Albi 26th June 1841

+ Fr. M. Ed. Archbishop of Albi. [Stamp of the archbishopric of Albi]

²³⁴ SPDR (Both versions) Chapter 1. Article 1

²³⁵ SPDR. 1841, Chapter 1 article 2.

²³⁶ St. Emilie Account of Graces paragraph 13.

‘Remain in my Presence. If you stray from my presence I shall recall you.’²³⁷

It appears to be an experience of being constantly aware of God’s presence. While it is a personal and close relationship with God, it is not a continuous reality at first. An invitation from God, but one that required a response. Later, as her commitment to serving God solely emerges in her life, she was moved to make a vow to practise Recollection.²³⁸ She does not recount how she went about keeping this vow. Her final reference, in the *Account*, comes from much later in her life, she stated,

‘On arriving in Tunis, I was overjoyed at having regained those precious graces of recollection.’²³⁹

At no time, in the *Account*, does she attempt to define the word. It seems to be a spiritual experience in her life that describes her way of living in the presence of God. Some of the respondents in the Questionnaire²⁴⁰ described an alternative interpretation, that it is a quieting of the interior milieu when coming to prayer, which enables a closer attention to God. In order to understand which meaning of the word was that of St. Emilie, the use of the word by contemporary writers was explored.

4.2.1.2. A contemporary of St. Emilie and Recollection.

A contemporary of St. Emilie was the Founder of the Marianist Congregation. Father Joseph Chaminade (1761-1850).²⁴¹ He wrote frequently about ‘Recollection’. In a two volume work called *The Spirit of our Foundation from the writings of Father*

²³⁷ Ibid

²³⁸ St. Emilie *Account of Graces* paragraph 26.

²³⁹ St. Emilie *Account of Graces* paragraph 35.

²⁴⁰ See 6.4.2.2. p. 243f.

²⁴¹ The foundation date for the Society of Mary, Marianists is October 2, 1817. It was, however the second foundation of what at the time was called the Institute of Mary since the Marianist Sisters, the Daughters of Mary (Immaculate - FMI), had come into existence May 25, 1816, more than one year before. Both had arisen out of the Marian Sodality – which had many affiliated sodalities throughout south western France – founded by Fr. William Joseph Chaminade in Bordeaux, France. Taken from the Marianist website 14th of August 2013. <http://www.marianist.org>.

*Chaminade and the early Documents*²⁴² an unnamed member wrote under the title of 'To live love', a new chapter begins with the question: 'How to achieve perfection?'²⁴³ The reply to this is,

Which means to achieve perfection? Recollection first point: Need for recollection second point: practice of recollection.'²⁴⁴

He then details the first two points;

'We cannot enjoy God and all spiritual things except by recollection. We can only unite ourselves to God by recollection God is indeed inside of us, He communicated himself to us therethis is a great work and when God begins to favour the soul with the graces of union, He is only more jealous that they do the work, etc.'²⁴⁵

This underlines the importance of Recollection in the development of a personal and intimate relationship with God. It implies that it is because of God's grace and the response of the individual. In a letter to a directee Father Charminade stated,

'Recollection is the application that one makes with the faculties after achieving silence,considered religious virtue, recollection has God for its object, in the sense that it helps us to put us and keep us in the presence of God, something that we do, for example, we concentrate our mind to study, that is, we apply it to a reading; but we do not apply it so completely that we do not retain an indirect thought of God, as, when viewing a picture in front of us, we see nonetheless from the corner of the eye the objects that are by the side. In addition, any object that we apply our mind and our senses to, by recollection, our heart is always with God: because for the heart, nothing is allowed to enter but God.'²⁴⁶

He then explains this process in all circumstances beginning with prayer.

²⁴² 'L'Esprit de Notre Fondation d'après Les Ecrits de M. Chaminade et Les Documents primitifs. Marianists General Archives. Volumes I and II.

²⁴³ 'L'Esprit de Notre Fondation d'après Les Ecrits de M. Chaminade et Les Documents primitifs. Marianists General Archives. Volume 1 p. 24 section 8.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid

²⁴⁶ 'L'Esprit de Notre Fondation d'après Les Ecrits de M. Chaminade et Les Documents primitifs. Marianists General Archives. Volume I p. 400. Letter to Father Lalanne 2 January 1839.

‘It is in prayer that it is especially important to recollect oneself, this is where the recollection must be deepest and where it is also easiest.’²⁴⁷

The understanding of the word here is that it is a continual awareness of the presence of God. It is an experience that becomes deeper in times of prayer but it also continues, maybe less intensely, when a person leaves a time of prayer. The significance of referring to these writings, is that it gives an insight into the understanding of what ‘recollection’ meant in St. Emilie’s time.

4.2.1.3. St. Emilie’s understanding of ‘Recollection’.

The meaning of ‘recollection,’ can be to be aware of the constant presence of God. Was this the meaning of the word for St. Emilie? In the SPDR after stating that recollection had to be the soul of the Congregation she stated,

‘for this spirit must animate their various actions and inspire all their conduct.’²⁴⁸

If this is something that ‘animates’ all the Sisters, it must be something that they live with continually. It cannot be something that a Sister occasionally does, like taking time for silent meditation. St. Emilie expected each Sister to live as always being in the presence of God. She expected that it was important to live in a way that encouraged this and she was very specific in her instructions:

‘To enter into and live the spirit of recollection, the Sisters:

1. frequently recall the holy presence of God,
2. doing their best to think only of Him and
3. of what He ordains, that is, of what is their duty and their work;
4. they dismiss from their mind all vain thoughts which could distract them from such concentration.’²⁴⁹

[the numbered list is not part of the text but is added to distinguish the different recommendations]

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ St. Emilie, *the Spirit and Development of the Rule*, Chapter 1, article two.

This implies that for St. Emilie recollection meant a constant awareness of God's presence but it is something that has to be fostered and nurtured until it becomes a habit. Times of prayer and silence help it to grow stronger in the individual, as she said in the first constitutions 'particularly the rule of silence'.²⁵⁰ The Rule and especially silence are tools to help develop Recollection but they are not recollection itself. Recollection is an awareness of God's continual presence. Other spiritual writers have called it 'practising the presence of God'. Brother Lawrence in *The practice of the Presence of God* described it,

"Thus," said he, "by rising after my falls, and by frequently renewed acts of faith and love, I am come to a state wherein it would be as difficult for me not to think of GOD as it was at first to accustom myself to it"²⁵¹

This attitude should 'animate' everything that is undertaken. In writing to a Sister who must have written to her with a difficulty she states,

'in your painful moments go, speak to him, beg him to help you, ask him to enlighten you, to fortify you and to console you by his grace..... His gaze is always upon you do not refuse him yours.'²⁵²

St. Emilie was encouraging the Sisters to develop this attitude of being constantly in the presence of God, it was this she called the Spirit of Recollection. Her final remark in the *Account* states,

'I was overjoyed at having regained those precious graces of recollection.....God once more showered on me an abundance of precious graces which enabled me, from that time onwards, to enter into a way of love for Him.'²⁵³

²⁵⁰ See above 4.2.1.1, p.108.

²⁵¹ *The practice of the Presence of God*, eBook edition, Loc 176.

²⁵² St. Emilie, *Letter 466*, to Sister Mery Petit, 21st April 1855.

²⁵³ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraphs 35 and 36.

Was this way of love, a living constantly in his loving presence? It would seem that the evidence points to this being her way of living Recollection.

4.2.2 Prayer²⁵⁴

In the previous section it was seen that the growth in the development of Recollection is connected to experiencing the presence of God in prayer. This is the second major virtue that forms part of her personal spiritual strengths. St. Emilie had a great love of 'going apart' and spending time with God. In the *Account*, she stated,

'I felt an attraction for prayer, and I would retire several times a day to my room in order to pray.'²⁵⁵

In the same paragraph she wrote also about going to Mass daily and she felt a desire to be present and to spend time before the Blessed Sacrament. She gave much of her time to occasions of encounter with God in prayer of different types.

4.2.2.1 Types of Prayer

There is a document in the Archives which is a timetable St. Emilie made for a retreat day before she founded the Congregation. This document is not dated but it is in her handwriting. The first part of her day is given here²⁵⁶:-

²⁵⁴ Such is the magnitude of writings on the topic of 'prayer' over the centuries that I felt the listing of representatives of this genre would not be relevant at this point in the discussion, as here I am examining St. Emilie's own attitude to prayer as evidenced from her own writings. As was illustrated in chapter three her own grounding in prayer was experiential as her 'director' was the Lord himself, see *Account* para 10, 3.4.3. p.80. in addition there is only very little documentary evidence of the spiritual books she read. I have already alluded to the only quotation in her letters about Spiritual books, see 3.4.4m p.78. Both these authors were from the 17th century. When it has been important to quote a work to illustrate a point, then this work has been noted in the footnotes and the book or document referenced in the Bibliography.

²⁵⁵ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces* paragraph 14.

²⁵⁶ Central Archives Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition in Paris; *Timetable of a retreat made by Emilie de Vialar when she was in the world*. Source : 2 A 1. 20

'Heures.

À 6 h /4 I get up giving my heart to God and putting myself into his divine presence.

À 7 h I go to Church to reflect on the subject of the meditation.

À 7 h 1/4 I say vocal prayers on my knees and followed by mental prayer sitting.

À 8 h I assist at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass kneeling

À 8 h 1/2 Five minutes after the Mass, I do the stations of the cross on my knees

À 9 h I go to breakfast

Illustration 4.01

The rest of the day is similarly full of times spent in different devotions. The whole day is crammed with such practices and it shows that St. Emilie used many different ways of praying. It does not tell us whether she continued in this manner all her life or if her practices changed as her spirituality matured. At another time she stated,

‘During a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, in the afternoon, between three and four o’clock, I was alone in the church, praying calmly and fervently. I had my head slightly bowed as an aid to recollection.’²⁵⁷

Although she wrote this in the *Account* as a preamble to describing her vision in the Church²⁵⁸ it describes what was probably her habit when she was praying before the Blessed Sacrament.

4.2.2.2 Prayer in the Rule of the Congregation.

In the SPDR²⁵⁹ St. Emilie stated,

‘The Sisters of this Congregation should have a special love of mental prayer and should regard it as the best means of passing the day in a holy manner. They devote a half-hour to it each morning,

²⁵⁷ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, Paragraph 15.

²⁵⁸ See 3.5.2 p. 86.

²⁵⁹ See above in 4.2.1.1, p.108.

and if sometimes they cannot do it at the appointed time, they ask the Superior to allow them to make it at another time of the day.'²⁶⁰

There is no elaboration on what she means by 'mental' prayer but it does underline how important she felt it to be. In the next article she began with,

'The Sisters neglect nothing to acquire and conserve the spirit of prayer.'²⁶¹

This strong statement implies that the 'spirit of prayer' is an essential virtue for each sister. It was something that she should choose to try and develop.

St. Emilie was always anxious to grow in her own Spiritual life. In 1839 she wrote to a priest,²⁶²

'I'm still a child in the spiritual life, and I need you Father to be near me to guide me.'²⁶³

Despite being experienced in prayer, she felt the need to deepen her response to God and that she still felt herself like a child in this respect. In the *Account* she frequently wrote of her commitment to times of prayer.²⁶⁴ In the first Constitutions she included an horarium ²⁶⁵which began with a half hour of prayer and meditation each morning, followed by Mass. Lunch was in silence with spiritual reading and followed by fifteen minutes of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. The afternoon had three quarters of an hour of Spiritual Reading, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the

²⁶⁰ St. Emilie, *Spirit and development of the Rule*, Article 14. (*Les sœurs de cette congrégation doivent aimer particulièrement l'oraison et la regarder comme le meilleur moyen de passer saintement la journée; elles y emploient chaque matin une demi-heure et si quelquefois elles ne peuvent la faire à l'heure indiquée, elles demandent à la supérieure de leur permettre de la faire dans un autre moment du jour.*)

²⁶¹ St. Emilie, *Spirit and development of the Rule*, Article 15. (*Les sœurs ne négligent rien pour acquérir et conserver l'esprit d'oraison.*)

²⁶² Father Suchet was the Parish Priest in Constantine, Algeria, in 1839.

²⁶³ St. Emilie, *Letter 27 to Father Suchet*, 9th May 1839.

²⁶⁴ See the *Account*, paragraphs 14, 22, 34, 35.

²⁶⁵ *1835 Constitutions*, Chapter 10. There is a further discussion of this in 5.2.1. p. 163ff

Rosary. Last thing at night before retiring they prayed evening prayer. It seems very structured but it shows the importance she gave to prayer of all kinds.

4.2.2.3 Prayer as a dialogue.

St. Emilie describes her experience of prayer as a two-way communication, or dialogue, between her and God. She waits for God to enlighten her as to what He wants her to do and then she did what He asked of her. There is a period in her *Account* when she describes an extraordinary time,

‘I seemed to know in so clear and precise a manner what God expected of me.....’²⁶⁶

This great facility of knowing God’s will so easily did not last but she retained the attitude of expectation and desire to hear His will before action. His word came to her in different ways; through insights at prayer, through her emotions in response to His touch and sometimes through supernatural means such as locutions.

An example of this can be seen when she was anxious about choosing the right way of life.²⁶⁷ As soon as she heard God say, in a locution, that He would inform her of her vocation in two years, she immediately returned to peace. She gave herself, in response to His inspiration, to various works of caring for the materially and spiritually poor.²⁶⁸ In this example she had responded to God’s urgings which had come, on the one hand by his direct voice and on the other by ‘the inclination of her heart that he had inspired.’²⁶⁹ In 1844 she wrote to Sister Celeste Pyre,

²⁶⁶ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, Paragraph 10.

²⁶⁷ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, Paragraph 18.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, Paragraph 19.

‘It is in my principles to never seek after anything by myself, but respecting the proprieties, I do all in my power so that God’s will be fulfilled in us.’²⁷⁰

And to the same Sister in 1846 she wrote,

‘Circumstances which manifest the will of God to me determine all my decisions, I just follow them.’²⁷¹

There are numerous instances in her correspondence and papers which illustrate that her spiritual life led her to ‘follow’ God’s lead. For St. Emilie this was not just an occasional practice necessary for an important decision. She had this principle as a constant practice in her life and she wrote to her Sisters to encourage them to have the same attitude. St. Emilie’s great spiritual gift in relation to prayer is that she expected to learn God’s wishes in any situation and then she would act on those wishes; prayer preceded action and not action preceding prayer. She was utterly convinced of God’s presence and action in anything that happened to her. This led her to give herself totally to Him.

4.2.3. Total Gift of self.

In her documents St. Emilie does not talk explicitly about this virtue, but all her actions illustrate that this is the nature of the relationship with God. As an example in a letter to a benefactor she stated,

‘This Congregation that I founded in 1832, and to which I consecrated my fortune, had for special aim the education of youth and the free care of the sick, principally in foreign countries.’²⁷²

²⁷⁰St. Emilie, *Letter 425*, to Sister Celeste Peyre, 26th February 1854

²⁷¹ St. Emilie, *Letter 514*, to Sister Celeste Peyre from Marseille 21st January 1856.

²⁷² St. Emilie, *Letter 473*, to Countess Walewska, 12th June 1855.

In this she displays her attitude to her own fortune, it was given totally to the Congregation and she expected this same attitude in the other Sisters. She expresses this sentiment to Sister Pauline Gineste who she was asking to take out a small loan,

‘If, for the time being, your consecration to God forces you to jeopardize your interests, it is only a temporary service.’²⁷³

In this statement she implies that because Sr. Pauline is consecrated to God then her material goods are at His disposal even if there is a risk.

It was not only the temporal goods she felt should be given to Him. Referring to her own commitment,

‘I have towards God the simplicity of a child.....he has engaged himself to help me, I follow Him by using all the faculties and the strength he had confided to me according to his views.’²⁷⁴

She states here that all her gifts are His and he is the one who chooses how they are to be used.

4.2.3.1 Emerging from the Account.

In the *Account* St. Emilie refers to being drawn by God to give herself to Him. Her first mention of this is in paragraph three when she stated,

‘God began from that moment to attract my heart.’²⁷⁵

This was followed in paragraph eight,

‘made me resolve to belong to Him entirely.’²⁷⁶

Finally towards the end she wrote,

‘God to grant me a great facility in uniting myself to Him in the depths of my heart.’²⁷⁷

²⁷³ St. Emilie, *Letter 209*, to Sister Pauline Gineste, 24th January 1846.

²⁷⁴ St. Emilie, *Letter 188*, to Mrs. D’Aubilly, 28th February 1845.

²⁷⁵ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 3.

²⁷⁶ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 8.

²⁷⁷ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 34.

These were the first calls which were to develop into a total giving of herself and all she has.

4.2.3.2 The image of 'Spouse of Christ'.

The one image that St. Emilie wrote about repeatedly in her letters is her identification as the 'spouse' of God. She wrote,

'I only have to thank my heavenly spouse for having chosen me to carry his cross; it is sweet when one hopes to be loved by him.'²⁷⁸

The significance of this term for St. Emilie was related to her cultural background. In her society and especially from her class, women were expected to marry and to be subordinate to their husbands, as they had been to their fathers or male relatives before their marriage.²⁷⁹ For her when a woman married she was given to her husband and all she owned was also given to him. All his concerns became hers in that she was expected to support and obey him. Any material goods which she owned were at his disposal. On his part he contracted to look after her in every way.

Culturally for St. Emilie to become the spouse of God was to give everything she had to Him, her person and her material goods. However, she also felt that it entailed a commitment from Him,

'This God, Father of all, is particularly for the weak and the oppressed. Yes, he is my father, unworthy as I am to be his child. It is more than that, He is my husband, and in using his support I have fought and I have won, and it is by still using this assistance I hope to triumph yet.'²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ St. Emilie, *Letter 168* to Father Bourgade, 17th September 1843.

²⁷⁹ In James F. McMillan's book, *France and women, 1789-1914*, he writes 'the civil code Institutionalised.....that man alone was the true social individual and that women were only 'relative creatures', to be defined by their relationship to men –father, husband or other male relative. p.37

²⁸⁰ St. Emilie, *letter 63*, to Father Mercier 11 June 1840

This attitude was very strong in her and it also brought her to a sense of union with Jesus Christ in His mission,

‘Pray for me constantly, for God, while assisting me continually more and more, will have me understand that I am the spouse of the Crucified.’²⁸¹

It is an attitude which is perfectly suited to Religious life for it encompasses the Evangelical Counsels: to be a spouse of God is to not be the spouse of another and therefore embrace chastity, to give everything to God is to embrace poverty, and as a woman she was expected to obey her husband, so this includes obedience. She also felt that this should be the attitude of the Sisters,

‘We must always remember that God did not separate us from the world, in order to taste the sweetness of this earth, but to work and suffer much, following the example of our Divine Master, whose spouses we are.’²⁸²

This total gift of self led to a great love and trust in the Lord. In the above letter she concluded,

‘following the example of our Divine Master, whose spouses we are; this view is a bit bitter to nature, but it is sweet to someone who really loves the Lord, let us make efforts to be one of this number.’²⁸³

This total gift led to a belief that God, on His part, would do all things for her ultimate good.

4.2.4. Confidence in Divine Providence.²⁸⁴

St. Emilie used the word ‘Providence’ to convey her belief in God’s awareness of everything that happens. In the five hundred and fifty letters in the Archives there

²⁸¹ St. Emilie, *Letter 424*, To Sr. Eugenie Laurez, 21st February 1854

²⁸² St. Emilie, *Letter 93b* to Sister Pauline Gineste 17th January 1841 [sic, recte 1842]

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ A literature search for the use of this word ‘Providence’ was difficult as most of the books were from much earlier times than St. Emilie’s era. An example of this is Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa*

are one hundred and seven usages of the word 'Providence'. In contrast, she only refers to 'Recollection' eight times in the letters although this was an important concept for her. None of the letters set out to give an explanation of her understanding of spiritual matters *per se*, but she often gave witness to her beliefs and her wishes of how the Sisters should react in faith to circumstances. In the letters she wrote to various Sisters and priests she was more likely to share her beliefs in God's action in her life. It is usually in this contact that she frequently refers to Divine Providence.

4.2.4.1 St. Emilie's use of 'Providence'.

St. Emilie used the word in many different ways. In a letter to Father Becquet,²⁸⁵

'I am pleased to inform you of the various works that Providence kindly allowed us to start with and which I hope to continue.'²⁸⁶

In this sentence the word seems to be used instead of using God's name. A further example of this use,

Theologia. Nearer to St. Emilie's time is *Abandonment to Divine Providence* by J. P. Caussade, S.J., who was in the Jesuit house in Toulouse. It is possible that St. Emilie did have access to this work as one of her advisors, Fr. Becquet was a Jesuit from the Toulouse House. However there is no evidence to confirm or deny this. After her death R. Garigou-lagrange O.P. wrote *Providence: God's loving Care for Men and the Need for Confidence in Almighty God*. Reading these texts illustrates that it has been used for centuries to convey a trust in God's foresight and planning. However, it does not reveal if St. Emilie was exposed to those available in her time. She does not give us much evidence of her spiritual reading. Some writers of spiritual books which may have been available to her, use the concept infrequently, while others use it, like St. Emilie herself, frequently. In *The complete works of St Teresa of Avila*, volume two, she only used the word twice. A contemporary writer of St. Teresa, St Frances de Sales, on the other hand, used it ninety-four times in his book *Treatise on the Love of God*. A contemporary writer of St. Emilie and someone who knew her, was a lay woman, Eugenie de Guerin, who in her published diaries occasionally mentioned St. Emilie and the foundation, also used the appellation, Divine Providence, quite frequently. This seemed to be the pattern as some writers used it frequently and as a way of referring to God and His actions, others barely used it at all. There are modern books written on this subject yet, despite this, the word has almost disappeared in most contemporary spiritual works except occasionally in Vatican documents.

²⁸⁵ Father Becquet, a Jesuit from Toulouse who helped St. Emilie and Father Mercier draw up the 1835 Constitutions. See Chapter 3.4.3, p.79, Fn.156.

²⁸⁶ St. Emilie, *Letter 11*, To the Reverend Father Becquet 3rd June 1836.

‘I used all the means that I have in me to second Providence in the designs he has for us.’²⁸⁷

In another letter to Father Suchet²⁸⁸ she wrote,

‘That God alone will be glorified by the little good that they carry out; especially since it is by a special grace of his Providence that they are called upon to do it.’²⁸⁹

This seems to refer to Providence as some sort of ‘tool’ or attribute of God that He is able to use rather than being used to refer to Him personally. Sometimes it would seem that her statements has a ‘flavour’ of referring to the Holy Spirit,

‘But to you, Father, I owe everything, because you were the instrument of Providence to work out my salvation, and He still wants it to be through you that I receive advice about my perfection.’²⁹⁰

This could also be interpreted as the all-encompassing care of God for her.

In a letter to her brother Augustine,

‘I considered that the stop the boat made at Sousse as Providential, for it is rather rare.’²⁹¹

This was not an unexpected chance event but part of God’s plan. So numerous are the occasions when St. Emilie utilises this word it is clear that it expresses her belief in God’s care and constant presence in everything that happens. It is an expression of her faith.

4.2.4.2 Providence, a way of expressing faith.

St. Emilie frequently expresses her faith in God and her belief in His providence. To Father Bourgade, she wrote,

²⁸⁷ St. Emilie, *Letter 48*, To Archbishop de Gualy 10th January 1840

²⁸⁸ See above 4.2.2.2, p.116, fn.262.

²⁸⁹ St. Emilie, *Letter 29*, to Father Suchet, 30th May 1839

²⁹⁰ St. Emilie, *Letter 161* to Father Bourgade 21st August 1843

²⁹¹ St. Emilie, *Letter 156* to Augustine de Vialar (Her brother) 14th July 1843.

‘To support Providence, to act always according to His designs, I do not know of any other way of conduct for religious..²⁹²

In this quotation she uses the word ‘providence’ in the first phrase when she could have said God, directly. By using Providence is she also affirming her faith in God’s plan and therefore her desire to conform with it? To the same priest in 1845, she wrote.

‘Nothing reminds me more of the Inquisition than their behaviour towards me, and above all what I would have gone through, had Divine Providence failed to assist me.’²⁹³

In this statement she witnesses to her faith in the protection of God, even in the direst circumstances. Before her problems increased she had already written to Father Bourgade,

‘It is necessary to place ourselves in the hands of Providence, I do it as much as my small growth in spirit allows me, and this is not very difficult as I feel God’s help very strongly in my heart.’²⁹⁴

She affirmed her trust in God’s plan and that she needed to grow in her faith to trust Him more deeply. To Sister Gabrielle she wrote,

‘It is not I who create circumstances, it is God who permits them. For so long I had wished you to be in Rome, and you could not manage to get there; the essential is that Providence has given you back your health, for which I am very happy.’²⁹⁵

She reminds the Sister that what is most important in this situation is that it is in God’s plan for her that she has regained her health even if she cannot take up the mission previously planned.

In 1851 she wrote to Sister Thérèse who had to make a journey on her own and who was a little daunted by this,

²⁹² St. Emilie, *Letter 77* to Reverend Father Bourgade, 25th May 1841

²⁹³ St. Emilie, *Letter 215*, to Father Bourgade, 9th May 1845

²⁹⁴ St. Emilie, *Letter 42* to Abbé Bourgade 16 December 1839.

²⁹⁵ St. Emilie, *Letter 294* To Sister Gabrielle Cœur de Roy 1st Nov 1849

‘I have travelled alone considerably and I have never had the slightest disagreeableness; Divine Providence, of which I was an instrument, has always assisted me.’²⁹⁶

In this example she is consoling the Sisters by sharing her own experience of God’s care for her on all her journeys. Thereby she is confirming her faith in His inclusion of the smaller details of life in his overall plan.

Despite the frequency of her use of the word in her letters she does not use it at all in either her *Account of Graces* or in the *1835 Constitutions*. It appeared in the 1835 Constitution in the approbation written by Mgr. de Gualy,²⁹⁷

‘those persons that Providence has already called and will still call to this new institute, we have approved and we have permitted it to be printed.’²⁹⁸

As can be seen the Foundress often uses the word when she could substitute the name of God. In addition, she uses Providence as an expression of her faith in God’s loving plan for her and the Congregation. This attitude of God’s overarching presence and plan for and in every circumstance in her life is a reflection of faith in God’s plan for Salvation. St. Emilie was invited to contemplate a part of this mystery in a vision which pictures God’s Providence in action. This will be the subject of the next section.

²⁹⁶ St. Emilie, *Letter 330* To Sister Thérèse Sangiorgi, 9th November 1851

²⁹⁷ See the 1835 Constitutions, the final text which is the written Approbation of the Constitutions by Mgr. De Gualy, Archbishop of Albi. At the end he says, ‘those persons that Providence has already called and will still call to this new institute, we have approved and we have permitted it to be printed.’

²⁹⁸ The Approbation of the 1835 Constitutions.

4.3 Revelation

This next group of Strengths come from the invitation God gave to St. Emilie to contemplate His actions through His self-revelation, either coming as a result of her prayer or from His gratuitous gifts of supernatural experiences.

4.3.1 A Vision of the Incarnate Lord.

4.3.1.1 The Vision itself.

In the *Account* St. Emilie described a vision of the crucified Lord, she began,

‘Suddenly I saw Jesus Christ in the tabernacle. He was lying with His head on the Gospel side and His feet on the Epistle side. The arms of the Saviour were in the form of a cross.’²⁹⁹

The full vision was given in chapter three.³⁰⁰ It is described tenderly and emphasises the humanity of Christ. St. Emilie made no attempt to explain the significance that this vision had for her. Several things can be noted as striking her forcefully but what they meant to her, she does not reveal. However, there are several strong aspects of her spirituality that could have roots in her contemplation of this vision and which appear in her other writings.

4.3.1.2. The Wounds of Christ and God’s love.

In the vision she saw the Incarnate Lord as a real person, suffering real pain from wounds still bleeding. She stated that she was specifically struck by the wounds of the Saviour, especially the one in His right side which was ‘oozing several drops of

²⁹⁹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 16.

³⁰⁰ See chapter 3.5.2. p. 86.

blood’.³⁰¹ These wounds testify to the immense love of God that He himself would undergo such physical suffering for our sake. The more that this act of love becomes a reality in a person’s life, as opposed to just being a story, the more the depth of that love can be contemplated and received. She wrote,

‘I tell you frankly, I really have a need to contemplate, more than once, Jesus stripped of everything on the cross, to strengthen me.’³⁰²

This vision certainly leads to a deep sense of wonder at the depth of God’s love for each of us, in that Christ became incarnate and suffered such a death for our redemption. The wounds underline this as a concrete reality. St. Emilie’s love for God was also immense, she wrote;

‘Love Our Lord more and more and expect from Him a very rich reward, if you work to please only Him; and this reward is nothing other than the possession of Himself, of which you will become so deeply aware that you will be, as it were, inebriated with joy and sweetness.’³⁰³

This vision is a call to contemplate the depth of God’s love in His giving of Himself in the Incarnate Word. It also awakens a desire to give oneself to others without counting the cost, in imitation of the Lord. The more a person responds to this invitation and grace, the deeper becomes mutual love and a closer union with God. Following St. Emilie each Sister is called to develop this deep loving relationship with God which is also a spur to reaching out to those in need.

³⁰¹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 16.

³⁰² St. Emilie, *Letter 35* to Father Suchet, 11th July 1839.

³⁰³ St. Emilie, *Letter 247*, to Sister Célestine Mougin, 15th February 1848.

4.3.1.3 The Works of Charity

In the *Account* St. Emilie does not explain more about the wounds but in the SPDR she develops this theme. She wrote in Section II article 3,

‘The spirit of this Congregation is to dedicate the Sisters to the exercise of the different works of charity.’³⁰⁴

She follows this statement in article 4,

‘They often reflect on the adorable wounds of Christ, so that, thinking constantly about God's love for men, they maintain and increase each day the feelings of compassion and zeal that must animate them towards those around them.’³⁰⁵

This was not present in the 1835 Constitutions but was added to the SPDR and so must have been an adjustment St. Emilie felt was needed. It is a strong statement of how she sees the orientation of the Sisters’ lives in response to the call of God. She then goes on to state,

‘To acquire this divine virtue [the Works of Charity],³⁰⁶ they meditate every day of their lives on the immense charity which fills the heart of Jesus Christ, and they strive to imitate his zeal for the salvation of souls, and his great mercy towards the neighbour.’³⁰⁷

Jesus Christ came and immersed Himself in the ‘wounds’ of humanity and in doing so brought salvation. St. Emilie went to those in need around her, to bring Jesus Christ into their lives, and open them to His mission of healing and salvation. She was prepared to give her life to reach out to people in need. Fired by meditating on His

³⁰⁴ St. Emilie, *Spirit and Development of the Rule*, Section II, article 3. (*L’esprit de cette congrégation est de consacrer les sœurs à l’exercice des différentes œuvres de la charité.*)

³⁰⁵ St. Emilie, *Spirit and Development of the Rule*, Section II, article 4. (*Elles considèrent souvent les plaies adorables du Sauveur, afin que, réfléchissant sans cesse sur l’amour de Dieu pour les hommes, elles entretiennent et augmentent chaque jour les sentiments de compassion et de zèle qui doivent les animer pour leurs semblables.*)

³⁰⁶ The title of this section in the SPDR is ‘works of Charity’. The virtue is the desire to do these various works.

³⁰⁷ St. Emilie, *Spirit and Development of the Rule*, Section II, article 4.

zeal she called the Sisters to commit themselves to the same mission, to save souls, to witness to His love and immense mercy.

After describing the vision and without giving an interpretation of it, St. Emilie described how it increased her fervour. She began to wonder about her choice of a way of life. The Lord assured her that he will inform her of this in two years³⁰⁸ and she immediately stated,

‘I gave myself up to the inclination He had inspired in me to practise charity towards my neighbours.’³⁰⁹

The vision illustrated the God/man who did not stay ‘out there’ but entered absolutely into the human condition, taking on the consequences of our sins and achieving our redemption. He came to change humanity’s situation by becoming part of us. St. Emilie, responding to God’s love, went out to the sick and the materially and spiritually poor, to transform their lives. This became one of the strongest elements of her spirituality and that is what she refers to in her writings as ‘Works of Charity’.

Among the letters of St. Emilie, there is an unsigned report to an unspecified Minister, and it states,

‘She [St. Emilie] had established, in the diocese of Albi, a Congregation of Sisters vowed very specially, though not exclusively, to the practice of the works of charity in Moslem and pagan countries.’³¹⁰

The crucified Christ had given everything and that is what she was trying to do, give everything to Him and to those around her who were in need. She wants to ‘imitate

³⁰⁸ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, Paragraph 18.

³⁰⁹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 19.

³¹⁰ St. Emilie, *Letter 130*, to an Unidentified Minister, summer 1842. Not a signed manuscript (? a draft or a copy).

Christ's zeal'.³¹¹ She did this through the care she lavished on those in any kind of need, material or spiritual.

In the first *Constitutions of 1835* she stated that the aim of the Congregation is twofold,

'The first is the perfection of its members who compose it; the second is the spiritual and physical good of the neighbour.'³¹²

So important was this call to the Foundress that she included a fourth vow in addition to the Evangelical Counsels,

'By the Vow of Consecrating oneself to the various works of Charity, the Sisters engage themselves to a twofold commitment:

- 1) To teach children, particularly poor children, according to the method and rule adopted by the Congregation.
- 2) To care for the sick at home, in hospitals, in prisons and generally everywhere where their services are demanded, without exception of the Houses of Refuge [Houses for the Elderly].³¹³

The importance of this was so great that she saw the practise of the works of Charity as a virtue to be developed.³¹⁴ This aspect of her spirituality was so important to her that in Algiers in 1850, under severe duress from the Bishop, she was prepared to ask Archbishop de Gualy, her Ecclesiastical Superior, to release her and the Sisters in Algiers, from their vows of obedience, which meant they would no longer be religious and could work as a group of pious women,

'Thus without leaving your Episcopal jurisdiction, we will continue to dedicate our strength, our fortunes, our future, even our lives if necessary in devoting ourselves to the relief of the distressed, the care of the sick and the poor, the education of children and all other works of charity. This vow of our heart, the only one which today, we are allowed to adhere to, we will always be faithful to.'³¹⁵

³¹¹ St. Emilie, *SPDR*, Chapter II, article 4.

³¹² St. Emilie, *1835 Constitutions*, Chapter 1, art. 1.

³¹³ St. Emilie, *1835 Constitutions*, Chapter 4.

³¹⁴ See above in this section 4.3.1.3, p.128.

³¹⁵ St. Emilie, *Letter 49*, to Monsignor Dupuch, 30.01.1840.

The call to those they ministered to came above their call to remain Religious in that Diocese. It is clear that an extremely important aspect of her response to God's call was the call to minister to those in need. It is also clear that she wanted this to be a major part of the spirituality of the Congregation.

4.3.1.4 Suffering, God's gift.

The suffering Christ was very evident in this vision. These were real wounds and they were bleeding. St. Emilie had to endure enormous suffering, physical, moral and spiritual, in her life, right from her earliest days. Her many trials had an impact on the growth of her spirituality. They began in her early years as she was growing up,³¹⁶ they continued with problems in the first mission in Algeria³¹⁷ and they were compounded back home in Gaillac by the defection and betrayal by one of her first companions.³¹⁸ She saw such hardships as God's way of training her to be more responsive to Him. To Father Mercier³¹⁹ she wrote,

'God who is good and merciful, He uses hardships to which He exposes me in order to open me to a new way to work for the glory of His name!'³²⁰

It is not that she does not feel the pain but that she sees His presence through it,

³¹⁶ The first memory in the *Account*, paragraph 2, is where she is inspired at the age of 8 or 9, 'with the desire to endure, for His sake, the pain we sometimes suffer from those who govern us'. In paragraph 5 she mentions that she lost her mother at the time she entered the convent school in Paris. The third mention comes in paragraph 29 when she said her work with the poor became the source of many domestic trials.

³¹⁷ Monsignor Dupuch, the Bishop of Algiers wanted to take over the Congregation and change the Constitutions. He called her a disobedient woman when she refused and maligned her reputation in the wider French Church.

³¹⁸ Sr. Pauline Gineste, one of the foundation Sisters, became estranged from St. Emilie. She broke away from the Congregation and was part of a group who took St. Emilie to court disputing the financial arrangements of the Congregation. Sr. Pauline had managed the funds in Gaillac and claimed St. Emilie had wasted the money. Vital pages of the accounts went missing and St. Emilie did not have the evidence to refute her claims. Because of this St. Emilie lost her fortune and that of the Congregation.

³¹⁹ See 2.2, p. 48, Fn. 85.

³²⁰ St. Emilie, *Letter 63*, to Father Mercier, 11th. June 1840.

‘I have had my heart pierced by bitterness, and I needed more blessings from the Lord, in order to get rid of all this dark sadness.’³²¹

Instead of it driving her away from God it makes her turn to Him for the graces she

needs to endure. She admits that it something she has had to grow into,

‘We can only expect perfect rest in heaven. Here, true happiness can only come from knowing how to suffer. My own knowledge of how to do this is still imperfect.

Yet eventually she was able to state,

‘In one way or another my soul is nourished by the bread of trials; it is my daily bread.’³²²

4.3.1.5 Embracing the Cross.

In this vision Jesus Christ is seen with His arms in the shape of the Cross, offering Himself on the altar for the redemption of the world. The image of the Cross is one which St. Emilie uses frequently in her letters. She wrote,

‘Oh yes, it is certainly the way of the cross that Divine Providence has made me follow.’³²³

She saw this as entering into the mission of Christ,

‘it is through suffering that God has saved the world, we, who are called to found a work to spread the Faith, we must accept the crosses willingly and promptly, since they must serve to glorify God.’³²⁴

This quotation also shows how this concept supplements her attitude to suffering as she perceives it as redemptive and connected with the cost of discipleship. She expresses her personal response,

³²¹ St. Emilie, *Letter 168*, to Father Bourgade, 17th September 1843.

³²² St. Emilie, *Letter 230*, To Father Bourgade, 3rd May 1847.

³²³ St. Emilie, *Letter 60*, to Sister Pauline Gineste, 6th June 1840.

³²⁴ St. Emilie, *Letter 72*, to Sr. Pauline Gineste 17th January 1841

'I only have to thank my heavenly spouse for having chosen me to carry his cross; it is sweet when one hopes to be loved by him.'³²⁵

She felt that he gave her so many spiritual favours to help her cope with the crosses, even so it was a hard calling,

'We now understand a little why Jesus Christ has granted me so many favours; no doubt, he saw that I needed these great graces in order to bear new crosses.'³²⁶

For her the existence of 'crosses' or trials was indicative of the presence and concern of the Lord. Indeed she stated in one letter,

'I kiss the cross whenever I see it.'³²⁷

Yet even a few months later she was to write,

'The last graces that I received were immense. To enjoy God, with so much simplicity from him, wouldn't that have been reason enough to sustain thousand martyrdoms, and yet I have reason for reproaching myself for fearing and dreading the crosses to such an extent that I do not always embrace them promptly.'³²⁸

The last quotation reveals that her experience is down to earth and human. However, she believed that it was the acceptance of these crosses and how they affected their relationship with God, that was what the Sisters were also called to embrace,

'Remember the three foundations of Christian perfection: humility, renunciation of all temporal goods and love of the cross. The latter, however difficult, will build us up if our love for God is sincere.'³²⁹

It was this recognition that the 'crosses' that come in the course of discipleship, are an invitation to turn more to God and to grow in love for Him, trusting Him to give the graces needed to endure.

³²⁵ St. Emilie, *Letter 168*, to Father Bourgade, 17th September 1843.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ St. Emilie, *Letter 203*, to Fr. Bourgade, 13th November 1845

³²⁸ St. Emilie, *Letter 212* to Father Bourgade 25th Mar 1846

³²⁹ St. Emilie, *Letter 345* to Sr. Eugenie Laurez, 9th July 1852.

4.3.1.6 The Association with the Eucharist

The vision was in the tabernacle which suggests a link with the Eucharist. In the *Account* after her vision, St. Emilie goes on to speak of receiving Communion three times a week.³³⁰ A grace granted to her by her confessor, for it was not usual at that time to receive Communion so frequently.³³¹ Therefore one effect for her was to have a desire to receive Communion as frequently as she was allowed.

In addition it was her habit to go frequently to the Parish Church to spend some time in front to the Blessed Sacrament. In the *Account* she related how she had had doubts about the Real Presence.³³² This vision would seem to be an affirmation of His presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

The Church has taught for centuries that in the celebration of the Eucharist the priest and people are united with Christ at the moment of His sacrifice on the Cross.³³³ This aspect of the Eucharist as the Holy Sacrifice was known to St. Emilie. It was illustrated in her timetable for a retreat in which she wrote

‘I assist at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.’³³⁴

St. Emilie was a teenager when she had her vision. In the *Account* she spoke of developing a spirit of sacrifice.³³⁵ Did this vision increase her desire to join the Lord in His sacrificial mission? She had a lifelong devotion to spending time in chapel before the Blessed Sacrament and she wanted her Sisters to do the same. In the first

³³⁰ *Account of Graces*, para. 17

³³¹ It was Pope Pius X in 1905 who encouraged frequent, even daily Holy Communion. *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*. Vol. 12. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911.

³³² See Chapter 3.4.1. p. 72.

³³³ St. Augustine, , ‘this is the sacrifice of Christians: we, being many, are one body in Christ. And this also is the sacrifice which the church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar.’ *The City of God, Book X, The Complete works of St. Augustine*, Kindle Edition, Locator 9774.

³³⁴ See 4.2.2.1, p.115.

³³⁵ See 3.5.1, p. 82.

Constitutions during the Daily timetable, there are two occasions when the Sisters are to spend some time with the Blessed Sacrament,

12:00 Lunch; reading during lunch followed by a short time of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, if there is a chapel in the house.

6:00 p.m. Quarter of an hour's adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.³³⁶

It might seem a small amount of time but it was to be a regular feature of the day.

There can be no doubt that her devotion to adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was a strong elements of her spirituality.

4.3.2 St. Joseph of the Apparition

4.3.2.1 Devotion to St. Joseph³³⁷

In St. Emilie's writings, she expresses her devotion to St. Joseph himself. In the 1835 Constitutions, she stated,

'As the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph is placed under the special protection of this saint, his feast will be celebrated every year in all the houses of the Congregation wherever there is a chapel.'³³⁸

And in the SPDR 1841, she repeats,

³³⁶ Constitutions 1835, Chapter 10.

³³⁷ The literature on Devotion to St. Joseph has a long history in the Church but it is in recent times that many books have been written solely dedicated to the Saint. There is one exception to this in the fifth century document 'the history of Joseph the Carpenter', probably of Byzantine origin and seems to be a compilation of most of the traditional stories of Joseph. Many of these traditional stories were to be found in the apocryphal gospel and not accepted by the Church into the New Testament. In St. Emilie's era most of the writings on St. Joseph were in other works such as homilies or devotional books on the Holy Family. Many of the recent books are collections of stories about St. Joseph and prayers attributed to several Saints who had a devotion to him. A more scholarly book is 'Discovering St. Joseph' by Andrew Doze which gives an account of the evolution of the increasing devotion in the Church for the earthly Father of Jesus.

³³⁸ 1835 *Constitutions*, Chapter 3.

‘Since the feast day of the patron saint, St. Joseph, is celebrated in a special way in all the houses of the Congregation, there is consequently a general Communion.’³³⁹

While both these quotations show that St. Joseph has a very special place as the Patron of the Congregation, they do not explain the reasons for St. Emilie to choose him. In addition, they do not explain the appellation of ‘the Apparition’. In the first quotation from the *1835 Constitutions* St. Emilie named the Congregation as St. Joseph of the Apparition. On several occasions in her letters she emphasised that this was to be the name. In a letter to Father Bourgade,³⁴⁰ she stated,

‘When I will come to Tunis, I shall ask to make a cross-reference to the article of the minutes in order to name us the title ‘Sisters of Charity’ and add ‘of St. Joseph of the Apparition’³⁴¹

It is clear that in the name ‘of the Apparition’ was not to be omitted. However, there is no explanation in any of her documents as to why she chose either St. Joseph and specifically of the Apparition.

In Gaillac there are three churches, the Parish Church of St. Peter, the Abbey Church of St. Michael and a small Church dedicated to St. John the Evangelist in which there is the altar dedicated to St. Francis Xavier.³⁴² St. Emilie chose none of these Saints as Patron of the Congregation. In the early eighteenth century devotion to St. Joseph was becoming more popular. In 1480 Pope Sixtus IV establish the feast of St.

³³⁹ St. Emilie, *Spirit and Development of the Rule* 1831 Article 17. (*Le jour du patronnage de St Joseph étant célébré d’une manière particulière dans toutes les maisons de la congrégation, il y aura par conséquent communion générale.*)

³⁴⁰ See 2.3, p. 54 . Fn. 90.

³⁴¹ St. Emilie, Letter 157 to Father Bourgade from La Marsa, 19th July 1843.

³⁴² See 3.6.4. p. 94, Fn. 192.

Joseph in the Breviary on the 19th March.³⁴³ According to Father A. Doze³⁴⁴ the first chapel dedicated to St. Joseph was in Toulouse in 1222. This means that there had been over 400 years of a tradition honouring St. Joseph in St Emilie's local area. However it does not seem to be consistent with the way St. Emilie discerned God's wishes for her to choose St. Joseph because he was a 'rising star' in the Church, or because she admired him, or because he was the 'perfect' father figure. She usually waited for God to express His will and then she followed it. In the biography written by Sister Agnes Cavasino in 1987, there is the following:

'In 1880, Camille, daughter of Maximum [St. Emilie's youngest brother] wrote:

I don't know if you have any knowledge of the apparition of St. Joseph to my aunt. She never spoke of it, but my mother, (Rosine de Bermond) in whom she confided, told me, that at the outset of her vocation, absolutely desperate, because of her father's opposition, she fell to her knees and was praying with all her heart, when St. Joseph appeared to her and said – 'do not be discouraged my daughter, you will meet obstacles, you will have much to suffer, you will be overcome with grief. Trials will be everywhere, but your work will prosper....' (Madame Brusley [Camille] wrote this in a reply to enquiries by Father Brunet in 1880)³⁴⁵

Unfortunately the letter quoted above can no longer be found in the Archives and the incident cannot be verified. St. Emilie, herself, does not mention such an incident in any of her documents. However, in the *Account*, she omits any mention of either her first Communion or her Confirmation despite these being important events spiritually. Such a vision of St. Joseph would certainly give her a good reason to put

³⁴³ The *Catholic Encyclopedia* states, 'Only under the pontificate of Sixtus IV (1471-84), were the efforts of this holy man rewarded by a place in the Roman Calendar (19 March). From that time the devotion acquired greater and greater popularity, the dignity of the feast keeping pace with this steady growth.' Souvay, Charles. 'St. Joseph.' *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 8. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910.

³⁴⁴ Doze, A., *Discovering St. Joseph*, p.30.

³⁴⁵ Cavasino A., *Emilie de Vialar, Foundress*, p.47.

the Congregation under the Patronage of the Saint. It would be more consistent with her way of responding to God in that she waited for His lead before acting.

4.3.2.2 Evidence from the Paintings

In the biography called 'Souvenir and Documents' Darbon related,

'An oil painting, a copy of a picture preserved in the Art Gallery of Toulouse, representing the first apparition of the Archangel Gabriel to St. Joseph after the Incarnation of the Divine Word, had been hung in the sanctuary over the altar and tabernacle, as portraying more faithfully the idea of the saintly Foundress.'³⁴⁶



Figure 1.4 The Picture in the Patronal House

This picture is still in existence and is in St. Emilie's Patronal House in Gaillac (Fig1.4). In the biographies it is claimed that St. Emilie may have seen a similar painting in the

Museum in Toulouse.(Fig. 2.4)³⁴⁷



Figure 2.4 Jean de Troy picture, reproduced with permission from the Musée des Augustines, Toulouse.

The museum has a picture very like the picture that Emilie

had painted for the chapel of the first Convent. This picture was painted in the seventeenth century by Jean de Troy³⁴⁸, and it was acquired by the state in 1794 and kept in the Museum, where it was catalogued in 1794.³⁴⁹ It is certainly possible that St Emilie saw this picture when she was growing up in the neighbouring town of

³⁴⁶ Darbon E., *Souvenir and Documents*, p.23

³⁴⁷The Musée des Augustines still exists in Toulouse and it was re-opened in 1799 during the French Revolution having become the recipient of several works of art which had been 'appropriated' from some of the suppressed religious houses.

³⁴⁸Musée des Augustins, Numéro d'inventaire : 2004 1 289, Titre LE SONGE DE SAINT JOSEPH, Auteur : TROY Jean de, Date de création : 1651-1700.

³⁴⁹Musée des Augustins, Bibliographie, [Jean-Paul Lucas], Catalogue des tableaux et autres monuments des Arts formant le muséum provisoire établi à Toulouse, Toulouse, impr. Robert, an III (1795) , Catalogue . Given by email 27.08.13.

Gaillac.³⁵⁰ The picture commissioned by St. Emilie is not signed nor dated and it was originally in the first Convent shortly after the foundation. From the early days, it has always been in the possession of the Congregation but there is no paper work in the Archives which describe its provenance.

The pictures are very similar, the positions of the Angel, St. Joseph and Our Lady in the background, are identical. However the background and the foreground of the pictures show dramatic changes. In the foreground of the de Troy picture there are carpentry tools on the floor. St. Joseph's right foot rests on a mallet and a chisel is lying beside it. These tools were not reproduced in the painting in Gaillac. St. Joseph's foot is supported by a small footstool. It is difficult to know whether there is significance in this change. Was it a deliberate change or was it that the artist copying the picture did not think the tools were important? Did St. Emilie instruct him to make this change and, if she did, why did she do it? Did she wish to emphasise that in this episode St. Joseph had received a new mission from God that altered his life and his status? He was now to be the head of a household with authority, not just an artisan. This change in Joseph's life can be drawn from the episode in the Gospel but it is not clear if this was something that St. Emilie wished to emphasize in her copy of the picture?

The background change is more obvious and is surely significant. The De Troy picture show a structure like a great church or temple. The Angel is pointing to heaven but there is nothing to emphasize that this pointing is to God. In the picture

³⁵⁰ There is an identical picture to the de Troy picture in a small Church in a town called Mautauban which is close to Gaillac. However, it is signed by a painter L. Combés, who was from Mautauban but he was not born until 1821, so his picture must also be a copy of the de Troy painting. The picture is not dated but it cannot be the inspiration for the convent painting as he would only have been aged 11 at the time of the foundation.

St. Emilie commissioned, there is no building but a light streaming from heaven. This would seem to be a deliberate change that appears to emphasize that the source of the Angel's message is God Himself. St. Emilie did not write any explanation of this picture but she did commission it and had it hung in the Foundation House's Chapel. Although we do not have documentary evidence of this commission, the picture itself has never been out of the care of the Congregation.

4.3.2.3. The Gospel of Matthew 1:18-24

These pictures illustrate that, when St. Emilie added to the Congregation's name 'of St. Joseph of the Apparition', she was referring to a passage from St. Matthew's Gospel (Matt 1:18-24):

'This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: Look! the virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'. When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.' (Matthew 1:18-24)

Once again why she chose this passage she did not explain in her documents. There are several characteristics of St. Emilie's spirituality in this passage. St. Joseph's recognition of God speaking to him. St. Emilie so frequently had experienced God's direct intervention in her life. St. Joseph's desire only to do what he thought God wanted him to do. As has been demonstrated this was St. Emilie's desire also.

Joseph's willingness to do what was asked of him despite it not fitting in exactly with what he expected. Many times in her life, even from her earliest days, St. Emilie had to adapt her plans in order to do God's expressed will. The instruction that Joseph received that he must name this child, Jesus. St. Emilie wanted to 'name' Jesus to those who were unbelievers. It was not just the 'name' she wanted them to know but who He is and this passage does say two pertinent statements, 'you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins' and 'a son whom they will call Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us.' Encapsulated in these two phrases is a wealth of Christology which speaks of who Jesus Christ is, the Saviour and the Incarnate Word, God with us as one of us.

In a time when people rarely owned a personal copy of the Scriptures, this was a visual image of a Gospel passage which encouraged meditation.³⁵¹ The Gospel affirms that Joseph was an upright man (Matt. 1:19); a man of compassion and forgiveness (Matt. 1:19); a man who recognises and accepts the word of God and who is obedient to that word (Matt. 1:24). It is also a practical demonstration of God's providence. Joseph is being shown his role in the Salvation of us all. There are many valuable points of reflection that can be brought out from contemplating this passage.

³⁵¹ It is not being suggested that St. Emilie and the Sisters never read the Gospels. We have no evidence of her having a personal copy of the Bible. There are two books in the Foundation House which were thought to be her personal property. One is a copy of the Psalms in Latin and the other is a prayer book. At the time of the foundation, the Sisters did not pray the Divine Office. St. Emilie quotes scripture in her letters, albeit, very infrequently. In some of her letters she itemises books needed for the new foundations where there were to be schools and the Gospels are included in these lists. In Letter 225 to Sister Sidonie Bonneville preparing to go out to Burma (Myanmar) she states, 'I am sending you a good number of books of the Epistles and the Gospels to make the pupils read them.' This is evidence that she believed in the personal reading of the New Testament.

It would seem that this story from scripture struck a 'chord' in St. Emilie. The changes in the picture seem to underline her conviction that enlightenment for her actions should be coming from God himself. It is also depicting a definite call to St. Joseph to change his life. He was a righteous Jew and his spirituality up to this point in his life, was based on the Law and the prophets. This announcement of the paternity of Mary's child could only mean one thing to him, this child was sent directly from God. Furthermore, the prophecies reinforced this and so this child had to be the Messiah. The immense shock he must have had is not conveyed in the text. It was a profound call to him to repentance, in the sense of the word 'to change his life'. He was also called upon to believe the Good News of Jesus Christ. His spirituality was no longer based on the Jewish Law but on his belief in the Incarnate Lord.

Sometimes Spiritual realities get limited by trying to write them down. Words can be limiting and constricting, never fully expressing the inexpressible. Such realities can be much better appreciated when they are lived and experienced. St. Emilie deliberately did not give her interpretation of this Gospel, instead she left the Gospel passage itself as a gift to the Congregation. The Church teaches that all scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit.³⁵² In leaving the passage to be meditated on by the Sisters she has effectively left a passage of Scripture through which the Holy Spirit may reveal what He wants to every generation. What He reveals is left to Him and at His choice which may be different to each person especially with the new

³⁵² Paul VI, *The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum*, 18th November 1965. 'Those divinely revealed realities which are contained and presented in Sacred Scripture have been committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.'

demands that the changing world may provoke. For the spirituality of the Congregation it is like an open door to God's revelation down through the ages.

As has been said there is a wealth of theology in this including the mystery of the Incarnation, the God who is with us and Christ's mission of salvation. This links up with the important vision she had in St. Peter's Church which also has the same theological underpinning.

4.4. A Missionary Spirit

4.4.1 The meaning of the word missionary.

In Chapter one it was discussed that the word 'mission' comes from the latin and means to be sent.³⁵³ This can give rise to two interpretations of the word, the idea of being commissioned by God and being sent out to do a particular task, with no reference to a geographical location. The second understanding of this word is to be sent out , especially to foreign parts, carrying the Good News to those who do not know Christ. This distinction does not seem to be a consideration of St. Emilie, she felt called,

'I gave myself up to the inclination He had inspired in me to practise charity towards my neighbours..... by labouring for the conversion of sinners and of heretics.'³⁵⁴

Later she also wrote,

'I felt a strong attraction for the Foreign Missions, and my heart went out spontaneously to infidel regions, every time I entered a Paris church dedicated to the Missions.'³⁵⁵

³⁵³ See 1.3.4, p.18.

³⁵⁴ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, Para. 19.

³⁵⁵ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, Para. 24.

In St. Emilie's era, many European countries were reaching out to other nations and making them colonies. The French colonised Algeria in 1830 and St. Emilie's brother Augustine³⁵⁶ was in the colonial administration and he was instrumental in the authorities inviting her to come with her Sisters. It was through this that the first foreign mission started. She felt she was 'sent' to especially those in any kind of need and those who did not know Christ. There were many places where both of these tasks could be carried out and she had to decide where it was that God was sending her and the Congregation.

4.4.2 Following God's Will.

To Father Bourgade St. Emilie stated,

'To support Providence, to act always according to His designs, I do not know of any other way of conduct for religious.'³⁵⁷

She did not describe how she went about discerning His will except with a particular phrase which she used on several occasions with conviction,

'You know that Divine Providence usually makes itself known through circumstances.'³⁵⁸

And she was very clear that the Sisters should have the same attitude,

'I follow the circumstances that manifest the will of God and you should do the same.'³⁵⁹

This shows that she regards that God's will is spoken through those things she cannot change, the circumstances. In order to accept this, she has to have a great trust in Him and his ability to have overall control of everything that happens. This attitude

³⁵⁶ St. Emilie had two younger brothers, Augustine and Maximin.

³⁵⁷ St. Emilie, *Letter 77*, To Reverend Father Bourgade, 25th May 1841.

³⁵⁸ St. Emilie, *Letter 410*, To Sister Thérèse Sangiorgi, 5th Oct. 1853

³⁵⁹ St. Emilie, *Letter 518*, To Sister Céleste Peyre, 4th Feb 1856.

is one of trusting God even when not understanding why things are as they are, and it is an important belief for the Sisters to develop. She said to one of the Sisters,

‘If I had mentioned something it was to show that you are not master of circumstances but rather you were sometimes obliged to bear them.’³⁶⁰

This is one of her important touchstones for deciding God’s will in all situations.

Through this she discerns where God is sending her and the Sisters.

4.4.3. The call of the Foreign Missions

From her young days St. Emilie felt called to go to the ‘foreign mission’, as she stated in the *Account of Graces*.³⁶¹ This was a consistent desire and she felt that it was one of the primary reasons for the foundation of the Congregation. She wrote about this in several reports. In the Central Archives is a document which is included among her letters. It states,

‘Madame Emilie de Vialar, Superior General of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, has the honour to state to you: That in the year... she had established, in the diocese of Albi, a Congregation of Sisters vowed very specially, though not exclusively, to the practice of all the works of charity in Moslem and pagan countries.’³⁶²

This document is not signed. It appears to be a draft of a report to be sent to a member of the French Government. It indicates that she felt she was strongly called to what she called ‘infidel’ Countries, but even here it is added, ‘not exclusively’.

³⁶⁰ St. Emilie, *Letter 545*, To Sister Emilie Julien, 7th August 1856.

³⁶¹ See 3.6.4. p. 94.

³⁶² St. Emilie, *Letter 130*, To an Unidentified Minister, Summer 1842.

4.4.4. Missions at Home and Abroad.

While the call to the foreign missions was very important to St. Emilie, she did not hesitate to found houses in Europe where there were also many poor people with material, physical and spiritual needs. The question could be asked as to what was St. Emilie's idea of a vocation to the missions. In her *Account* she stated that she felt called to,

‘visiting the sick in their own homes and caring for them in their needs, or by labouring for the conversion of sinners and of heretics.’³⁶³

She was clearly called to do this everywhere she was invited to establish her Sisters, whether it was in France or abroad. The table on the next page shows the foundations she made in her lifetime

Foundations made in St. Emilie's Lifetime		
Year	Europe	Outside Europe
1832	GAILLAC, France.	
1833		
1834		
1835		ALGIERS, Algeria
1836		BONE, Algeria
1837		CONTANTINE, Algeria
1838		
1839	ST. AFFRIQUE, France ; MILLAU, France	
1840		TUNIS, Tunisia
1841		
1842	ROME, Italy ; VITTORIOSA, Malta	SOUSSE, Tunisia
1843		LA MARSA, Tunisia
1844	LANARKA, Cyprus	
1845	REQUISTA, France ; SAN GERMINIANO, Italy ; LAMBROGIANA, Italy ; VALETTA, Malta	
1846	SYRA, Greece	
1847	TOULOUSE, France	MOULMEIN, Myanmar
1848	CHIO, Greece	JERUSALEM, Palestine
1849		JAFFA, Palestine
1850		
1851		JERUSALEM HOSPITAL, Palestine
1852	CANEA, Crete ; MARSEILLE, France ; TOLFA, Italy ; OXFORD, England	SFAX, Tunisia ; TREBIZONDE, Armenia ;
1853	TREMOREL, France	
1854		TRIPOLI, Libya ; SaïDA, Lebanon ; ALEPPO-AZIZIE, Syria
1855		LA GOULETTE, Tunisia ; ERZEROU, Armenia ; FREEMANTLE, Australia
1856	PESCA, Italy	BETHLEHEM, Palestine
Totals	19	20
Statistics taken from Appendix One of <i>Emilie de Vialar: Foundress</i> by Sr. Agnes Cavasino. p.281-288		

³⁶³ *Account of Graces*, paragraph 19.

Illustration 4.02

The table illustrates that there was an almost equal number of foundations in and out of Europe. She wrote in a letter to Sister Eugenie Laurez,

‘God and his greater glory, the service of our neighbour and the ardent desire to be useful to him! These attitudes should be so dear to our hearts that we cannot be shaken by any difficulty.’³⁶⁴

There is no suggestion that this service is to be rendered *only* in those countries where the majority are not Christians. However, it is also clear from other letters that she regarded the Congregation as having a special call to the foreign missions. To Father Privilegio³⁶⁵ she stated;

‘Since my vocation is explicitly for the missions, I maintain that it is essential that the foundation made there will be well established’³⁶⁶

Countries which did not share the Faith attracted her as she wanted to spread the Good News of salvation to all those who did not know it. This attraction is a part of her spirituality and it is something that she felt was integral to the reason for founding the Congregation.

Father Privilegio had invited her to his parish in Greece and she responded by co-operating with him as he supported the new foundation. Some years later she accepted an invitation from another priest to establish a school in Tolfa in Italy. Both these foundations she saw as coming from God through the invitations of the priests, she had said that she never sought a foundation herself but waited for God to show his will. It made no difference to her where in the world that invitation came from.

³⁶⁴ St. Emilie Letter 354 to Sister Eugenie Laurez from Marseille 11 October 1852.

³⁶⁵ The Rev. Fr. Pietro Privilegio, Parish Priest of St. Sebastian, Syra, Greece in 1843.

³⁶⁶ St. Emilie, Letter 382, to Father Privilegio, 21st April 1853.

‘It is in my principles to never seek after anything, by myself, but respecting the proprieties, I do all in my power so that God’s will be fulfilled in us.’³⁶⁷

In 1853 she established a new Mother House in Marseille. As well as the foundation was the Mother house, they also established a girls school. In the prospectus for this she wrote,

“the Congregation founded to exercise its works principally in infidel and non-Catholic countries.”³⁶⁸

This expresses her mature view of the Congregation. In a letter to her first cousin just after she had settled in Marseille she wrote,

‘both Mayor and Prefect admire and appreciate the fact that our service is given gratuitously to the sick.’³⁶⁹

In this statement her commitment to the poor in Marseille is evident, yet in the same letter she also wrote,

‘We need to be inserted in the society around us³⁷⁰ [pupils for the school]. I will refuse pupils who would hinder me from having those of the first class of society.’³⁷¹

It seems as if these two statements are contradictory, she is first being praised for the care of the sick poor and yet the school is only for the rich. This illustrates something of her strategy, the foundations in Europe are to enable and supply the works for the poor and the foreign mission. It was not only by financial means but also with personnel. In a letter to Sister Celeste Peyre, while discussing a possible new mission in England she wrote,

³⁶⁷ St. Emilie *Letter 425*, to Sister Celeste Peyre, 26th February 1854.

³⁶⁸ St. Emilie, *Prospectus*, 16th August 1853.

³⁶⁹ St. Emilie, *Letter 363*, To Mde. d’Aubilly, 9th December 1852

³⁷⁰ Translated by me. A difficult translation which I have altered. In French, ‘Nous sommes posées auprès de la société, in the website translation ‘To succeed we are close to society,’ my translation, ‘We need to be inserted in the society around us.’ I feel she is talking about the school being situated in a very affluent area and that is why she will only accept upper class pupils. This school has to make an income for the Mother House.

³⁷¹ St. Emilie, *Letter 363*, To Madame d’Aubilly, 9th December 1852

‘the difficulty is to have an English sister. If you happen to come across someone suitable do not let her escape.’³⁷²

In the same letter she congratulates her on getting some Italian postulants, for ‘we have great need’.³⁷³ The desire to have new recruits were not the sole reason for the house in Europe, wherever they were established the Sisters reached out to the poor in need around them, as was illustrated by the response of the Civil Authorities to the new foundation in Marseille as quoted above.

From all that has been said in this section, It can be seen that St. Emilie had a true missionary spirit in the sense that the whole Church has a missionary vocation:

‘And he said to them, “Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation.”’[Mk 16:14]

She felt herself called to the far missions and the Congregation was also so committed, but her desire to facilitate such an endeavour led her to found houses which could finance and recruit Sisters for those foundations outside of Europe and at the same time reaching out to the poor in Europe. Thus two aspects of her spirituality are in evidence, the foreign missionary dimension and her call to the ‘Works of Charity’ wherever she found a need.

In this manner the Sisters brought Christ to the people whom they served. It is by their loving care and their devotion to the sick, as a result of their own love of Christ, which witnesses to others of his goodness, His care and His love. This was St. Emilie’s way of evangelising by loving those in need and tending practically to those needs, she made real the love of Christ for them. Once again it is an expression of

³⁷² St. Emilie, *Letter 362*, To Sister Céleste Peyre, 28th November 1852.

³⁷³ Ibid.

the 'virtue' which she called being committed to the 'Works of Charity' in Christ's name.

4.5 Religious Life.

4.5.1 'Core' spirituality and Religious Life spirituality.

So far in this chapter the emphasis has been to elucidate and understand the 'core' elements of the Foundress' personal spirituality. These 'core' elements are the important 'ingredients' of her unique mix of Spiritual strengths which make up the 'cocktail' of her spirituality. In Chapter One when speaking about the spirituality of the Foundress, it was stated,

'All these Spiritual strengths are Christian virtues and attitudes and every Christian is called to live them. However, it is the particular mix and strengths of these virtues which makes the distinctiveness of a person's way of responding to God.'³⁷⁴

Whatever way of life St. Emilie may have chosen she would have come to it with this special mix of Spiritual Values which are her 'core' values. An allegory can be taken from the world of the artist. When a painter starts a new picture he/she can decide what surface can be applied to the canvas to produce a specific effect when the paint is applied. Different surfaces will give different results. Every state of life that God calls people to, is like a particular canvas, prepared by Him on which He paints the core spirituality of that person. The canvas which carries Religious life is prepared by God in a particular way with characteristics to be shared by all who are called to that way of living the Gospel. On this prepared background God will paint the particular spirituality of the founder and subsequent members of the Institute. The picture that

³⁷⁴ See 1.4.1, p. 24.

emerges is of their unique spirituality lived out within the characteristics of that particular canvas, in this case Religious life.

4.5.2 First Steps

In the *Account* St. Emilie recorded how she became anxious to choose the way of life that God wanted for her.³⁷⁵ She relates how He directly told her that He would inform her of His will in two years. Following this intervention from God, she gave herself to ‘the inclination He had inspired in me to practise charity towards my neighbours’³⁷⁶ and she forgot about the passage of time. Around the time the two years were completed, she was moved to make three private vows, one to pray daily to St. Francis Xavier,³⁷⁷ another to practise Recollection³⁷⁸, and the third was a vow of virginity. This last vow drew forth a strong reaction from God,

‘As I reached this resolution, [to make the vow of perpetual virginity] sensible grace flooded my soul and enlightened me regarding the advantages of virginity, upon which I had never reflected. My heart was inflamed with an intense affection for this virtue, and a few days later, I made a vow of perpetual virginity.’

However, she does not explicitly state that she felt a call to become a Religious at that time. Later in the *Account* she stated,

‘The devoted care which I lavished upon the sick poor in their homes aroused in me the idea to establish a work which would ensure their being assisted day and night.’³⁷⁹

Once again she does not state anything about embracing Religious Life as she could have carried out such a work as a group of ‘pious women’. However, by the time she wrote the first Constitutions they were decidedly those of a new Religious Institute.

³⁷⁵ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 18.

³⁷⁶ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 19.

³⁷⁷ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 24.

³⁷⁸ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 26.

³⁷⁹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 30.

In the intervening years this call had come to her but she did not describe anything of it in any of her documents.

4.5.3 Embracing Religious Life

There is no doubt that St. Emilie felt called to found a religious Institute and thus she, and all the Sisters who followed her, chose that way of life:

‘Through the charitable activities to which I devoted myself, my Vocation became more and more convincingly defined, owing to the attraction which I felt for this work and the success with which Almighty God blessed my efforts’³⁸⁰

The Spiritual Values associated with this form of life became part of her spirituality and that of the Congregation.

Over the last century there have been great changes in the understanding of this particular way of living the Gospel. To include a discussion of this in this thesis, at this point, would not add to the aim of demonstrating the pivotal role of the unique spirituality in the continuity of the charism. It is also such a large topic that it could generate enough material for a further study. However, it would not have been possible to exclude mention of it completely as for all full members of a Congregation, the Spiritual values of Religious life must form part of their spirituality. It is also true to say that the ‘Core’ spirituality will affect the way the founder and members approach and live the values of Religious life. The Core spirituality affects the interpretation of the demands of religious life. It could be the starting point of a further study. However, there are three exceptions that need a brief mention and they have arisen as a result of differences between the original and current Constitutions.

³⁸⁰ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, Paragraph 32.

4.5.3.1 The fourth vow.

St. Emilie included a fourth vow, as well as those of Chastity, Poverty and Obedience. This vow was to dedicate the Sisters to all the Works of Charity. There has already been a discussion on the 'Works of Charity' in this chapter.³⁸¹ In the next chapter there will be further discussion about this vow as in chapter five there is an analysis of the Constitutions for the presence of the Spiritual strengths St. Emilie wanted to continue in the Congregation.

4.5.3.2 Apostolic Religious Life.³⁸²

The different traditions of Religious life, Monastic, Mendicant and Apostolic were not discussed in those terms during St. Emilie's lifetime. Despite this many Congregations in the Apostolic tradition were founded during her era.³⁸³ Its

³⁸¹ See 4.3.1.3 p.128.

³⁸² Especially since Vatican II the different traditions of Religious life have been more clearly understood. Many post-Vatican II books on Religious Life give short histories of Religious life. There is one book, *Sisters in Arms* by J. A. k. Mcnamara which outlines the development of women in Religious Life from the early Church to the present day but it is more an historical account and does not emphasise the spirituality. Sandra Schneiders in *New Wine-skins*, 1986, gives a typical summary of the different traditions on page 171-172. There are many other writers who are describing the possible changes in Religious life since Vatican II and they always include a brief mention of how Religious Life has developed. A few examples of these are D. Cogan, *Apostolic Religious life*, 1997, D. Ò Murchù, *Reframing Religious Life*, 1995 and j. Merkle, *Committed by Choice; Religious life today*, 1992

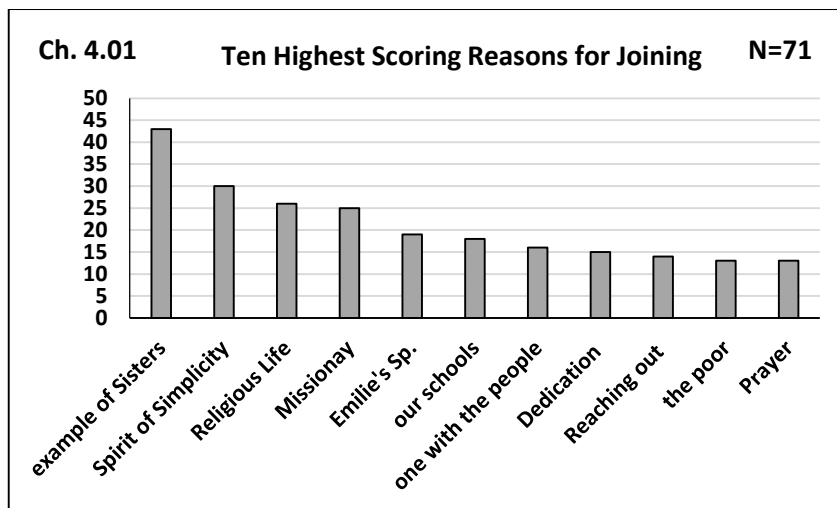
³⁸³ For instance the Faithful Companions of Jesus Congregation notes, in relation to their own origins that 'in the wake of the French Revolution, women all over France worked for the restoration of the primacy of religion in French life and for social stability. Many of these women formed groups for mutual support and in numerous cases these developed into religious communities. It is an amazing fact that between 1800 and 1820 thirty-five new communities of women were founded in France; and each year between 1820 and 1880 six new communities were founded.' Taken from the website of the Faithful Companions of Jesus, http://www.fcjsisters.org/fcj_english/spirit/mmv_life.html accessed 28.12.12. For further information on the events of the French Revolution there is an immense body of literature available but little is written comparing the great flowering of apostolic religious life at this time. Some works describing the 1789 Revolution were consulted for this thesis but were not quoted as this is not a document which aims to give an historical account, but is describing the spirituality of a person who was born in that era. Some books relating to the position and education of women, during her lifetime, have already been quoted when they helped shed light on possible cultural values of the foundress. One of these is S. K. Foley, *Women in France since 1789: the meanings of Difference*, 2004; and another in this genre is J. F. McMill, *France and women 1789-1914 gender, society and politics*, 2000. A book which gives excellent statistical data about the

characteristics include a commitment to going out to help people where they are, to live a deep prayer life that enables the growth in a personal relationship and an ability to discern to what God is calling them and also a Community life that facilitates both the mission and the prayer, as well as supporting the members. St. Emilie would never have heard the term Apostolic Religious life. A deepening of understanding of this tradition was more fully developed after Vatican II. The 1982 Constitutions quite clearly define the Congregation as Apostolic. There will be a further discussion of this in the next chapter.

4.5.3.3 Simplicity of life-style.

There is one aspect of the spirituality of the Congregation which does not appear either in the *Account* or in the early Constitutions. It does appear in some of St. Emilie's letters and is reinforced by the 1982 Constitutions and it is strongly endorsed by the Sisters who responded to the Questionnaire. In the first question the Sisters were asked what was it that drew them to enter this Congregation. They gave a variety of answers but the second highest scoring was Spirit of Simplicity.

Revolution is O. Connelly, *French Revolution and the Napoleonic Era*, 2000. An older series of books which covers the effects on the Church of the Revolution is written by J. McManners one of his series of books is *Church and Society in Eighteenth Century France: Volume 1: The clerical establishments and its Social Ramifications*, 1998. The research did not discover any books which deals specifically and in detail with the effects of the Revolution on women's Religious Life.



St. Emilie valued this spirit of simplicity,

‘God always wants this good spirit, the spirit of union, obedience, simplicity, which reigns in this House and in all of our Congregation. All I wish for is that this primitive spirit should be perpetuated forever.’³⁸⁴

For her it is a primary characteristic of a Catholic,

‘you know that simplicity is the first quality of a good Catholic, and even more so of a good religious.’³⁸⁵

The question arises as to what she meant by simplicity, she wrote

‘I have towards God the simplicity of a child, but enlightened about my duty, I am not less alert to second it; he has engaged himself to help me, I follow Him by using all the faculties and the strength he had confided to me according to his views.’³⁸⁶

It would seem that she is describing an attitude to God’s care like that of a child to its parent. God has assured her of His care and she responds by being available with all she has, for Him to use. As a child, she feels she is precious in the eyes of the Lord, as is each Sister with their individual gifts. St. Emilie was always interested not just in the numbers of postulants and novices, but also in their aptitudes,

³⁸⁴ St. Emilie, *Letter 23*, to Fr Balitrand, 15 December 1838. Father Balitrand, 1805-1855, was the curate at St. Peter’s Church in Gaillac at the time of the Foundation. He became the chaplain to the new Convent.

³⁸⁵ St. Emilie, *Letter 162*, to Mr. Camilleri, 26th August 1843.

³⁸⁶ St. Emilie, *Letter 188* To Mrs. d’Aubilly, 28th February 1845

‘Would you kindly inform me about the character, the piety, the aptitudes of your postulant or novice.’³⁸⁷

This is only one example but her letters to the various superiors revealed that she had extensive knowledge about the gifts and the difficulties of individual novices. She also expressed her opinion that all the Sisters were equal in importance. In a letter to Sister Celeste Peyre she wrote,

‘You know well that I strongly reject all that could create inequality between Sisters. I have even eliminated from our Statutes the existence of two classes of Sisters’³⁸⁸

Perhaps it was this lack of distinction between Sisters in the sense that no matter what their work was, they were all treated equally, that appealed to people. There must have been something about how the Sisters lived which struck others. She wrote to another Sister in 1855,

‘I must only tell you that in Palestine and everywhere, Consuls esteem our Congregation because of the simplicity that characterises it, and they give the best testimonies to the Government of our works in foreign missions.’³⁸⁹

This is the final element of the cocktail of Spiritual strengths that emerges from the analysis of her documents.

4.6 Summary of this Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to list the Spiritual strengths of the Foundress which make up her ‘core spirituality’ and which she wanted to see continued in the Congregation. They were derived by searching for them by using a content analysis on all the documents of the foundress. Each spiritual strength was discussed and its

³⁸⁷ St. Emilie, *Letter 477* to Sister Emilienne Naubonnet, 17th July 1855

³⁸⁸ St. Emilie, *Letter 449* to Sister Celeste Peyre, 9th December 1854

³⁸⁹ St. Emilie, *Letter 489* to Sister Virginie Cazallières 19th October 1855

effect on the spirituality established. They were described under four groups, personal, revelation, mission and religious life.

From the first chapter of this thesis it has been argued that a person's spirituality is a gift from God. He forms the person in their particular mix of Christian virtues and attitudes. All of these Spiritual strengths which were identified were gifted to her by God and He nourished and formed them in her. It has also been argued that He continues to gift others with a similar 'cocktail' of virtues and gave them the graces they need to develop these virtues.³⁹⁰ Bringing together the people He has spiritually gifted in the same way, has created the Congregation with its own unique spirituality, which was first expressed in the Foundress' spirituality.

The ingredients of this spirituality have been described in this chapter. The first group of spiritual strengths is related to St. Emilie's personal relationship with God. These include recollection, a commitment to prayer, a preparedness to give a total gift of self and a great confidence in Divine Providence. There are other virtues which all Christian are called to live but which have not been listed, these are important and are also lived by those called to the Congregation but the ones listed are called the 'Spiritual strengths' as there is a greater emphasis on these virtues. This means that the members are called to live these virtues with a greater intensity in order to accomplish the mission for which God has created them.

In addition to these virtues God gifted the Foundress with a vision of the crucified Christ in the Tabernacle and also inspired her to call the Congregation after a passage in St. Matthew's Gospel which showed St. Joseph receiving his mission in

³⁹⁰ See 1.4.4. p.29f.

life which included a radical change of life and entailed the nurturing of the Incarnate Lord. Both of these revelations of God affected her outlook and devotion to God in Christ. From the vision it seems to have moved her to a deep call to what she called 'Works of Charity'. It also inspired to unite herself with the crucified Lord and His mission. This may have also played a part in her faith-filled manner of accepting suffering. The gospel story of St. Joseph emphasised her conviction that she should always be ready to follow God's lead and that this often called for a willingness to adopt God's plans rather than choose her own.

The fourth group of virtues and attitudes concerned her strong attraction to evangelisation both in foreign lands and at home in Europe. She felt she had received a call from God to reach out to those who did not know or believe in Christ. She especially felt strongly a call to the foreign missions.

Finally, she believed that God had called her to found a new religious family whose members would go to wherever they were needed and do whatever God inspired them to do, to make people's lives better materially and spiritually.

This has resulted in a list of concepts which constitute the elements of the spirituality of the Congregation. The personal group with recollection, prayer, total gift of self and trust in Divine Providence. Those derived from God's revelation, His enormous love, the Works of Charity, embracing the Cross, union with Christ in suffering and devotion to the Eucharist. Her missionary call to evangelisation both at home and abroad. Finally, her conviction that she should find a religious family which went out to people in all kinds of need. Not every Sister will have these virtues in equal measure but they will all have them to some degree. These concepts can be looked for in the Constitutions and in the lives and experience of present day

members. The next chapter will examine the Constitutions for the presence of these elements. The current membership will be the subject of chapter Six.

PART TWO

CHAPTER FIVE

Passing on the Spirit.

5.1 Introduction to Chapter Five.

In the previous chapter the spiritual strengths of the foundress which she wished to be continued in the Congregation were discussed and listed. In the *Account* she stated, when talking about her care of the poor, that she wanted

‘to establish a work which would ensure their being assisted day and night.’³⁹¹

It is not possible to found a Congregation in the Church without its approval. In order to carry out her desire she had to produce a document that would describe the Congregation, state its aims, outline the mode of living of the Sisters and which would enshrine within it all of the Spiritual values she wanted to develop for carrying out the mission. These are the Constitutions of the Congregation. Because they have a particular purpose which has a juridical function in the Church, they are written in a particular manner. It contains elements that are demanded by Canon Law. It also contains elements which describe the ‘being’ of the Congregation as well as the ministerial options that it embraces.

It has been argued from Chapter One³⁹² that it is the spirituality of the Congregation which unifies the Sisters over the life of the Congregation. In the last chapter the Spiritual strengths which make up the unique ‘cocktail’ of values were

³⁹¹ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, Paragraph 30.

³⁹² See Chapter One, 1.4.4 p. 29f.

identified. In this chapter the object is to review the first and current Constitutions for the presence of these values. The first Constitutions were written in 1835 and the current ones were submitted, after a General Chapter, and approved by the Church in 1982. With both these documents a content analysis has been carried out in a similar manner to the letters of St. Emilie. A coding method has been used on both documents in order to categorise the ideas being presented in them. It is not intended, in this thesis, to do a full textual analysis of these two documents. A content analysis was carried out to identify the presence or absence of the elements of the spirituality. The analysis would also establish if new virtues or attitudes had arisen, especially in the current constitutions.

In addition to these two documents, a second document written by St. Emilie in 1841 has been included and analysed in a similar way. This document is called 'The Spirit and Development of the Rule' (SPDR). It was referred to in Chapter Two.³⁹³ It was a document which supported the application St. Emilie made to the Holy See for approbation of the Constitutions. Because it is a document that St. Emilie wrote six years after the Constitutions, it reflects her lived experience of those Constitutions and therefore contains the concepts she felt needed more clarification. On the whole, the contents of this document are of a practical nature, concerned with such things as the comportment of the Sisters, what they are to do when they are travelling, how they are to receive visitors, how they sustain relationships with their families and other such topics. It is not a new constitution but St. Emilie does use it to underline some of her ideas which are in the Constitutions. Because it was written

³⁹³ See Chapter 2.4.2 p. 60.

by the foundress and reflects her choice as to what she felt needed to be clarified, it was important to search this document also for the elements of her spirituality which she felt needed further emphasis. A content analysis looking for the presence of the elements of the spirituality was carried out.

5.2 The Two Constitutions

5.2.1 The 1835 Constitutions

At the start of the Constitutions St. Emilie stated,

‘I wrote the draft of the Statutes with the help of Fr. Mercier³⁹⁴, Parish Priest of St. Peter’s, the Parish church of Gaillac, and that of Rev. Fr. Becquet S.J.’³⁹⁵

Father Mercier was her longstanding friend and spiritual guide at this time. Father Becquet was from the Jesuit House in Toulouse. When she wrote these constitutions she had founded the first house in Algiers and so these Constitutions were for the new emerging Congregation with foundations in different countries and cultures. In a report to Pope Gregory XVI she wrote,

‘Towards the end of 1832, I founded in Gaillac, Tarn, my native town, a Congregation of Sisters of Charity, under the protection of St. Joseph, and under the name of the Apparition. I had conceived this plan more than ten years before I could put it into effect.’³⁹⁶

In the first chapter she outlined very clearly the aims of the Congregation as,

‘The first is the perfection of its members who compose it; the second is the spiritual and physical good of the neighbour.’³⁹⁷

³⁹⁴ See Father Mercier p. 48, Fn. 85 and Father Becquet p. 79 Fn. 156.

³⁹⁵ 1835 Constitution, Central Archives

³⁹⁶ St. Emilie, *Report to the Pope*, March 1839, Central Archives R1,1

³⁹⁷ St. Emilie 1835 Constitutions, Chapter 1, article 1, Central Archives, CR2 Source 2 A 1. 10.

She immediately goes on to describe the means to attain these aims. In article two, she described how to achieve the first aim,

‘the practice of the three simple vows of Religion, according to the spirit of the Institute, moreover, the practice of the vow of consecrating themselves to the various works of charity, according to the same spirit.’³⁹⁸

This quotation verifies her call to the making Simple Religious Vows.³⁹⁹

The first Constitutions were much simpler than the present Constitutions. The timetable for the Sisters was much more structured, especially in relation to prayer in common. This is best illustrated by a look at Chapter 10 of the 1835 Constitutions, which gives a daily timetable,

Daily Timetable.

5:00 a.m.	Rising time
5:45 a.m.	Prayer and meditation
6:15 a.m.	Various duties
7:30 a.m.	Breakfast
8:00 a.m.	Holy Mass
8:30 a.m.	Various duties
12:00	Lunch; reading during lunch followed by a short time of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, if there is a chapel in the house.
12:30	Recreation
1:15 p.m.	Various duties
5:45 p.m.	Spiritual reading
6:00 p.m.	Quarter of an hour's adoration before the Blessed Sacrament
6:15 p.m.	Rosary
6:30 p.m.	Dinner; reading over dinner
7:00 p.m.	Recreation

³⁹⁸ St. Emilie *1835 Constitutions*, Chapter 1, article 2.1, Central Archives , CR2 Source 2 A 1. 10.

³⁹⁹ The distinction between simple and solemn vows came from the history of Religious life. In the 14th century groups of Tertiaries made vows which were called simple rather than solemn. The difference seemed to be in the manner of making these vows. In the 16th century St. Pius V refused new Religious groups with simple vows. However, they continued to emerge and the Vatican refused to fully recognise such Congregations until the end of the 19th Century. The most obvious difference is that those who took solemn vows renounced all material assets under the vow of poverty. Under simple vows members retain any assets but they give up the right to administer them. The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition have simple vows.

8:00 p.m.	Evening prayer
8:15 p.m.	Particular examination; free prayers (it actually says outpouring of the heart but the English translator interpreted it as free prayer.)
8:30 p.m.	End of pious exercises
9:00 p.m.	Retiring
The Silence.	Except at recreation time, silence must be observed through all the day, unless in case of necessity or for charity, even then one must speak in a low voice. ⁴⁰⁰

This is an extremely structured day which would seem, at first glance, to be very 'monastic' in style. Analysing the above timetable gives two hours and twenty five minutes for prayer, nine hours and fifteen minutes for 'various duties', eight hours for sleep and the rest for mealtimes and recreation. This structured day could, and indeed did, work well for Sisters working in Institutions founded by the Congregation. From the very beginning and in most of the mission countries, one of the first projects was the establishment of Schools. A school has a very detailed and structured timetable and thus a timetable could be established for any Community serving such a school. Numerous letters speak of the establishment both in France and in Tunis of schools and the posting of Sisters whose expertise was needed for these institutions. To a certain extent, but less easily so, hospitals and clinics can also establish a rhythm. In such institutions, such as schools and hospitals run by the Sisters, the rhythm of the day could be arranged to fit in with the timetable of the Sisters. The vast majority of the day would have been spent in whatever work the Sister had been assigned. The emphasis was therefore on the apostolate but there was time to spend listening to the Lord in prayer.

⁴⁰⁰ St. Emilie, *1835 Constitutions*, Chapter 10. Central Archives.

5.2.2 The 1982 Constitutions.

The current constitutions were the result of several years of consultation and study on the part of the whole Congregation in the years following Vatican II. The Superior General and her council asked the Provincial leaders to seek feedback from sisters on draft material for the renewal of the Constitutions prior to a specially convened General chapter in 1981. The chapter delegates debated each article of the new constitutions and finalised the text in French. The final version was submitted to the Holy See and received its approbation in 1982.

At the outset of this study, permission was sought from the General Council to have access to these preparatory papers and the minutes of the General Chapter. The minutes of all General Chapters are considered confidential and permission was not given for this access as some members of that chapter are still alive. Only the text of the present constitutions could be used.

On reflection, it would have been informative to understand the process of the evolution of the constitutions but the aim of this thesis is not to do a complete analysis of the constitutions, but to search for evidence of the presence or absence of the spiritual strengths, defined in chapter four, which are the elements of the spirituality. The presence of these elements would give evidence of the role of the spirituality in creating continuity over time and with the inevitable changes of culture and environment that involves.

It is argued, therefore, that not having access to the proceedings of the chapter and the preparatory documents, has not interfered with the analysis of the constitutions consistent with the aim of this research. Reading the constitutions

occasionally produced questions in the researchers mind about why some of the spiritual strengths were presented in the order that they were, but the object of the analysis was to establish if they were present or not. There is no doubt that there is potential for further study with this document but that study would not change the findings of the research relevant to this thesis. A study that would include an understanding of the theological milieu in which the constitutions were written, would add to the understanding of the call of God for the congregation and could be the object of another work. However, it would add nothing to the demonstration that it is the elements of the spirituality that enables continuity of the spirit over time.

As has already been stated in Chapter One, the Council asked all the religious families to go back to their roots and re-examine the founding spiritual impetus from which each Congregation emerged. This led to a desire to reassess the Constitutions of the Congregation and to rewrite them to reflect a more modern understanding of what was being asked of the members in the modern world. Since the 1835 Constitutions, the Church had demanded at various times that the Constitutions would be revised. The original Constitutions were not approved by the Church officially until after St. Emilie's death. The first official Approbation came in 1865 under Pius IX, who had known St. Emilie. The definitive Approbation of the Constitutions came in 1910 under Pius X, when all the Congregations with simple vows were finally approved by the Church. The Constitutions of that era have a very different style to either the 1835 or the 1982 Constitutions.⁴⁰¹ It is outside the

⁴⁰¹ An earlier version of the Constitutions in the Archives after the 1835 version, dates from 1924. They are called '*Règle de Saint Augustine et Constitutions de la Congrégation des Sœurs de Saint Joseph dites de L'Appatition*'. In the English Provincial Archives, there is a version of these Constitutions in English and it is printed in 1949. There are other versions as Mother Emilie Julien, St. Emilie's successor, presented constitutions to Rome in 1865. In addition, other Constitutions

purpose of this thesis to examine the different versions of the Constitutions as it is examining the role of the spirituality in the continuity and change of the charism by comparing the founding Constitutions with the current ones. Having discerned the Spiritual strengths of the foundress in the previous chapter, in this chapter their presence, absence or development is being considered in the first and the current Constitutions.

The 1982 Constitutions are the current version and resulted from the work done by the membership at that time. In order to demonstrate the continuity of the spirit of the Congregation, it is in these Constitutions that it is important to search for the presence or absence of those spiritual strengths which St. Emilie emphasised.

5.3 A structural comparison of 1835 and 1982 Constitutions

These two constitutions are very different in the style in which they are written. It would not be possible to compare them chapter by chapter. The 1982 Constitutions have taken the Spirit expressed in the first Constitutions and with the benefit of a hundred and fifty years of the lived experience of the charism, have been developed into a much more detailed description of the Congregation. It would be possible to carry out another study which would analyse the two constitutions in relation to the theological principles and Church documents and teaching, which

were presented to the Vatican in 1910. All of these documents have very different styles. It would be interesting to conduct a study that traced the changes in these versions of the Constitutions, a decision was made that it was beyond the remit of this thesis which has opted to compare the first Constitutions with that of the current Constitutions. While it is acknowledged that an understanding of the evolution of the Constitutions would be very important to a documentary analysis of the Constitutions, this is not what this thesis is trying to do. It is looking for the presence of the elements of the Spirituality in the present Constitutions which witnesses to the passing on of these spiritual strengths in the modern era.

underlie them, but that would be another thesis and would not be in keeping with the object of this chapter. The purpose of this section of the chapter is to illustrate any connection between the two versions and to illustrate any changes.

5.3.1 A comparison of the outlines of the 1835⁴⁰² and 1982⁴⁰³ versions.

The best way to compare the structure of each version is with the diagram below. Both Constitutions are represented, chapter by chapter. Only

Chapters 1835	No. Articles	No. Articles	Chapters 1982
Chapter One Aims of the Congregation.	4	7	Chapter one Describes the Congregation in the Church
Chapter Two Government and Administration	30	7	Chapter Two. Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition. It describes the Sisters themselves and their response to God's call.
Chapter Three Feasts of the Congregation	1 paragraph	43	Chapter Three Formation This is a long chapter which deals with training of all Sisters.
Chapter Four Foundations, this specifies what is necessary to establish a foundation	2	26	Chapter Four Consecration, the Vows
Chapter Five Procedures for Election of the Superior General and her Councillors	8	12	Chapter Five Union with God in prayer. All types both public and private
Chapter Six The vows	5 paragraphs, one an introduction and one for the four vows.	6	Chapter Six the Spirit animating the apostolate.
Chapter Seven Mores for teaching Children	Small introduction and 9 paragraphs	9	Chapter Seven The Community, they are about life in Community.
Chapter Eight Mores for Care of the Sick	Small introduction and 5 paragraphs	73	Chapter Eight Government
Chapter Nine Charity to dead Sisters	Small paragraph describing prayers for the dead.	7	Chapter Nine Unity and fidelity, the need for a common mind and faithfulness to tradition.
Chapter Ten Daily Timetable			None

Diagram of Chapters of the Constitutions

two chapter could be directly compared and they are coloured in grey and are the chapters dealing with the vows and with Government.

⁴⁰² 1835 Constitutions, Central Archives.

⁴⁰³ 1982 Constitutions, Central Archives.

The 1835 Constitutions conclude with detailed liturgical instruction for the ceremonies of receiving the habit and of making profession. The 1982 only retain the Vow Formula which could be equated with the final chapters of the first Constitution.

It is really difficult to compare these two documents as the styles of writing are very different. As has been highlighted in the diagram there are two sets which could be compared directly. The first of these two sets is chapter Two, 1835 and Chapter Nine, 1982, as they both deal with Government. They are both the largest chapters in each Constitution with thirty articles in 1835 and seventy-three in 1982. It is obvious that they are deemed extremely important in both Constitutions. The opening lines of Chapter Two in the 1835 version are,

‘The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, known as of the Apparition, is and will remain under the immediate jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Albi, the sole and unique Ecclesiastic Superior of this Congregation.’⁴⁰⁴

This states the place of the Congregation in the Church as at its foundation. It had been established with the approbation of the Archbishop of Albi. There is no mention of their obligations to other Bishops or to the laws of the Church. The 1982 Constitutions begin in a similar way,

‘In authenticating the charism of Saint Emilie, the Church acknowledges the place of the Congregation in the People of God. For their part, all the Sisters remain very attached to the Church and to its visible Head, to whom they are subject by virtue of the vow of obedience. They are subject likewise to the authority of the Bishops in all that concerns the works of the apostolate. (can. 678. 1)’⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ 1835 *Constitutions* Chapter Two, article 1.

⁴⁰⁵ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter Eight, article 110.

Because of difficulties with a Bishop of another Diocese where a foundation had been made,⁴⁰⁶ the Congregation became dependent on the Pope rather than a Diocesan Bishop and so this is now the status of the Congregation in the Church. In this article, it also describes the relationship with local Bishops and refers to the current code of Canon law as a reference. These two quotations illustrate the major difference between the two Constitutions. The first Constitutions are simpler, less developed and place the local Bishop as the Ecclesial head. The 1982 version is more elaborate and places the Congregation in the heart of the Universal Church with obedience to the Pope. The 1835 version contains the seed and the 1982 is the tree that has developed from it. The roots of both are the same, in that they have developed from the original call given to the Foundress.

The second set of chapters that can be directly compared are chapter six in 1835 and chapter four in 1982, as these chapters deal with the vows. In the 1835 version there are five paragraphs which are not listed as articles. The introduction states,

‘the Sisters commit themselves by the three simple vows of religion, according to the spirit of the Institute, and by a fourth vow to devote themselves to the various works of charity, according to the spirit of the same Institute, it is important that they understand the spirit in which they pronounce the vows, and the extent of their commitments.’⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ The first foreign foundation was made in Algeria in 1835. At the time there was no Bishop in Algeria but the foundation was made with permission of the Church. Monsignor Dupuch, see Fn. 69, was appointed the first Bishop of Algiers in 1838. The Sisters had already been there for three years. Relations deteriorated when it became clear that the Bishop wanted to take over the Congregation, at least those foundations in his diocese. St. Emile did not feel that this was God’s will and she appealed to the Vatican.

⁴⁰⁷ *1835 Constitutions*, chapter six. This chapter is not divided into articles.

After this there are four brief paragraphs outlining each vow, poverty, obedience, chastity and dedication to the Works of Charity. The latter was the fourth vow that St. Emilie required of her Sisters.

The 1982 Chapter four is titled 'Consecration' and begins with a similar paragraph but it is much more rooted in the Gospel,

'In response to the Lord's prevenient love, the Sisters offer their person to God to be wholly and irrevocably with Christ our Saviour at the service of their sisters and brothers. They commit themselves by vow to follow Christ, who was poor, obedient and chaste, and, according to the charism of St. Emilie, to dedicate themselves to the "works of charity". Plunged by their consecration into the death of Christ to rise again with Him, the Sisters witness in hope and love to the Kingdom which is to come.'⁴⁰⁸

This is then followed by twenty-six articles, nine on Poverty, ten on Obedience and seven on Chastity. The Works of Charity are covered by another Chapter, Six, which is entitled 'The Spirit animating the Apostolate'. Chapter Six has an introduction and six articles. The Introduction is a quotation from the SPDR, which has been quoted before, and it begins with,

'The spirit of this Congregation is to dedicate the Sisters to the practice of the different works of charity.'⁴⁰⁹

It also quotes the next article which encourages the Sisters to reflect daily on the great love of God in order to acquire this virtue of commitment to the Works of Charity. So once again the connection is there between the early document and the current Constitutions.

Both of these examples are of easily comparable Chapters but the other chapters do not so easily lend themselves to such a comparison. As an example

⁴⁰⁸ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 4, article 58.

⁴⁰⁹ St. Emilie, *the Spirit and Development of the Rule*, Chapter II, art. 3.

Chapter Three in the 1835 Constitutions is about the feasts to be kept with special importance in the Congregation.

‘As the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph is placed under the special protection of this saint, his feast will be celebrated every year..... This feast and those of the Sacred Heart, of Our Lady of the Rosary, of St. Francis de Sales and St. Francis Xavier, will all be a day of general communion in all the houses of the Congregation.’⁴¹⁰

There is no equivalent chapter in the current Constitutions but there are two articles in Chapter Five which is the chapter about prayer. Article 91 talks about devotion to Our Lady and 92 deals with devotion to St. Joseph and St. Emilie,

‘They pay very special honour to St. Joseph, first witness of the fulfilment of the Incarnation, and to St. Emilie, whose mission they continue in the Church today.’

There are no other saints mentioned in the current Constitutions.

However, there is a gap of 150 years and this means that the customs will have altered. Do the concepts expressed in both Constitutions have the same meaning for the Sisters of St. Emilie’s time and for those of 1982? It is, with this in mind, that a content analysis was carried out on both documents. By using a simple coding method, it was possible to examine each document for the way it deals with a particular concept.

An example of this is the concept of the Community. There is no chapter in the original Constitutions which deals with Community but the 1982 Constitutions has devoted Chapter Seven to it. There are two occasions when the 1835 Constitutions refer to Community life. The first is in Chapter two, Article 21,

‘Art. 21. Since union and concord are absolutely necessary for the maintenance of a religious community, it is forbidden to sisters to pass remarks about each other’s faults, and even to speak about

⁴¹⁰ 1835 Constitutions, Chapter Three

them. However, should they see some faults against the spirit of the rule, they should in all charity point it out to the Superior, after having prayed to the Lord for guidance.’⁴¹¹

This article starts with a very strong statement about ‘union and concord’ being ‘absolutely necessary’ for a religious Community. It then goes on to pick up one aspect of living together which can lead to problems between Sisters. It is obvious that Community life is important but the concept is not fully developed here. The second specific mention is in the next article,

‘Particular friendships are so harmful to the good of communities, as experience shows only too well, sisters are not allowed to have other mutual relationships except those demanded by charity and propriety.’⁴¹²

Once again this is a specific problem which can arise and disrupt the life of a Community. It does not speak about Community as a separate concept but implies that it is something of great importance that it has to be cultivated with care and sacrifice.

This is all there is in the 1835 Constitutions but in the SPDR, Chapter Three is dedicated to Community Spirit. It contains nine articles, the first of which says,

‘We conserve and make manifest in this Congregation a true spirit of Community and the principal exercises are made in common.’⁴¹³

This document supported the presentation of the Constitutions to the Holy See in 1841. It is not a new constitution but appears to address certain issues which are not immediately clear from the 1835 Constitutions. The authorship is given to St. Emilie but it was probably the work of herself and some of her senior Sisters. As has been said there are two versions of it in the Archives. These two documents are not

⁴¹¹ 1835 Constitutions, Chapter 2, article 21.

⁴¹² 1835 Constitutions, Chapter 2, article 22.

⁴¹³ St. Emilie, *The Spirit and Development of the Rule* 1841, Chapter 3, article 5.

identical as there are some of the articles in different places and each has a small number of articles which do not appear in the other versions. It was only the dated version which was presented to the Holy See. The undated version, which has been designated as the 'draft' document, has a title for this Chapter, 'Common Life'. The dated version has another title, 'Common life and the Spirit of Community'. They both have the same number of articles but they differ in the way they are written.

Article 5 in the undated version says,

'A true community spirit animates this Congregation, and the principal exercises will be done in common.'⁴¹⁴

In the dated version it is,

'We conserve and make manifest in this Congregation a true spirit of Community and the principal exercises are made in common.

Both statements are in reality saying the same thing and the dated version must have seemed a better way of stating about unity in Community. For this thesis the differences do not matter but it does illustrate the value St. Emilie puts on Community life. It is not just an exercise in living in harmony together but it has a spiritual value which motivates the members of the Congregation.

The rest of this chapter deals with such things as not having individual rooms, including the Superior General, eating only in the Convent and without strangers present, the 'possession' of such things as books and other objects in common and that the Sisters are not allowed to keep pets.

From these practical rules it is hard from all this to understand the extent of how important Community life was to St. Emilie. There is some evidence from her

⁴¹⁴ St. Emilie, *The Spirit and Development of the Rule*, undated version, chapter 3, article 5.

letters that she saw it as a very important aspect of the Congregation. In a letter to Father Ballytrand,⁴¹⁵

Would to God that always this good spirit, spirit of union, obedience and simplicity reign in this house and in all those of the Congregation. The only wish I have is that this primitive spirit will always be lived, spirit so foreign to ambition and discord. I feel its importance so much that at my death all I would wish to the wealth of our Congregation is in these two things: banish ambition and disunity from the mind and heart of our Sisters.⁴¹⁶

This quotation has appeared before in relation to simplicity⁴¹⁷ but it expresses St. Emilie's feelings about the need for unity, obedience and simplicity in the Congregation. Even so it is not a full statement of what she means by Community life. It is almost as if she sees it as totally unnecessary to describe the value of Community life, it is not a concept she debates. What concerns her is the quality or the spirit in which it is lived.

The 1982 Chapter on Community life, Chapter Seven, is also more concerned with the Spirit of the Community life than with the practicalities. It makes this statement in the first article of Chapter seven,

'The charism of the Institute makes of the Congregation an apostolic body, a unique missionary Community.'⁴¹⁸

This first article raises the idea of Community from the sense of separate houses to the idea of the whole Congregation is a Community in itself. This reiterates the statement made in article one of these Constitutions,

'The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition is a religious missionary Institute of pontifical right, in the Church,

⁴¹⁵ Father Ballytrand see Fn. 384, p. 155

⁴¹⁶ St. Emilie, *Letter no 23*, to Fathe Balitrant 15th Dec. 1838.

⁴¹⁷ See chapter 4.5.3.3. p. 155.

⁴¹⁸ *1982 Constitutions*, chapter 7, article 100.

whose members consecrate themselves to God with a view to the apostolate.⁴¹⁹

However, it implies that this 'uniqueness' in the Church comes from the sense of common identity and purpose shared by the whole Congregation. In Chapter Seven there are nine articles which all deal with some aspect of Community life. Article 101 sets the tone of the chapter as it says,

'The same call from Christ which gathered the first Community around Saint Emilie, still to this day brings the Sisters together and creates Community.'⁴²⁰

This statement places the concept of Community firmly in the traditions of the Congregation. The article is concluded with,

'The latter is a gift of the Spirit, which, with the active participation of each Sister, is built up in Christ and follows him.'

Thus, it affirms the belief that Community life is a gift from God and a means of walking closer to Him. The rest of the chapter continues in this positive and spiritual way. Instead of warning about behaviour which can cause friction the present Constitutions affirm,

'It implies the humility and gentleness of Christ towards everyone, the abnegation of self which sees to it that the best is reserved for others. It must enable the Sisters to accept the differences and diversity which characterize the members of the Congregation, the Communities and their activities while, even so, remain in union.'⁴²¹

There are some practicalities discussed in later articles, especially in view of the role of the Superior.

The 1982 Constitutions reflect the greater development of the understanding of the gift of Community life which has grown over the years of the existence of the

⁴¹⁹ 1982 *Constitutions*, chapter 1, art. 1.

⁴²⁰ 1982 *Constitutions*, chapter 7, art. 101.

⁴²¹ 1982 *Constitutions*, chapter 7, art. 102.

Congregation. This is not to say that St. Emilie did not have the same vision of Community life, it is just that she did not see the need to draw it out in the same manner. This illustrates the difficulty of assessing the extent of the appreciation of different concepts in the two versions. If a concept is highlighted in the later constitution and not in such detail in the other version, this does not constitute evidence that it is less appreciated in the earlier versions. It would need a much more detailed study of the two documents to argue such a point of view. This would be an interesting topic of research but it is outside the remit of this thesis. This chapter aims to establish if St. Emilie's Spiritual strengths are present in the two constitutions. What has been established in this part of the chapter is that there is some continuity between the two versions but their style is so different that it is difficult to 'judge' the relative importance of a concept. Following the hypothesis stated in chapter one, which claims that it is the spirituality of the Congregation which unites the members,⁴²² this chapter seeks to see if these Spiritual strengths can be traced in the Constitutions.

5.4 The Spiritual strengths of St. Emilie through the two Constitutions

5.4.1 Introduction to this Section

From chapters three and four the strongest characteristics of St. Emilie's spirituality were identified. They were divided into four groups of virtues, the first being personal; recollection, prayer, total gift of self and confidence in Divine Providence. The second group was called Revelation and came from two sources.

⁴²² See Chapter 1.4.4. p. 29.

The first was from St. Emilie's personal experience of God's self-revelation. They include God's great love expressed by the gift and sacrifice of the Son, the Works of Charity, the gift of the experiences of suffering in the cause of the mission, the need to embrace the Cross and devotion to the Eucharist. The second revelatory experience came from the Gospel Passage in Matthew from which the name of the Congregation was taken, St. Joseph of the Apparition. The virtues included here are devotion to St. Joseph and following his virtues of obedience, faithfulness, willingness to change and to accept, believe and nourish the mission of the Incarnate Lord. The third group of virtues was named as 'Missionary' and it included the call to mission in the Church and also to the foreign missions. In addition, it included a call to allow oneself to be sent wherever God wanted, a willingness to be detached from all one held dear, in order to go when the Spirit calls. These three groups made up what was called St. Emilie's 'core' spirituality. Added on to these is the fourth group of virtues and these are those which are associated with Religious life and a simplicity of living. The first Constitutions, themselves, bring out St Emilie's commitment to Religious life. In this aspect of her response to God, the vows and community are an important factor, as was illustrated in the last section in relation to Community life. The Vows do not arise often in St. Emilie's writings. The documents in the Archives are incomplete and do constitute a definitive statement of her faith vision. She related three private vows in her *Account* including a vow of virginity in her teenage years.⁴²³ The place where she describes the vows is the 1835 Constitutions. The Vows are an important part of the lifestyle of all Religious. In this thesis the concern is to illustrate

⁴²³ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 26. See also Chapter 3.6.4 p. 94.

the role of the spirituality the meaning of the word 'charism' in relation to Religious life. The charism has three constitutive elements which contribute to the unique gift of God given to the Church. The spirituality of a Congregation is one of these elements and the argument is that it is the one element which unites the members who share a common 'core' spirituality. An in-depth discussion on the virtues of Religious life would not advance the argument concerning the uniqueness of the 'core' spirituality.

All the three documents under consideration, 1835 Constitutions, the Spirit and development of the Rule (both versions) and the 1982 Constitutions were subject to a content analysis, using a simple method of coding, for evidence of the presence of the virtues that have been listed in Chapter Four. These documents were not written to list virtues but to describe the type of living of the Gospel which would encourage those virtues to grow and mature. Therefore, the elements of the spirituality are found interwoven through the description of the lifestyle of the Congregation.

5.4.3 The Spirit of Recollection

In the First Constitutions 'Recollection' is described as part of one of the two principal means of achieving the first aim of the Congregation which is the 'perfection'⁴²⁴ of its members.

⁴²⁴ The term 'perfection' has a long history in the Church going back to Origen and St. Clement (Jordan Aumann, *Christian Spirituality in the Catholic Tradition*, p.32). By the time of St. Emilie it meant a striving for union with God which was only fully possible in heaven but people strove to come as close as possible to that ideal by living lives in the grace of God.

'The observance of the established rules, particularly the rule of silence, in order to strive unceasingly to attain recollection, which must be like the soul of this Congregation.'⁴²⁵

This is a strong statement which inserts this concept into the deepest 'being' of the Sisters. It is for every Sister and not just an optional extra for some. It establishes that it is something that needs to grow until it become part of their being, and thus it is a fundamental characteristic of the Congregation. So important did St. Emilie see this that in the *SPDR* the first chapter is devoted to recollection which she stated was essential for the development of the right Spirit in the Congregation.

"It is essential to take the greatest care so that all the Sisters belonging to this Congregation have the spirit which is proper to it, for this spirit must animate their various actions and give an impulse to their whole conduct. To enter into and live this spirit of recollection, the Sisters will frequently call to mind the holy presence of God, doing all they can to think only of Him and of what He commands, namely, of whatever their duty and their employment entail; and they will banish from their mind all vain thoughts which could distract them from applying themselves in this way."⁴²⁶

This spirit must 'animate their various actions and give impulse to their whole conduct'. It must be actively developed by constantly recalling the presence of God and keeping their minds on Him. The Sisters must concentrate on the tasks they have been given and not allow their minds to be distracted by daydreams. In the development of this interior attitude of attention to God's presence, silence, actual and interior is a valuable aid.

The 1982 Constitutions states in Chapter Three on Formation in the general introduction,

'The Sisters are called to a life which is lived wholly for God. This gift of themselves to God and to others should bring happiness to

⁴²⁵ 1835 *Constitutions* Chapter 1, article 2, para. 2.

⁴²⁶ St. Emilie, *The Spirit and Development of the Rule, 1841*, Chapter 1, art. 1, paragraph 2.

their life. The formation will tend to develop in them "a dominant love for the Lord" and the "spirit of recollection" which leads to the apostolate and disposes them for it.⁴²⁷

This article underlines two virtue, the 'total gift of self' and 'recollection'. The formation of all Sisters, young and old, should lead to the development of a 'dominant love of the Lord' but also the 'the spirit of recollection'. The latter phrase has just been described from the first Constitutions. The former phrase may come from the letters of St. Emilie, speaking to a Sister who was teaching in Valletta, Malta,

'Inspire them with a dominant love for our Lord as that is the principal aim to have in mind.'⁴²⁸

Although this phrase of St. Emilie is applied to pupils in the school, the Sisters in 1982 felt it was appropriate to apply to the aims of the formation of every Sister in the Congregation. The two virtues complement each other. Living continuously aware of God's presence leads to a dominant love for the God who is always lovingly present.

At the beginning of Chapter Five of the 1982 Constitutions, which is entitled 'Union with God in prayer and action', the Sisters saw fit to insert the quotation from the first Constitutions about Recollection being the soul of the Congregation. This was discussed above in relation to the 1835 Constitutions. It is as if the words of St. Emilie could not be surpassed in describing this spiritual attitude. It also implies that the practice of Recollection is an essential characteristic which, secondary to the grace of God, has to grow in each member. This is underlined in Article 82 in the same chapter where it states,

'The spirit of recollection and of union with God is the foundation of St. Emilie's contemplation and action. This spirit must create

⁴²⁷ 1982 Constitutions, Chapter 3, Art. 17..

⁴²⁸ St. Emilie, *Letter 309* to Sister Thérèse Sangiorgi, 20th October 1950.

unity in the apostolic life of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition. It brings prayer into their whole life and helps them to act habitually in union with God.⁴²⁹

There is no doubt that the importance of 'recollection', as a basic spiritual attitude, is confirmed in the modern Constitutions. Because of this importance, in the Questionnaire, to be discussed in the next Chapter of the thesis, it was decided to have a question which asked the Sisters what was their experience of Recollection.⁴³⁰

5.4.4 Prayer

As has been noted the original Constitutions give about 3 hours a day to various types of prayer in the timetable. Most of this is in small parcels of time and accomplished in common. There are many different types of prayer proposed, mental prayer, attendance at Mass, spiritual reading, prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and the Rosary. It also expresses the norms for an annual eight-day Retreat, which is also done in the Community.

These small parcels of prayer include several where private prayer can be entered into, even if the Sisters are sitting together in the chapel. Chapter Seven of the first Constitutions is entitled, 'Teaching Children and Means to Observe to and Teach Well'.⁴³¹ In it St. Emilie describes nine 'means' that the Sisters who are called to teaching must employ to do their duty well. The very first of these is entitled 'prayer', it states,

'Prayer. Since all talents come from God, a Sister of St. Joseph must frequently beg of God in prayer the talents she most needs to teach her class well. She must sometimes receive Holy Communion for this intention, often invoke the protection of the Blessed Virgin and

⁴²⁹ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter Five, Article 82.

⁴³⁰ Question 2, see chapter 6.4.2.2 p. 243.

⁴³¹ 1935 *Constitutions* Chapter 7.

of St. Joseph, the help of the Holy Angels, and recommend herself to them in the difficulties she encounters in her work.' ⁴³²

In this small paragraph she urges both attendance at Mass and prayer to Our Lady and St. Joseph and invoking the help of the Holy Angels. The occasions of prayer for this is personal prayer and so the Sister must find time for it herself.

St. Emilie is very strong in her encouraging the Sisters to go to the Sacraments. In an age when daily Communion was not encouraged by the church, ⁴³³ she stated the following in chapter Two,

'The sisters confess at least once a week. Likewise they enable themselves to receive Holy Communion as often as possible, according to the advice of their confessor. According to the spirit of the Congregation, the sisters should receive Holy Communion at least every Sunday.'

Both Confession and Communion are laid down as 'norms' for the Sisters. In addition, it is 'according to the spirit of the Congregation' that the Sisters receive Communion regularly. There are other occasions when she urges the Sisters to take communion; during Masses for the dead Sisters and ceremonies of receiving the habit and profession.

Daily there are two short prayer sessions in front of the Blessed Sacrament, an examination of conscience and the rosary inserted into the timetable. There is something entitled 'evening prayer' although this was not the recitation of the Divine Office.⁴³⁴ There is a time in the morning given to prayer and meditation. This multiplicity of forms of prayer reflects her own experience of different kinds of prayer

⁴³² St. Emilie, *1835 Constitutions*, Chapter 7, means 1.

⁴³³ The Church did not encourage frequent Communion until Pope Pius X. 'he advised all (Decr. S. Congr. Concil., 20 Dec., 1905) to receive Holy Communion frequently and, if possible, daily.' Benigni, Umberto. "Pope Pius X." *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*. Vol. 12. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911.

⁴³⁴ The practice of reciting Lauds and Vespers from the Divine Office in the Congregation did not commence until after Vatican II.

as discussed in chapter four.⁴³⁵ It is obvious that she desired the Sisters to develop a frequent habit of turning to God in prayer.

In the 1982 Constitutions Chapter Six is entitled 'Union with God in Prayer and Action.' It is dedicated to all the forms of prayer, some only 'recommended' and some laid down as 'norms' for the Sisters. It has already been pointed out, in the previous discussion on recollection, Chapter Six of this Constitutions begins with a strong exhortation to develop Recollection. In Article 82 it states why the introduction should contain the quotations on Recollection from St. Emilie,

'The spirit of recollection and of union with God is the foundation of St. Emilie's contemplation and action. This spirit must create unity in the apostolic life of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition. It brings prayer into their whole life and helps them to act habitually in union with God.'⁴³⁶

In the next article it immediately states that 'the Eucharist is at the heart of their apostolic life'.⁴³⁷ This is followed by,

'Adoration of Christ present in the Eucharist expands prayer to the dimensions of the world. It is apostolic prayer par excellence.'⁴³⁸

It then states that the Sisters should devote a moment of their day to it. This reflects St. Emilie's devotion to prayer before the Blessed Sacrament although, in this modern constitution, it does not specify the time to be spent in such adoration. It is one of the differences between the two constitutions that the current constitutions mostly recommends rather than specifies a specific time. This is seen in the next articles, the norms for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, frequently (art 85), the value of prayer in suffering and the need for discernment (art 86) and the recommendation to recite

⁴³⁵ See Chapter 4.2.2 p. 114.

⁴³⁶ *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 5, article 82.

⁴³⁷ *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 5, article 83.

⁴³⁸ *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 5, article 84.

the Hours of the Office, especially lauds and vespers (art 87). The next article, number 88, commences with this statement,

'The life of mental prayer is at the basis of apostolic availability and it makes one capable of acting as a witness to Jesus Christ.'⁴³⁹

It goes on to set as a norm that each Sister should spend an hour each day in mental prayer and spiritual reading.

The final articles contain recommendations for a daily examination of conduct, the annual retreat (not necessarily in common), devotion to Our Lady and St. Joseph, but the forms of devotion are not specified rigidly. As an example Article 92 states,

'They pay very special honour to St. Joseph, first witness of the fulfilment of the Incarnation, and to St. Emilie, whose mission they continue in the Church today.'

This article recommends both to St. Joseph and St. Emilie but it does not specify how it should be done.

It is obvious that both Constitutions emphasized the importance of many kinds of prayer on a regular basis. Both indicate also that to spend time in prayer is vital to be able to respond to God's call and thereby fulfil their vocation as Sisters of St. Joseph. Because of its importance, prayer was included in the questionnaire in order to ascertain the Sisters' view of how it affects their lives.⁴⁴⁰

5.4.5 Divine Providence

As we have seen in Chapter Four St. Emilie frequently used the word 'Providence' in her letters. It was argued that 'the word is describing an experience

⁴³⁹ 1982 Constitutions Art. 88.

⁴⁴⁰ Question 3, See chapter 6.4.2.3. p. 246.

of God's all embracing care for each individual.'⁴⁴¹ However she did not use the word at all when drawing up either the 1835 Constitutions or the 1841 SPDR. It does raise the question of how important this concept was to St. Emilie. As we discussed in Chapter four it was one of the attributes of God to which she was ever ready to give a wondrous witness. She was utterly convinced that everything that happened, whether good or bad, was allowed to occur because God used it in His plan for herself and the Congregation. The Constitutions were written to define the way the Sisters should live under the overall care of Divine Providence. What they were meant to do was to encourage the growth of the necessary virtues to live the life of a Sister of St. Joseph of the Apparition in response to God's call. For whatever the reason she did not find it necessary to mention the need to develop a belief in Divine Providence.

In the 1982 Constitutions the Sisters who drew them up in the General Chapter included several references to Divine Providence. In Chapter Three on Formation in Article twenty it states,

'The Congregation established by God must not fear but must count on him for its continuance and development, so long as it will please Divine Providence to make use of it for his greater glory.'⁴⁴²

Once again this reference seems to refer to God Himself but it expressed faith in His use of the Congregation in His overall plan for creation. Another mention of this virtue comes in Chapter 4 when talking about the vow of poverty,

'With the most confident faith, the Sisters place their life in the hands of the Father, with the assurance that "Divine Providence has taken upon itself to come to their assistance". They can go without fear wherever God leads them.'⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ See Chapter 4.2.4.2, p. 124.

⁴⁴² *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 3, article 20.

⁴⁴³ *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 4, article 62

Within this quotation there is what appears to be a quotation from another document. The reference is not given in the Constitutions and an exact copy of this phrase does not appear in the letters. The sentiment is expressed in several letters, one example being,

‘Divine Providence is always watching over us and provides all that is necessary.’⁴⁴⁴

Article sixty two concludes with what could really be called a definition of Providence,

‘His help will always be forthcoming, often in ways which cannot be foreseen, to those who give their all, even their own lives, in fidelity to their vocation.’⁴⁴⁵

This comment reflects the ways St. Emilie approached her appreciation of God’s Providence. Even if St. Emilie did not use the word in her Constitutions, the concept was important to her, so it would seem that the inclusion of these references in the 1982 Constitutions is evidence of faithfulness to St. Emilie’s Spirit.

Later in this Chapter Four of the 1982 Constitutions, it is stated,

‘In the apostolic life, the Cross may take the form of failure, of persecution, of the most abject impoverishment. Sisters will see in this a call to a greater abandonment to God and to his Providence and an invitation to taste the fruit of vows made to the Lord.’⁴⁴⁶

It seems to link up with a statement made by St. Emilie in a letter to Sister Marie Petit,

‘It seems to me that despite previous afflictions it is really only in Toulouse that I was privileged to taste the fruit of the vows that I made to the Lord.’

When St. Emilie was in Toulouse she was at the height of her financial difficulties when she virtually had no money. She goes on to compare herself with St. Ignatius

⁴⁴⁴ St. Emilie, *Letter 434* to Sister Celeste Peyre 13th June 1854.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁶ *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 4, article 66

of Antioch who declared he really only felt a true Christian just when he was to be martyred.⁴⁴⁷ She then stated,

‘I also said to myself that only then I was beginning to feel I am a religious. How my faith in the fatherly help of Divine Providence has grown! If only I could show each Sister the motherly and fatherly care that the Lord has showered on me.’⁴⁴⁸

It is obvious that the 1982 Constitutions have picked up on the Spirit of St. Emilie in this use of the word Providence. It is also to be noted that Constitutions article 66 has raised the topic of a calling to the way of the Cross which is another of the virtues listed in Chapter Four.⁴⁴⁹ It is not elaborated further in these Constitutions.

A further reference to Providence appears in Chapter Six which is entitled, ‘the Spirit animating the Sisters in the Apostolate’. This firmly states,

‘The apostolic life of the Sisters is based on a true spirit of poverty which arouses their faith and their entire confidence in Providence.’⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁷ St. Ignatius of Antioch, from the Catholic Encyclopaedia, ‘More than one of the earliest ecclesiastical writers have given credence, though apparently without good reason, to the legend that Ignatius was the child whom the Savior took up in His arms, as described in Mark 9:35. It is also believed, and with great probability, that, with his friend Polycarp, he was among the auditors of the Apostle St. John. If we include St. Peter, Ignatius was the third Bishop of Antioch and the immediate successor of Evodius (Eusebius, Church History II.3.22). Theodoret ("Dial. Immutab.", I, iv, 33a, Paris, 1642) is the authority for the statement that St. Peter appointed Ignatius to the See of Antioch. St. John Chrysostom lays special emphasis on the honour conferred upon the martyr in receiving his episcopal consecration at the hands of the Apostles themselves ("Hom. in St. Ig.", IV. 587).

The character of St. Ignatius, as deduced from his own and the extant writings of his contemporaries, is that of a true athlete of Christ. The triple honour of apostle, bishop, and martyr was well merited by this energetic soldier of the Faith. An enthusiastic devotion to duty, a passionate love of sacrifice, and an utter fearlessness in the defence of Christian truth, were his chief characteristics. Zeal for the spiritual well-being of those under his charge breathes from every line of his writings. Ever vigilant lest they be infected by the rampant heresies of those early days; praying for them, that their faith and courage may not be wanting in the hour of persecution; constantly exhorting them to unflinching obedience to their bishops; teaching them all Catholic truth; eagerly sighing for the crown of martyrdom, that his own blood may fructify in added graces in the souls of his flock, he proves himself in every sense a true, pastor of souls, the good shepherd that lays down his life for his sheep.’ O’Connor, John Bonaventure. "St. Ignatius of Antioch", The Catholic Encyclopaedia. Vol. 7. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910.

⁴⁴⁸ St. Emilie, *Letter 288*, to Sister Marie Petit, 15th July 1849.

⁴⁴⁹ See chapter 4.3.1.5. p. 132. This section discusses embracing the Cross and entering into the mission of Christ.

⁴⁵⁰ *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 6, Article 97

This is a very clear statement of the attitude the Sisters should cultivate in relation to God and his Providence. This is emphasized in the final Chapter where article 184 states,

‘So that the work of the apostolate be accomplished, God must have the initiative of our action and must bring it to completion. It is thus that the Sisters, after the example of Saint Emilie, will be able to second the action of Providence.’⁴⁵¹

This chapter speaks about the unity of the Congregation and its fidelity to the call of God. It clearly states that this trust in Divine Providence is consistent with St. Emilie’s spirituality.

In choosing questions for the Questionnaire, a question on Providence was considered. However, a decision was made not to include such a question. The reasons for this was two-fold, the first was because the concept was not included by St. Emilie either in the *Account* or in the 1835 Constitutions. This is not to imply that it was a less important concept for her but she chose not to include it in these two seminal documents. The second reason is that it is not a phrase which is used frequently in spiritual books today. The younger Sisters may not have a clear grasp of its meaning and therefore would be asked to discuss something that they are not familiar with. It would be better to see if it arose from the Sisters themselves and thus see how important a concept it is and what it means to them.

5.4.6 The Incarnate Lord

In chapter four St. Emilie’s vision of the incarnate Lord on the Cross and in the tabernacle of St. Peter’s Church in Gaillac was discussed in detail.⁴⁵² Because it was

⁴⁵¹ 1982 *Constitutions*, chapter 9, Article 184

⁴⁵² See chapter 4.3.1. p. 126.

a vision of Jesus Christ crucified and St. Emilie described it as such. A more modern writer might have described it as a vision of the Incarnate Lord but this was not a term in common use in St. Emilie's time. It is a term that has come to be much used in the modern world and along with it has come the term, Incarnational spirituality.⁴⁵³ It is therefore not surprising that there is no mention of the Incarnation in either the 1835 Constitutions or the 1841 SPDR. However, the 1982 Constitutions constantly refer to Incarnational spirituality although they do not define it. The first mention of this in Chapter 1,

‘The contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation inspired Saint Emilie to found the Institute and to give it the name it bears.’⁴⁵⁴

This is a very strong statement but it does not explain itself. The Constitutions claim that the mystery of the Incarnation is at the basis of St. Emilie's choice of the name of the Congregation, that is St. Joseph of the Apparition. Article six in the same chapter states,

‘Like St. Joseph, Patron of the Institute, the Congregation receives in silence and humility the annunciation of the mystery of the Incarnation.’⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵³ Although this term occurs frequently in many modern books, a literature research using ‘Incarnational Spirituality’ itself was very sparse. J. A. Talvacchia in a small booklet to introduce the Associates of SCHJ to Incarnational Spirituality states, ‘One definition of spirituality is - the way we live our lives in light of our relationship with the divine. When the mystery of God becoming human is the focal point of our relationship with God, it is called Incarnational spirituality.’ *Incarnational Spirituality, An Introduction for SCHJ Associates*. 2010. This is a simple definition and many of the modern scholarship is concentrating on exploring exactly that, how the mystery of God who has become human affects our ways of thinking and acting in relation to Him. Modern theologians such as Edward Schillebeeckx and Hans von Balthasar have written extensively on different aspects of this mystery. Documents from the Vatican are also redolent with teaching on this subject. Paragraph 2 of Dei Verbum states, ‘In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will (see Eph. 1:9) by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature.’

⁴⁵⁴ 1982 Constitutions Chapter 1 Article 2.

⁴⁵⁵ 1982 Constitutions Chapter 1 Article 6.

This statement implies that one of the bases of the Congregation's response to God is that it imitates its patron and receives the revelation of the Incarnation 'in silence and humility'. This article links up with the first quotation that linked the incarnation and how it resulted in the name of the Congregation. However, article three points in a different direction,

'Called by the Holy Spirit to enter into the movement of divine charity, the Congregation seeks to share in the mission for which the Son of God became incarnate and which He fulfils in the Church.'⁴⁵⁶

In this first chapter the Constitutions are describing the Congregation itself and in this article it is stating that the call to the Congregation is to join in the mission of the Incarnate Son. This is a strong statement and it links up with St. Emilie's attitude to accepting 'crosses' which she felt brought her closer to the Lord in His mission.⁴⁵⁷

In Constitution Chapter Four in the section on poverty it states,

'For love of God and in order to manifest the generosity of the love He has for all persons, the Sisters are called upon to enter into the movement of the Incarnation of the Son of God who comes to share our human condition (d. Phil 2, 6ff). Thus, following Christ who was poor, they will become capable of hearing the cry of the poor.'⁴⁵⁸

These statements very clearly place the response to God, by the members of this Congregation, as a 'joining in' the 'movement of divine charity', that is God motivated and impelled by love, going to those in need; moving from His glory to the wounded state of humanity. It was to 'fallen' humanity to whom the Son of God was sent in order to give them new life. This sentiment is repeated in the above quotation from

⁴⁵⁶ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 1, article 3.

⁴⁵⁷ See 4.3.1.5 p. 132.

⁴⁵⁸ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 4, article 60.

Chapter Four. The article is one from the section on Poverty and it refers to 2 Philipians 6ff, which refers to the self-emptying of Christ,

‘Who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being.’ Phil. 2:6-7.

Thus, it would seem that part of the way of responding to God is to enter into a radical self-emptying in order to be able to go out to those in need. This kenosis links up with the idea of a total gift of self which was discussed in Chapter Four.⁴⁵⁹ For St. Emilie everything she had was at the disposal of God.

In addition to these articles there is an article on devotion to Our Lady and St. Joseph which also have direct reference to the Incarnation.

‘They pay very special honour to St. Joseph, first witness of the fulfilment of the Incarnation,’⁴⁶⁰

It would seem, therefore, that for the Sisters in 1982, they wished to state that the spirituality of the Congregation sits firmly in Incarnational Theology. This is a departure from what St. Emilie would have said, as she would never had used such language. However, it is obvious that in the vision she had in St. Peter’s Church she saw the Incarnate Lord, wounded and offering himself for everyone. This could be interpreted as an invitation from God to join in the movement of the Incarnate Lord to those in need of salvation. The 1982 Constitutions give a deeper reflection on this and develop the concept that at the source of the Congregation’s spirituality is an insertion, following God’s invitation, into the mission of the Incarnate Lord who reaches out to those in need..

⁴⁵⁹ See 4.2.3 p.118.

⁴⁶⁰ *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 5, article 94.

This is a development of the theological basis of the spirituality. All Christian Spiritualities are based on the mystery of the Incarnation. This belief in the mission of the second person of the Trinity, has to play a part in every Christian's response to God. As a group of Christians, the Congregation's spirituality has to have the Incarnation as a fundamental base. It is certain aspects of this mystery which are emphasised in the spirituality of the Congregation. Two of these aspects seem to be the self-emptying of Christ and His movement to those in need. It can be seen that the 'seeds' of this spiritual orientation are present in the original inspiration of St. Emilie and that the reflection of subsequent members, especially in the light of both their own experience of responding to God's personal call and of greater theological understanding of God's revelation in Christ, has produced a deepening of understanding of the original impulse. So important is this development that a question was included in the questionnaire on how much of an influence this mystery is in the everyday lives of the members today.⁴⁶¹

5.4.7 Suffering

In the previous chapter, under the heading of virtues as a result of God's own self-revelation, there was a discussion about St. Emilie's attitude to suffering.⁴⁶² In that chapter it was argued that she came to see suffering as indicating the mark of God's favour. She saw it as being part of her espousal of a crucified God and it was both a sign and an opportunity for God's blessings. She also saw how the Incarnate Lord had come down to those who suffered and she wanted to join Him in His union with those who suffer and also to minister to Him in His suffering. However, she did

⁴⁶¹ Question Eight. See 6.4.2.8, p. 266.

⁴⁶² See 4.3.1.4, p.131.

not write anything into the 1835 Constitutions or the SPDR on this topic. It was through her letters that her attitude to suffering was deduced.

The 1982 Constitutions has several direct references to it. The first comes in Chapter Two, which describes the Sisters themselves,

‘They will see Christ in anyone who suffers and will take pains to give him solace in every circumstance and by every means.’⁴⁶³

This statement links up powerfully with the vision where St. Emilie saw the suffering Incarnate Christ in the tabernacle. It was through this that she wanted to reach out to those who were suffering and bring them healing and solace by being the instrument of Christ to them. In the chapter on formation it states,

‘Formation must sustain conversion at every stage of life, so that zeal for God and one's neighbour should not be disconcerted by trials and suffering, but should come through them purified and strengthened. The Sisters will seek to recognize that God leads them through the events of their life.’⁴⁶⁴

St. Emilie was utterly convinced that God had an overall plan, Divine Providence, and that everything that happened was permitted and He could use it to bring a person closer to Him. This article acknowledges that it is often a hard lesson to learn but that it is vital for those who want to share their faith with others. This idea is reinforced in Chapter four when dealing with poverty,

‘In the apostolic life, the Cross may take the form of failure, of persecution, of the most abject impoverishment. Sisters will see in this a call to a greater abandonment to God and to his Providence and an invitation to taste the fruit of vows made to the Lord.’⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶³ 1982 *Constitutions* Chapter 2, Article 10.

⁴⁶⁴ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 3, article 18.

⁴⁶⁵ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 4. Article 66.

Once again there is a reference here to virtues discussed in Chapter Four of the thesis, the total gift of self and the acceptance of the Cross in the spiritual life.⁴⁶⁶ Later the Constitutions underline that suffering is something that the Holy Spirit may demand of the Sisters,

‘By patience in trials, by the acceptance of the fatigues and sufferings inherent in the missionary apostolate, by the unremitting search after an adapted asceticism, the Sisters will collaborate humbly with the work of the Spirit.’⁴⁶⁷

This article comes from the chapter which is entitled ‘Union with God in prayer and action’, and it is speaking about having a readiness to personal conversion, an awareness of the need for spiritual combat and to fight against evil wherever it is found. It is after this that the quotation above is inserted and it acknowledges that suffering may be a part of the response to the Spirit’s leading. The final entry which includes a mention of suffering is,

‘In the simple life⁴⁶⁸ they lead, which is poor and ordinary, through the suffering and joys shared in community and with those around them, the Sisters participate in the mystery of Christ, who gave his life to bring all people together.’⁴⁶⁹

This article refers to the simplicity of the life the Sisters live together and of its union with the mission of Christ and in which both sufferings and joys have a part to play in bringing the Sisters into union.

5.4.8 Works of Charity

In the 1835 Constitutions the first mention of ‘Works of Charity’ comes in Chapter One when St. Emilie is describing the means of achieving the aims of the

⁴⁶⁶ See chapter 4.2.3 p.118 and 4.3.1.5. p.132.

⁴⁶⁷ *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 5. Article 86.

⁴⁶⁸ See 4.5.3.3. p.155.

⁴⁶⁹ *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 7. Article 109.

Congregation. She has said the first aim is the perfection of the members⁴⁷⁰ and the means to achieve this are,

‘The practice of the three simple vows of Religion, according to the spirit of the Institute, moreover, the practice of the vow of consecrating themselves to the various works of charity, according to the same spirit.’⁴⁷¹

This is a direct translation from the French text and it could be argued that the word ‘charity’ in English is slightly more restrictive in its meaning than its equivalent in French.⁴⁷² In English, it implies the limited and acceptable works undertaken by local gentry to help the poor on their estates, or those of Christian women attempting to ‘rescue’ sinners such as prostitutes. In French it does have this meaning but also has more of a wider sense of love. So the translation could be ‘works of love’. St. Emilie does not list these ‘works of love’ at this point but she has already said that the second aim of the Congregation is ‘the spiritual and physical good of the

⁴⁷⁰ 1835 *Constitutions*, Chapter 1, Article 1. .

⁴⁷¹ 1835 *Constitutions*, Chapter 1, Article 2.

⁴⁷² A book by F.K. Prochaska called *Women and Philanthropy in 19th Century England*, gives a very comprehensive account of the voluntary work of women as an occupation which was acceptable in 19th century. On page 5 it says, ‘Philanthropy was the vocation that most often came to mind.’ This was what a ‘respectable’ women could do.’ On page 6 a quotation was give from Sarah Ellis (*Education of the heart, women’s best work, London 1869, p. 14*), ‘As society is at present a lady may do almost anything from motives of charity or zeal.’ In France the situation was much the same as in England. S. K., Foley in *Women in France since 1789*, writes on p. 52, ‘Women were expected to devote one or two afternoons per week to charity work, and they spent many additional hours producing items for sale at charity bazaars.’ So in the society of both France and England in the 19th century ‘works of charity’ were many and varied. In chapter VI of her book, Prochaska discusses the many various activities of ‘charitable women’ which included seeking the reform of prostitutes, sweat-shop women, drunks, factory workers, Irish navies and other poorer members of society. It also included the running of ‘rescue societies which were run by women of all classes to help prostitutes and their children.

The word ‘charity’ in both countries means ‘love’ but love that is associated with philanthropy rather than the freely given, non-judgemental love of God. Today the word charity in English retains this association with philanthropy and the word is not used in relation to God. In French, this is not always the case and sometime charity is used for God’s love. An example of this can be found in Jude 1:1-2. From the french version of the Jerusalem Bible, ‘aux appelés, aimés de Père et gardés por Jésus Christ. A vous miséricorde et paix et charité en abondance.’ This is translated in the English version of that bible to ‘to those who are dear to God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ, mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.’ It is a subtle difference in the use of the word but worth pointing out to primary English speakers that the translation legitimately could be ‘works of love’ which has a wider meaning than ‘works of charity’.

neighbour.’⁴⁷³ She then goes on to give this list as the means of achieving the second aim,

1. ‘Christian education of poor children, for whom they run a free school.
2. Caring of the sick at home, in hospitals, in prisons and generally everywhere where their services are demanded, without omitting the houses of refuge.’⁴⁷⁴

These were the two main focuses of the works done in the early houses. This pattern of works was similar in all the establishments in her time. However, it was not rigidly adhered to, for in some foundations, if there was a need, orphanages were opened. It seems to have been the needs of the area which prompted the establishment of the type of work. The Constitutions do not lay down absolute rules for the type of work to be undertaken. There is much more information about this available from her letters, especially those letters she has sent to establish various missions. In one such letter she wrote,

‘I see it is the Lord Himself who is directing you towards this mission because it is by circumstances that the will of God manifests itself.’⁴⁷⁵

There are several letters in which she expresses the sentiment that she understands the circumstances of events, are used by God to convey His wishes to her.

In chapter four,⁴⁷⁶ it was discussed how St. Emilie’s vision of the Incarnate Lord in the Tabernacle could have been at the basis of her call to go to all humanity in any kind of need. In the SPDR, which amplified the Constitutions after some years of lived experience, she specifically states,

⁴⁷³ 1835 *Constitutions*, Chapter 1, Article 1.

⁴⁷⁴ 1835 *Constitutions*, Chapter 1, Article 4.1 and 4.2.

⁴⁷⁵ St. Emilie, *Letter 336*, To Sister Gabrielle Cœur de Roy, 21st February 1852.

⁴⁷⁶ See Chapter 4.3.1.3. p. 128.

'The spirit of this Congregation is to dedicate the Sisters to the exercise of the different works of charity.'⁴⁷⁷

St. Emilie, herself, goes on to unpack this statement more in the next article,

'To acquire this divine virtue, they meditate every day of their life on the immense charity which fills the heart of Jesus Christ, and they strive to imitate his zeal for the salvation of souls, and his great mercy towards the neighbour. They often reflect on the adorable wounds of Christ, so that, thinking constantly about God's love for men, they maintain and increase each day the feelings of compassion and zeal that must animate them towards those around them.'⁴⁷⁸

This is a call to consider the immensity of God's love as revealed to us in the coming of Jesus Christ. It is also a call to imitate His total gift of self even enduring such physical wounds, in order to reach out and be more sensitive to the needs of those around them. There are several of the virtues described in Chapter Four which find echoes here; the total gift of self, the call to embrace the cross; the desire to join the Christ in His saving mission and the call to meditate regularly on the great love of God which was revealed in the Incarnation.

The next time this term, Works of Charity, is used in the 1835 Constitutions, is in relation to the fourth vow. In Chapter Six the introduction states,

'Since by the Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, known as of the Apparition, the Sisters commit themselves by the three simple vows of religion, according to the spirit of the Institute, and by a fourth vow to devote themselves to the various works of charity, according to the spirit of the same Institute.'⁴⁷⁹

This vow seems to have been given equal importance by St. Emilie to the three traditional vows of Religious Life, Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. This would

⁴⁷⁷ St. Emilie, *SPDR, 1841*, Chapter 2, Article 3.

⁴⁷⁸ St. Emilie. *SPDR, 1841*, Chapter 2, article 4.

⁴⁷⁹ St. Emilie, *1835 Constitutions*, Chapter 6, Introduction.

indicate that it was a very important concept for the foundress. More will be said of this vow in a subsequent section of this chapter.⁴⁸⁰

In turning to the 1982 Constitutions the term, 'Works of Charity' is frequently used and it is written in parenthesis, making it the name of the concept under discussion. In Chapter one it states,

'By the "works of charity" to which the Sisters dedicate themselves, the Congregation is by vocation a living sign today of the love of God which has become incarnate and which reaches people through human actions.'⁴⁸¹

This statement strongly emphasises that it is by these works that the Sisters are called to 'living signs' of the God made man in the world today. It describes their human actions as reaching out to people and thus being a sign of God's love for them. In the next chapter these works are outlined,

'The impetus of love which the Holy Spirit has poured into their hearts prompts them to devote to the relief of the needy, to the care of the sick and the poor, to the various types of education and to every charitable work, their possessions and their energies, even to the sacrifice of their lives, should the need arise.'⁴⁸²

This statement also contains echoes of the virtues which were listed above; the great love of God which the Holy Spirit pours in, the impulse to go out to those in need; total self-giving; and acceptance of suffering for the needs of the mission. This article uses phrases in ways that St. Emilie would not have used them. The reference to the Holy Spirit would not have come to her mind as the role of the Spirit is much better articulated today than in her era. In her letters St. Emilie uses a direct reference to the Holy Spirit only once,

⁴⁸⁰ See 5.4.11 p. 213.

⁴⁸¹ *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 1, article 4.

⁴⁸² *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 2, article 11.

‘The people of Rome love him [Pope Pius IX], and each one is delighted with the choice that the Holy Spirit has made.’⁴⁸³

She usually refers to God either as God or the Lord, and quite often uses Divine Providence in that role.

Article eleven, quoted above, lists some of the varieties of works that the Sisters undertake prompted by the experience of love being poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit. In the French version of the 1982 Constitutions the word used for ‘love’ is once again ‘Charité’. The full phrase is, ‘L’*élan* de Charité’, which the English translator of the Constitutions⁴⁸⁴ in 1982 gave as ‘the surge of charity.’ The word ‘*élan*’ has a meaning in English, ‘Energy, style, and enthusiasm’.⁴⁸⁵ It would seem to say that what is trying to be conveyed here is the sense of being motivated to works of love by the experience of love being poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

The next time the phrase is used is in the introductory article of Chapter Four which speaks about the vows,

‘They commit themselves by vow to follow Christ, who was poor, obedient and chaste, and, according to the charism of St. Emilie, to dedicate themselves to the “works of charity”’.⁴⁸⁶

However, there is no mention of a fourth vow in this chapter and this will be discussed in the section on the vows.⁴⁸⁷

The next mention of the phrase is in the un-numbered introduction to Chapter Six which speaks about the attitude the Sisters have to the apostolate. As

⁴⁸³ St. Emilie, *Letter 221*, to Father Bourgade, 23rd August 1846

⁴⁸⁴ The Constitutions were translated immediately after their approbation in 1982 by a White Father whose name is not recorded.

⁴⁸⁵ Online Oxford Dictionary, accessed 26th April 2015.

⁴⁸⁶ *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 4, article 58.

⁴⁸⁷ See 5.4.11 p. 213.

an introduction to the chapter the Sisters included two quotations from the SPDR.

The first of these is,

"The spirit of this Congregation is to dedicate the Sisters to the practice of the different works of charity".⁴⁸⁸

In the SPDR this is the first article in chapter 2 which is entitled 'The Works of Charity' and the Sister in 1982 decided to include it verbatim in the introduction to this chapter. In article 96 in the same chapter, it is stated,

'The spirit of simplicity and humility makes them accept with a like joy the various apostolic tasks and love the most humble services.'⁴⁸⁹

While this sentence does not use the phrase, it implies that such works are very variable and often not all that glamorous. This chapter states that it is by these various 'works of Charity' that the Sisters maintain a sense of unity.⁴⁹⁰

This concept is an important one for St. Emilie and it is highlighted in the 1982 Constitutions. Because of its importance to the foundress to the extent that she made it a fourth vow, it was included as a question in the Questionnaire.⁴⁹¹

5.4.9 St. Joseph

In the previous chapter of the thesis, there has been a discussion of St. Emilie's insistence on St. Joseph as the Patron and the name of the Congregation as that of St. Joseph of the Apparition. In the first Constitutions she lists the feasts that are to be celebrated by the Congregation in Chapter Three. It begins with,

'As the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph is placed under the special protection of this saint, his feast will be celebrated every

⁴⁸⁸ St. Emilie, *SPDR*. Chapter 2, Article 3. quoted in the introduction to chapter 6 in the 1982 Constitutions.

⁴⁸⁹ *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 6, article 95

⁴⁹⁰ *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 6, article 98

⁴⁹¹ Question Six, see 6.4.2.6. p. 258.

year in all the houses of the Congregation wherever there is a chapel,⁴⁹²

She then goes on to list some other feasts which should be especially celebrated in the Communities.

‘This feast and those of the Sacred Heart, of Our Lady of the Rosary, of St. Francis de Sales and St. Francis Xavier, will all be a day of general communion in all the houses of the Congregation.’⁴⁹³

It is interesting to note that by the time she wrote the SPDR, she had added to this list of Saints, St. Peter, St. Augustine, St. Eugene, but St. Joseph remained in the primary position. However, there is no expansion of the reasons for these additional devotions.

The 1982 Constitutions frequently refer to the Congregation by the name St. Joseph of the Apparition. It appears to have become an established title. In the very first article the Constitutions describe the Congregation in the Church as an Apostolic Missionary Congregation which has the name St. Joseph of the Apparition. Article two begins with three passages of scripture,

‘God is Love (I Jn. 4:16).
He revealed himself to all people (Mt. 1: 20-24)
and made known to them the mystery of his Will (Eph. 1:9).’⁴⁹⁴

These scriptural quotations are immediately followed by the second half of article two which was quoted in the section above on Incarnational spirituality,⁴⁹⁵ which claims that it is in the contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation that St. Emilie chose the name of the Congregation. These Gospel passages need to be applied to the name to understand why the Sisters placed them there at the very beginning of

⁴⁹² 1835 Constitutions Chapter 3.

⁴⁹³ 1835 Constitutions, Chapter 3.

⁴⁹⁴ 1982 Constitutions Chapter 1, Article 2.

⁴⁹⁵ See chapter 5.4.6. p.190.

the Constitutions. Within that name is a revelation of God who is love, who reveals himself and thus makes known his mysterious plan for us.

The full name of St. Joseph of the Apparition is used throughout the 1982 Constitutions whenever the Congregation is referred to. It is never shortened to the Sisters of St. Joseph in this document.

The 1982 Constitutions only have one article that directly speaks of devotion to St. Joseph and it also includes St. Emilie,

‘They pay very special honour to St. Joseph, first witness of the fulfilment of the Incarnation, and to St. Emilie, whose mission they continue in the Church today.’⁴⁹⁶

This article is in Chapter Five which is entitled ‘Union with God in prayer’. The article before speaks of Devotion to Our Lady, once again the emphasis is about her role in the Incarnation,

‘It is by the Virgin Mary and in her that the Incarnation of the Son of God took place. She teaches docility to the Spirit to everyone. The Sisters will be faithful each day to recite the Angelus and to meditate on some of the mysteries of the Rosary.’⁴⁹⁷

There are no other saints listed for special devotion although there is one small mention of St. Emilie. In this respect the two Constitutions differ as it would seem that while prayer, in itself, is greatly encouraged in both documents, devotional prayer to certain Saints has become a matter of personal choice with the exception of devotion to Our Lady, St. Joseph and St. Emilie. It would also seem that the way in which these two articles, articles 91 and 92, were written, reflected the Sisters’ understanding of spirituality of the Incarnation as being a fundamental element in the Congregation’s spirituality. This is a development as St. Emilie did not emphasise

⁴⁹⁶ 1982 Constitutions Chapter 5, Article 92.

⁴⁹⁷ 1982 Constitutions Chapter 5, Article 91.

the Incarnation in this way. In her era there was a movement in the French Church which came, after her death, to be called the French School of spirituality. Its adherents were wholeheartedly influenced by the Incarnation and its spirituality is described to this day as Incarnational.⁴⁹⁸ As was discussed in the section on Incarnation in this chapter of the thesis, Incarnational spirituality is the fundamental revelation of God in Christ. For those writers ascribed to the French School of spirituality, the revelation of the God made man, was a dominant theme in their response to God. Both the evidence from her vision in St. Peter's Church and the name of the Congregation, reveal that the Incarnation affected St. Emilie's response to God. Her vision of the Incarnate Lord has been extensively discussed and the importance of this event and its effect on her spirituality has been shown to be fundamental to her growth in her response to God.⁴⁹⁹ Similarly, the discussion about St. Joseph and the Apparition described in Matthew's Gospel, also has elements of the news of the Incarnation.⁵⁰⁰ However in her writings the emphasis seems to be more on the call to enter into one aspect of the Incarnation, the call from God to self-emptying and reaching out to those in need, even when that may mean great personal cost. This aspect of the Incarnation is aptly represented by the Gospel Passage in Matthew which illustrates Joseph receiving a direct call from God to turn from his own plans and facilitate the plan of God for the salvation of all. The vision

⁴⁹⁸ This school of Spirituality experienced a resurgence of popularity after Vatican II when many Congregations which were founded when its influence on Catholic Spirituality was great, began to take an interest. Its recognition in the late 19th century is well documented by a body of literature. Some of the books in this genre are, *Berulle and the French School: selected writings*, *The French School of Spirituality* by Raymond Deville, *Post Reformation Spirituality* Louis Cognet, [Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité](#) which is available on-line. It was also possible to access some of the works of St. John Eudes and Jean-Jacques Olier, these are listed in the Bibliography. The writings of Cardinal Berulle are available in modern French through les Edition du Cerf.

⁴⁹⁹ See 4.3.1 p.126f.

⁵⁰⁰ See 4.3.2 p.135f.

also can lead to a desire to be united with the Lord in His intimate becoming one with suffering humanity, not just to endure suffering but to change it into a redemptive act. It is this specific aspect of Incarnational spirituality which appears to be the Foundress' foundation to her spirituality. This is acknowledged in the 1982 Constitutions in the final article which includes a reference to St. Joseph which would support this statement. In Chapter One article 7 states,

'Like St. Joseph, Patron of the Institute, the Congregation receives in silence and humility the annunciation of the mystery of the Incarnation. In abandonment to God, it is zealous in its efforts to serve his plan, in accordance with his Will.'⁵⁰¹

This implies that the spirit of the Congregation is in harmony with the spirit of St. Joseph which is exhibited in the Apparition story. In this story there is an announcement of the Incarnation, a silent submission to the plan of God which transforms St. Joseph's life. However, It seems that in the current Constitutions, the influence of the St. Joseph's response, as described in Chapter Four of the thesis,⁵⁰² has taken a step back in favour of contemplating the total mystery of the Incarnation. The question could be asked as to how this fits in with the foundress' insistence on keeping the name which refers to both the Saint and the Gospel passage. The 1982 Constitutions seem to place a great deal more emphasis on the influence of the Incarnation and less on the role of St. Joseph. A decision was made to add a question to the questionnaire to ask the current membership what they thought was significant in the name St. Emilie gave the Congregation.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰¹ 1982 *Constitutions* Chapter 1, Article 7.

⁵⁰² See 4.3.2.1 p.135.

⁵⁰³ Question 4, see 6.4.2.4. p. 250.

5.4.10 Mission

In chapter Four, of the thesis, there was a discussion of the three different meanings of the word 'mission'; one definition being an exclusive call to going out to the far distant countries where Christianity is not well known or practised, the second definition as being primarily to be sent by God to those who do not believe wherever they may be, at home or abroad and the final meaning of the word applies to any project undertaken as a response to God's urging. In chapter four it was discussed that St. Emilie probably was not concerned with definitions. She felt drawn to the foreign mission but equally she felt drawn to the needs of believers and unbelievers at home.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the word in any of its meanings does not appear anywhere in the 1835 Constitutions or in the SPDR. The only description of works undertaken have already been discussed in the previous section on 'Works of Charity'. However, the history of the Congregation tells us that at the time of writing these Constitutions she had already founded the first foreign mission in Algeria.

The third definition of mission, being sent by God to do a particular project, is the one which is closest to the meaning of the word when used as the third element of the charism. What is unique about this third element is that because of the particular faith vision which the members share as a result of their shared spirituality, they interpret God's call to undertake apostolic work and carry it out in a manner strongly influenced by their spirituality. The Sisters of this Congregation live in Community, in the midst of the people they serve and they are drawn to minister to those who have the greatest needs, either spiritual or material.

In the 1982 Constitutions the very first article defines the Congregation as ‘a religious missionary Institute of pontifical right.’⁵⁰⁴ In these Constitutions there are several references to ‘the mission’ of the Congregation. The first comes in article 3,

‘Called by the Holy Spirit to enter into the movement of divine charity, the Congregation seeks to share in the mission for which the Son of God became incarnate and which He fulfils in the Church.’⁵⁰⁵

The word ‘mission’ is here being used in its widest sense. It also firmly situates the Congregation in the mission of the Church. It is reminiscent of the opening paragraph of chapter one of *Ad Gentes*,

‘The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father.’⁵⁰⁶

It is certainly true to say that the congregation is called by the Holy Spirit to take its place as the Church fulfils its missionary imperative. What is specific for the Congregation is that it does this through its specific spirituality, the habitual way of responding to God,⁵⁰⁷ the Holy Spirit has endowed it with.

One of the characteristics of this charism is described in chapter 2,

‘Attentive to the calls of the Spirit in the Church and discerning the signs of God in world events, it is to all people, without distinction of religion, race or social condition, that they wish to witness, after the example of Christ, to the unfathomable riches of God's love.’⁵⁰⁸

This describes a mission which is universal and open to all. It is not targeting any one place or social class. It is affirming that the choice of where the Sisters work, and the nature of that work, is in response to ‘the calls of the Spirit and discerning the signs

⁵⁰⁴ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 1, Article 1.

⁵⁰⁵ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 1, Article 3.

⁵⁰⁶ Decree *Ad Gentes*, on the mission activity of the church. Vatican II 1965.

⁵⁰⁷ See chapter 1.3.3, p. 15.

⁵⁰⁸ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 2 article 12.

of God in world events.’ This is a development of the original impetus of St. Emilie to go wherever the Lord sent her which included an attraction to the foreign missions, ‘but not exclusively’.⁵⁰⁹ In the 150 years (1832-1982) of the Congregation it had established foundations on a world-wide basis. The choice of these missions has been as a result of discernment of the will of God.

In chapter Three the following description is given,

‘To be a missionary, is to be on the move with Christ and to follow him in the whole of his mystery, up to and including his Pasch.’⁵¹⁰

This is situated in the chapter on formation and it would seem to be saying that being sent by God demands total commitment and sacrifice. This echoes the virtue of total self-commitment⁵¹¹ and also the spirit of sacrifice in chapter three.⁵¹²

In the next article it states,

‘The whole of formation comes within the ambit of the missionary project of the Congregation and has apostolic zeal as its motive.’

This statement is claiming that part of the missionary project of the Congregation is to form Sisters so that they may be effective in this apostolate. It implies that there is an appropriate formation for the missionary project of the Congregation. The reason for doing this is to deepen the commitment to the various projects God has given to the Congregation, many of which are in the far missions. This is true for formation at all levels as it is explicitly stated in the remainder of the article,

‘The whole Congregation, each of the Provinces and Communities, will be the place in which a vocation is matured and confirmed at every age. Thus, the Congregation will be able to fulfil the mission with which it is entrusted by the Church.’⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁹ St Emilie, *letter 130*, To an Unidentified Minister, Summer 1842. See also 4.4.1. p.139.

⁵¹⁰ *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 3, Article 18.

⁵¹¹ See 4.2.3. p. 118.

⁵¹² See 3.5.1. p. 82.

⁵¹³ *1982 Constitutions*, Chapter 3, Article 19.

The use of the word 'mission' in this part is back to the task confided to the Congregation by the Church. The increase in referring to 'mission' in the 1982 Constitutions testifies to the understanding of the Sisters who drew up these Constitutions, of how important missionary spirituality is in the charism of the Congregation. There is an article that states,

'The charism of the Institute makes of the Congregation an apostolic body, a unique missionary Community.'⁵¹⁴

It is the charism that carries the uniqueness of the Congregation but It has been argued that there are three elements in each charism, the Members, the spirituality and the mission, all of which contain elements that contribute to the uniqueness of the Congregation.

From the first chapter it was stated that it is God who calls each individual Member and who also forms them and endows them with a spirituality appropriate for the Congregation to which He is calling them. If this is a missionary congregation then He will have called them to be missionaries as well and given them the spirituality which is appropriate for that particular calling. This is a slightly different use of the word 'mission'. It is describing an attitude that is proper to the person's spirituality. In chapter 3 St. Emilie affirms that she felt attracted to the foreign missions.⁵¹⁵ In Chapter Four the Foundress' call to mission was discussed and it was clearly a strong call to her. This was part of her spirituality but she would not have thought of it in her time because spirituality was not used in that way in her era.

It is very clear that in the 1982 Constitutions that this aspect of the spirituality has been strengthened and developed. As the spirituality is lived by the members it

⁵¹⁴ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 7, Article 100.

⁵¹⁵ See 3.6.4. p. 94.

develops in the sense that it is deepened but not fundamentally changed. It can be likened to like a tree grows from a sapling to a mature tree. In the current Constitutions the missionary aspect of the spirituality has developed in continuity with the development of the understanding of missionary spirituality in the Church and the world. Mission, in this sense, is a particular apostolic work, described as a missionary spirit. In this phrase, missionary Spirit,⁵¹⁶ there is a different use of the word 'mission'. Missionary spirituality is a particular apostolic work, described as a missionary spirit, way of responding to God which involves the sharing of faith to those who do not know Christ. In the Decree on the Missions from Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, it states about mission,

"Missions" is the term usually given to those particular undertakings by which the heralds of the Gospel, sent out by the Church and going forth into the whole world, carry out the task of preaching the Gospel and planting the Church among peoples or groups who do not yet believe in Christ.'⁵¹⁷

It then goes on to state,

'The proper purpose of this missionary activity is evangelization, and the planting of the Church among those peoples and groups where it has not yet taken root.'⁵¹⁸

A missionary spirit is an impulse to evangelise. Not just in the far missions but also in de-christianised areas like many countries in Europe today. This impulse is a virtue

⁵¹⁶ There is a large body of modern literature which relates to Missionary Spirituality. According to L. Nemer, 'the category "missionary spirituality" only appeared in the *Bibliographia Missionaria* late in the 1970's (Missiology: An International Review, Vol. XI, No. 4, October, 1983). Part of the reason for the idea of Missionary Spirituality being a relatively new concept, is that the word 'spirituality' had a different meaning as was discussed in chapter One 1.2.3f. Books on the topic began to appear after the 1970's. Two of these are D. J. Bosch, *A spirituality of the road*, originally printed in 1979 but reissued in 2001; Michael Reilly's *Spirituality for the Mission* in 1980. There is one of the decrees from Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, on the missionary activity of the Church. Twenty-five years later John Paul II wrote an Encyclical called *Redemptoris Missio* in which he extensively discusses Missionary Spirituality, Chapter 8. The concept of Missionary Spirituality is an evolving one and a very different and much more complex a topic than was understood in the Foundress' era.

⁵¹⁷ *Ad Gentes*, Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church, 1965. Para. 6

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*

which has been placed in the person by God and He gives the gifts necessary to accomplish it. In *Redemptoris Missio*, St. John Paul wrote,

'This spirituality is expressed first of all by a life of complete docility to the Spirit. It commits us to being moulded from within by the Spirit, so that we may become ever more like Christ. It is not possible to bear witness to Christ without reflecting his image, which is made alive in us by grace and the power of the Spirit. This docility then commits us to receive the gifts of fortitude and discernment, which are essential elements of missionary spirituality.'⁵¹⁹

This description of being totally available to the Spirit is certainly compatible with the virtues of total gift of self and reliance on the direct guidance of God before action.

The way that this is accomplished is affected by the spirituality and the response of the Sisters. The works of the Congregation have often been of a practical nature rather than 'preaching the Gospel' directly. *Ad Gentes* comments,

'missionaries can and must at least bear witness to Christ by charity and by works of mercy, with all patience, prudence and great confidence. Thus they will prepare the way for the Lord and make Him somehow present.'⁵²⁰

This statement seems to be very appropriate for many of the Communities who live and serve in countries where there is State objections to any kind of proselytizing. The Sisters work to alleviate the suffering of the poor, especially when they cannot afford medical care, teach adults and children basic skills, reading, writing, parenting, budgeting and minor husbandry. In all of this they give witness to the care and love God has for each one. The Sisters in 1982 felt it to be a very important element and so they state,

'The Congregation must take care that the missionary aspect of its charism remains the distinctive trait of a Sister of St. Joseph of the

⁵¹⁹ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, para 87.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

Apparition. It is God who sends them and this is what constitutes the spiritual dynamism of the apostolic life.'⁵²¹

This article is from Chapter Nine which discusses unity and fidelity in the Congregation and it gives a warning that the missionary aspect is not to be lost. It is fundamental to the very nature of the Congregation that it has been given this missionary spirit by God and this is what empowers their life as 'apostles' of God today. Because this is such an important topic a question on missionary spirituality was included in the questionnaire.⁵²²

5.4.11 Religious life: The Vows

It is in the treatment of the vows that it is possible to see that there has been a great change in understanding of these important 'acts of commitment' to God. In the 1835 Constitutions there are only six paragraphs which refer to the vows, whereas in the 1982 version there are eighteen articles. In both Constitutions there is a chapter dedicated to them.

St. Emilie starts her constitutions with a very strong statement that one of the two means that the Sisters will employ to attain the first aim of the Congregation, that is the perfection⁵²³ of the member, is,

'The practice of the three simple vows of Religion, according to the spirit of the Institute, moreover, the practice of the vow of consecrating themselves to the various works of charity, according to the same spirit.'⁵²⁴

⁵²¹ 1982 Constitutions, Chapter 9, Article 183.

⁵²² See 6.4.2.11. p. 278.,

⁵²³ See 5.4.3, p. 180, Fn. 424.

⁵²⁴ 1835 Constitutions, Chapter 1, Article 2, (1).

It is to be noted that there are four vows, Obedience, Poverty, Chastity and a Consecration to the 'Works of Charity'.⁵²⁵ Chapter six is the chapter devoted to the vows and in its introduction she stated,

'the Sisters commit themselves by the three simple vows of religion, according to the spirit of the Institute, and by a fourth vow to devote themselves to the various works of charity, according to the spirit of the same Institute, it is important that they understand the spirit in which they pronounce the vows, and the extent of their commitments.'⁵²⁶

This is followed by a short description of each vow beginning with Poverty, then Obedience, Chastity and the Consecration to the Works of Charity. There is no attempt to outline anything of the theological basis of each vow. Essentially what is written is practical; renounce goods in heart and mind, obey your superiors, do nothing to compromise Chastity and either teach or care for the sick with the fourth vow. However, St. Emilie stated at the beginning that it was the 'practice' of the vows, that is, the living of them to the fullest extent which was one way in which the Sisters would achieve 'perfection' which is one of the aims of the Congregation.

The section on Consecration in the 1982 Constitutions is much more developed on several levels as there is both the practical directives and often some attention is paid to the theological and scriptural basis of the various vows. In addition the language used is closer to that of the modern era. To give an example the 1982 Constitutions give as the aim of the Congregation,

'In view of the ever greater glory of God, it proposes as its aim the sanctification of its members and the good of the neighbour.'⁵²⁷

⁵²⁵ 1835 *Constitutions*, Chapter 1, Article 2, paragraph 1

⁵²⁶ 1835 *Constitutions*, Introduction to Chapter six, no numbered articles.

⁵²⁷ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 1, Article 3.

In this statement the two original aims are present but the word 'perfection' has been replaced by 'sanctification'. It is also stated that this is 'in view of the greater glory of God'.

In the modern Constitutions the vows are included in a chapter which is entitled 'Consecration'. The concept of Consecration is used frequently in the first two chapters. The very first article of Chapter one which describes the type of Religious Congregation it is, states, 'whose members consecrate themselves to God with a view to the apostolate.' In chapter two which describes the 'being' of the Sisters, the word is used in three articles; 'Consecrated by God for the spread of his kingdom (art. 8); 'The Sisters live out their consecration in an apostolic community.' (art. 13) and 'The consecration stamps their whole existence with the seal of the Pasch.' (art. 14) The word consecration means to be dedicated to God for His use. It can apply to a person or to an object. In what has been said above it is a mutual act of love, God calls people to consecrate themselves and the people respond by making an act of Consecration. Once consecrated then a person is committed to a life consistent with the state they have embraced and thus communities must be places where that relationship can deepen.

The chapter which describes the vows contains twenty three articles. The introduction of this chapter illustrates how much more developed this section of the Constitutions is compared to that of the 1835 version,

'In response to the Lord's prevenient love, the Sisters offer their person to God to be wholly and irrevocably with Christ our Saviour at the service of their sisters and brothers. They commit themselves by vow to follow Christ, who was poor, obedient and chaste, and, according to the charism of St. Emilie, to dedicate themselves to the "works of charity". Plunged by their consecration into the death

of Christ to rise again with Him, the Sisters witness in hope and love to the Kingdom which is to come.⁵²⁸

It can be seen immediately that this is a very different statement when compared to that of the 1835 version. It begins by stating that the initiative is with God and is a result of his love. It is a call and needs a response. Once given, the gift is irrevocable. It lists the vows but then states that these vows 'plunge' the Sisters into the Paschal mystery and witness to the coming parousia.

A decision was made when considering this thesis that a detailed examination of the treatment of the vows in the two Constitutions would not add to the objective of this study. Much of the development of the understanding of the vows is as a result of modern scholarship and does not illustrate the uniqueness of the charism. It is true to say that the individuals in every Institute will live their vows in a way that is consistent with their specific spirituality. As an example the living of poverty by an enclosed religious who does not have to manage a personal budget will differ from that of an apostolic Religious who may have to run a car and maintain an apartment. Both will live their vows to the fullest but in different ways because of their call to different circumstances. However to embark on such an analysis of the evolution of the vows could result in enough material to write another dissertation and would restrict the space for the third part of this study, the result of the questionnaire.

The only exception to that is the treatment of the fourth vow, the Consecration to the different Works of Charity. In the original Constitutions the Vow formula was,

I, the undersigned, Sr. N..., daughter of N..., native of the Parish of N..., aged ..., certify that today ... of the month of ..., of the year ..., I have freely and willingly made my Profession in the hands of N...,

⁵²⁸ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 4, Article 58.

delegated to this effect by the Archbishop of Albi, Superior of the Congregation, in the Church or Chapel of N..., by making the four vows of poverty, obedience, chastity and consecration to the diverse works of charity, in the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, known as of the Apparition, according to the spirit of the institute.⁵²⁹

It is very clear that the fourth vow is treated equally with the other three. However, in the 1982 Constitutions the fourth vow is not considered at all in this chapter on Consecration. In Chapter three on Formation it gives the vow formula that all the Sisters take,

"'Almighty and Eternal God, I, Sister ... animated by your grace and fortified by your love, make to 'Your Divine Majesty, into the hands of Sister... Superior General (1).....the vows of poverty, obedience and chastity, for ... (2) in the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, according to the Constitutions and the spirit of the Institute, and moreover, I consecrate myself to the different works of charity, according to that same spirit".⁵³⁰

It is to be noted that the fourth vow is present but it appears to have less prominence than the other three vows. There have been several revisions of the Constitutions during the lifetime of the Congregation. The Church did not fully approve Institutes with simple vows until the beginning of the twentieth Century.⁵³¹ The revised version of the Constitutions in 1910 did not contain the fourth vow. It would appear that at some time during the years between the two Constitutions that the fourth vow was suppressed. The 1982 Constitutions have restored it by including it in the modern vow formula.

⁵²⁹ 1835 *Constitutions*, Model of Act of Profession.

⁵³⁰ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 3 Article 47.

⁵³¹ 'Leo XIII, by his Constitution "Conditæ" of 8 Dec., 1900, gave to the congregations their official character; and a set of regulations of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, of 20 June, 1901, known by the name of Normæ, traces the general lines on which the Holy See wishes the new institutes to be constructed and the old ones reorganized.' Vermeersch, Arthur. "Religious Life." *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*. Vol. 12. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911.

A question arises as to why did this happen and what was the motive for this 'downgrading'? Does this treatment of the fourth vow reflect a change in the charism? However, it has been restored, in a slightly different form, in the modern vow formula. It creates interesting questions which could be an opening for another study but it is not being pursued here. This research is demonstrating the presence of the spiritual values St. Emilie wished to be enshrined in the Congregation. The fact that the fourth vow has been restored illustrates that the Sisters in 1982 were aware of the necessity of its inclusion and reinstated it.

In formulating the questions for the questionnaire, a decision was also made not to include a question, or questions, which directly asks about the vows. This decision was made for the same reason that a detailed analysis of the vows was also not included. The questionnaire is attempting to encourage the Sisters to share their lived experience of the Spiritual values of St. Emilie. It was not testing for knowledge of theological issues. It was also felt that to do justice to the vows, four questions would be needed and yet these would not give much new information about the role of the spirituality in the charism. The question about the fourth vow would have been interesting to debate but a decision was made to ask a question directly about 'Works of Charity' and how they understood this concept in their lives.⁵³²

In chapter four there was a section on the spirit of simplicity which was included in the section on Religious life. In that chapter it was pointed out that there was no mention of simplicity of lifestyle in the 1835 Constitutions and yet it was illustrated as an important concept for St. Emilie through what she wrote in her

⁵³² See 6.4.2.6. p. 258.

letters. Since she does not explain the disparity in any way, it raises a question as to whether this was part of her spiritual strengths, yet her letters testify to her valuing this spirit, perhaps as something so obvious she does not feel the need to include it. This is certainly the tone in her letter to ex-father Camilleri,

‘you know that simplicity is the first quality of a good Catholic, and even more so of a good religious.’⁵³³

This quotation also appeared in Chapter four but its re-use here is to illustrate just how basic a characteristic of a Catholic and a religious, she feels simplicity is to be. Is this the reason why she does not feel it needs to be stated explicitly?

In the 1982 Constitutions there are three specific mentions,

‘With uprightness and simplicity, the Sisters in all they do or undertake seek nothing but the glory of God and the good of their neighbour.

The spirit of simplicity and humility makes them accept with a like joy the various apostolic tasks and love the most humble services.’⁵³⁴

This is written in the chapter of the Constitution which is titled, The Spirit animating the Apostolate. It describes the attitudes that the Sisters should foster in relation to the many projects they undertake.

The second mention comes in the chapter which describes Community life. It states,

‘Life in the Communities should be simple, adapted to the milieu in which the Sisters usually live and work.’⁵³⁵

This is a simple statement which links up with St. Emilie’s statement that simplicity is the mark of a good religious⁵³⁶ and yet it also states that it should be flexible according to the culture in which the Sisters are living.

⁵³³ St. Emilie, *Letter 162*, to Mr. Camilleri, 26th August 1843.

⁵³⁴ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 6, The Spirit animating the Apostolate, Article 95.

⁵³⁵ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 7, The Community, Article 105.

⁵³⁶ St. Emilie, *Letter 162*, to Mr. Camilleri, 26th August 1843.

The final comment comes also from the chapter on Community,

‘In the simple life they lead, which is poor and ordinary, through the suffering and joys shared in community and with those around them, the Sisters participate in the mystery of Christ, who gave his life to bring all people together.’⁵³⁷

This article sums up the type of Community that should be easily recognisable throughout the world and which is consistent with the spirituality of the Congregation.

5.4.12 Summary of this Chapter.

The purpose of this chapter was to illustrate how the elements of the spirituality, the Spiritual strengths elucidated in Chapter Four, were incorporated into the first Constitutions and the current ones. There is a second document from St. Emilie called the Spirit and Development of the Rule, SPDR, which was also included with the early Constitutions because it was a document that St. Emilie felt was necessary to supplement the understanding of her first Constitutions.

Both Constitutions are written to describe the way of life that the members are called to live. They are also the means by which this way of life can be assessed and approved by the Church. They do not set out to list the elements of the Spirituality but these virtues and attitudes appear in the various articles which are designed to encourage their coming to maturity.

There was no attempt to carry out a full textual analysis of either Constitution. They were written 150 years apart and each follows a different style and they reflect

⁵³⁷ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 7, The Community, Article 109.

the religious environment in which they were written. However they both have the same purpose. This way of life must enable the members to live the call God has given them. It is being claimed that it is the spirituality which God has given to each member which unites them. If this is true it should be possible to find the elements of the spirituality expressed in the Constitutions.

The chapter began with a short illustration of the difference in style and arrangement of chapters between the two Constitutions. The first Constitutions and the SPDR are more practical than spiritual in style. This makes it harder to identify spiritual concepts in them. The 1982 Constitutions are written in a more spiritual style and so it is easier to identify the presence of the Spiritual strengths identified in Chapter Four.

This was followed by an account of those Spiritual strengths that had been listed and could be identified in one or both of the Constitutions. These Spiritual strengths had been grouped under four headings, Personal, Revelation, Missionary and Religious life. In the Constitutions these virtues did not appear in such groups and therefore had to be discovered by conducting a content analysis of the documents. Not every virtue could be identified in both Constitutions. This was especially true of the first Constitutions because of their less spiritual style. However, the presence of all the major attitudes were underlined in the 1982 Constitutions.

In both Constitutions the concepts of recollection and prayer are underlined as very important. Such concepts as total self-giving and union with Christ in His mission are frequently woven into the text of both the Constitutions.

In the modern Constitutions there is a much great emphasis on the influence of Incarnational spirituality when compared with those of 1835. At the same time

there is less of an emphasis on the influence of St. Joseph in that while he still has a prominent place as the Patron of the Congregation, his role in the name of the Congregation has become secondary to the announcement of the Incarnation.

The place of suffering and the Cross are not reflected in the first Constitutions despite their prominent place in the Spiritual strengths of the foundress. However, in the 1982 Constitutions they are seen as an indication of the presence and action of Christ and the Sisters are encouraged to witness to this.

The virtue of the 'Works of Charity' is seen to be extremely important in the first Constitutions and in the SPDR. It was so important that St. Emilie had it as a fourth vow on a par with the evangelical Counsels. However during the course of the life of the Congregation this vow was suppressed and the importance of this virtue was diminished. In the 1982 Constitutions there had been some attempt to redress this position in that the dedication to the 'works of Charity' are included in the vow formula. It is there as an addition not quite on the same footing as the evangelical Counsels which are treated as vows. In the modern day formula it states 'moreover, I consecrate myself to the different works of charity, according to that same spirit'.⁵³⁸ Despite this it would seem that the emphasis on this virtue does not have the same strength as that of St. Emilie.

It was remarked that despite St. Emilie's strong commitment to a missionary spirituality, she did not actually write anything about it in the 1835 Constitutions. The 1982 Constitutions were very clear that the Congregation is a missionary Congregation first and foremost. There is also a deepening of understanding of

⁵³⁸ 1982 *Constitutions*, Chapter 3 article 47.

‘missionary spirituality’ which is consistent with a deepening of this concept in the Christian Churches over the last century. This seems to mean being called to spreading the good news to those who do not know Christ but what is very important is to be living a deep life in Christ and thus to witness first by the way of life. Words and actions should flow from a lived relationship. In this Congregation this is often done through caring acts rather than preaching in words.

Finally, the question of the suppression and reappearance of the fourth vow was discussed as the sole topic in the elements of Religious life which is unique to the Congregation. A discussion of the other elements of religious life was not undertaken as this would need another lengthy study and would not add a great deal to this thesis which is examining the unique features of a particular charism, that of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition. Included at the end of this section is the idea of simplicity of lifestyle which was important to St. Emilie although she did not include it in her Constitutions or the SPDR, but it is mentioned briefly in the modern Constitutions.

The research did not show any major changes except that in the modern Constitutions the spiritual concepts had been developed and given a more theological context. This comment reflects the overall focus of this thesis, which is the relationship between charism and spirituality as a central aspect of a Congregation’s foundation and living witness. The comment does not specifically address the socio-cultural from which religious documents emerge. In so far as the 1982 Constitutions flow from the decisions of Vatican II, directives for the whole Church, they may well be influenced by wider socio/cultural preferences of their time of origin. This is a rich topic for research but this thesis does not develop this aspect.

Its primary objective is to trace the presence or absence of the original elements of the spirituality. Some of those elements have evolved and are expressed in language which is influenced by the theological environment of the era. This evolvement certainly shows change but it is more the developmental change which is a growth of understanding rather than a fundamental change of orientation. These changes include the increase in the understanding of the influence of Incarnational spirituality, the attitude to the devotion to St. Joseph and the treatment of the Works of Charity, which are dispersed throughout the Constitutions rather than being treated as a virtue to be sort and acquired. In the next chapter these concepts will be commented on by living members of the Congregation.

PART THREE

CHAPTER SIX

SOME SISTERS SPEAK.

6.1 Introduction to Chapter Six

The primary objective of this research is to examine the role of the spirituality in both the change and the continuity of the charism of the Congregation today. In Chapter One a definition of charism was given,⁵³⁹ and that there are three elements, the members, the spirituality and the mission. However, it is the spirituality which binds the members and influences their choice and manner of carrying out their mission in the Church. In the first part of this thesis the elements of the foundress' spirituality were established from her own writings. In part two the presence of the elements of the spirituality were traced in the original and the present day Constitutions.

This chapter uses a social science research paradigm to begin exploring the degree of congruence that exists between current members and that of the Foundress using a small sample of the Sisters. Though limited in scope it provides some initial indicative insights that may prove useful both to understanding the current situation and point to possible future developments.

⁵³⁹ See 1.3.1, p. 7f.

6.2 Research Method

6.2.1 The choice of a Questionnaire.

In chapter one Research positionality was discussed.⁵⁴⁰ A major consideration was the lack of a common language within the Congregation. On the 31st of May 2013 the Congregation had a total of 832 Sisters.⁵⁴¹ They live in all five continents and are comprised of 33 nationalities. There is no common language but the most frequently spoken are English, French, Italian and Spanish. Greek, Arabic and the many Asian languages are quite widely spoken but most of the Sisters who speak these languages also speak one of the four main European languages.

This lack of a common language was one reasons for opting for a questionnaire as opposed to conducting interviews. Interviews would have been very useful and allowed clarification of concepts expressed, but that option would limit the respondents to those who spoke the same languages as the interviewer. Misunderstanding could be large if the interviewee and the interviewer were conversing in a language in which both were not fluent.

Positionality has already been described in chapter one but it also played a major consideration in the rejection of interviews as the method of consulting the Sisters. Many Sisters have encountered my work with the Associates and the literature I have produced for their formation. Acquaintance with these documents could affect some Sisters, especially in an interview situation. Some of the Sisters who have lived the charism longer than I have, have expressed, to me, their opinion that my work is

⁵⁴⁰ See Ch. 1.2 p. 2.

⁵⁴¹ All the statistics given here are from the General Chapter of 2013.

simplistic. Indeed, in many ways they are correct. The work I produced was intended for those not familiar with Religious Language. Some of these more experienced Sisters could approach an interview situation with a desire to 'correct' my viewpoint, rather than express what they, themselves, experience in trying to live the charism. Many older Sisters also find it very difficult to share their inner-feelings, as in their formation they were not encouraged so to do.

I have had different experiences with younger Sisters, especially those coming from the Far East. In some there was a lack of desire to evaluate critically what I had been saying. I felt that there was a tendency to accept my opinions as if there was no need to evaluate it. It is possible that in an interview situation that there may be a desire to 'say the right thing' rather than express their own experience which may or may not sound so acceptable. A questionnaire would minimise the effects of this 'insider as researcher'. It would encourage Sisters to express their own views rather than say what they thought 'ought' to be said.

In addition to the language and insider effects a questionnaire has an advantage in that it would enable access to a wider sample of the Congregation. As a result of these consideration it was decided to devise a questionnaire comprising of open-ended questions which could be translated into English, French, Italian and Spanish. Because there are difficulties for some Sisters to use electronic means of communication, the questionnaire was made available in hard copy.

6.2.2 Nature of the Sample

Permission had to be sought from the Superior General and her Council to issue the questionnaire. Agreement was given for some Sisters from each Province to be

invited to participate. However, permission was not given for a random sample to be taken from the list of professed Sisters. Some Sisters, because of ill health or aging, would not be capable of receiving such an invitation. In some sisters this could be deleterious to their mental health. Only those who could freely choose to take part, could be approached. In order to ensure that only suitable Sisters would be invited, a decision was made to involve the Provincial Superiors who know every Sister in their Province.⁵⁴²

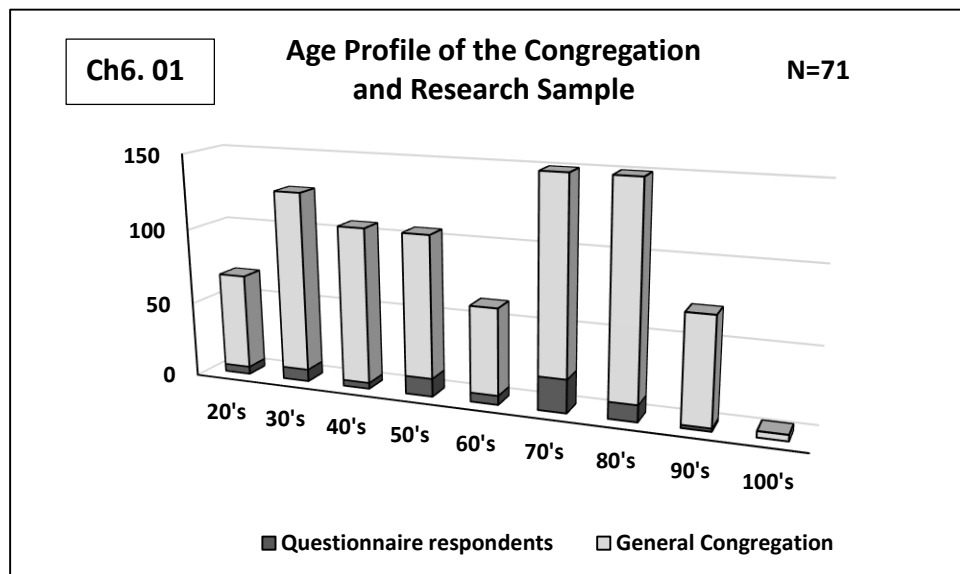
Each Provincial Superior was approached by the researcher and the questionnaire explained to her verbally and with a written letter of instructions.⁵⁴³ She was asked to distribute ten invitations to professed sisters in her province chosen from those who could be included. The subject of bias was explained to each one and she was asked to pick the ten sisters from the list of suitable recipients in as random a manner as possible. It was recognised that this would still not result in a probability sample as circumstances did not allow this. The reason for this randomisation was not to change the statistical status of the sample, but to promote as wide a range of sisters as possible to be invited to take part and thus lessen the effect of bias.

It was explained to the Provincial that she should not receive back the completed questionnaires, in order to preserve confidentiality and to minimise possible bias of the recipient writing to please a person in authority. The sisters were asked to send their responses, identified only by an identification number, to

⁵⁴² The Congregation is administered through eleven Provinces. Each Province is led by a Sister Provincial and thus she is the one person who will know which Sister in her Province could be approached. The importance that those invited should not be disturbed by the invitation was underlined.

⁵⁴³ See Appendix 2. p. 345.

another Sister in the province⁵⁴⁴ or directly to the researcher. It was emphasized that the sisters would have a free choice to accept or decline participation. A quota sample⁵⁴⁵ based on ten invitations from each Province was recruited. The following chart compares the sample with the full membership.



Although the sample is a non-probability sample, the age groups have all been represented across the spectrum in the Congregation with the exception of those Sisters over 100 years old. Of the sample, 57% is under 60 years old and in the Congregation 54%. Among the sample there were nineteen nationalities represented as opposed to thirty-three in the Congregation. The respondents came from all the five continents and every Province.

Despite the similarities, this should be regarded as a form of an opportunistic sample, which is taking participants from people who are available at

⁵⁴⁴ This Sister was recruited by the Provincial and she received a letter explaining her role and asking her to send the completed questionnaires to me.

⁵⁴⁵ Quota sampling is a non-probability sampling technique wherein the assembled sample has the same proportions of individuals as the entire population with respect to known characteristics, traits or focused phenomenon.

the time of the study and who fit the criteria. Given the characteristics of the current membership of the Congregation, the criteria applied are that the respondents should be professed sisters of this Congregation and are intellectually capable of receiving and responding to such an invitation. As an opportunistic sample it is not, by definition, a statistically random sample that can be taken as truly representative of the Congregation at large.

Following the requirements of the General Council, this was the only group of sisters that could be recruited. If the questionnaire had been designed to detect trends and to then extrapolate them to the rest of the Congregation, this would be a considerable disadvantage. However, the purpose of this questionnaire is to examine the presence and influence, in the lives of the participants, of spiritual strengths similar to those of the foundress. The Sisters are all current members of the Congregation and the questionnaire will illustrate the presence or absence of the elements of the Spirituality already established in parts one and two. The results cannot be extrapolated to the whole congregation and will only describe the experience of this particular group of sisters. However, if the presence of the spiritual elements are established, it would indicate that the role of the Spirituality as providing continuity over the life of the Congregation, has been established in this group. If there is a divergence established in the group, this would indicate that further research ought to be undertaken to establish if this is the situation in the rest of the Congregation.

There are other possible sources of bias in the use of questionnaires. Although clear guidance was given to those tasked with selecting the respondents (in the form of oral and written instructions) the participants chosen may be the

more educated and more erudite members of the Congregation. As such they may have different qualities to the generality of Sisters. Moreover, because they are 'selected' the respondents may answer in the way that they think will please the researcher.

Other bias could result as the researcher had to design questions which enable, as much as possible, all the respondents to interpret the questions in the same way and on the same 'level'. The Sisters all undergo centrally designed and led periods of formation throughout their lives. These sessions create a common knowledge base among the sisters which mitigates, to a certain extent, differences in understanding of common concepts and beliefs within the congregation. However cultural and age differences must still be recognised as possible causes of bias.

Further, the written evidence gathered from the respondents cannot be clarified if the meaning is not clear. There had to be some interpretation by the researcher and this is never completely independent of the researcher's beliefs, preconceptions, or theoretical commitment.

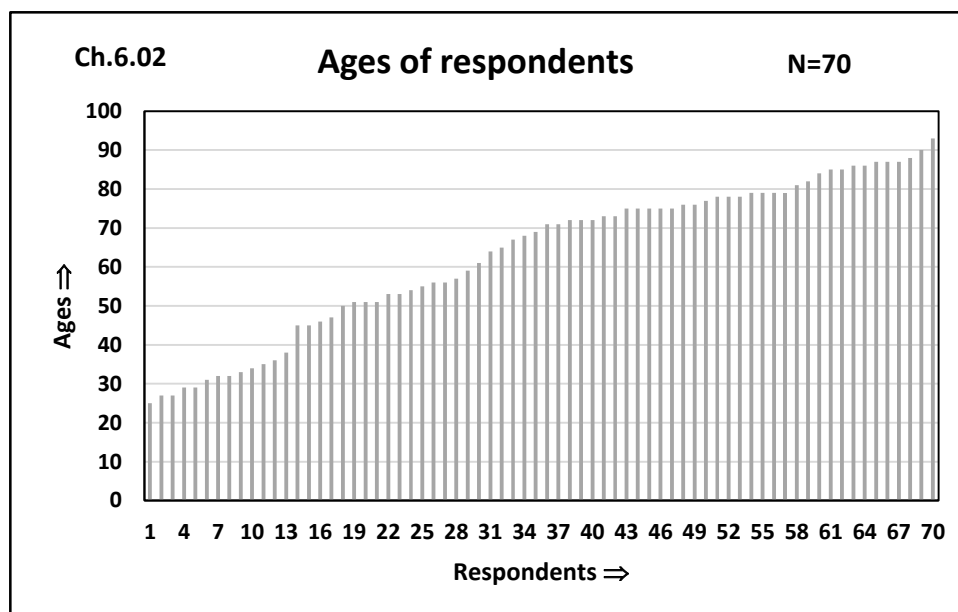
Despite these difficulties, questionnaires have their uses, especially as a means of collecting information from a wider sample than can be reached by personal interview, as was the case in this research. Because of the nature of this particular sample, it cannot be claimed statistically that this is representative of the whole Congregation. I would argue that in taking this approach, while it is open to various claims of research bias, it is defensible provided I do not over-state the significance of the findings and recognise the limitations of the data the questionnaire provides. It is indicative and suggestive only. However, I contend

that the evidence from the questionnaire will provide some insights into the way these particular sisters describe their own experience of the spirituality. If it is the case that the majority of the sample affirms the presence of the elements of the spirituality in their lives, this gives evidence that, within this group of sisters, the spirituality has created a continuity with the foundress' spirituality.

6.2.3 The Respondents

A total of 115 questionnaires were distributed, ten to each Province. Since this had to be an opportunistic sample, no allowance was made to accommodate differences in the size of the provinces. All the larger provinces had no problem with inviting ten sisters but some of the older and less populated provinces, could not find ten sisters capable of receiving the invitation. In addition, the Provincials, themselves, were invited to complete a questionnaire. Five of the latter took up the invitation and special arrangement were made to ensure their anonymity.⁵⁴⁶ Seventy-one sisters completed the questionnaire and this amounted to fifty-eight per cent of the questionnaires distributed. The age range was from 25 to 93, as illustrated in the next chart:-

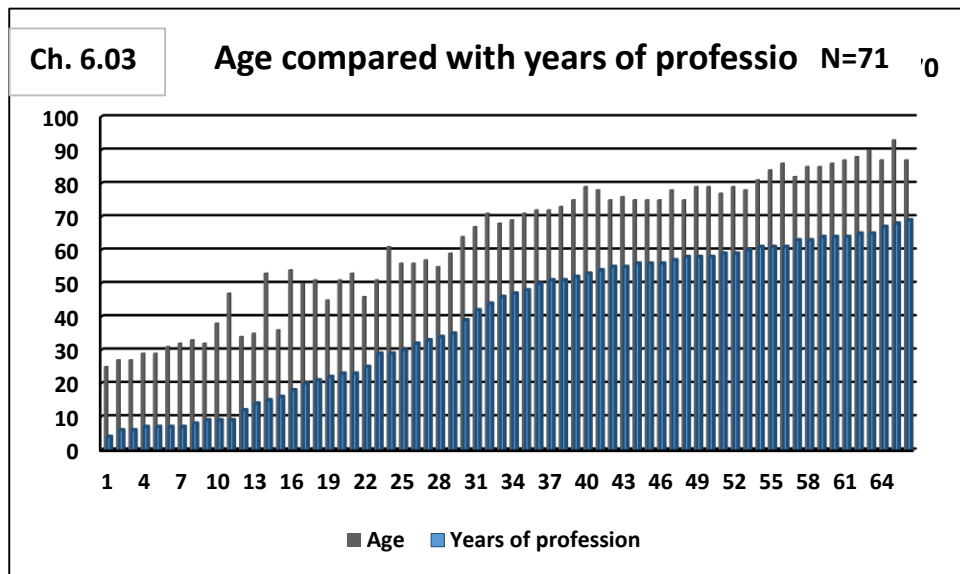
⁵⁴⁶ Twenty Identification codes were produced which specified them as Major Religious but they picked their own number from the 20 prepared so that, I, the researcher, did not know who had picked which number. In the future, if others want to access this data, there is no possibility that they can identify the person through their Identification Code.



This represents a considerable age range and indicates that the sisters will have experienced differing types of formation as novices and junior sisters. This could introduce more factors that could affect the response of the Sisters. However, in this study the sisters were not being assessed for factual knowledge but they were being asked to share their personal experience of their life in Christ. All through the life of the Congregation, religious formation has been aimed at fostering the growth of the person's response to God. Courses in theology, scripture, spirituality and others, help a person understand God's call in a deeper way but the 'habitual way' of responding to Him, that has been called a person's spirituality,⁵⁴⁷ is His gift and is nurtured by Him in prayer and develops under His guidance. It is acknowledged that training can enhance, or even mar, this development. This was one of the reasons that a preliminary page giving the year of birth, date of first and final profession, country of origin and country where they are carrying out their present mission, was included.

⁵⁴⁷ see 1.4.1 p. 22.

The following chart illustrates the ages of the sisters compared to the years of profession.



This enabled the researcher in the analysis to consider the effects of age, years of profession, ethnic origin, and varying initial formation and missionary experience to be reviewed with each question. However only those instances where differences were discovered were reported in the text of the analysis.

Each sister received a package which included a letter of invitation and explanation.⁵⁴⁸ This letter also outlined the steps taken to preserve their confidentiality. The package contained the preliminary page and the questions which were numbered one to twelve. They were informed that they could answer them in any order and omit any they did not want to answer.

Finally, they were asked if their completed questionnaires could be retained, after the end of the study and stored in the Archives of the Congregation. In this way the data would be available to other researchers in the future. Each retained

⁵⁴⁸Appendix 1. p. 341.

questionnaire would only be identified by the Identification code. Most agreed but four Sisters refused this permission. Their responses will be removed and destroyed at the end of this study. Seventy-one completed questionnaires were received.

6.3 The Questionnaire

6.3.1 The Design of the Questionnaire:

In chapter One it was argument that the particular mix of Christian virtues which make up the spirituality of the foundress, is what can also be described as the unique spirituality of the Congregation.⁵⁴⁹ Having established the elements of St. Emilie's spirituality in part one, and their importance and presence in the Constitutions in Part Two, this chapter explores the experience of their presence in the lives of the Sisters in the questionnaire sample.

6.3.2 The Individual Questions

The first page of the questionnaire ascertained some quantitative data; the year of birth, the year of first profession; the year of final profession; the nationality of the respondent and the country of mission. This gave some background information for each respondent. Some of the data from this has already been discussed in the previous section.⁵⁵⁰

This page was followed by the twelve open questions. The first gave some personal background information and explained their choice of this Congregation. The middle ten questions refer to either a Spiritual Strength or a spiritual concept

⁵⁴⁹Chapter 1.4.4, p. 31

⁵⁵⁰ 6.2.2. p. 227f

which has emerged over the life of the Congregation. Question Ten is an exception to this as it deals with the question of the 'type' of Religious Life that the sisters feel called to live. The final question gives information on the 'missions', that the respondent has been involved in. This question also asked the respondent to express any aspirations for the future of their service in the Congregation.

The ten middle questions follow a format of a statement followed by some questions designed to stimulate both a reaction to the spiritual concept itself and also the respondent's personal experience.

6.4 The Analysis for each question

6.4.1 The Methods of Analysis of the Completed Questionnaires:

The questionnaire uses closed and open questions designed to provide both qualitative and quantitative data. As each response was received it was transcribed, in English, to a Spread Sheet. Each completed questionnaire was given a transcription number on this spreadsheet. In the following discussion the transcription number will identify the respondent so that the Identification code is not used in the written thesis.

The first data came from the front page and related to the age range, the years spent in Religious life following both first and final profession, the nationalities of the respondents and their countries of mission. This quantitative data was easily displayed by a spreadsheet and selective series by creating charts as has already been

illustrated in 6.2.3⁵⁵¹ and the range of the sample could be seen and compared with the Congregations statistics for the whole population.⁵⁵²

The questions were analysed using coding and a grid system. All the responses were analysed for their content of ideas, reactions; attitudes and attributes of the respondent themselves, Saint Emile, Saint Joseph and God himself. Any quotations from any source were noted. As each response was read for a question the ideas which were expressed were coded on a spread sheet. Each idea became a code. Under the code was placed the figure 1. When another respondent convey the same idea a figure 1 was placed in the square under that code and in the respondent's row. If an Idea was expressed that no-one else had said, then that became a new code. An example taken from the analysis of question 1 is shown below,

Transcript No.	Attracted to Religious life.	All kinds of ministry	Called by God to serve.	Example of the Sisters.	God's inter-vention.	One with the people.
1	1			1		
2		1	1		1	1
3		1		1		1
4	1			1		
5	1		1			1
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
70		1				
71		1		1		1
Total	26	11	13	40	5	16

Illustration 6.01. example of part of codes and grid establishing frequency of ideas expressed in letter One.

⁵⁵¹ See p. 232f

⁵⁵² see 6.2.2 p. 227.

The first column was the response of each Sister and it has not been included in this illustration. The codes were generated from the text of each Sister. The first row generated the first codes and a figure '1' was placed under each code. In the next row the second respondents answer generated more codes but if she expressed a similar idea to that which had already been coded, this was marked by a figure '1' in the new respondent's row below the established code. The codes were slotted in in alphabetical order. In this manner, all the responses were analysed. When all had been analysed, the popularity of each idea was assessed by counting the number of times a particular concept was endorsed by a respondent, by counting the '1's. All the concepts in the coding were called topics. The data was depicted visually by a variety of Charts and thus the popularity of the topics displayed. The topics were categorised reflecting similar ideas.

In the following detailed analyses to each question the thesis offers statistically an account of the most popular responses followed by an over-arching reflection on the scope of the replies as a whole.

6.4.2 The findings for each question.

6.4.2.1 Question One

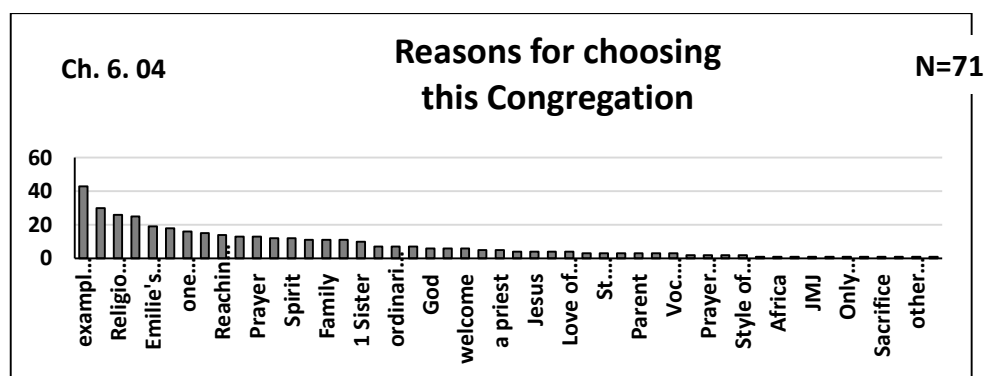
This asked a very basic question,

‘What were the main reasons you were attracted to this Congregation?’

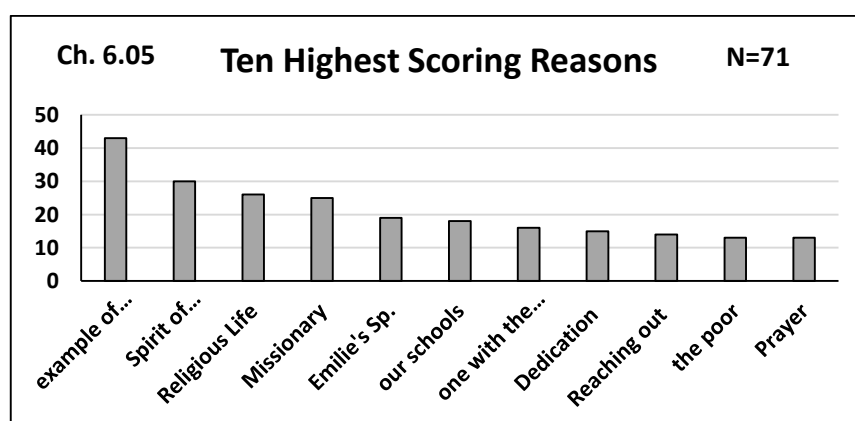
This was a broad introductory question allowing for basic background information, entirely at the choice of each respondent. It is thus less easy to establish detailed patterns across the sample. This question is descriptive and is not seeking data which

could be analysed into patterns. It serves to engage the respondents in the questionnaire as a whole. It is a question that many Sisters will have been asked before and therefore they would not find it intimidating. It was also hoped that it would give some personal information about each sister's origin, even though it did not ask explicitly for this. The reason for not asking explicit personal questions was to give the respondent the freedom to preserve their anonymity.

The following chart shows the distribution of responses.



The Chart illustrated the spread of the reasons for their choice. Unfortunately, the chart is unable to list every response there were so many. The following chart shows the ten most numerous responses,



There was one answer that dominated in over half of the replies(43). [in the following text whenever numbers are displayed in brackets it indicates the number of respondents who chose that topic]. The next most popular was 'the Spirit of

Simplicity'(29). This centres on the perception that the sisters in the Congregation lived a simple lifestyle and had an attitude of being at ease with the people they served. One respondent stated:

'Our sisters made the people in the village to feel that they are one among them.'⁵⁵³

A further example of this was serving anyone in need with no concern for race, colour, caste or religion. A Sister related:

'Once a pagan fell off a tree and broke one of his legs. My mother would always tell us how the Sisters took care of him and nursed him and if the Sisters hadn't been in our village he would have lost his leg.'⁵⁵⁴

Many Sisters related they felt a personal call to religious life (26) and the Congregation appealed to them because of the life style, mission or experience of the Sisters. For many the fact that the Congregation is a missionary institute (25) was an important factor in their choice. Several had had experience of the Sisters and were attracted by St. Emilie's spirit(19) and many of them had attended the schools run by the sisters(18).

The next group of responses is derived from the respondents admiring the lifestyle of the sisters. Two of the responses in this group, 'one with the people'(16) and reaching out(14) are illustrated in the following quote,

'The main reason I was attracted to this congregation is the hospitality and the apostolate of serving the needy, reach out god's love to the people no matter what religion people may be belonging to.'⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵³ Transcript 22. As was stated above each respondent was given a transcript number as the responses were transcribed.

⁵⁵⁴ Transcript 36.

⁵⁵⁵ Transcript 12.

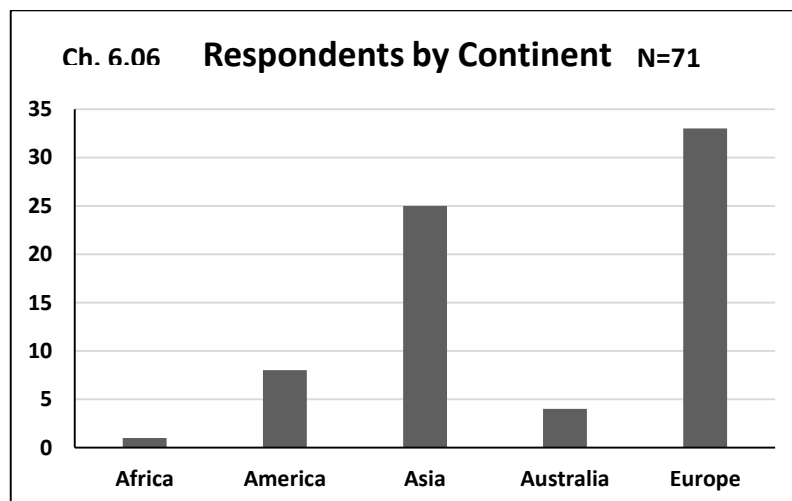
The last three categories in the 'top ten' are 'the dedication of the sisters'(15), the going out to the poor(1) and the prayer life (13). These are really an elaboration of the top scorer, the example of the Sisters.

There were many others responses which were fairly popular such as 'many different works'(12), 'the love of the sisters'(11), 'the influence of one particular sister'(10), 'the internationality of the sisters'(7) and 'the ordinariness of the sisters'(7). An example of this last response was,

'One day during family visit, two of our sisters gave a bath to an old man who had sores on his body. They cleaned his wounds and helped his wife to dress him up. The service of the sisters made the old couple feel that they are their own daughters. When I heard this incident, I was attracted towards our sisters.'⁵⁵⁶

Once again all of these could be interpreted as the example of the Sisters but each one illustrates a different aspect of this.

This question resulted in some personal information about the Sisters. They had come from varying backgrounds, villages, towns or cities and from all five continents. The next chart gives the continents from which the respondents originated.



⁵⁵⁶ Transcript 22.

The Congregation only has a small number of missions in Africa and only one respondent had been born there in Tunisia. With this spread of geographical origins, it could raise a question about the effects of different experiences of formation. Over the years the various houses of formation have always been overseen by the central government of the Congregation. The training of formators has been guided from the centre. This thesis did not overtly compare the effects of different formation as that was beyond the aim of the research, which was to establish if the elements of the original founding spirituality were still actively present in the lives of current members. It is acknowledged that different experiences, especially in early formation, could affect a sister's spiritual growth. In the analysis of the questions differences between age groups, length of profession, national origin and place of mission were looked at to see if there were any marked differences. This occurred on three occasions. The first was with question four and the idea that Incarnational Spirituality is at the basis of the name of the Congregation. The second was with question five which dealt with 'the five wounds' devotion. The final question was the ninth which discussed the use of the word 'spouse' to describe their personal relationship with God. These differences encountered are fully discussed under the relevant question.

From this question some few respondents gave a brief description of their previous activities especially if it touched their future mission, teaching, nursing or involvement in the Church. Finally, from the remarks of some respondents it was possible to appreciate how the Sisters were regarded among the people they served.

This question could have been used to gain more personal information about the sisters in the sample to illustrate the diversity in the members called to the

Congregation. However, the questionnaire was not designed to fulfil that objective but to examine the presence or absence of the elements of the spirituality. The purpose of this introductory question was to give the sisters something which asked for a personal response but was not too challenging. It was something most sisters could feel comfortable with and it prepared them to share their personal experiences of the virtues and attitudes in the spirituality, rather than give a learned theoretical response. The experience of joining the Congregation is personal but it is one which most religious have been often asked.

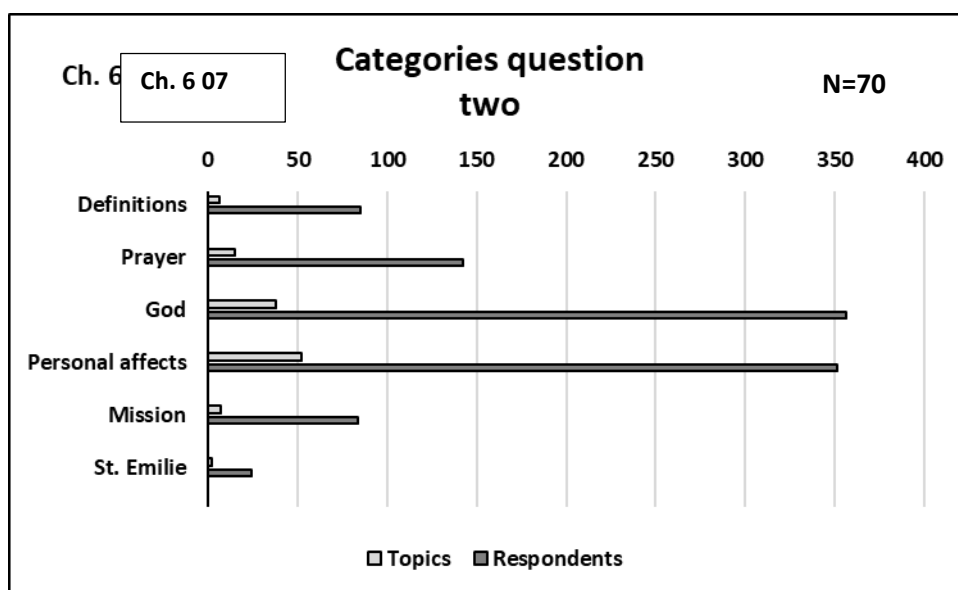
6.4.2.2 Question Two: Recollection.

Recollection was very important to St. Emilie.⁵⁵⁷

- a. Can you explain what this means to you?
- b. Does this affect the way you respond to God and carry out your mission?
Can you explain how?

The topics were divided into six categories. In the chart there are two bars for each category. The light grey bar shows the number of topics in that category and the dark grey the number of endorsements of the respondents. Although the number of Sisters in the sample was only 71, if there are more than one topic in a category and each Sister endorsed all the topics, the number of respondents will be more than 71. Ten topics endorsed by all the Sisters will give 710 endorsements. This gives us information about the popularity of the topics. Ten topics with twelve endorsements means that these topics have mostly been endorsed by single individuals. 3 topics with 320 endorsements means that these three ideas were very popular with the Sisters.

⁵⁵⁷ See 4.2.1 pp. 108 - 114.



The first category was labelled 'definitions', it reveals that not all gave a definition. From those who did, there were differences in the understanding of what this word meant. Two examples will illustrate this,

'For me recollection is to live in God's Presence.'⁵⁵⁸

'For me recollection means - experiencing the silence and being with God.'⁵⁵⁹

The first example refers to an experience of living in the continuous presence of God. Whereas the second refers to a sense of entering into periods of silence and then becoming aware of the presence of God.

The next category is termed 'prayer' and in it recollection is treated as a form of prayer(31) which it is good to spend some time on a regular basis(16).

'It means, on my part, making time, and being faithful to that precious time, to be with the Lord, to share my hopes and anxieties, my aspirations as well as my fears'.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁸ Transcript 1

⁵⁵⁹ Transcript 10

⁵⁶⁰ Transcript 6.

There are descriptions of many types of prayer and its efficacy in their lives, 'a place for revelation'(15), 'of refreshment'(15), meditation(13) and contemplation(7). Others spoke of it as continuous prayer throughout the day.

In the next category, the Sisters describe their experience of God's active presence in their lives. As can be seen from the chart, the majority of respondents contributed to this category. Topics such as, 'Recall the presence of God'(29), 'United to God'(29), 'His Presence'(25), 'Responding to God'(25), 'Living in the presence of God'(19) and 'Attentive to invisible presence of God'(17). There were many other sisters who spoke about how they felt sustained in their lives by God, or by Jesus. All these responses witnessed to a deep personal relationship with God.

How recollection affects their lives is the next category which include 'Casts light on my life'(23), 'Guidance'(20), 'Reflects in my relationships'(20), 'Discernment'(18), 'Consult before action'(17) and 'All problems referred to him'(14). The responses in this category witness to the Sisters' deep experience of God personally concerned in their lives. Forty two directly stated that 'recollection' had an impact on the way they went about their daily lives,

' Yes, it does help me in the way I respond to God and in the way I carry out my mission because I try to refer all my actions to the will of God.'⁵⁶¹

The final two small categories gave witness to the respect that the Sisters had for St. Emilie and their call to mission but did not add to the discussion on recollection.

Recollection was of major importance to St. Emilie and this question has shown that it remains an important concept for the Sisters in this sample, despite

⁵⁶¹ Transcript 4

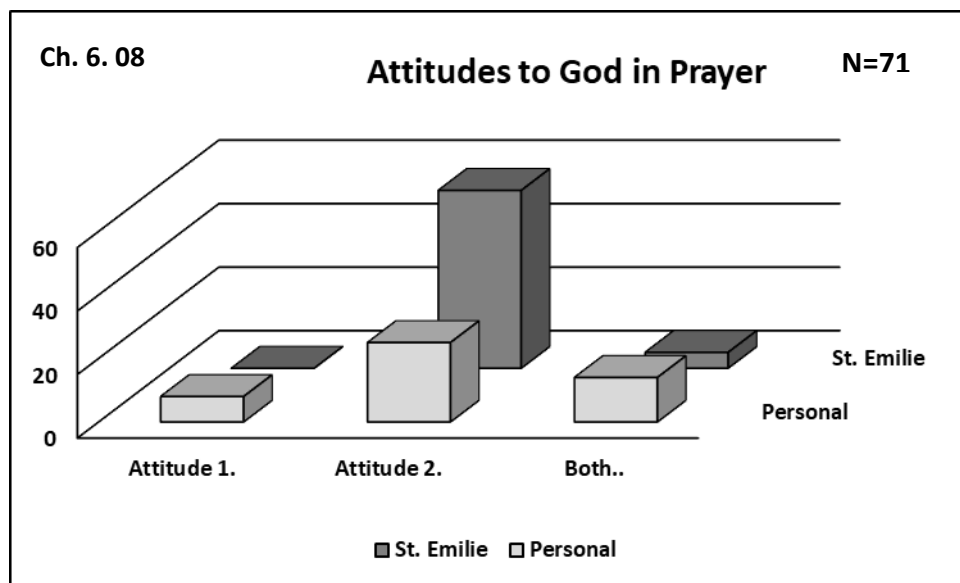
there being a discrepancy in the understanding of the concept. It expresses a deep experience of a close personal relationship with God.

6.4.2.3 Question Three: Prayer

This question commenced by descriptions of two different attitudes to prayer. The first attitude is that prayer is a monologue, God does not ‘speak’ back. The second is that prayer is a dialogue, God definitely ‘speaks’ back. They were then asked:

- Which of these ways of praying do you think was Emilie’s way of praying?
- Which way do you find easier for your way of praying?
- Can you explain the importance that prayer has in your life?

The first two questions produced the following data on the attitude to prayer as illustrated in this bar chart:



The majority of respondents(56)⁵⁶² felt that St. Emilie’s prayer was dialogical in nature. Many of them gave evidence for this by quoting from her documents. A few(5) felt that she had both attitudes.

⁵⁶² Whenever a number is enclosed in brackets (x), when describing the data, it will always be the number of respondents who chose either the option or the topic under discussion.

Just under half(25) felt that dialogue described their own attitude. However many also said that they felt their response was more akin to the first attitude.

'I find the second way of praying better but I find that many a time I follow the first way.'⁵⁶³

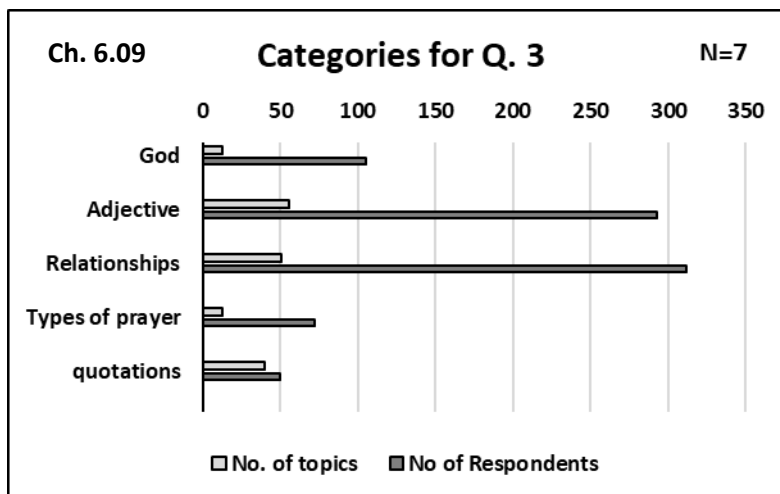
Many felt that sometimes God takes His time to 'reply'. It is in these circumstances that their experience of prayer seems more of a monologue.

'Both ways also, I may say but since most of the time [I am]⁵⁶⁴ a busybody, sometimes hard to listen.'⁵⁶⁵

Some of the respondents wrote that the second attitude came after communing with God through the first way,

'When I was newly professed, I had the idea to do all the good I can. I used to look around me, present to God my projects... But when failure comes, I used to meditate with what I have done..... My strength was all I depended on.'⁵⁶⁶

The third question asked about the importance of prayer in the Sisters' lives. The topics were divided into five categories;



⁵⁶³ Transcript 13.

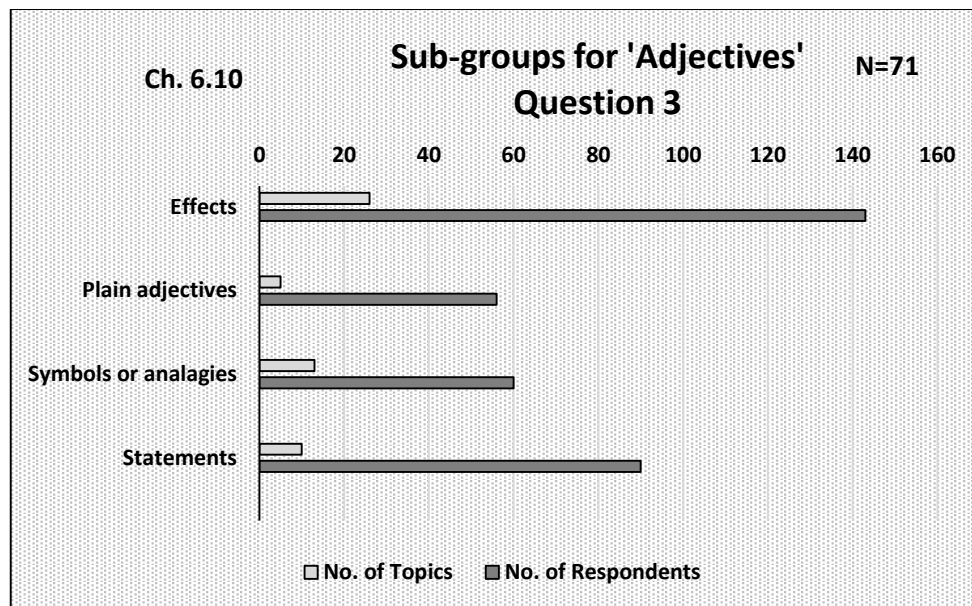
⁵⁶⁴ The response was written in English but I feel that it would read better with the addition of 'I am'. In this thesis if I, the researcher, add words to clarify meaning they will be enclosed in the square brackets [x].

⁵⁶⁵ Transcript 49.

⁵⁶⁶ Transcript 48.

The first category was titled 'God's attributes'. Some examples are, 'God's Providence'(18), 'His presence'(17), and 'the constant presence of Jesus'(6). These ideas witness to the respondents growing awareness of God's presence.

The category with the largest number of topics is called 'Adjectives'. This contains statements which described prayer itself. These topics were further divided into sub-groups;



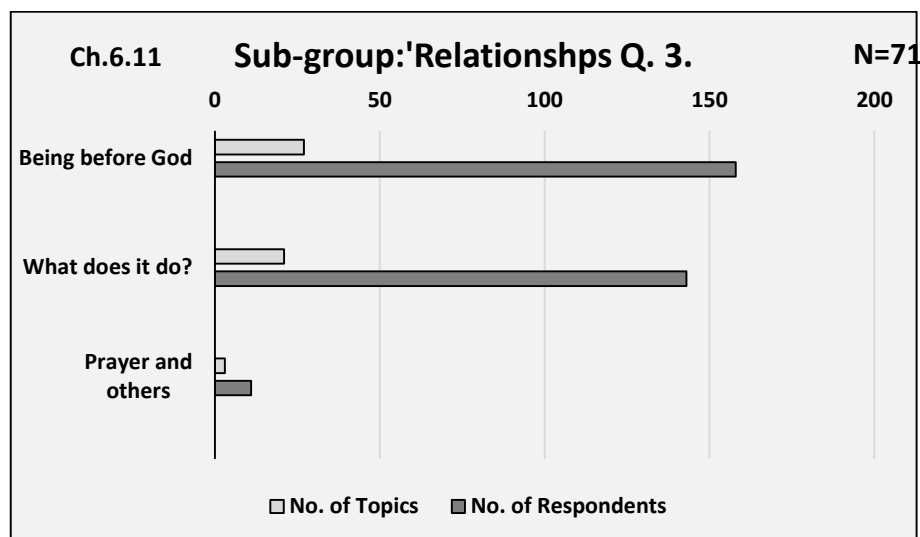
The most 'popular' of these sub-groups was that which described the effects of prayer. In this group there were topics such as, 'gives strength and courage'(15) and 'reinforces faith'(6). The topics all built up the individual in their relationship with God.

In the 'Plain Adjective' sub-group were included 'important' (32), 'essential'(16), and 'indispensable'(4). The number of respondents here was large and this confirmed that prayer was a priority.

Among the symbols were 'nourishment for the soul'(10), 'breath of life'(7), and 'like blood in the body'(3). Use of such symbolic language conveys that there is an element of mystery in the developing relationship.

Finally there were ten strong statements made which included ‘Religious Life without prayer is incomprehensible’(9) and ‘you starve without it’(4). The richness of all these testimonies speak powerfully of a strong commitment to prayer.

Category three, ‘Relationship’, describes the respondent’s relationship to God and others. It includes the topic which was referred to by the majority of the respondents, ‘discerning the will of God’(42). The importance of prayer for discernment was expressed in relation to St. Emilie and in personal decision making. It also was divided into subgroups,



The first sub-group, ‘being before God’, describes how they feel while at prayer. They include, ‘in contact with God’(24), ‘union with God’(13). They witness to an experience of intimacy with God. The second called ‘what does it do’ meaning, how the prayer relationship affects the person; ‘Gives peace and serenity’(8) and ‘Source of strength’(7). The last is called, ‘prayer and others’, explaining how prayer helps in relating to others. All these give a picture of a vibrant lived relationship with God which is reflected in other relationships.

‘Types of prayer’ are the next category. It is the smallest category but the full range of types of prayer are mentioned. They include novenas, the sacraments, scripture based meditation and contemplation. Many respondents were used to using more than one form of prayer.

The responses to this question has shown that prayer is a vital and valued part of the everyday life of the Sisters. For many they have emphasised that prayer must precede action especially for someone sent out by God to serve others. It also indicates that St. Emilie’s wish that prayer should be a major concern of the members of the Congregation has continued with these Sisters.

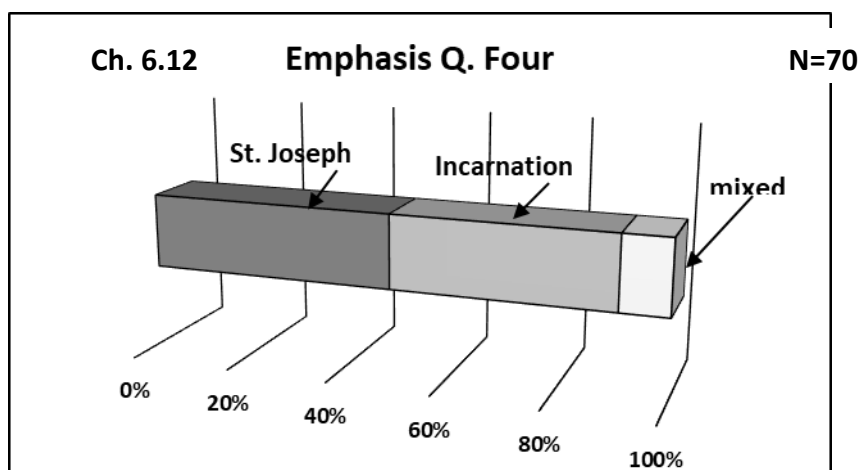
6.4.2.4. Question Four: The Name

Question Four is about the Name of the Congregation, St. Joseph of the Apparition.

- a. What are your thoughts about why she called us after this Gospel?
- b. Does this affect the way you respond to God and carry out your mission? Can you explain how?

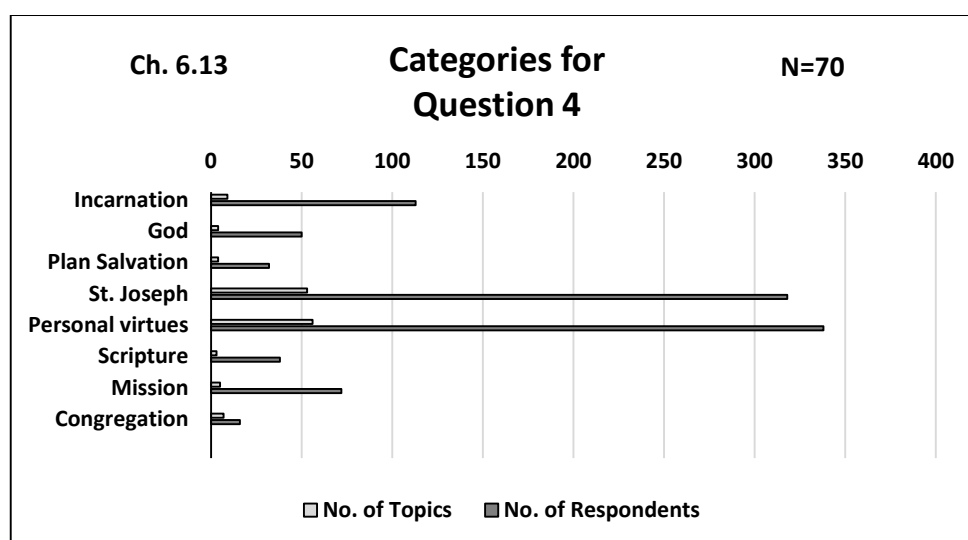
The analysis of this question divided into two parts. The first was about what the sisters felt was the underlying Christian basis for St. Emilie’s choice of the Apparition of the Angel to St. Joseph, the Incarnation. The second was St. Joseph’s role(32).

The division in the responses is shown on the next chart,



Those who emphasised St. Joseph felt that the name was related to how St. Emilie understood St. Joseph and his role in salvation history. The second group interpreted this story from the Gospels as highlighting the Incarnation of Jesus. Half of this latter group(16) did not include any mention of St. Joseph.

The topics were sorted into categories,



‘Incarnation’ is the first category and included the most popular topic, ‘Devotion to the Mystery of the Incarnation’(33). There are only five topics in this category, but the number of respondents is high because topics were heavily endorsed. This underlines the Sisters’ belief in the importance of the mystery of the Incarnation.

The second category, ‘about God’ had four topics which spoke about ‘God’s love for all’(27), ‘his infinite love’(23), ‘his forgiveness’(1) and ‘His nearness’(1).

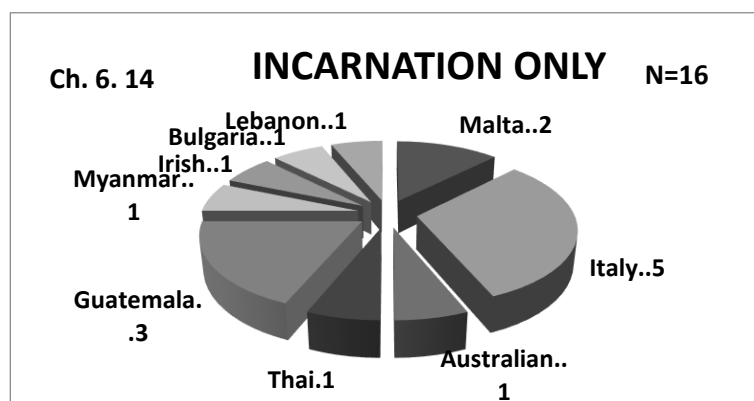
This was followed by ‘God’s plan for salvation’. The largest topic here was ‘Join God’s plan for salvation’(23).

A large category is 'St. Joseph'. Popular topics include 'His humility'(21), 'St. Joseph as a model'(19), 'his obedience'(18) and 'his silence'(12).

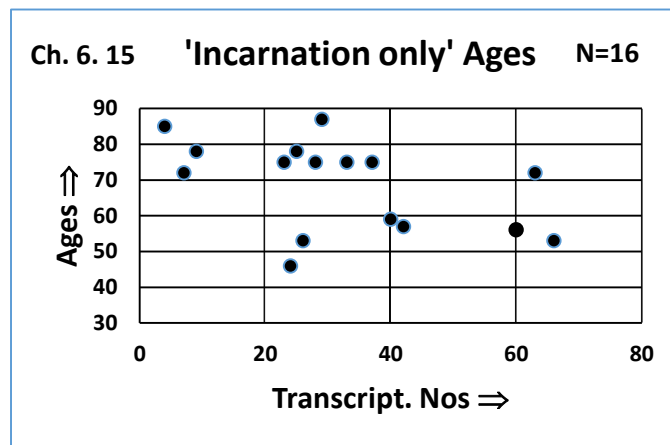
The largest category, 'Personal virtues', described the effect of reflecting on the name. Three topics scored highly; 'Contemplate the mystery of the Incarnation'(22), 'Imitate St. Joseph's attitudes'(22) and 'imitate St. Joseph's virtues'(20). There were other topics which spoke about how the respondents were inspired to act; 'Unhesitating acceptance of God's will'(10), 'Incarnate Christ with human gestures'(7) and 'work quietly and unobtrusively(4).

The final small categories give quotations and comments which support the previous categories rather than raise new issues.

This question has demonstrated that the Incarnation and St. Joseph are important elements in the devotion of the Sisters. St. Emilie never explained her choice of name but she left her successors to ponder why. Both St. Joseph and the Incarnate Lord were important to her and this question has demonstrated they are still important factors in this group of Sisters. St. Joseph's attributes of obedience, faith and willingness to turn around his life to serve the Incarnate Lord, are to be emulated. However, it was a surprising finding that 16 Sisters did not feel that St. Joseph, himself, had a role in the intention of the Foundress, for them the Incarnation was much more important.



A closer look at this small sub-group supplies some factors which may be playing a part in this. The following pie chart illustrates that they came from different parts of the world, although there is the largest group come from Italy(4). The Italian province heavily influenced Guatemala(3) as the latter was a missionary project of that province and they supplied the formators for the sisters recruited locally. This could indicate an emphasis on Incarnational theology in areas under the influence of the Italian Province. However, the numbers involved are very small. it would need further studies to investigate this in the general Congregation. The Sisters involved in this sub-group were mostly elderly. The following chart



illustrates

this.

The

youngest sister in the group was forty-six years old but the majority were over seventy. Eleven of the sixteen were over fifty years professed. Of the other five others, the shortest time of profession was fifteen years and none were professed more than thirty-five years. This is the only group in the sample where the question of the influence of formation could be raised. However, these sixteen sisters only represent 22% of the sample. Their numbers are too small to be able to draw conclusions even within the respondents. Seventy-eight per cent of the sample did not reflect this tendency. This situation highlights a weakness of using a questionnaire. In an interview the Sister could have been asked why she had not

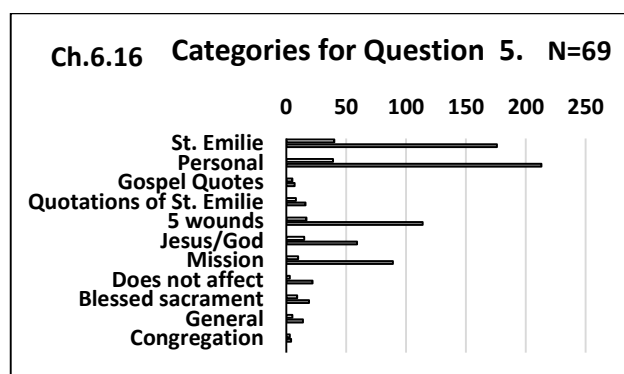
mentioned St. Joseph. It would require further research to claim or disclaim that formation was an influence here.

6.4.2.5 Question Five: The Vision.

This question explores the vision in St. Peter's Church, which marked a stage in St. Emilie's life but which she never fully explained.⁵⁶⁷

- a. What are your reactions when you think about this vision?
- b. Does this affect the way you respond to God and carry out your mission?
Can you explain how?

The response to this question was very different from that of question Four. In this question there was a much wider variation of responses. They were classified in eleven categories.



The first category described how this vision illustrated St. Emilie's virtues and attitudes. The most popular was, 'it drew Emilie to the sufferings of others'(21). Others stated that 'this vision clarified her vocation as a calling to those in need'(12) and 'she came to see Jesus in those in need'(11). In the middle range were 'her total gift of herself'(7); and that 'she was faithful to prayer'(4).

'Personal reactions', contains what sentiments and desires this story engendered in the Sisters. The highest score was, 'Awareness of God's love spurs one

⁵⁶⁷ See 3.5.2 p. 86

to love others.’(19). This theme of going out to serve others was the most popular; ‘cannot remain indifferent to the suffering of others’(17). Others speak of ‘compassion’ in the fullest meaning of the word, ‘suffering unites us with the crucified Christ’(16).

‘listening to people makes me go to the Lord and with my involvement wish that the people feel this compassionate and merciful love of God.’⁵⁶⁸

A second theme, union with Jesus in His suffering, was frequently repeated, ‘accept to suffer with Him’(12). Some stated that this vision affirms their faith(5). For the majority this vision spurred them to go out to others in need.

Quotations from Scripture and St. Emilie were frequently given to support the statements made and constitute two further categories.

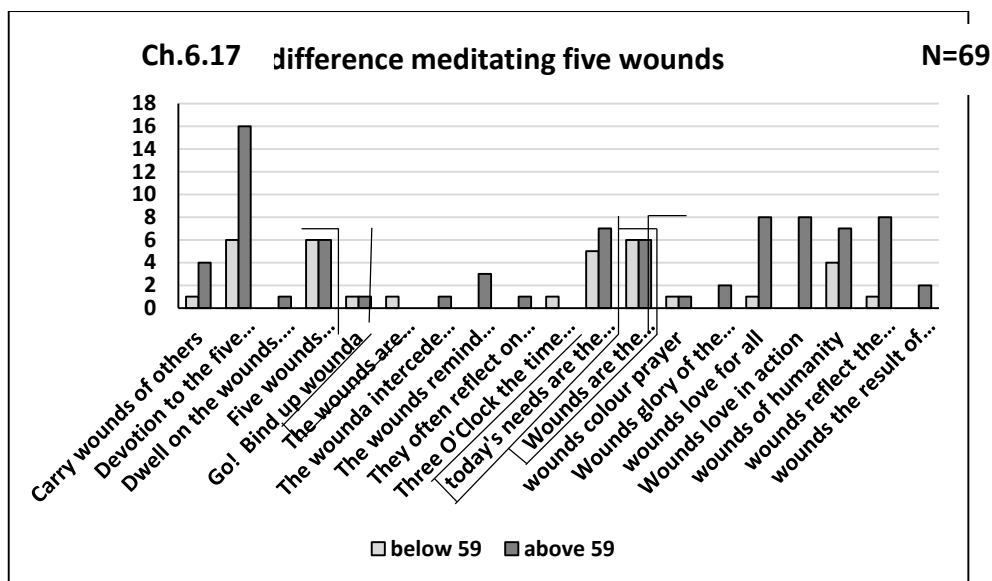
‘The Five wounds’ category has a high number of respondents contributing to it. The highest scoring topic is ‘devotion to the Five Wounds’(23). St. Emilie did encourage the Sisters to contemplate the wounds of the Saviour,

‘They meditate often on the adorable wounds of the Saviour,...’⁵⁶⁹

Prior to Vatican II there was a prayer recited in most communities on a daily basis which meditated on the five wounds. Some of the respondents regretted the cessation of this devotion. There is an age difference with regard to this category. This is illustrated in this Chart,

⁵⁶⁸ Transcript 44.

⁵⁶⁹ St. Emilie, *SPDR*, 1841, Chapter 2, article 4.



Since the age of retirement for women, in the United Kingdom, has been considered to be around 60 years old, the younger group was considered to be up to and including those of 59 years. The topics which related to the wounds of Christ were more subscribed to by those over 59 years. This bar chart shows each topic in this group and the numbers over and under 59 who subscribed to them. There are three exceptions. The first of these is, 'Five wounds meditation leads to compassion and kindness'(12), 'today's needs are the wounds of the Mystical Body of Christ'(12) and 'wounds are the injuries of everyone'(12). Within this sample the younger generation respond by spiritualising them and seeing them in the context of the suffering of the body of Christ.

The category, 'Jesus/God' lists the various attributes of God or of the Saviour. The highest scoring of these is 'Jesus Christ's self-emptying love for all.'(15). Other topics include, 'the non-judgemental love of God'(8) and 'The forgiveness of God'(3).

There follows, 'Mission' which describes what meditating on this vision urges the Sisters to do. Despite having less topics than the previous one, it has considerably more people opting for them. The highest scorer here is 'see God in people especially

sick, poor and needy.’(21). Further examples are, ‘Vision urges me to reach out to the poor and needy.’(16); ‘take part in the concrete gestures of the Lord’(11).

In a category called ‘Does not affect,’ there were three topics in which 11 respondents said that this particular vision did not affect their lives and they rarely or never thought about it.

This was followed by ‘The Blessed Sacrament’, all the topics here have low scores. What they witness to is that a small number of Sisters saw a link between this vision and the Eucharist.

The response to this question have shown that this vision has had a powerful effect on those Sisters who have contemplated it. The Sisters were impressed by the love of God shown through the self-sacrifice of the Incarnate Lord. Their responses have firmly established that the vision acts as a spur to going out on mission to those in need, following the example of St Emilie. It has also raised the idea of total self-giving following the example of Christ. All of these, the immense love of God, the call to ‘works of Charity’ and the clear desire to give themselves totally to God are all part of the Spiritual strengths in the spirituality.

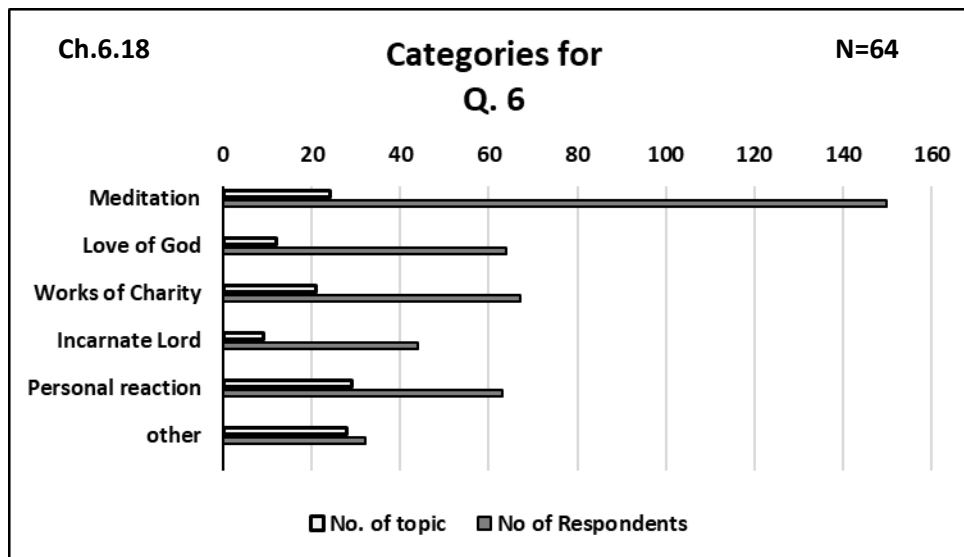
6.4.2.6 Question Six: Works of Charity

The ‘concept’ which St. Emilie called ‘Works of Charity’ is considered in this question. St. Emilie considered it as a concept rather than a phrase. It was so important that she had it as the basis for a fourth vow in the first Constitutions.⁵⁷⁰

- a. What are your reactions to this?
- b. Does this affect the way you respond to God and carry out your mission? Can you explain how?

⁵⁷⁰ See 5.4.11. p. 213.

The Sisters chose three foci for their responses, the ‘works’, ‘love’ especially God’s love and the admonition of St. Emilie to meditate daily on the great love of God in Christ. The responses were divided into categories,



Category one was about the benefits and importance of meditation. The highest scoring topic was ‘Daily meditation on love of God’(27). Some expanded it to include all of scripture, but the motive was to become aware of the great love of God. Sisters stated, ‘it was vital in order to discern the demands of the Mission’(12), others felt ‘it was necessary to allow oneself to be changed by what they contemplated’(8); ‘it was one of the best ways to experience God’(6); ‘it opened them to new ideas and initiatives from God (6) and ‘must spend time with God or you will fail to experience his touch (5).

‘Love of God’, highlighted God’s love. The number of topics was small but the number of respondents was large meaning that many Sisters held these views. Typical topics were, ‘in order to love others you had to be filled with God’s love

first.’(18), ‘the great love of the Father is seen in the gift of His Son.’(11) and ‘it was this love of God which urged them to go out to those in need’(8).

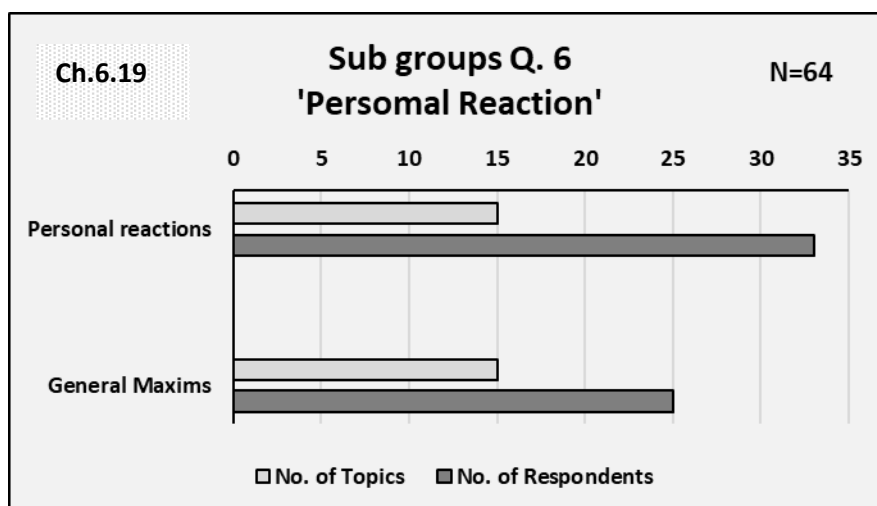
The third category, ‘Charitable works’, describes the nature of the works done as ‘Charitable works for love of God’(13). These works should ‘bring solace to those in need’(8), such deeds should be ‘concrete acts’(6) if they are truly to witness to God’s love. Others speak of being called to the very poor and in serving them they are responding to a personal experience of God’s love as seen through the mission of the Son. One Sister said.

‘Making works that liberate the person helping them to regain their sense and dignity, thus taking part in the mission of Jesus in today’s history and its challenges.’⁵⁷¹

The category called ‘Incarnate Lord’ has nine topics but six times that in number of Respondents. Thus these topics are popular with the Sisters. The most popular topic is ‘Jesus gives his life therefore we give ours’(10). Further ideas are ‘seeing Jesus as a model for life’ (5). This category reinforces the idea that the virtue of Works of Charity develops after contemplating the mystery of the Son who became one with us in order to reach out to us in our need.

The largest category of all, ‘Personal Reactions,’ comprised the personal way that this question affected the Sisters. Although it had the largest number of topics it had only about twice that number of respondents as most of the topics did not score very highly. It could be further subdivided into two groups,

⁵⁷¹ Transcript 40.



From 'personal reactions' an example was,

'take responsibility to cultivate human and evangelical relations, that can encourage, listen, respect, and make me donate myself without expecting acknowledgements.'⁵⁷²

Another topic, the need to grow in their capacity to love(5),

'I do not consider myself one who has arrived in the field of love, I do not know whether I carry out totally this love of which Emilia is speaking to us. Much remains to me to be done.'⁵⁷³

In the maxims group were 'Regular life of prayer needed,'(4) and 'Seek only the glory of God and the good of the neighbour.'(4). Many others from a single source such as 'Charity begins at home', were given. All these reactions centre around 'love' both human and divine and the reaching out to others.

The final category 'Other', had many a wonderful idea each given by one respondent. One was,

'I find it very important to have concrete works, through them we can live our charism that of revealing to other God's love for all men and women etc.'⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷² Transcript 15.

⁵⁷³ Transcript 25.

⁵⁷⁴ Transcript 3.

By 'concrete works' it assumes that it is not enough to talk of God's love but that this should be expressed in practical ways. It complements what has been said about the 'virtue' of Works of Charity and expresses the need for the practise of this virtue to be not simply theory but translated into real or 'concrete acts.

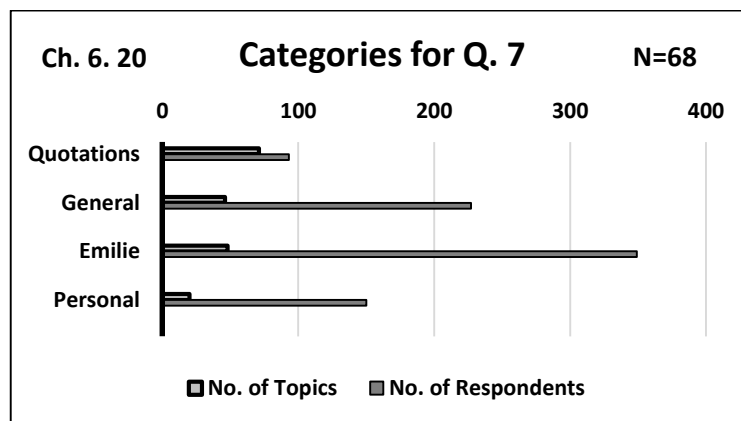
This question was difficult to answer for some but it seems to centre around the great love of God as revealed to us in Jesus, who goes out to those most in need. The Sisters were also convinced that their response should be practical not theoretical, showing their readiness to undertake any work to help others.

6.4.2.7 Question Seven: Suffering

Question Seven explores reactions to suffering.

- What are your thoughts about St. Emilie's attitude to suffering?
- Does this help you cope with your own hard times and those of the people you serve?

This question engendered 183 topics and they sorted into four categories.



This is typical of the responses.

'I think I understand that Saint Emilie always took the right attitude with courage without letting herself be dominated or disheartened, facing all forms of suffering—suffering in her family, in the church, her emotions with other people and her own Congregational sisters.'⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷⁵ Transcript 24

The category with the largest number of topics is labelled 'Quotations'. There were 71 different quotations, five of which were from scripture, one from the writings of St. John Chrysostom and the others from the document and letters of St. Emilie.

The most popular scripture quoted was of that of St. Paul to the Corinthians,

'he answered me, "My grace is enough for you: for power is at full stretch in weakness' 2 Cor. 12:9.

Five respondents quoted this text and one pointed out a direct connection to St. Emilie's letters,

'Never has my courage been greater, and my confidence in God more complete, that I can say with St. Paul that "the grace of God is sufficient for me," and that it is strong enough to maintain my soul at peace, indeed in a sort of joy, which makes me really happy.'⁵⁷⁶

This is a very strong statement by St. Emilie but it is also typical of the many times she spoke about sufferings in her letters. This indicates that St. Emilie felt herself to be sustained by the Lord in suffering, and this attitude was strongly supported by the Sisters.

The highest scoring quotation from St. Emilie was 'Everything must be marked by the seal of the Cross'.(14) This phrase cannot be found in St. Emilie's letters but it is quoted by Father Picard and by Father Malachy Carrol in their biographies.⁵⁷⁷ Father Picard is quoting from the testimony of Mother Cyprienne⁵⁷⁸ It is, therefore, from a secondary source. It implies that St. Emilie saw suffering as a mark of God's grace and an insertion into the mystery of salvation.

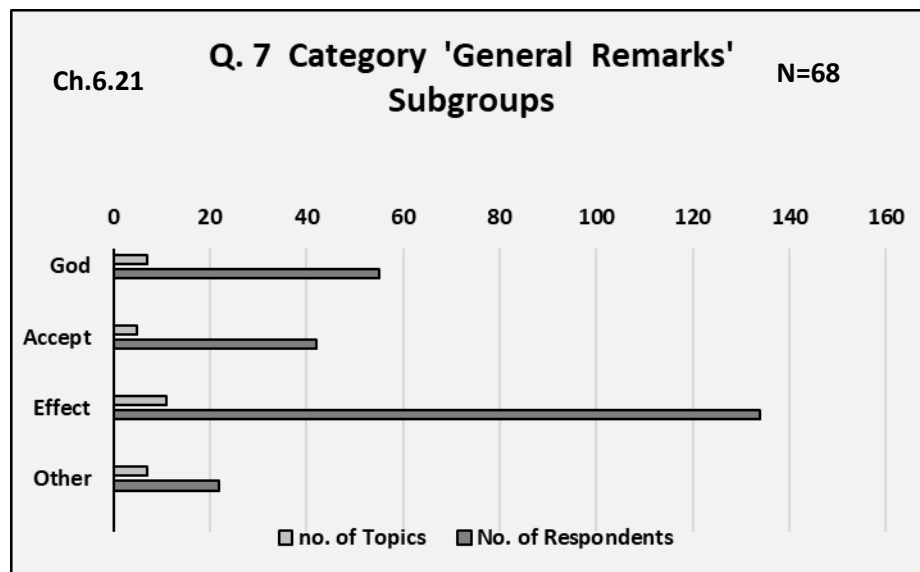
⁵⁷⁶ St. Emilie, letter 188 to Madame D'Aubilly, Transcript 36

⁵⁷⁷ See 2.5 p. 60ff..

⁵⁷⁸ Mother Cyprienne see fn. 62 p. 34

The second most popular quotation from St. Emilie is, 'I kiss the cross as soon as I see it'(4)⁵⁷⁹ This shows that she came to be able to greet trials with joy as she felt they were a touch of God in her life.

One of the categories, 'General Remarks' has topics which recall general attitudes to suffering but which cannot be traced directly to St. Emilie. It was divided into subgroups,



The first of the subgroup is about what suffering reveals of God. It is said 'to reveal His unconditional love'(14); 'how 'we can have unlimited trust in Him'(14); and 'suffering can be a sign and source of His love'(4).

The next subgroup describes how a person may accept suffering before God. It only has five topics but they are heavily subscribed with a total of 42 respondents. Examples are, 'evidence of God's love we can have a certain happiness in it'(13); 'all crosses in some way come from God'(11) and it should be accepted with 'a constant search for the will of God'(9). An example statement,

⁵⁷⁹ St. Emilie Letter 203 to Monsieur l'abbé Bourgade, 13th November 1845.

‘[St. Emilie]... welcomed the suffering in a way that was ‘human’, that is to say she was not caught by stoicism, but she was not complaining either in a sad way.’⁵⁸⁰

The third subgroup is called ‘the effects of suffering’. The topics include, ‘Suffering strengthens people’(13); it is a ‘sharing in the mystery of salvation’(12) and ‘the saving Cross of Christ gives meaning to suffering’,(8). The final subgroups consists of axioms such as ‘there is no rose without thorns’(1). The largest topic in this sub-category is, ‘the Cross is part of life’(10).

In this Category called ‘General’ the Sisters explored God’s perspective on suffering, how it is possible to accept it and how it can affect a person. By repeating well known axioms, ‘no roses without thorns’(1), they have also shown that it is a common human experience.

In the category called ‘St. Emilie’, the most popular topics was, ‘Unite her suffering with that of Christ.’(20). One such example is,

‘She felt privileged and thanked the heavenly spouse for giving her to bear his cross.’⁵⁸¹

The two further popular topics were ‘Emilie has a great spirit of faith’(24) and ‘her dominant love of God enabled her to suffer’(22). It was repeatedly stated that her ability to rise above what were constant and severe trials, was partly because of her great faith in God and His Providence. One respondent said,

‘From her letter we know how much St. Emilie has lived trials of all kinds, and all this in an attitude which is totally Christian, founded on her faith and on her love of Christ, from the perspective of the offering of a missionary.’⁵⁸²

⁵⁸⁰ Transcript 54

⁵⁸¹ Transcript 19.

⁵⁸² Transcript 56.

This quotation also mentions her love of Christ, but others put this in a much stronger way,

‘Her sufferings brought her closer to the Lord whom she loved with a dominant love. That was the secret of her ability to suffer.’⁵⁸³

The theme of being ‘united to a crucified Lord’(20), was expressed quite frequently by the Sisters:

‘St. Emilie had much suffering but she always carried her cross with courage and magnanimity uniting her suffering to that of Christ.’⁵⁸⁴

Other major themes in this category were that ‘her commitment to prayer was vital for her ability to endure(15);’ she always drew strength from God’(15) and that ‘she was convinced she was doing God’s will’(8).

The category call ‘Personal’ contains the personal responses of the Sisters to St. Emilie’s attitude and to their own personal sufferings. The highest scoring topics are, ‘Her attitude helps me’(28) and ‘get strength from her example’(13). These topics speak for themselves and it was quite clear that St. Emilie’s attitude to suffering was the model the Sisters wished to emulate.

As can be seen by the number of respondents who supported the different topics this question interested the Sisters and they gave much thought to it. It gives a picture of St. Emilie who came to terms with the suffering in her life and saw it as the touch of God. Her response to suffering was a major part of her response to God. The Sisters also reflected on the sense of union with the Lord who was a crucified God and this is one of the elements of the spirituality. St. Emilie trusted Him through

⁵⁸³ Transcript 8.

⁵⁸⁴ Transcript 4.

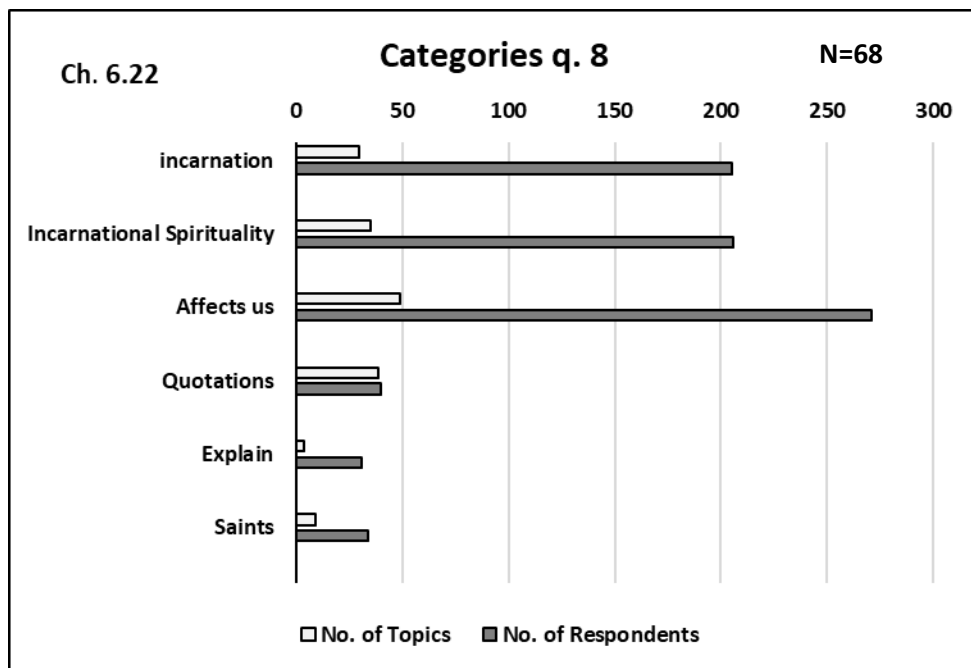
everything and she wanted this attitude to continue in the Congregation. These Sisters express their admiration and desire to follow St. Emilie in this.

6.4.2.8 Question Eight: Incarnational s

With this question the Sisters were given the opportunity to talk about the influence of Incarnational spirituality.

- a. How do you explain Incarnational spirituality to others?
- b. Can you explain if it affects your way of responding to God and to others.

The responses were divided into six categories,



Category one is about definition of the Mystery of the Incarnation while the second is about Incarnational spirituality. Theological ideas, describing God's revelation about himself, and spirituality, our response to that revelation, are often confused, it was quite difficult to differentiate the topics into separate categories.

The 'Incarnation' category consists of topics which seemed to describe the Incarnation itself. The most popular was, 'God became one with us'(26) and a typical statement was,

'God came to us in the form of human being to be one among us.'⁵⁸⁵
Other statements were, 'God's unconditional love'(22); 'God incarnated Himself out of love for suffering humanity'(20) and 'Came to free us from our bondage to sin'(6). All of these reveal God's way of reaching out to us which came through the Incarnation.

The second category, 'Incarnational spirituality', describe reactions to the mystery. Several respondents gave definitions of Incarnational spirituality such as, 'Is to go out to help others by example and action'(11); 'To be like Jesus in thought, attitudes and values.'(10) and 'A way of life: words and actions speak of the Incarnation'(8). Others stated, 'Is a call to action not just to reflection'(8); 'how I relate to God'(7); 'To live as Jesus lived'(7) and 'Respond to God in the ordinary'(5). One Sister spoke about the French School of spirituality,

'Here are a few highlights:

- The contemplation of the Lord Jesus in the various mysteries of his earthly life, including the life of the Virgin Mary.
- Focus on interiority, prayer, life 'sharing' with Jesus, in dependence on the Holy Spirit - a subsidiary life in the Father.
- The importance of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist - bearing channels of grace of sanctification.'⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁵ Transcript 10.

⁵⁸⁶ Transcript 56.

This summary covers many of the points given individually by others in relation to this spirituality. Two examples of this is the need for a life of prayer and the need for the Sacraments to deepen such a way of living.

The next category looks at how the incarnation affects people. The highest scoring topic is 'Embody the love of God'(25) and a typical example of this is,

'Jesus embodied this in the realities of his time and today invites us to enter into that same movement, embodying the love of God.'⁵⁸⁷

Some respondents reflected back to the previous questions and stated, 'To witness to the Love of God through Works of charity'(15). Many of the respondents identified a call to associate themselves with the mission of Christ, 'Cooperate in the mission for which the Son of man became incarnate'(18) and 'Imitating Christ'(11). These latter topics would demand a deep relationship with Christ, some of the topics support this, 'Enables a personal relationship with Christ'(4); 'God within us'(4) and 'Spiritual life, His life animated by faith'(2). It would seem that in this category the Love of God is transmitted to the individual through an experience of an intimate personal relationship with Christ.

The category that follows consists of the Quotations which emerged from the respondents. Twenty Two respondents quoted from Scripture, five from the documents of St. Emilie, six from the Constitutions and six other sources, including one St. John Paul II and one from Shakespeare. The highest scoring Gospel quote was from John 3:16, 'God so loved the world that he gave His only son'(8). Most of the other quotations came from single individuals and spoke about the Incarnation

⁵⁸⁷ Transcript 24

itself rather than Incarnational spirituality. One exception to this was a quotation from the Account which is, ‘

I gave myself up to the inclination He had inspired in me to practise charity towards my neighbours,⁵⁸⁸

There remain two small categories, the first, entitled ‘Explain’, give those topics which the Sisters offered as their way of explaining Incarnational spirituality to others. There are only four topics in this group, ‘Love explains Incarnation’(11); ‘it is a Divine Mystery’(10); ‘To explain this you need to have experienced God's unconditional love’(7) and ‘God speaks through humanity’(3). These responses reiterate what was said in the previous categories, the Incarnation of Christ reveals the depth of God’s love for all, this is what people need to understand.

The final category was given the name ‘Saints’ and it referred to any mention of Our lady, St. Joseph or St. Emilie. It only has nine topics all of which had low scores. The highest scoring topic was about St. Emilie, ‘Emilie moved by her reflection to go out to those in need’(7) and the next two concerned St. Joseph, ‘Called to live the virtues of St. Joseph,’(7) and ‘Honour for St Joseph at the moment he gets the Good News’(6). One respondent stated ‘the point of entry into this mystery is Joseph (1).

The response to this question has revealed that many of these Sisters have spent much time in pondering the Mystery of the Incarnation. The 1982 Constitution frequently refers to this mystery as a basis for the spirituality of St. Emilie and the Congregation. This question has given the Sisters the opportunity to

⁵⁸⁸ St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 19.

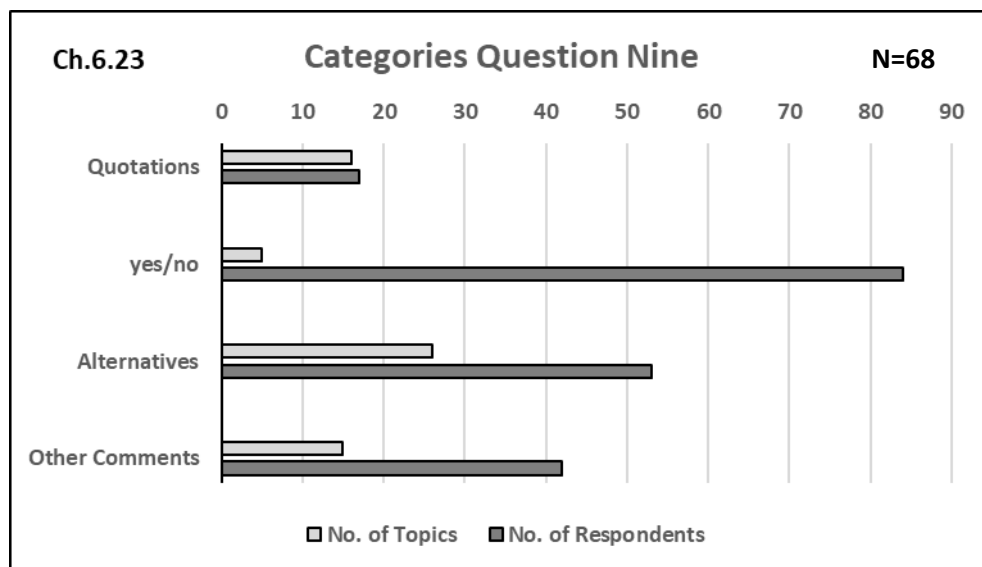
share how this mystery affects their lives. Their responses show that they have been deeply touched by it and it is a major influence on their response to God.

6.4.2.9 Question Nine: God's Spouse?

This question explores the Sisters' image of their personal relationship with God, especially as St. Emilie used the word 'spouse' frequently to describe her relationship.

- a. Do you feel that this describes your relationship to God as a Religious Sister?
- b. Do you have another way of describing it which suits you better?

It drew a varied response from the Sisters who gave quite short answers. The topics were divided into four categories,

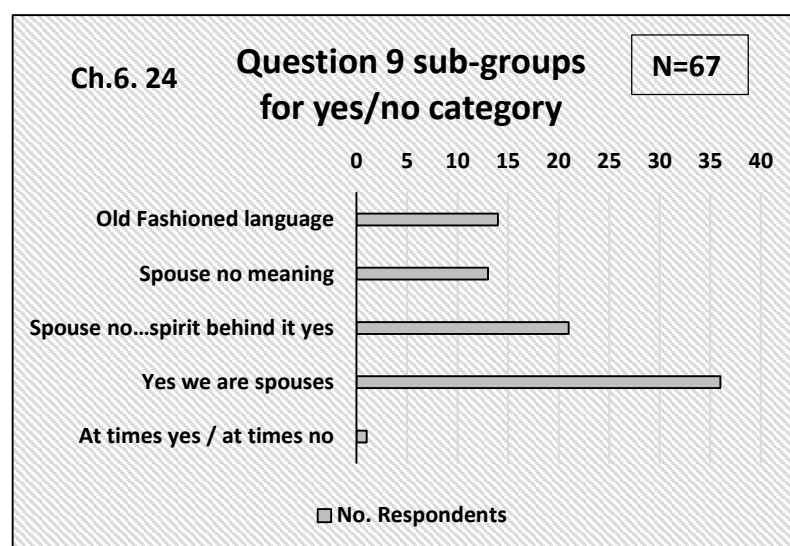


The first category contained a total of sixteen quotations; four from the 1982 Constitutions, six from Scripture, five from St. Emilie's letter and one from Pope John Paul II. The type of sentiment expressed in these different quotations is exemplified by the following

" he is my beloved and I am his." Song of Songs'⁵⁸⁹

The category labelled as 'yes/no', gives an answer to the use of the word 'spouse'.

Most of the Sisters gave a straight answer. This category could be divided into five subgroups each with one topic, therefore only the number of respondents is shown,



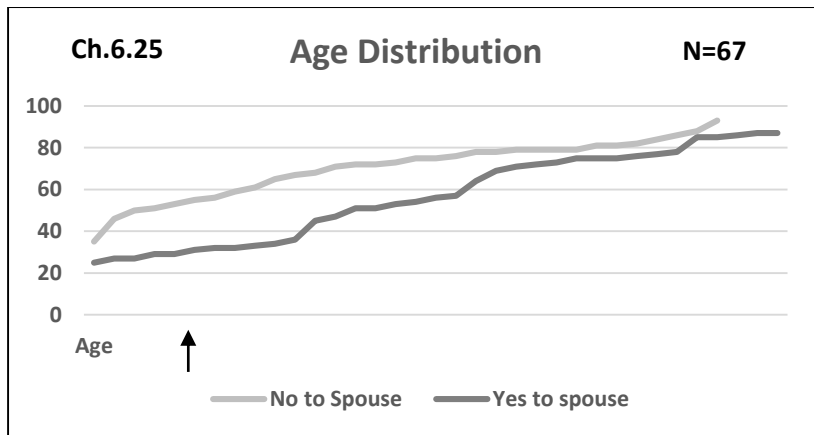
The greatest number of respondents(36) agreed with the use of the word. A typical example of this response is,

'To be brides means to desire to stay with him and this recalls the word. "Fidelity", it is the groom that looks at me with love and I must let myself to be penetrated by this love, make it enter into the deep, to taste the sweetness of his love'⁵⁹⁰

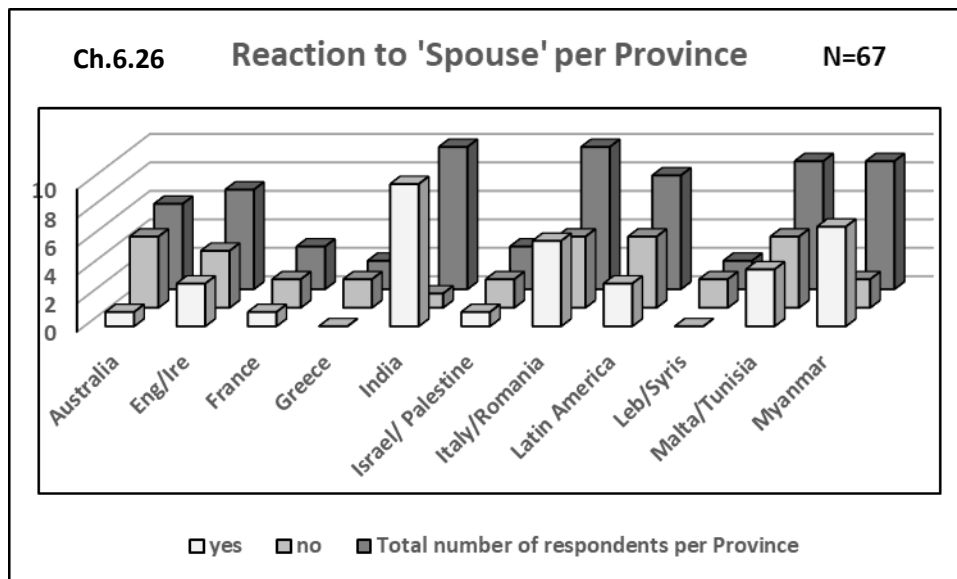
A comparison of the ages of the 'yes' and 'no' responses was made,

⁵⁸⁹ Transcript 39.

⁵⁹⁰ Transcript 23



The 'no' group is consistently older than the 'yes' group. However the difference is not great. The average age for the 'yes's' is 55, whereas it is 68 for the 'no's'. This suggests that there is tendency for the younger Sisters, in this sample, to find more meaning in the term. Since the majority of the young Sisters come from the Asian Provinces, a comparison of the answers given according to each Province was made. The following Bar Chart illustrates the results.



It is striking that both the Indian and Myanmar Provinces have a large majority who replied 'yes'. This indicates that there may be a cultural influence at work in this group of Sisters.

The third category, 'Alternatives', described either words or phrases the Sisters preferred to use instead of 'spouse'. Some prefers the word 'disciple'(4) one stated.

'I consider myself as a DISCIPLE of Jesus. For me disciple means a friend, a collaborator, a person totally committed to the Master, Disciple is a person who is always on the move with Christ'⁵⁹¹

It speaks of a total dedication to Christ and an experience of the constant presence of the Lord. Others experienced 'God as a Father' or others that Christ was a brother, one mentioned relating motherhood to God, as if they felt themselves fitting in as part of the 'family of the Trinity'.(9) 'Special friend' with God was popular(8);

'Today's language the same reality would tend or to use the model of "friendship" in deepest sense.'⁵⁹²

There were other words such as 'Consecrated'(2), 'Jesus My Lord'(1), 'Humble Servant'(1), 'The Beloved'(1) and 'Followers of Christ'(1). The oldest Sister wrote,

'Our way of life, in this respect, has similarities with that of marriage -- a choice of spouse, a call, a response, a life of knowledge in the intimacy of a love and maintained fidelity - but all of this is to live, take it on another level, because our spouse is not a human but divine person. Our fertility, as spouse, is also birthed in pain and love, but for the Kingdom of heaven.'⁵⁹³

This remarkable statement seems, to some extent, a bridge between the two groups.

The final category consisted of remarks made to underline the feeling of commitment the Sisters felt to the call of God to be a religious. The most popular of this category was 'given everything to God'(10);

'This relationship calls for undivided love, fidelity, sacrifices, selflessness and total submission. Pledging one's life to ever

⁵⁹¹ Transcript 1.

⁵⁹² Transcript 61.

⁵⁹³ Transcript 56.

remain faithful in following Christ who is poor, chaste and obedient, is to be a religious sister.⁵⁹⁴

The second most popular topic was 'an Intimate relationship with Christ'(10);

'I find more proper the expression 'consecrated', as belonging to Christ. Person who lives in relationship with Jesus Christ. That belongs to him; an expression that indicates belonging, intimate union, confidential relation deeply felt.'⁵⁹⁵

Other remarks reinforce this, 'Jesus fills me'(3), 'His love transforms' (3), 'Undivided Love' (2), 'He is with me always'(2) and 'The Lord takes the initiative'(2).

It would seem that the result of this question exhibits that the Sisters experience an intense sense of total commitment to God and that this is expressed by their use of different words but all of which tend towards an intimate personal relationship with God and a total commitment to Him.

6.4.2.10 Question Ten: Religious Life Traditions

After giving four brief descriptions of four traditions of Religious life, Monastic, Mendicant, Apostolic and Ministerial, the Sister were asked the following questions;

- a. Having reflected on these different traditions, which one do you live?
- b. Perhaps you feel you live a mixture of these traditions, please explain.
- c. Which one attracts you most?

Historically there have been three traditional ways of living Religious Life, Monastic, Mendicant and Apostolic.⁵⁹⁶ As the demands of the Apostolate change, communities have to adapt in respond to new circumstances. In some recent books on religious

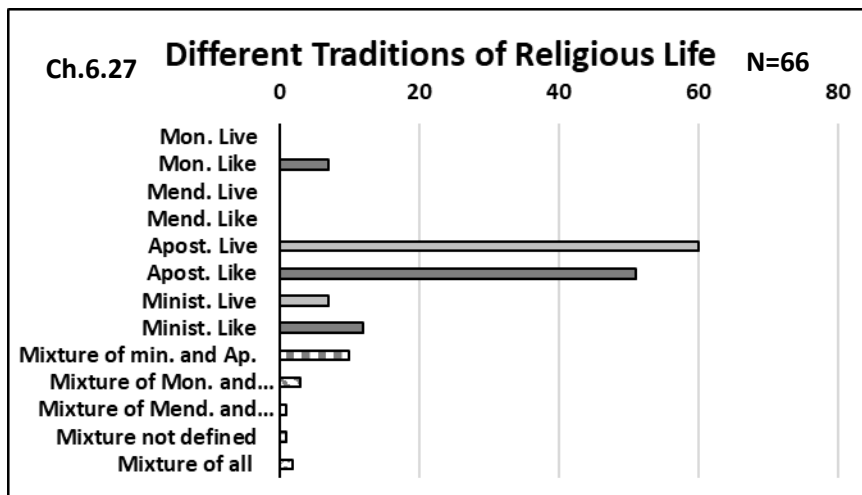
⁵⁹⁴ Transcript 21.

⁵⁹⁵ Transcript 25.

⁵⁹⁶ There is no written history of Religious Life which outlines these traditions. History reveals that from the time of the Desert Fathers there were Christians who forsook 'every-day' life to live a life of prayer, poverty and total dedication to God. There was a gradual development over the next few centuries of Monasteries. The Mendicant Orders arose around the 11th Century. The apostolic tradition is credited to have started with Ignatius Loyola in the 16th Century. Jordan Aumann in Christian Spirituality in the Catholic Tradition traces the beginning of Monasticism in Chapter 4 and then in subsequent chapters outlines the emergence of the other traditions by describing the spiritualities of the founders.

life it has been suggested that a fourth tradition, called Ministerial, is emerging.⁵⁹⁷

The following Bar chart gives the respondents answers to how much they identify with the different traditions.



Most of the Sisters, 84 percent, felt they lived the apostolic life. 74 percent said that they liked living it. Seven respondents said that they were already living the Ministerial way, although one of these felt that it was not a separate tradition,

‘I really do not see much difference between the apostolic and ministerial lives but hesitate to say which one attracts me more, until I experience more of the ministerial.’⁵⁹⁸

The same Respondent felt that religious life is in a time of transition. Another Respondent stated,

‘Currently I am living in an apostolic life community where life is organised in function of the ministries of the members. It differs little in practice from the ministerial type described.’⁵⁹⁹

Five Sisters were attracted to the Monastic style because of the prayer life.

⁵⁹⁷ Schneiders S., *Selling All*. This is the middle volume of her trilogy *Religious Life in a new Millenium*. The term ministerial is introduced as a new way of living community where individuals may live alone because of their work and return to community from time to time. The Community is not constituted all the time in one place. Throughout this book different aspects of this new way of living is discussed, see particularly Chapter 9.

⁵⁹⁸ Transcript 46.

⁵⁹⁹ Transcript 61.

'I do feel the mixture of these traditions because I feel the need of prayer so to say, the life of monastic. Where I need to spend my time with Jesus, in meditation and reflection.'⁶⁰⁰

Finally, some Sisters felt they recognised elements of more than one tradition. One

of the Major Superiors stated,

'We live apostolic life.

b. We also live a mixture of Monastic life because recollection is the soul of our congregation. The spirit of recollection and of union with God is the foundation of St. Emilie's contemplation and action.

c. We live a mixture of Mendicant because we too embrace poverty which is reflected in our dress, our food and our personal possessions. Our life together is still very structured.

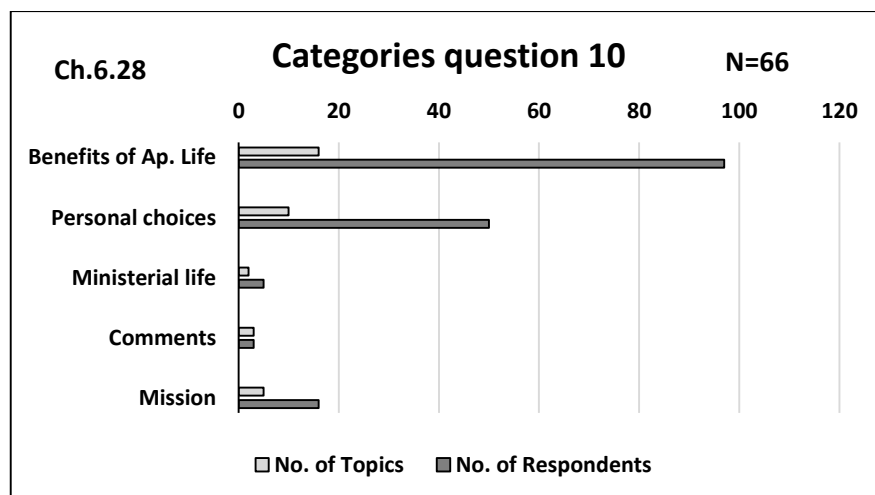
d. I feel that we live a mixture of Ministerial life also. We minister to people outside the convent. Some do not live in community all the time if their ministry calls for it.'⁶⁰¹

This last statement exhibits the flexibility needed in changing circumstances. It also

witnesses to the fact that these different traditions all have elements in common.

The different elements have varying emphases in each tradition. The questions

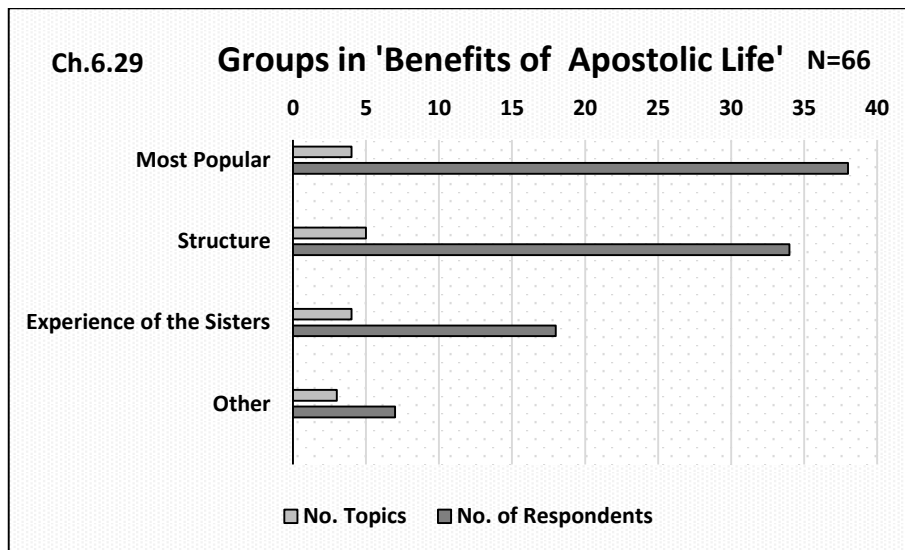
produced five categories,



⁶⁰⁰ Transcript 10.

⁶⁰¹ Transcript 69.

The first of these categories , ‘the benefits of Apostolic life’ was sub-divided into groups,



The top scoring topics are, ‘Common life varies according to need’(10), ‘Mixture of prayer and action’(10), ‘Leads to both contemplation and action’(9) and ‘Prayer is essential for Apostolic life’(9). From these remarks prayer is an integral part of Apostolic life, not some optional add-on.

‘Structure’, describes organisational aspects of community living ‘Community has some structure’(7), ‘Enjoy community and team work’(7) and ‘Need to adapt to changing circumstances’(6). Two important aspects of Apostolic Life, the need for some structure but also the need for it to be adaptable.

The ‘personal experience’ of the Sisters follows, ‘Being supported by the Sisters’(6), ‘Live a simple life’(5) and ‘You are part of a Family’(3).

The final group has three topics which stand on their own, ‘Need to be open to the Holy Spirit’(4) and ‘Teaches the Spirit of Community’(2).

The second category, ‘personal choices’, describe what the Sisters said they personally enjoyed about this way of living. The most popular was ‘Enjoy being with

people and bring them Jesus Christ'(14). This was also the highest scoring topic in the responses. The Sister go on to say they like prayer in common(6) and that they 'do not feel called to the cloister'(3).

One Sister felt that there should be a 'fifth' tradition. A 'core' group of religious live in a community where others, without vows, may come and go but join in the life of the Community, prayer and mission.

Of the remaining three categories the first is about the ministerial tradition and it is implied that this type of Religious life may become more important in the future. The other two categories are valid comments but do not add to the discussion of this question.

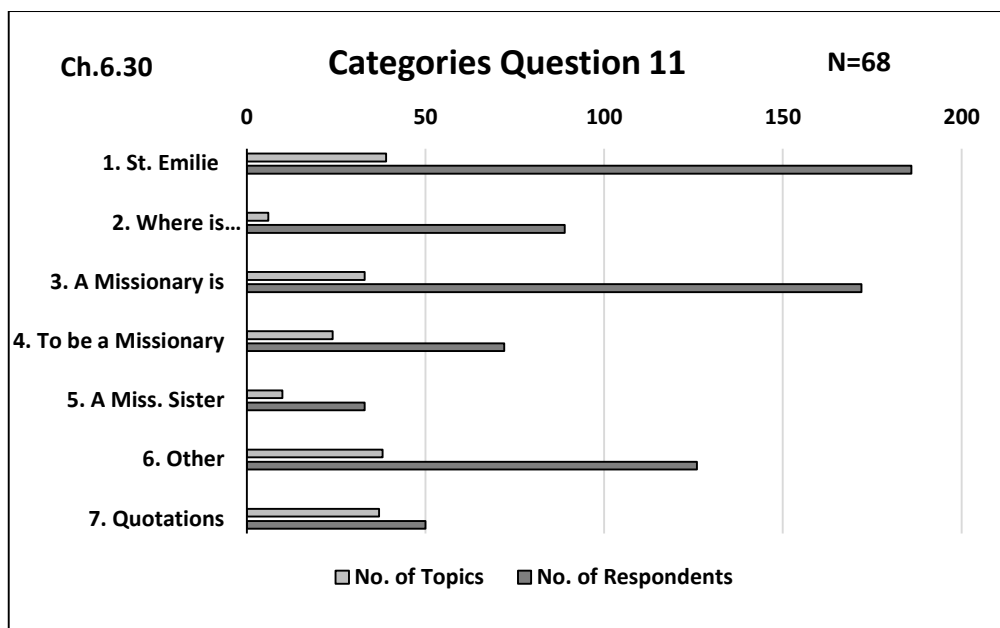
This question has revealed that the majority of the Sisters are comfortable with living the Apostolic tradition but some are aware that the changing world may :cause the need to adapt, perhaps more towards that which has been called ministerial.

6.4.2.11 Question Eleven: Missionary

This question asked the Sisters their opinion of what St. Emilie understood by the word 'Missionary' and then goes on to ask what it means to them.

- a. What do you think was St. Emilie's idea being a 'missionary'?
- b. What does it mean for you to be a Sister in a missionary Congregation?

The analysis produced seven categories



The largest category, 'St. Emilie' had thirty nine topics which attracted 189 respondent scores. This shows that most people contributed to this category. The two highest scoring topics were very similar, 'St. Emilie wanted to make Jesus known and loved'(15) and 'She loved the Lord and wanted everyone to know this love. '(13). These illustrate her motivation rather than define her understanding of the missionary vocation. Two more topic, 'St. Emilie wanted foreign missions'(13) and 'St. Emilie wanted to announce Christ to infidels'(13) and these were often accompanied by this quotation,

“I felt strong attraction for the foreign missions. My heart went out spontaneously to infidel region.”⁶⁰²

The next topics all affirm strongly that St. Emilie was a missionary,

‘St Emilie's heart and soul was missionary: She had a great devotion to St Francis Xavier and prayed that she and her Congregation would "announce the Good News of the Kingdom to the poor.”⁶⁰³

⁶⁰² St. Emilie, *Account of Graces*, paragraph 24.

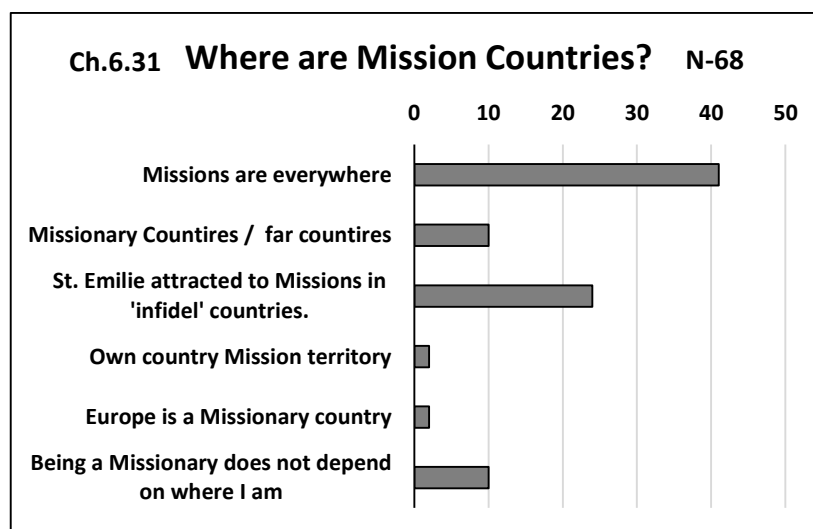
⁶⁰³ Transcript 6.

One Sister stated strongly that being a missionary was not just an add-on for St. Emilie,

‘Emilie, it was not something "added" to the charism and the identity of her sisters, but the identity of the being consecrated to God, and then sent by him, as the apostles, to the very border of the Earth.’⁶⁰⁴

Many Sisters commented that St. Emilie did not make any distinction between people, ‘race, colour or religion’(8). They ascribe her motivation to three impulses; to share God’s love(19), ‘to spread the message of Christ’(24) and finally the convictions that it was ‘her contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation which led her to be missionary’(6). In this category the Sisters gave their conviction that St. Emilie had a missionary vocation but they did not define what that really meant, and especially what it meant to her.

From the Sisters responses it became apparent that there was some debate about if it was necessary to go out to foreign lands to be truly a missionary. The second category was labelled ‘Where or what is mission territory?’. This category was divided into subgroups,



⁶⁰⁴ Transcript 62.

The majority,⁴¹ feel that the mission is everywhere. No particular country or 'type' of country is more 'mission territory' than any other. Ten Sisters expressed the opinion that it was an important aspect of belonging to a missionary order to be prepared to go to another country on mission. Twenty four Sisters pointed out that St. Emilie had expressed an attraction for the foreign missions but most qualified it by saying that she was really attracted to those who did not know Christ.

'I think St. Emilie's Idea of the word "missionary" Is bringing Jesus to be known in the whole world especially those who do not know of Jesus. This is why she responded whole heartedly the demands of an invitations of the foreign land missions.'⁶⁰⁵

Two people stated that their own country was 'missionary territory' and two more made the same statement about Europe. None of these respondents defined what they meant by 'Mission Territory'.

The final group states quite clearly that the respondents do not feel that being a missionary has anything to do with where they carry out their mission.

In the next two categories the Sisters gave their ideas of the Characteristics of missionaries. These Categories could have been combined but the information was presented in different ways. Category three, labelled 'A missionary is', consists of direct statements which were like definitions of the term. The fourth Category, labelled 'To be a missionary...' is composed of ideas which were gleaned from the text written by the respondents, they were not offered as definitions but as attitudes or characteristics of missionaries. To illustrate the difference between these categories, the highest scoring topic in Category three was 'A missionary is attentive, open and available to announce Christ'(17), a typical example,

⁶⁰⁵ Transcript 53

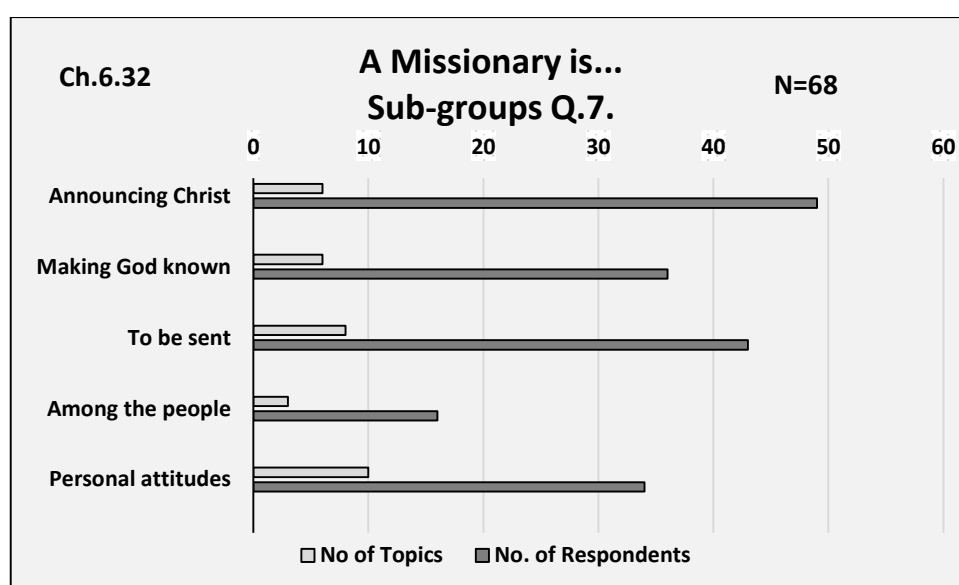
'It means to be attentive, open, available to go out in order to: - announce, love, welcome and accept that which god entrusts to me,'⁶⁰⁶

In the Category four there was, 'To be a missionary is to be totally available'(6),

'St Emilie liked her daughters to strive to live as one totally available to God in their mission.'⁶⁰⁷

Although these are not identical they convey very similar ideas.

Category three expresses strong opinions about the word 'Missionary'. The topics were subdivided as follows,



The three strongest sub-groups are 'announcing Christ'(49), 'making God known'(36) and 'To be sent'(43). The first of these contains such things as, 'introducing people to Jesus'(17); and 'spreading the Good News'(9).

'For me to be a Sister of a missionary Congregation means that, being a daughter of S. Emilie, I must like she did, have the desire to make the Lord known to all, without distinctions of race, religion.....'⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁶ Transcript 24.

⁶⁰⁷ Transcript 60

⁶⁰⁸ Transcript 29

For some Sisters it was God rather than Christ that was to be made known. This formed the second sub-group.

The third subgroup, 'To be sent', was almost as large as the first and was important to many,

'My idea of missionary means - one is sent by God to the people who don't know God, to reveal God to them by teaching, preaching, healing and witnessing God's kenotic love.'⁶⁰⁹

The final two subgroups are smaller and much of what is in them is repeated in Category 4. However there are two topics in the final subgroup which are not repeated in the next Category and these are, 'A missionary must encounter Christ to reflect Him to others'(3),

'Reflection on my own experience of God is necessary for me to be able to be a witness of the face of God to those whom I meet.'⁶¹⁰

The second attitude is the opinion that 'A missionary has a special grace from God'(2),

'To belong to a missionary Congregation is truly a special gift of God.'⁶¹¹

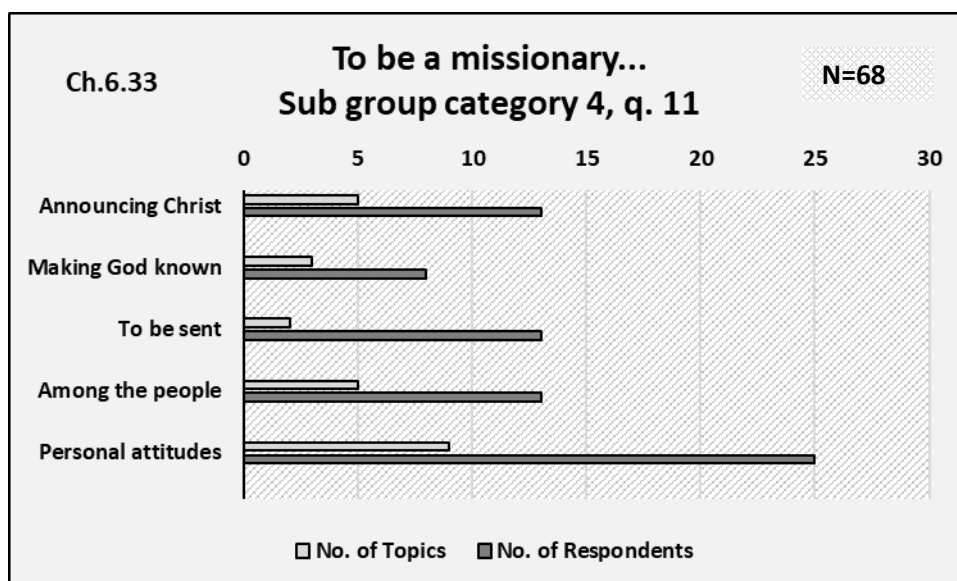
This idea is suggesting that a missionary call is a gift of the Spirit given to some individuals for the sake of the whole people of God.

Category 4 was sorted into sub-groups with the same titles,

⁶⁰⁹ Transcript 69.

⁶¹⁰ Transcript 34.

⁶¹¹ Transcript 33.



The first three subgroups gave much the same ideas as in category three. However there is greater emphasis on the last two subgroup in this Category. The Sisters felt that it was important to be one with the people that they were called to serve, 'To be a missionary is to be one among the people to whom you are sent'(4) and 'to adapt to cultures and people'(4),

'To have a missionary spirit also is to adapt to the culture and become one among the people wherever I go.'⁶¹²

They also felt that certain personal attitudes were needed to be good missionaries. One such was 'being available to respond to God whenever and wherever they are'(13),

'To me personally from some courage and a certain freedom to be "available", open to differences, learning that not a geographical place our houses, but the presence of God wherever we may be.'⁶¹³

Other personal attitudes were 'be detached from country, family and possessions'(6), 'to be willing to accept suffering(1) and 'to seek the will of the Father'(1). In addition reflecting the love of God to others was a strong theme, 'A

⁶¹² Transcript 19.

⁶¹³ Transcript 62.

missionary is to incarnate the saving love of the Father'(5) and 'To be a missionary to love and serve without limits'(3).

Category three produces the definition of being sent to make God or Christ known, after experiencing God in prayer. Category four, reflecting experience, produces the need to be open to God always, to be aware of the needs of the people, and the need to be detached from the things of this world and to reflect God's love. Both categories emphasise the need to be on the move, ready to go wherever a person is sent. Through these a 'profile' of a missionary emerged.

The fifth category is made up of statements which refer to being a religious in a Missionary Congregation. The Sisters expressed their appreciation of belonging to an International Congregation and they felt that no matter where the Sisters were established, they would feel 'at home' even if there were cultural differences(6). Belonging to such an organisation gave them support in their mission(4). Several stated as Sisters of St. Joseph, they 'manifest God's love through human actions'(6), 'they should have the same spirit as St. Joseph'(2) and 'the confident faith of St. Joseph'(2). One Sister stated simply,

'The fact that I have entered in a missionary corps, automatically I am one! Even if my apostolate is at the interior of the house!'.⁶¹⁴

This category testifies to their experience of belonging to a missionary order.

The next category, 'other', consists of statement which could not be placed in the other categories. Many of the topics mentioned here are basic Christian principles which all Christians should embrace. One topic is 'To love and live with Him'(5),

⁶¹⁴ Transcript 58.

'I do believe that my vocation is to show love of God to all person by loving.'⁶¹⁵

It is a call to which all Christians are called, but missionaries especially so. There were two topics which added something to the understanding of a missionary. One was 'Join the mission of Christ wherever we are, therefore all Christians are missionary'(14),

'to make Christ known to all those who have not yet known, and thus continue the ministry which Christ started.'⁶¹⁶

The second topic reinforces this,

'Missionary life rooted in Christ and the scriptures'⁶¹⁷

Four Sisters pointed out that 'The foundation of all missionary calls is Christ saying 'go'(4). This was based on Mark 16:15.

The final Category of this question consists of the quotations which Sisters offered. There were thirty seven in all. Most were from the documents of St. Emilie(14), the Constitutions(7) and from scripture(9).

In answering this question the Sisters have given a picture of a missionary as a person called to spread the Good news by their lives and actions, alongside their readiness to go wherever they are sent. They attested to the need to share the experience of God's love. They feel strongly that a missionary is specifically sent by God to carry out this task. They also stated that the place that this task is carried out has no preference for any particular geographic location. It is wherever God has sent them.

⁶¹⁵ Transcript 46.

⁶¹⁶ Transcript 11

⁶¹⁷ Transcript 69

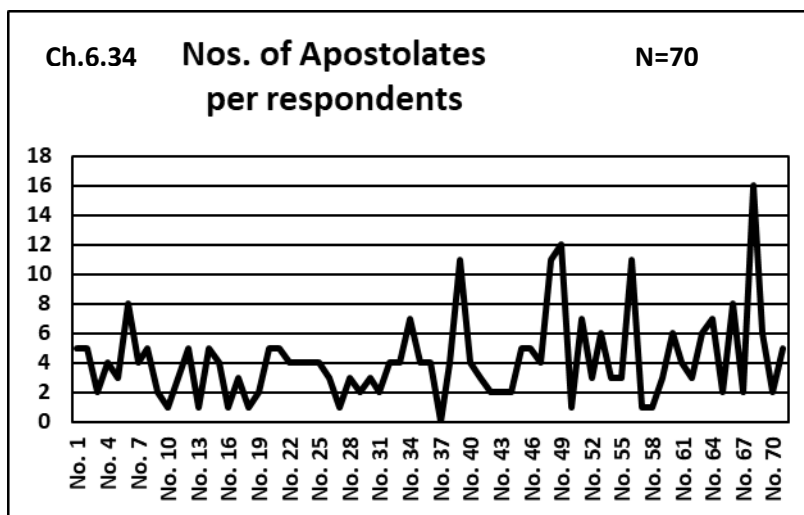
6.4.2.12 Question Twelve: Apostolates

In this question the Sisters were simply asked to say what is or has been their main missions.

What is or has been your main Mission? For the future to what kind of mission do you feel called?

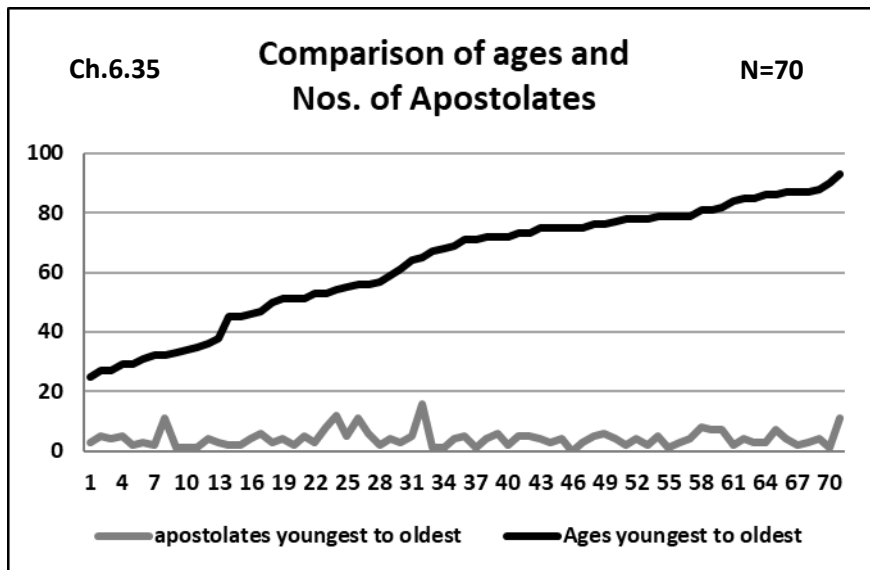
In the discussion, about the responses, the word 'Apostolate' will be used to convey differing 'fields' of work. Thus if a Sister changed her work in the same field of work, for example in education to change from a school to a university, this will be recorded as the same apostolate. A change in apostolate would be from one field of work to another, such as education to social work.

Most of the respondents had been involved in several different apostolates throughout their lives. The following chart shows the number described by each respondent,



This illustrates that a few Sisters remained in the one apostolate all their lives. The largest is the response of a Provincial who listed most of the works ongoing in her Province.

This variation in the number of changes does not have any relation to the age of the Respondents. This can be seen with the following graph,

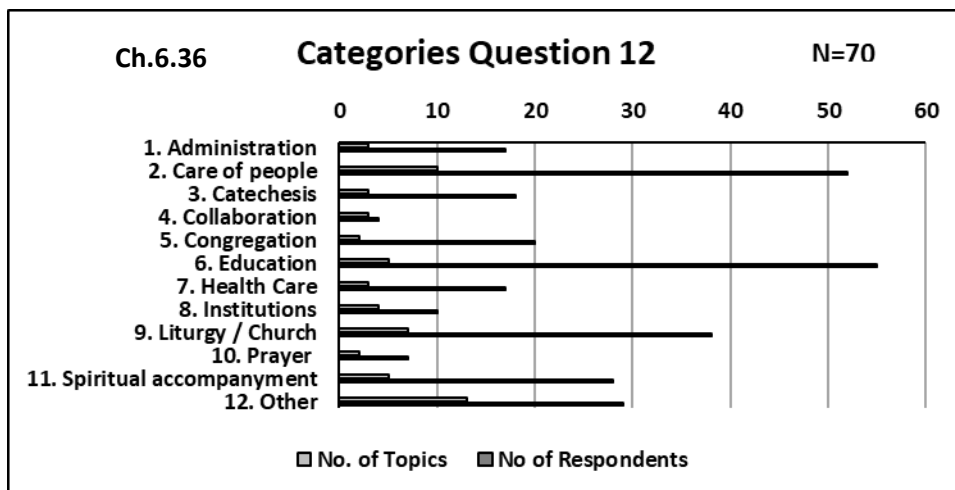


The average number of apostolates is 4.3. However many will be involved with more than one apostolate at the same time,

‘I have retired because of advanced age but I still work on administration for my Community. I do some Parish work too in bringing Communion to the sick. I am a minister of the Eucharist therefore I give Communion during Mass.’⁶¹⁸

The multiplicity of different apostolates shows that within this group of Sisters there is a willingness to change in response to God’s call. From the responses the types of Apostolate which were divided into twelve categories.

⁶¹⁸ Transcript 4.



Administration was composed of serving at some level in the various levels of the Congregation. One Sister had served on the General Council, others had either been Provincials or members of the Provincial team. Some had had responsibilities for individual Communities.

Care of people consists of those who have been involved with the care of a particular group of people,

‘The elderly people living alone at home, homes for the aged, hospital and etc, so I’m glad to do so. God gave me special gift to be smiling, laughter, words consoling them, pray with them, sing with them, cry with them also sometimes.’⁶¹⁹

The types of caring listed were, care of children(3), of elderly(8), of elderly Sisters(3), of HIV children(1), of the poor(8), of families(3) and of the sick(9). The marginalised(8) included lepers, the poorest with nothing, feeding the homeless, women denied human rights or abused, refugees, migrants and the mentally unable. Included here were social work(3) and those who worked with Young people(14).

⁶¹⁹ Transcript 60.

The followed category, 'catechesis' has three topics, catechesis'(14), Biblical studies and sharing'(3) and 'evangelisation'(1)'. Only those who mentioned this by name were added to this group

The next category is small and relates working in collaboration with other Congregations(1), Associates(2) and other faiths or ecumenism(1).

Category 5 is called 'Congregation' and it has a small number of topics but a large number of respondents. It consists of two topics, the first 'formation'(18) the religious education of members. The second topic is 'vocation ministry'(2).

'Education' is the largest Apostolate. It has six topics, the largest of which is called 'education'(34) those who stated they worked in education of any kind. Some specified the type of education, 'of catechists'(6), 'in schools'(13), 'special needs'(1) and in college(1). Many worked at different levels in education.

'My main mission has been in the field of education. My experience in schools ranged from the 1st primary school class up to the Final class in secondary school,'⁶²⁰

'Health care' is the next category, the highest scoring topic is 'care of the sick'(9). The next topic is called 'health care professionals'(7) and includes those professionally trained, all were nurses. The final topic is termed 'dispensary'(1).

Category eight, 'Institutions', consists of the orphanages(4), places for village girls to board while attending schools(3), hospital(2), hostels for young village women working in the cities(1), many schools(2) and a women's prison(2).

The next category, 'Church and Liturgy', has only five topics but there are many respondents. The most popular topic is 'pastoral work'(25).

⁶²⁰ Transcript 34.

‘My main mission has been pastoral Ministry in a Parish or School setting, or youth work.’⁶²¹

Many of those whose main work had been teaching moved to this apostolate retiring.

‘My main mission was teaching in a senior school which including organising spiritual activities for teenage girls. In spite of my age I can still do quite a lot of organising spiritual activities and helping in the Parish.’⁶²²

Other topics included ‘Music and choir’(3), ‘sacristan’(3), ‘Chaplain for a group or organisation’(4), ‘Liturgical animation’(2) and ‘minister of the Eucharist’(1).

Following on is ‘Prayer’. It is a very small category with only three topics which are ‘prayer groups’(4), ‘prayer and intercession’(2) and ‘healing ministry’(1).

A fairly large category, number eleven, follows, ‘Spiritual Accompaniment’, its most popular topic, ‘Accompaniment of groups and individuals’(17). An example is,

‘from 2009 to at present I am serving as school guidance counsellor. There are many students who find life so difficult, who are looking for love and care.’⁶²³

The other topics are ‘counselling’(3), ‘Spiritual direction’(2) and ‘spirituality’(4).

The final category named, ‘Others’, consisted of occupations which could not be fitted into the other categories. The highest scorer in this group is called ‘Service of small acts’(7). It was written by many of the retired Sister in the sample,

‘My main mission has always been and still is today even though I am retired, we live art. 4 of Constitutions, that is revealing God's

⁶²¹ Transcript 39.

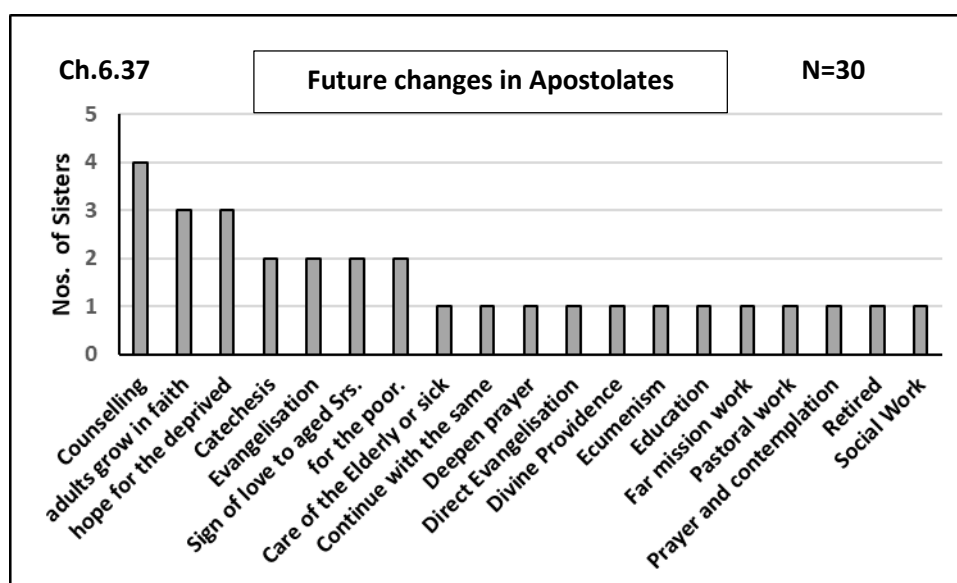
⁶²² Transcript 8.

⁶²³ Transcript 53.

love and tenderness to others through all our gestures no matter how small and insignificant they might seem.'⁶²⁴

Many of the retired Sisters, expressed similar sentiments. A retired teacher is working with elderly people in a home helping them with craft work. Another Sister was a librarian, four were studying for degrees, a Sister was active in justice and peace and a Sister had trained as a theologian. The other topics were reflective rather than practical comprising 'reflect God's love'(4), 'Whatever God asks'(3), 'Partner in Jesus' mission'(2), 'Work for God's greater glory'(2), 'Follow Divine Providence'(1) and 'Participate in God's work'(1).

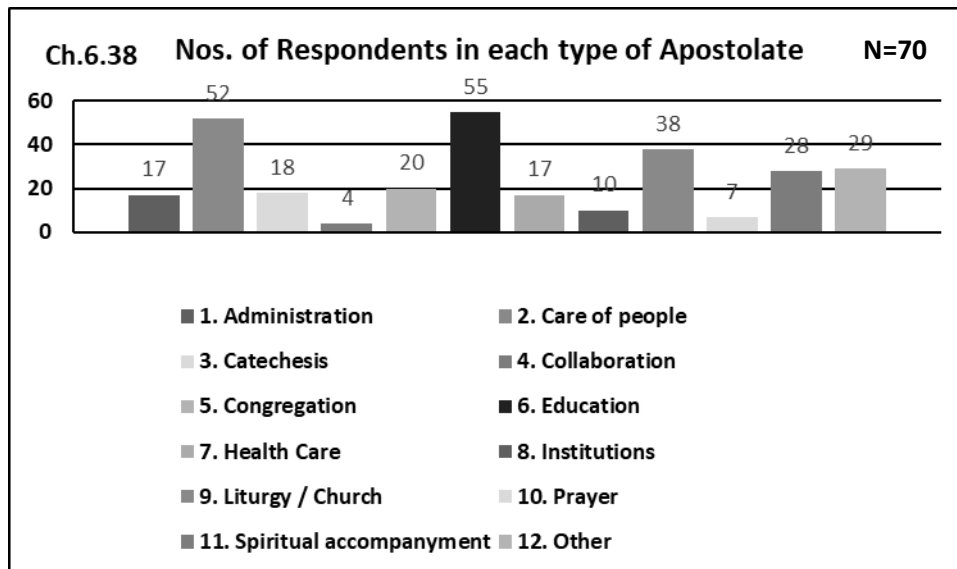
The second part to this question was to give an opportunity to express any ideas for the future. The majority of respondents did not answer this part of the question. Those who did gave the replies that can be seen on this bar chart,



All of these missions are already being undertaken by some Sisters in the Congregation. However this illustrates that for some there is a movement towards providing help to adults growing in their lives and faith.

⁶²⁴ Transcript 3.

The response to this question has demonstrated the wide and varied missions that the members of the sample are, or have been, involved in. The following bar chart shows the numbers of Respondents in each category,



All these missions seem to be motivated by three things, to reach out to people in need, to make Christ known and to improve the lives of those who are being ministered to. The plethora of ways in which this is being accomplished would seem to fit very forcefully with the admonition Sister Cyprienne said that St. Emilie gave to those departing for Burma, 'Go and with all you have or all you will receive do all the good you can'⁶²⁵

6.5 Discussion and Summary.

At the outset of this thesis the charism was defined as having the three elements, members, spirituality and mission.⁶²⁶ These three elements have emerged from the responses, a least for the members of this sample.

⁶²⁵ Testimony of Mother Cyprienne according to Louis Picard, *Une Vierge Française*, p. 241. See Footnotes 53,54.

⁶²⁶ See 1.4 p.19-32.

The first and last questions gave us some personal information about the Sisters. They came from all the five continents and some were brought up in villages and others in towns or cities. They had many skills which they gave freely to the mission. The Apostolates they engaged in were many and varied. This gives a picture of a multinational group who all hold the conviction that God has called them individually to become part of this Congregation reaching out by responding to any need.

In part one the essential elements of the foundress' spirituality, virtues given and nurtured by God, were identified, especially those which she wanted to see continuing to flourish in the Sisters. In the questionnaire the Sisters were given the opportunity to share their experience of these virtues.

Recollection was the first discussed and it became obvious that there was a division within this group of Sisters as to the meaning of the word. Nevertheless it was also apparent that all the respondents felt that it was an important concept for them in their relationship with Christ. This is evidence that these Sisters share with St. Emilie the conviction that God is inviting them to grow closer to Him through the growth of this virtue.

The responses to the question on prayer showed both the importance and the richness of prayer in the lives of 'apostolic' Sisters. Such expressions as 'do God's will' (42) and 'you starve without it,' (4) testify to its importance in their lives. All types of prayer were included in their experience but the overall impression was that it was vital to have a personal relationship with God in order to discern His will for them. They testified to St. Emilie's attitude of coming to God in prayer first and then carrying

out His word in practical terms. For the majority this attitude was what they wanted to experience in their own lives.

This attitude was reinforced when the concept of being a missionary was considered. The Sisters felt that the Congregation had a missionary mandate and this meant to them that they feel they are sent out. It is God who sends and this has to be first discerned through prayer. While it was acknowledged that in the foundress' day going to the 'foreign missions' was a desire to spread the Good News to those who did not know Christ, it was expressed that in today's world it could mean being sent to anywhere in the world. Everywhere, in rich and poor nations, there are those who do not know the Lord. These two subjects, prayer and a missionary call, were very much part of the foundress' spirituality and are still active aspects of the spiritual lives of the Sisters in this sample.

Several questions raised a discussion of Incarnational spirituality. It was given as an explanation for the name of the Congregation, it came into the discussion about the vision of St. Emilie and it is the subject of question eight. All Christian faith is based on a belief in the Incarnation of Jesus, Son of God and son of Mary. Incarnational spirituality is how a person responds in their relation to God following His revelation of Himself in the Incarnation. In the answers to these questions it was not always clear that the spirituality or the theological revelation was being discussed. There was obviously a great appreciation of how this mystery reveals the great love of God for all. This is a truth that should impact every Christian and affect the way they react to God. It is part of the Congregation's task to witness to this great love to believers and unbelievers alike? The life-style of the Sisters does this by a

willingness to reach out to anybody in any kind of need, by a simple way of living and deep personal loving relationships with God, among ourselves and with others.

The foundress was very insistent that the name should be 'St. Joseph of the Apparition'.⁶²⁷ Those who emphasized St. Joseph gave a deep witness to the understanding of his attitudes and virtues. However, St. Emilie did not call the Congregation after St. Joseph but after one episode of his life which is recounted at the start of Matthew's Gospel, Matt.1:16-24. There is also no doubt that this is an announcement of the Incarnation but the Sisters did not explain how these two concepts, Joseph's story at that moment in his life and the announcement of the Incarnation, were connected or revealed the specific call God is giving through this connection. Some saw it as a spur to imitate the many varied virtues of St. Joseph and others went directly to the revealed mystery of God given at the Incarnation. The richness of the sharing on the two concepts revealed that they had been frequently meditated in prayer.

In the discussion regarding the vision of St. Emilie of the wounded incarnate Lord in the tabernacle, the greatest response was that it spurred the Sisters to go out, in imitation of the self-emptying and self-sacrificing Lord, to those who were wounded in any way. In this question it was the amazing loving self-gift of Christ to all in need which was the aspect of the Incarnation which was emphasised. What seemed to dominate was the movement of the Incarnate Second Person of the Trinity towards those in need. The going out to the very poor and marginalised of the world seemed to be a call to the Sisters. It was certainly St. Emilie's desire and she expressed

⁶²⁷ See 4.3.2. p.135ff.

it in the dedication of the Sisters to Works of Charity. It was so important to her that she made it the subject of a fourth vow. However, in the question on the Works of Charity, question six, incarnational spirituality was not raised to the same extent. In question six the Sister discussed the great love of God for all people. It was an appreciation of this love which urged them to reach out to those in need with love and acceptance and help. Once again this is fully in line with St. Emilie's attitude to God.

Question nine and ten were not concerned so much with what the Sisters had inherited from the past but how they felt about their personal relation to God today and the kind of way they wanted to live together. In question nine the Sisters expressed how they would describe their relationship to Christ. St. Emilie very clearly felt herself to be a spouse of Christ. This image was accepted by half the Sisters who felt it indicated a total giving to Him. For the others it was not an image they found acceptable because the modern meaning of the word had changed. All the alternatives which were proffered gave witness also to a total self-giving to Christ, as a disciple, as co-worker or consecrated to Him and many other images.

In discussing the different traditions of Religious Life the majority were drawn to all aspects of Apostolic life. A few felt that with the changing circumstances in today's world the Ministerial model was coming to the fore, however not all were convinced that it was a separate tradition but a form of Apostolic life. Their motive for embracing this new form of living was motivated by the needs of the mission which comes first. Community life is important but it has to serve the mission as well as the physical and spiritual welfare of the Sisters.

The final element in the charism is the Mission . The final question gave ample evidence of the flexibility and the dedication to many different fields of Apostolate. This would seem to be another part of the spirituality of the Sisters, to see varying needs, both physical and spiritual, and to be prepared to change their lives to respond to these very varied needs.

The questionnaire has given much evidence of the presence of the same elements of the spirituality which were present at the beginning of the Congregation. It has also produced some areas which could be further developed and better understood, such as the meaning of Recollection and the reason for the name the Congregation bears. The sample is a non-probability sample so its findings cannot be extrapolated to the whole Congregation but it could promote further research to answer these questions. It has, however, given evidence that the elements of the spirituality are being actively lived by the Sisters in this sample.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

7.1. The Structures of the charism.

In the first chapter of this thesis a definition was given of what the word charism could mean when associated with a Religious Institute. In line with the accepted use of the word in scripture, the charism of each Religious Family is a gift of God given to the Church and the world, which facilitates the saving mission of the Church. It was argued that it is not a simple gift but consists of three main elements, each of which carries part of the uniqueness of the particular Religious Family.

The first of these elements is the membership. Every person called to a particular institute has been called to it by God. He has gifted and formed each one to be a part of the institute. Each one is a unique person and their personal talents will be at the service of the mission. What enables them to bond into a single unit in the Church is that God has also gifted them with a common spiritual vision.

This spiritual vision is the second element which is part of the charism. It is the spirituality which all the members share. It is God who touches each person and leads them to experience His touch, which produces a response in them. In this way God forms people from their earliest days to have a relationship with Him expressed through an habitual way of responding to Him. This habitual way was given as the definition of their spirituality. It consists of both virtues and attitudes developed as a result of His touch, as well as an expectation of how He reveals Himself to them. This has also been called in this thesis as a 'Faith Vision', a particular belief that this is how God has and will reveal Himself. Because these attitudes, virtues and

expectations are describable concepts, a person spirituality can be described. Those who have similar spiritualities will find themselves attracted to each other as they share a Faith Vision. The unique blend of attitudes and virtues, described as a spiritual cocktail, is first given by God to the founder or founders of an Institute. Other people whom God has also gifted with a similar blend will be attracted to join the founder and so their individual spiritualities begin to form the unique spirituality of the Institute. It is this common spirituality which plays an important role in assuring the continuity of the original spiritual impetus and at the same time coping with changes in the world over time. In the thesis this role of the spirituality has been explored in relation to the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition.

The third element of the charism has been called the mission. With their common 'faith vision' members are attracted to take up similar ways of 'working' in the Kingdom. The word 'mission' is denoting the apostolic works undertaken by the members of the Institute. They are drawn to particular types of work because of their sensitivity to God's call in these areas as a result of their common spirituality. In addition, the spirituality influences the manner in which they carry out their apostolates.

In considering the three elements of the charism, this thesis has contributed to an understanding of how each one contributes to the unique gift God has given to the Church and the world in the Congregation.

Over the course of the life of the Congregation, the members have changed as each one came and went. However, the uniqueness of each person called and their contribution to the congregation, remains as part of the gift that God. What

seems to unite these diverse people is that they share a similar way of responding to God. They have a shared spirituality.

The research has clarified the role of the spirituality in a charism. In part one the elements of the spirituality of the foundress were established. This was followed, in part two, by tracing the presence of these elements in the original and current Constitutions. Part three established that these elements were active in the lives of the sisters in the questionnaire sample, who are members of the Congregation today. Through all these different parts of the research, it was established that there were no major changes in the elements of the spirituality. Some elements have lessened in their expression in the modern constitutions or in the lives of the Sisters; the attitude to St. Joseph, the devotion to the wounds of Christ, the understanding of recollection and the importance of the fourth vow for 'works of Charity'. Others have become stronger; Incarnational spirituality and simplicity of life style. As all these elements were present in the spirituality of the foundress and are still present in the modern era, the changes were development of existing elements rather than introduction of new ones. The elements of the spirituality remain the same although the understanding of their meaning and call has altered. This process occurs with the passage of time. Like a tree that grows from a sapling into a strong mature tree. It broadens, as others join and live it, there is a deepening, a better understanding as time goes by, but the roots remain the same.

The various apostolic endeavours or missions have changed over time and in the face of new needs. Indeed, question twelve of the questionnaire⁶²⁸ illustrated

⁶²⁸ See 6.4.2.12. p. 287

that, even for individual sisters, apostolates can change several times. However, these changes in missions have been chosen through the filter of the spirituality as each sister discerns her response to new needs with the unique faith vision of the congregation.

The spirituality was given to each one by God and it developed as each person respond to Him. As each one was led by God to the congregation, their shared spirituality became the spirituality of the congregation. With each additional person there emerged, and continues to emerge, a deepening, a better understanding, of the individual elements of the shared spirituality. However, the research has shown that within this congregation, the elements remained essentially the same even as the lived experience of them expanded the understanding of their demands and roles. This stability of the basic elements is an important factor which unites all the members of the congregation, from the foundress to the present day. In this way, the spirituality is both an agent of continuity and a means of coping with change. It creates the faith vision shared by the whole congregation and through which changing circumstances can be evaluated and responded to.

7.2 The Three Parts of the Thesis.

In order to illustrate the role of the spirituality, in part one this thesis concentrated on understanding the values which make up the particular 'cocktail' of virtues which were the spiritual strengths of the Foundress' 'core'⁶²⁹ spirituality. These same values were shown to be present and encouraged to develop by the first

⁶²⁹ See 4.5.1 p.150.

and the current Constitutions of the Congregation in part two. Finally, in part three, they were demonstrated to be being lived by the current members who formed the Questionnaire Sample.

7.2.1. Part One

The first part concentrated on the time when there was only one member, the foundress, St. Emilie de Vialar.⁶³⁰ In chapters three and four there is a detailed analysis of her 'core' spirituality.

Chapter three examined a document, the *Account of Graces*⁶³¹, which she wrote as a mature woman but which referred to the beginning of her vocation. This document was analysed for signs of her emerging spiritual strengths. Those that were highlighted from this analysis included Recollection, a personal relationship with God, the importance of a deep prayer life, a deep commitment to alleviating the misfortunes of others and a call to the foreign missions. This chapter also illustrated how these elements grew in her life. From God's earliest call to His gradual deepening of that call and the response she gave. All Christians are called to follow Christ. In this document it was illustrated how gradually God developed her personal relationship with Him and gave her a thirst for Recollection, self-giving and prayer. As he walked with her through the good and the bad she developed a great trust in Him. Through this revelation she was led to desire to join the Incarnate Son in His going out to and embracing the needs of suffering humanity. Her appreciation of His immense love was such that she wanted to share this experience with others and she

⁶³⁰ See Fn. 37 p. 16.

⁶³¹ See 2.3. p. 52.

felt called to evangelisation both in France and abroad. This chapter attested to God's way of forming a person in a specific spirituality in order to take up the role He has called them to take in the world. In St. Emilie's situation she became aware that He was calling her to establish a work which would reach out to all in need.

In Chapter Four the primary sources were extended to include all the documents that are in the Archives that could be attributed to the foundress. These documents included her letters, the Account of Graces, constitutions, reports and some instruction for Sisters who teach.⁶³² Analysing these documents to seek for signs of her spirituality enabled a deepening of understanding of those spiritual strengths that had emerged in Chapter Three, and also added others which came to prominence in her other documents. This led to a deepening of understanding the elements of her spirituality which could now be grouped into four categories: her personal relationship with God, those which derived from His personal revelation to her, those which sent her out as a missionary and those which appertained to style of life which included a call to Religious Life. In this chapter the different elements were examined in detail and some secondary sources were used to establish how the concepts were understood in the Foundress' era.

From these two Chapters the particular 'cocktail' of spiritual values that constitute the spirituality of St. Emilie emerged. The first group of spiritual strengths were those which related and fed the intense personal relationship she was called to live with God. He led her to live constantly in His presence, she called this Recollection⁶³³. This was a constant state that was both a gift from Him and

⁶³² The website of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition.

⁶³³ See 4.2.1. p. 108f.

something she had to develop. It was nourished by the great attraction she had for all kinds of prayer, but especially private prayer and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.⁶³⁴ As this relationship developed it lead her to give a total gift of herself to God, she used the word 'spouse' to describe this.⁶³⁵ Finally through the intensity of this personal relationship with God she grew in faith and expressed this in a great trust in Divine Providence, her conviction that He could use any situation to turn it to the good of all.⁶³⁶

The second group derived from two supernatural experiences she received. The first of these was a vision of the Incarnate crucified Lord in the tabernacle of the Parish Church in Gaillac. This vision led her to a devotion to the wounds of Christ Crucified,⁶³⁷ an immensely powerful call to 'Works of Charity',⁶³⁸ embracing suffering as a gift and with a redemptive element,⁶³⁹ a readiness to embrace the cross,⁶⁴⁰ and a deep devotion to the adoration of the blessed Sacrament.⁶⁴¹ The second supernatural experienced seems to have come from scripture, the apparition of the angel to Joseph to enlighten him about Mary's pregnancy, Matthew 1:18-24. She used this episode from the bible to name the Congregation, Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition.⁶⁴² She was very insistent that 'of the apparition' should be included in the name, but she never explained her motives for this. She had a devotion to St. Joseph who she named as patron of the Congregation but she never explained where

⁶³⁴ See 4.2.2. p. 114f.

⁶³⁵ See 4,2,3, p. 118f.

⁶³⁶ See 4.2.4. p. 122f.

⁶³⁷ See 4.3.1.2. p. 126.

⁶³⁸ See 4.3.1.3. p. 128.

⁶³⁹ See 4.3.1.4. p. 131.

⁶⁴⁰ See 4.3.1.5. p. 132.

⁶⁴¹ See 4.3.1.6. p. 134.

⁶⁴² See 4.3.2. p. 135f.

this devotion came from. Joseph's example seems to 'flavour' her relationship with God. His obedience to God's will, seems to match up with hers but in some respects, this is only speculation or the result of reflecting on this gospel. She had a picture painted of the Gospel story⁶⁴³ and it was speculated that she wanted the Sisters to come to God in prayer and allow God to move them as they contemplated this picture.

The next group of spiritual values relate to her call to be a missionary.⁶⁴⁴ In her era there were many places in the world where the Church was just making its first foundations and as the foundress of a missionary Congregation, she received many invitations to foreign missions. She always responded to them by discerning God's will, usually through the circumstances of the invitations.⁶⁴⁵ Being a missionary in a far distant land meant being prepared to leave your homeland and thus a willingness to cut ties with family and friends. It is another aspect of total self-giving and self-emptying. As a missionary she had the gifts of grace for this particular role in the Church. God used her and her Sisters to start the spark of faith in those who had no faith. In St. Emilie and the Congregation, this gift of evangelisation was also exercised at home in Europe. She felt called to go to those who had fallen away from the church as well as those who had never encountered Christ.⁶⁴⁶

These three categories comprise what has been called her 'core' spirituality.⁶⁴⁷ No matter what path in life she decided God was wanting her to take, these attitudes and virtues would have coloured her faith vision. However, she was

⁶⁴³ See 4.3.2.2. p. 138.

⁶⁴⁴ See 4.4.1. p. 143.

⁶⁴⁵ See 4.4.2. p. 144.

⁶⁴⁶ See 4.4.4. p. 146.

⁶⁴⁷ See 4.5.1. p.150.

called to found a new Religious Family and so she also received the spiritual gifts needed to be a Religious. In this thesis, this aspect of her spirituality was not examined in detail for several reasons. The first was that this research aims to highlight the uniqueness of the spiritual cocktail that was the foundress'. This uniqueness resides most strongly in her core spirituality. It was decided to only examine two aspects of Religious Life that were influenced by her core spirituality. The first of these two aspects was the fourth vow, a vow to do the Works of Charity. The second came more from her letters and this concerned a simplicity of lifestyle, especially living close to the people she was called to serve.

At the end of Part One the research yielded a description of the spirituality of the foundress which had very clear discernible elements. These became the essential elements of the spirituality of the Congregation.

7.2.2. Part two.

This consisted of one chapter, Chapter Five, which concentrated on three documents, the 1835 Constitutions,⁶⁴⁸ the Spirit and Development of the Rule (SPDR) of 1841⁶⁴⁹ and the current Constitutions⁶⁵⁰, approved by the Church in 1982. These documents belong to a very particular genre of writings. They function as a means of describing the way of life, creating the conditions for the development and living of the common Spirit of the Institute and also as documents which are submitted to the Church for its approbation. They were analysed in order to search for the

⁶⁴⁸ 1835 Constitutions See 2.4.1. p. 59.

⁶⁴⁹ SPDR See 2.4.2. p. 60.

⁶⁵⁰ 1982 Constitutions See 5.2.2. p. 165.

elements of the spirituality, the spiritual strengths of the foundress that had been listed from the research in Part One, and to see if any others had emerged.

St. Emilie wrote the first Constitution three years after founding the Institute and the SPDR six years later. She had had several years of other Sisters living the spirituality and the mission of the Congregation. The first Constitutions, with the SPDR, enshrined the expanded understanding of God's call to the members which others, who He had called to the Congregation, must have brought with them. The Charism, at this time, according to the definition that has been argued, must include all the new Sisters, as well as the Foundress, the spirituality that they share and the missionary choices they have made. In searching for the spiritual strengths, there was a difficulty in that both these early documents were essentially practical documents with only occasional and brief spiritual statements. Despite this limitation, it was possible to find many of the foundress' spiritual strengths enshrined in the early Constitutions.

By contrast the current Constitutions frequently express spiritual concepts and so it was possible to see if the original spirituality has been retained without change in the present day. When this document was written in 1982, the charism had grown as there had been generations of Sisters, living and dead, who had contributed to it, all of whom had been united by the common Spirit.

It was evident from the analysis of these Constitutions that the same Spiritual strengths were present, although for some there was a change in emphasis, some greater, some less. This was especially true of Recollection which was strongly emphasised in the early documents. The early documents were quoted in the 1982 Constitutions to give the importance of this virtue, however, there was no further

elaboration. The words of St. Emilie which emphasised this virtue were left unchanged with the same admonition for the current membership.

In all the documents the importance of 'Works of Charity' as a virtue was highlighted. The early document underlined this by it becoming the content of the fourth vow. Over the years this fourth vow had been suppressed but the 1982 Constitutions had brought it back, in an amended form, to the current vow formula.

The importance of prayer, both public, private and sacramental is highlighted in both Constitutions. Virtues like simplicity of lifestyle, self-giving, self-emptying, love of God and others, are present in the descriptions of the way the sisters are expected to live, to relate to God, to each other and their families.

The missionary aspect of the Congregation is well defined in the current Constitutions. Reference to being 'missionary' were not expressed in the earlier documents. It is obvious from the research in part one that the missionary aspect of the Congregation was present from the outset but the Foundress saw no reason to include it explicitly in the early constitutions.

Another area that St. Emilie would never have described is the term 'Apostolic Religious Life', as this is a modern concept.⁶⁵¹ Sisters in this tradition understand that God calls them to be His instruments as they serve people outside of the Convent, in the society to which He has sent them. Prayer and discernment of God's will is vital for sisters in this Tradition, but the majority of time is spent in carrying out the tasks which have been discerned as God's will for them. In the timetable of the

⁶⁵¹ See 4.5.3.2 Fn. 382 p. 154.

early Constitutions the greater part of the day was given to the work assigned to each Sister.⁶⁵²

These documents do not list the element of the spirituality but most find expression in one way or another in the various chapters and articles. No new elements have been added in the current Constitutions. What has happened is that there has been a change of emphasis for some elements. For the Foundress the virtue of the 'works of Charity' was of major importance and she made it a fourth vow. In the modern Constitutions it is not treated as a separate vow, but the concept is more like a guiding principle to the works undertaken, still important but in a different way.

In the current Constitutions greater emphasis has been placed on the importance of the spirituality of the Incarnation as the basis of the spirituality of the Congregation. In St. Emilie's era the word 'spirituality' was meant something which related to the clergy.⁶⁵³ The importance of the revelation of God which occurred in the Incarnation of Christ and how it affects the relationship between God and humanity, is something that was underlined and re-emphasised at the beginning of the twentieth Century with the recognition of the importance of the French School of Spirituality.⁶⁵⁴ The term Incarnational Spirituality would not have been part of the foundress' vocabulary. However, she often alluded to the great love of the Lord for us. In the SPDR she wrote,

'The spirit of this Congregation is to dedicate the Sisters to the exercise of the different works of charity.

⁶⁵² See 5.2.1 p.163-164.

⁶⁵³ See Chapter 1.3.3 Fn. 35 p. 16.

⁶⁵⁴ See Fn. 498 p. 204.

To acquire this divine virtue, they meditate every day of their life on the immense charity which fills the heart of Jesus Christ, and they strive to imitate his zeal for the salvation of souls, and his great mercy towards the neighbour.’⁶⁵⁵

This illustrates her appreciation of the great love God has revealed in the gift of His Son and His desire to reach out to those in need. While she may not use the words ‘incarnational spirituality’, there is no doubt that the coming of the incarnate Lord is a major base to her response to Him and her desire to imitate Him in reaching out to others. This is not a change in substance but a growth in understanding of this element of the spirituality.

7.2.3. Part three.

Chapter six, turned to a survey of a sample of current members which was designed to do three things. It explored their experience of the Spiritual strengths which had been highlighted in parts one and two. It gave some data concerning their personal origins and their vision of Religious life and the Congregation. Finally, it gave some information about the missionary endeavours they had embraced in their lives.

The non-probability sample reflected the experiences of seventy-one Sisters and it had an age range which was very similar to the total membership. Most of the question explored their personal experiences of the Spiritual strengths of the Foundress. Three were different and gave opportunities to talk about their origins, their views on the changes in Religious Life and their experience of mission. It was evident, in this group of Sisters, that despite coming from different cultures and with

⁶⁵⁵ SPDR articles 3 and 4.

different gifts, they shared a common spirituality which corresponded with that of the Foundress.

There were direct questions on Recollection⁶⁵⁶ and Prayer⁶⁵⁷. The responses revealed that there were two understandings of what Recollection meant. One group felt it was the experience they lived when withdrawn and quietly in prayer while others felt it was living in the continual awareness of the presence of God. Both groups felt it was vital to develop it to live the life of a Sisters of St. Joseph. Prayer was described as being vital to life. All kinds of prayer were practised but a personal relationship was felt to be essential.

The question on the name of the Congregation⁶⁵⁸, produced another difference of understanding. Most of the Sisters felt that the Gospel passage that inspired it, was an announcement of the Incarnation of Christ. Many felt that St. Joseph was the second witness to this mystery and St. Emilie was attracted to this aspect of the story. They also felt that she saw a model of how to respond to God in Jesus' foster father. His virtues were to be emulated. Others felt that the purpose of this was to point to the Incarnation, as they felt the spirituality of the Congregation is based on this mystery.

The question which asked them to comment on the Vision⁶⁵⁹ St. Emilie had in the Parish Church in Gaillac produced two reactions. A few felt it was evidence of her holiness and that it was for her alone. Others felt that it deeply touched them and

⁶⁵⁶ 6.4.2.2. p.243.

⁶⁵⁷ 6.4.2.3. p.246.

⁶⁵⁸ 6.4.2.4. p.250.

⁶⁵⁹ 6.4.2.5. p.254.

led them to a spirit of self-sacrifice and a deep motivation to go out to people in need, following Christ's total self-giving.

Following this came a question on the 'Works of Charity'.⁶⁶⁰ It proved to be a difficult question for many people but the responses centred around two ideas, the great love of God as revealed through the Incarnation and the right response for a Sister of St. Joseph was to witness to this by practical acts that alleviated people's hardships.

The next question concerned suffering⁶⁶¹ and the way to cope with this. It was a question that most of the Sister answered. It was clear that they had had experience of hardships in their life and that St. Emilie's attitude of seeing it as a touch of God, had been helpful to themselves and to those they served.

The question that asked for their understanding of Incarnational spirituality⁶⁶² revealed that all had spent time contemplating this mystery and they felt it was a major influence in their lives. It spurs them to reach out, in union with the incarnate Lord, to others.

This was followed by a question which explored the Sisters' way of describing their relationship with God⁶⁶³. St. Emilie used the word 'spouse' for this. There seemed to be a cultural split on the use of the word 'spouse'. Younger Sisters from the orient were attracted to this. Older Sisters did not like it and used many other words to describe their relationship. However both groups exhibited a deep sense of total commitment to God.

⁶⁶⁰ 6.4.2.6. p.258.

⁶⁶¹ 6.4.2.7. p.261.

⁶⁶² 6.4.2.8. p.266.

⁶⁶³ 6.4.2.9. p.270.

The question on the type of Religious life⁶⁶⁴ affirmed that the majority were attracted to Apostolic Religious Life. A few felt that the Ministerial model was becoming more prevalent with the fall in vocations.

When asked what was the meaning of being a missionary⁶⁶⁵ the Sisters affirmed that this was an integral part of the Congregation. However, the majority felt that the place where this particular gift from the Lord was to be exercised, was anywhere in the world, wherever people did not know Christ. This led them to embrace an extremely wide variety of Ministerial options⁶⁶⁶, especially those in most need, spiritually, physically and materially.

The three parts of the charism were all evident in the sample, the respondents themselves with their different backgrounds and personal gifts, the common spirituality they shared and the missions they had all lived.

It also revealed that all the elements of the spirituality were present in this sample of current day members. They have embraced the idea of incarnational spirituality as a vital element of the spirituality of the Congregations. Also evident was that the varied and multiple apostolates they embraced, witnessed to the 'virtue' of 'Works of Charity' being very much an active force in the Congregation today.

7.3. Final Remarks

From the outset of this thesis, it was argued that the spirituality of a Religious Institute is one of the three elements that make up the unique gift of God which is

⁶⁶⁴ 6.4.2.10. p.274.

⁶⁶⁵ 6.4.2.11. p.278.

⁶⁶⁶ 6.4.2.12. p.287.

called its charism. The other two elements are the members and the missions they undertake. The research has explored and clarified the relationship of the spirituality within this concept of charism. However, it is not just one of the elements of the charism but the one that unites the members and ensures the continuity of the Spirit of an Institute across the growth of the membership and over the years of subsequent generations.

In analysing the spirituality as a 'cocktail' of Christian Virtues, while identifying the spiritual strengths as its primary and distinguishing characteristics, it has offered a paradigm for a deeper understanding of the spiritualities of groupings of people, both religious families and other groups which have arisen in the Church. It does not claim to be a definitive description of such Spiritualities but by highlighting the spiritual strengths, it can lead to a deeper understanding of the 'flavour' of the particular spirituality which God has given to the group.

This has been illustrated in this thesis by an in-depth analysis of the role of the spirituality in the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition. The spirituality of the Foundress, St. Emilie de Vialar, was established from her writings, by identifying her spiritual strengths. Their presence was traced in the original and the current Constitutions of the Congregation, with no new concepts arising but with a difference in emphasis especially in the treatment of Incarnational spirituality and the 'virtue' of 'Works of Charity'. However, the contribution of the Questionnaire of current members illustrated that the 'virtue of Works of Charity' was very evident as an active force in their lives. It was also evident that they were deeply motivated by the love of God revealed in His gift of His Incarnate Son, and this led them to a deep desire for union with Christ. All of these desires had equally been shown to be the

desires of the Foundress and it illustrates the continuity of the Spiritual outlook of the Congregation.

As this analysis proceeded, it has also described the inner life of this Congregation which belongs to the Apostolic Tradition. It has not concentrated on describing the works of the Congregation but has illumined the inner realities that are vital for Sisters called to live this form of Religious life. The first of these is that it is God who calls, gifts and forms each member to be a part of this specific Congregation. He asks them to live their Christian life in common, united by the common spirit He has given them and for the service of others. As Apostolic Religious they have to come first to Him in prayer and then let Him send them out to accomplish the task He has planned for them to do. He draws them into a deep personal relationship with Himself. He reveals Himself to them and empowers them to witness to others their faith vision and He asks them to live their lives as consecrated to Him through their vows.

As an inside researcher, this research has raised questions in relation to the Congregation, especially in relation to Incarnational spirituality, Recollection and the 'virtue' of Works of Charity. The 1982 Constitutions firmly based the spirituality on the Incarnation of Christ. This is the basis of all Christian spirituality. It is our belief in the Incarnation of the second person of the Trinity as God and man, one person with two natures, that distinguishes Christianity from other faiths. To state that the basis of the spirituality is based on the Incarnation, is to claim that it is a Christian spirituality. However, the question that needs to be asked is, on what specific aspect or aspects of the Incarnation God asks the Congregation to be a witness. It seems to me that the two Spiritual strengths that were of primary importance to the

Foundress, Recollection and the 'virtue' of Works of Charity, hold the key to the answer to that question. The Congregation is a group of Christians who witness to a genuine lived experience of God's presence. It gives a powerful witness to a world where His existence and His love are questioned.⁶⁶⁷ The call God gives to each member to reach out in all situations with loving acts, no matter the race, the creed, station in life or gender, is also a following of the Incarnate Lord who came for all. All these actions make Him present and are part of His saving action in the world.

This thesis has outlined the ingredients of the spirituality and has shown their presence from the foundation up to the present day. It has illustrated the spirituality's role in providing continuity in the process of change which inevitably occurs over time. As it is describing a gift from God, there will always be more to discern and interpret of what He is asking of the Congregation in the gifts He has given it. This study is not so much at an end but a basis for further research to deepen what He wants for the Congregation in today's world.

⁶⁶⁷ Secularisation and lack of belief in God has a long history. In the Foundress' era the leaders of the Enlightenment were extremely active. Owen Connolly stated, 'They were motivated by the belief that man, through the application of reason and science, would soon be able to control his own destiny. At the same time, they saw themselves as perpetuating the "natural" leadership of France in matters of the mind. Had not the seventeenth-century France produced such as Racine, Corneille, Molière, Descartes, Pascal, Cyrano de Bergerac and La Fontaine? Was not French the language of diplomacy and of the aristocracy of Europe (and even England)?' Connolly, O., French Revolution/Napoleonic Era p.22. There is a very extensive literature on this topic but one quotation from St. John Paul II sums up the problem, 'The number of those who do not know Christ and do not belong to the Church is constantly on the increase. Indeed, since the end of the Council it has almost doubled. When we consider this immense portion of humanity which is loved by the Father and for whom he sent his Son, the urgency of the Church's mission is obvious.' *Redemptoris Missio* on the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate, Pope John Paul II, 1990.

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Appendix 1



Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition
Sister Janet Arrowsmith
Convent of St. Joseph
Oakhill Park
Old Swan
Liverpool
England
srjanet@ladyofthevale.org.uk

0044 (0)151 228 8849

Dear Sister,

You must be wondering what this package is all about. My name is Sister Janet Arrowsmith and I belong to the Province of England and Ireland. For many years now I have had the pleasure of helping our Lay Associates grow in their knowledge and love of the Congregation. Because I have had that responsibility I had to try and explain our way of serving God and I found that it was necessary to explain it in modern language. We are a rich Congregation in that we have some wonderful documents and books which help us to know our history. However St. Emilie lived 200 years ago and the manner in which her insights have been explained were better understood in times past. Our understanding of many Spiritual things has grown since then. So with the permission of my Provincial and also of our General, Sister Dorothy, I am studying our spirituality. As members of the Congregation we believe that God has called us to it. Since we have made profession each one of us and the Congregation have decided that this is the place that God wants us to be. But we are all different, we have different gifts and yet we share something which brings us together in this group in the Church.

This questionnaire is to help us get a better understanding of the spirit which moves us as members of Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition. As members of the Congregation we have come together in a unique body in the Church. Individually we have very different vocation stories but we have all felt that it is within this unique body in the Church that we have decided to live out our personal call. In this questionnaire we are trying to understand the spirit which moves each one of us and thereby understand the common Spirituality that is being shared.

In my study I need to look deeply at St. Emilie and her spiritual gifts which were her gifts to us all in the Charism of the Congregation. I also need to look at the Sisters who are part of the Congregation today and try to see how these gifts are being lived in our present time. I hope it will become a work that will benefit the whole Congregation. This is what this package is about. I cannot send this questionnaire to every member of the Congregation for two reasons,

1. Sister Dorothy asked me not to ask everyone as she felt it would be too much for many Sisters. She asked me to give it to some Sisters only.

2. I am very glad that she said that because I really could not cope with several hundred replies!

Questionnaire for the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition.

Identification CodeEI01
Year of Birth.....
Year of first profess.....
Year of Final Profession.....
Nationality.....
Country of Mission at present.....

So for these two reasons I am inviting 10 Sisters from each Province to fill in this questionnaire. You are one of those Sisters, but it is an invitation, you can decide to do it or not. No-one is checking to see if you do it. You are free to decide to do it or not to do it.

What do you have to do?

The first page you will find looks like this.

It has your **Identification Code**. You will notice that your name is NOT written on these papers. This is so that your answers will remain confidential.

Please write in the year of your birth.

Then write the year of your first profession and of your final vows if you have made them.

Next please write in your nationality.

Finally write the Country in which you are currently on

mission.

Next you will find the **12 questions** to be answered. Each Question is in its own folder. Each one is written on the first page of a group of 3 pages stapled together in the folder.

Question 1 Page 1 Identification Code [E][I][0][1]

1. What attracted you to this Congregation?

This is the first page of question 1. All you have to do is to answer it in your own words. You can write in any language but I will need a translation into English or French, if it is not written in either of these two languages. I have people in England who can translate Spanish and Italian as well.

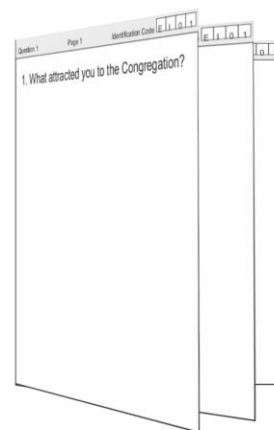
Unfortunately I do not have many opportunities for translation from other languages, these will have to be done in your own province. Provision has been made for this.

You write your answer below the question and continue on the two extra pages if you have a need to. There are some more extra pages at the back of the pack should you need more. Please put the number of the question on the extra pages.

There are 12 questions.

Each one is written at the top of the first page of three pages clipped together. You may answer them in any order. Place your response to each question back in its own wallet before tackling another.

You are asked to give some reflection to each question and then write what you feel about it. I will be receiving your responses and I will be the only person who reads them, apart from any translators. However since your name is not



on the papers I will not know who has written them. The same thing could be said for the translators also because they will receive your papers without your name attached to them. If the translation is being done in your own province it is possible that your handwriting will be recognised. The translators have been asked to not discuss the contents with anyone, whether they know who has written it or not.

I realise that this will mean you taking some time to complete this questionnaire. It is not meant to be a 'test'. There are no right or wrong answers. I want to hear what you feel about your life with God as a Sister of St. Joseph. You do not have to think of 'clever' things to say. Tell me about what you feel as you think about the Spiritual gifts we share as Sisters in this Congregation and how you see those gifts helping you to do today what God is asking of you. If you do not feel that you want to answer a question you can leave it out. You are free to do as much or as little as you want. I do need to have all the responses back by January 2014.

The diagram shows a rectangular return envelope with a vertical orange strip on the left side. The text 'EI 01' is printed in the top left corner of the envelope. Near the bottom left, the text 'Need Translation' is printed next to a small, empty square checkbox.

When you have finished answering all the questions place your answers, and all the other pages, in the return envelope I have provided. It looks like this:-

If you have written in a language which needs translation please tick the box at the bottom of the return envelope.

Tick this box for translation.

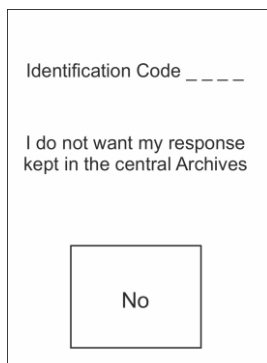
Then please send it back to the Sister in your Province who has agreed to collect the responses. She will send all the replies she receives to me. If there is a need for a translation she will also arrange for that to be done.

I am doing this study as a part of a doctoral degree under the following two institutions:

- The Pontifical Institute of Maryvale, Birmingham.
- Hope University Liverpool.

In the drawing up of this questionnaire I have followed their ethical guidelines and have received permission from the Ethic Committee.

Thank-you, when I have finished the study I hope everyone can read it. Your work will be part of it but no-one will be able to see what you personally answered, but you will have played a part in something which will help us to understand ourselves better as a Religious Congregation, called to work for the Glory of God in our modern world. It is proposed to keep the English transcript of all the responses received after the Study. Since these will be typed transcripts there is no possibility that a person's handwriting could identify them. They will be distinguished from each other by the Identification Codes. The list of names for each Code will not be kept so



Identification Code _ _ _ _

I do not want my response
kept in the central Archives

No

that the writer may not be identified. If you do not want your responses to be included in these transcripts there is a page in your package where you can say NO.

Why do we want to keep these transcripts? They will be placed in our Archives. In the future any person wishing to write about our history or our Charism, will be able to see what was written today and then see how things have grown since then. It is valuable historical data and it would be good to preserve it. However, I repeat, if you do not want your responses included you can say NO by ticking the box on this

page.

At this point it may seem a little complicated. To help you here is a summary of what you are asked to do:-

1. Fill in Page 1.
2. Answer the 12 questions, in any order and in a language that you feel you can express yourself best.
3. Keep the answers to each question in its own wallet. If you need more paper there are 10 extra pages. Please put the number of the question on the extra page.
4. If you do NOT WANT your answer to be kept after the study, please indicate by ticking the box on the last page.
5. Put your answers in the envelope provided for sending them back.
6. If you have written in a language other than English, French, Italian or Spanish. please tick the box on the return envelope.
7. Send the return envelope to the Sister in your Province who has agreed to collect them.
8. Please fill them in and send them to the Sister who is collecting them by January 2014.

Please pray for me that I will listen more deeply to the Holy Spirit and really respond to Him as I try to share with this modern world the wonderful Spiritual Gifts He has given us.

United in Jesus, Mary and Joseph,



Sr. Janet Arrowsmith

Appendix 2



Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition
Sister Janet Arrowsmith
Convent of St. Joseph
Oakhill Park
Old Swan
Liverpool
England
srjanet@ladyofthevale.org.uk

0044 (0)151 228 8849

To the Sister Provincials (or a Sister designated by her in her Province)

This questionnaire is to help us get a better understanding of the spirit which moves the Sisters, who are members of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition in our modern world. The world we live in is changing rapidly and the spiritual and material needs of people are both similar and different from the time of our foundation. The Congregation is a unique body in the Church and as such is a gift to our modern world. The individual members have very different vocation stories but they have all felt that it is within this unique body, in the Church, that they have decided to live out their personal call. In this Questionnaire we are trying to understand and define in language which is understood by people today, the spirit which moves each Sister and thereby understand the common Spirituality that is being shared.

When I sought permission from Sister Dorothy to issue this questionnaire, she gave me permission to ask some Sisters to be invited to fill in the Questionnaire. She did not want it to interrupt our preparation for the General Chapter as there is so much preparation needed for this important event in our Congregation.

I have therefore timed this to come after the Chapter. However to make the study a truly representative one of the Congregation, I need responses from Sisters from all over the world. In order to get some Sisters from the different Provinces I need your help. It may be that you would rather hand this role to

another Sister in your Province, but I ask your patience to hear what I am asking you to do.

What am I asking you to do?

1. To select 10 Sisters from your Province. It is important to get a representative picture of the Congregation that these Sisters are chosen at random. I can understand that you might think that it would be better to ask only those Sisters who are the most able in your Province. This would exclude some Sisters who may give simpler answers. I am not looking for knowledge but for the spirit which moves them. Of course there will be some Sisters to whom this questionnaire should not be sent because of mental or physical frailty. It is for this reason that I am asking you to do this task because you know the Sisters best. I would not want anyone to be troubled by receiving this questionnaire.

I am suggesting that you put the names of the Sisters in your Province in a bag and pick out 10 names.

2. When you have got the 10 names please write them on the Master Sheet which looks like this:-

Below is an example with fictitious names.

Identification Code	Name
EI01	Sister Jane Smith
EI02	Sister John May
EI03	Sister Adrian Walsh
EI04	Sister Francis Now
EI05	Sister Sheila Person
EI06	Sister Margaret Third
EI07	Sister Coral Own
EI08	Sister Catherine Past
EI09	Sister Patricia Future
EI10	Sister Gwen Down

This would be the sheet for the English/Irish Province. These are fictitious names. The Code is made up of the initial 'E' for English and 'I' for Irish, and the numbers are just 1 – 10.

Master Sheet Names and Identification Numbers

Identification Numbers	Sisters Names
EI 01	
EI 02	
EI 03	
EI 04	
EI 05	
EI 06	
EI 07	
EI 08	
EI 09	
EI10	

When this form is completed please send it to:

Sister Sheila McCourt,
Convent of St. Emille,
Grange road
Altrincham
Cheshire
WA14 3HA
England

3. I have given you 10 envelopes which contain the questionnaires. Each one has the Identification Number Marked in the top left hand corner.



Inside this envelope is:

- a. A letter from me explaining the questionnaire.
 - b. Page one of the Questionnaire.
 - c. The 12 questions.
 - d. The final page of the Questionnaire
 - e. 10 extra blank pages
 - f. An envelope to put the completed questionnaire in.
4. I ask you to address this envelope to the Sister who has the relevant Identification code.

Questionnaire for the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition.

Identification Code

E	I	0	3
---	---	---	---

Year of Birth.....
...

Year of first profess.....

Year of Final Profession.....

Nationality.....
.....

Country of Mission.....

Page 1

This is the page one for the Sister who has received the Identification Code EI03. There is nothing for you to do with this page it is for the Sisters who is receiving the invitation to take part. This example would be the third Sister chosen in the English Irish

Province. There is one more task to do before you seal the envelopes and send them to the Sisters chosen. In order to preserve the Sisters confidentiality, their responses cannot come back to you, (or to the Sister you may have delegated to do this task). You have seen which Sister has received which Identification Code and therefore you could remember and identify the respondent. The responses will not have the name of the Sister and are identified only by the Code. For this reason they need to be collected by another Sister who has not seen which name belongs to which identification Code.

Please send the completed questionnaire to:-

Sister.....

.....

.....

.....

If you have written in any language other than English, French, Spanish or Italian please let thus Sister know that your answers need translating.

I am therefore asking you to ask another Sister in your Province to collect the responses and send them back to me in January 2014. The name of this Sister needs to be added to the package to each Sister. There is a page for you to put the names the address of this Sister. This page looks like this:-

As you will notice I am also asking for a translation if the Sister

has replied in a language other than English, French, Spanish or Italian. It is important that the Sisters are free to express themselves fully and not be hampered by struggling with a language which is not their own. However I will need a translation and I will be asking the Sister who is collecting the responses to organise this if it is necessary.

5. When you have placed the name of the Sister who will act as the collector, in the envelope. It can be sealed and sent to the Sisters. You are free to put a covering letter or speak to the Sister if you want to, in order to facilitate the process. However I would ask you to say that you will not be seeing the responses. This is important to give the Sister freedom so that she writes what she feels and not what she thinks you would like her to write.

In order to facilitate your understanding of this I am offering you the opportunity to fill in the Questionnaire yourself. Your responses will not be part of the 10 from your Province. Your identification Number

will be MR01 –MR20. MR means Major Religious. I have made 20 copies of the questionnaire with those Identification Numbers and I am asking you to pick one. I will not know which number belongs to which of you, in that way your confidentiality will be ensured. You might like to take a questionnaire and do it but decide not to submit it. You, like any Sister, are free to do it or not. However it would be most valuable to this study if you would submit it. In order to further preserve your confidentiality I have asked Sister Anita Callaghan, Deputy Provincial Superior of England and Ireland, to collect your responses. She will hand them to me and I will not know who has completed the Questionnaire. I will have to get them translated if they are not in English or French. I have Sisters who can translate Spanish and Italian. I would have to seek outside help for other languages.

6. The last task is to send the completed Master Page with the names and the identification Codes to Sister Sheila McCourt, Convent of St. Emilie, Grange Road, Bowdon Vale, Altrincham, WA14 3HA, England. This means that the names and the Identification Codes are preserved during the study so that we can prove that the questionnaire came from members of the Congregation. However when the answers come back to me they will not have the names of the Sisters, so I will not know who has written what. I will know that they are a Sister but I will not know their name. This further preserves the confidentiality of the Sisters. After you have posted this list to England there is nothing more for you to do.

I realise that this seems a little complicated. Here is a summary

1. Pick ten names
2. Assign each an Identification number.
3. Ask a Sister to act as collector for the responses.
4. Give the Sisters invited to complete the Questionnaire the name and address of the Sister designated to collect them.
5. Send the questionnaires to the invited Sisters.
6. Send the Master Sheet to England.

I thank you for your co-operation in this project. At the end of the study I hope to make it available in English and French to the whole Congregation. I hope it will be a work that will help us all respond better to what God is asking of us in this changing modern world. Please keep me and this study in your prayers, United in Jesus with Mary and Joseph



Sister Janet Arrowsmith