

# **The Inculturation of Religious Life in two Female Roman Catholic Congregations of Zambia: ‘A Sense of Feeling of being at Home’**

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## ***Abstract***

*When Pope Paul VI visited Africa in 1969 (the first pope to visit Africa) he directed the church in Africa to have an African Christianity. The Pope gave an opportunity for the African Christians to develop or domesticate Christianity and make it their own. Five years later, the Synod of Bishops on Consecrated Life gave a directive to religious men and women to inculturate religious life so that it could be meaningful to them and the people they served. It was assumed that religious life was still foreign to the African religious men and women. It is against the above background that reasons for the inculturation of religious life were explored. The paper argues that without inculturating or domesticating religious, it would not survive and be meaningful to the religious persons. The religious men and women were being implored by the Church to Africanize religious life. Therefore, the paper seeks to explore reasons for the inculturation of religious life in Zambia. Although there are good reasons why religious life should be inculturated, there are several obstacles which has made it difficult to domesticate or inculturate religious life in Zambia as observed by Milingo (2013) who outlined the challenges to the implementation process of inculturation of religious life in Zambia. Related literature was reviewed to appreciate the efforts made by religious scholars in the area of inculturating religious life.*

*The study was qualitative and used the case study design. The targeted population was the catholic community in four provinces of Zambia (Lusaka, Copperbelt, Central and Southern). A total number of eighty-nine respondents were used. Fifty-five were sisters, two bishops, ten priests, eight former sisters, eight former brothers and six practising Catholics. Data was mainly collected through interviews and focused group discussions with semi structured interviews with former brothers, former sisters, priests and practicing Catholics. Observations and document analysis were also used. The data was analysed using thematic approach and presented in a descriptive manner. The study revealed that the religious men and women were in favour of inculturating religious life and the following are the reasons: survival, meaning and relevancy of religious life, credibility, a sense of feeling of being at home and maintaining an African identity. The study recommended that Church leadership should be flexible and give freedom to the religious persons to implement integration of African values and religious life. Policy makers in the congregations should put a deliberate policy on inculturation of religious life.*

**Key words:** The Church, Religious life, Inculturation and Religious Women

## **Introduction**

Inculturation is an approach or method that has been used by the Roman Catholic Church to indigenize Catholicism especially in Africa and Asia. Inculturation is the encounter or dialogue between the Christian message and cultures and it is the on-going dialogue between faith and culture/cultures (Shorter, 1988).

Since its inception, inculturation as a concept has provoked debate. Domestication of the Catholic faith has evoked different responses in the Roman Catholic Church communities, theologians and scholars of religion and critics of varying dispositions (the following are some of the proponents of inculturation: Aylward Shorter, John Baur, Joan Burke, Udeani Chibueze, Laurenti Magesa, Joseph Masson, Vincite C. Kiaziku, Emmanuel Milingo, Pedro Arrupe, Mary Walligo and Stuart C. Bates). It has brought about two schools of thought. There are those who see inculturation as a valuable and effective tool for evangelisation of the gospel in Africa and those who see it as threatening the core values of Catholicism or diluting them.

There are a number of religious scholars that have written on the inculturation of religious life. The researcher reviewed literature on inculturation as a concept in the Catholic Church because when the Pope (Paul VI) gave a directive to Africa to develop an Africanised Christianity, he was doing it from the larger perspective of inculturation.

The focus of this study is the inculturation of religious life with special reference to women religious congregations in Zambia.

Christianity was introduced to Zambia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, among others by Catholic missionaries namely; the White Fathers and Jesuits Fathers. These were followed by women from international religious congregations who were invited to help in the evangelization process. With the arrival of women congregations, Zambian girls were attracted to sisterhood (religious life) and began joining sisterhood. By 1926, a local congregation was established in the Northern part of Zambia, known as the Sisters of the Child Jesus. Today, there are thirty congregations, seven are local, and the rest are of foreign origin and the religious sisters both local and international number 1,596 (Zambia Catholic Directory, 2010).

European sisters trained the first sisters in local congregations. In many ways, the local congregations that resulted have been modelled on the European sister's congregations. Perhaps, this signifies why, in the 1970s, the local sisters started advocating for a lifestyle that would be truly *Zambian*. The sisters felt that the life they were living was an "importation" from Europe; hence they wanted to inculturate it to suit the *Zambian* situation or integrate it with *Zambian* or *African* values. Verstraalen (1975: 175) observed in his report that:

In *Zambia* nowadays a re-thinking process has started as regards on authentic *African* sisterhood, pursued not in the last place by *Zambian* sisters themselves.

In October 1994, the Synod of Bishops on Consecrated Life directed religious men and women to inculturate religious life in order for it to be meaningful to them and the people they served. This has also been reported in other *African* countries (Burke, 2001 & 2010) and (Kiaziku, 2009).

The research reported here was part of the bigger study, which investigated the inculturation of religious life in *Zambia*. The research was conducted in two female Roman Catholic congregations. Religious life also known as consecrated life is a way of life of Christian living within the Catholic Church. The religious men and women publicly profess three vows known as chastity, obedience and poverty (Canon 573-746 of the code of Canon Law). The two congregations where the research was done included one locally founded congregation, and another of foreign origin. Both congregations have houses in *Lusaka* and outside *Lusaka*.

## Related Literature

This section presents a review of literature relevant to inculturation. The literature on the inculturation of religious life in Africa, let alone Zambia is scanty.

The call for the religious persons to renew and adapt their life style to the times of the day was repeated in 1994 at the Synod of Bishops on Consecrated Life, as Proposal 40 (*Second* in, 1996). The Synod insisted on the necessity of inculturating religious life in order to spread it, so that it offers quality evangelical witness to the world. Before the Synod of Bishops of 1994, in the early 1970s, the Zambian Sisters called for the change of the religious life they had received from the missionary sisters. They wanted a religious life that was to suit the Zambian way of life (Verstraelen, 1970). The Zambian sisters were not the only religious persons that had advocated -for the inculturation of religious life as other sisters within Africa and other continents have called for the inculturation of religious life as the literature will show.

Several scholars including Kiaziku (2009), Ngwagwu (2008, 1997), Burke (2001 & 2010) and Musonda (1997) all agree that religious life should be inculturated or integrated with African values for it to be understood and appreciated by the local people and the religious persons and society. The mentioned scholars are in agreement that religious life has been imported from America and Europe, thus the need to domesticate it or integrate it with African cultural values.

Hinfelaar (2004)'s report on Zambian Sister Congregations points out that, despite the presence of sisters, only a small body of literature deals with their existence. Hinfelaar further states that the only in-depth study of African sisters was done by Joan Burke (2001 and revised (2010). It is a study of the Congolese sisters, "Towards the Inculturation of Religious Life in Africa". The book focuses on how the Congolese sisters have Africanized some

aspects of their life such as decision making, conflict resolution in the community and ritualizing of profession rites by using African models. Burke further says that the religious persons in Africa have to appropriate a life that is in line with their own cultural values so that their life would be of great service to society and the Church on the continent. She adds that the African persons should shape their religious life in a form, which they themselves “feel at home” with so that their life would be understandable to the members of the local church and the society. Kiaziku (2007:85) has a similar point when he states that,

A feeling of unease seems to spread throughout religious communities both international and indigenous, especially female communities, where the religious sisters seem to suffer the loss of their African identity, and their ability to live as consecrated persons in the totality and unity of their being.

Similarly, Kitweo (1994) refers to the above point as cultural alienation which African religious women experience especially after acquiring formal education and later on becoming religious sisters/nuns<sup>1</sup>. The religious persons experience religious life as foreign. Kitweo (ibid) further argues that, some African religious persons still feel strangers in their communities as the lifestyle they live is imposed because they are not happy with the principles that regulate community life. The result is that a sister opposes them and suffers, as the principles are alien to her culture. The loss of cultural identity is also referred to by Ter Haar (1992) in her study of Milingo, when she pointed out that Milingo had realised that he had paid a price for it as Western studies had alienated him from his own people and traditions.

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1 Nuns are religious women who live monastery while sisters are active and live in open or ‘apostolic’ communities. The term nun is still used as a blanket term for both nuns and sisters.

Fernandez in Kiaziku (2007: 89) emphasizes the point of inculturating religious life by stating, it is a necessary process, so that it may be rooted deeply and its witness may be comprehensible and attractive to Africans and therefore credible. The importance of inculturating religious/consecrated life cannot be overemphasized as we take the words of the French bishops writing on the significance of inculturating religious life in Kiaziku (*ibid*), as they said:

The credibility and the future of consecrated life depend on its capacity to be inculturated, in dynamic fidelity to the foundational charisma of each institute. Similarly, among the final documents submitted to the Pope, there was one dealing explicitly with inculturation. It stated: the inculturation of consecrated life is necessary; both for its spread and the quality of the Gospel witness it must offer the world.

In stressing the need for the inculturation of religious life, Nwagwu (1997: 131) asserts that; other aspects of ecclesial life had already manifested some concrete and laudable examples of inculturation taking place, but little had been done for the consecrated life. Consequently, there was an urgent need for inculturation among the consecrated men and women who live in Africa. She further adds that, the consecrated men and women should work together and address the issue of inculturating the gospel values, especially as lived by the consecrated men and women in Africa. In the article, 'Religious Vows in Traditional African Context' Nwagwu (2008: 133) suggest to inculturate essential elements of the consecrated life so that they can be permanent in African societies. She goes to argue that inadequate inculturation renders irresponsible and unconvinced of the entire lifestyle which also leads to personalities that are torn between allegiance to cultural

demands of their society and the constraining obligations of their vowed life.

The literature above depicts the significance of inculturating or domesticating religious life in Africa and Zambia. Most of the literature reviewed was not an empirical study except the one done by Burke (2001 and (2010) which was on the Congolese sisters. This research focused on the Congolese sisters who had Africanised some aspects of religious life. The study was done in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The second study was done in Zambia by Verstraelen (1970). In this study, the Zambian sisters called for domestication of religious life. The rest of the literatures reviewed were desk researches and not much has been written on the inculturation of religious life.

The present article goes beyond what had been presented in the above studies because an empirical study was done into 2 female religious congregations and several reasons have been identified for the inculturation of religious life. The paper explores a notion that might not have been addressed by the church in Zambia, it will also add value to the existing scholarly research and literature on inculturation.

The next section discusses the methods used to collect data for this study.

## **Methodology**

The qualitative approach was employed in this study. This methodology places emphasis on exploring the richness, depth and complexity of phenomena. Kombo and Tromp (2006) states that qualitative research methods seek to describe and analyse the behaviour of people from the point of view of those being studied. Bryman (2008: 366) defines qualitative research as “a research strategy that usually emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data”. And Strauss and Corbin (1990: 17) define qualitative research as:



Any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. Although some of the data may be quantified as with census data, but the analysis itself is a qualitative one.

In this study, the qualitative methodology was found appropriate for collecting the desired data on the grounds that it seeks to understand human and social behaviour from the perspective of those living in the environment. The method was appropriate for describing and analysing the reasons for inculturation, to enhance the inculturation of religious life. It gave the researcher a valuable chance to access important information regarding the reasons for the inculturation of religious life. It also enabled the participants to discuss freely and gave valuable information, which was in most cases in the natural settings of the participants. This is the point made by Miles and Humberman (1994: 10) who states that qualitative data focus on natural occurring and ordinary events in natural settings, so that we have a strong handle on what “real life” is like.

Details of the total sample are shown in the table below:

**Table 2: Respondents by province**

<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Lusaka</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Copperbelt</i>	<i>Southern</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Grand Total</i>
Nuns- Congregations						
Local	32	8	-	9	47	47
International	02	-	10	-	12	12
Bishops	02	-	-	-	02	02
Priests	10	-	-	-	10	10
Former Sisters	08	-	-	-	08	08
Former Brothers	04	-	-	-	04	02
Practising Catholics	06	-	-	-	06	06
Grand Total					<b>89</b>	<b>89</b>

The two bishops were chosen because they were founders of locally established congregations in Zambia and they were also indigenous. The two bishops were purposively sampled because they had practical experience with the local congregations. For instance, one of the bishops had attempted to implement inculturation in the congregation he founded. The four provinces were chosen on the basis that they represented both the urban and rural settings of Zambia. This being a qualitative study, the findings are presented in the form of descriptions with direct quotations.

**The Target Population and Study Sample**

The population for the study comprised all religious sisters from local and international congregations in four provinces namely: Central, Copperbelt, and Lusaka and Southern and the catholic

community. The target population were sisters from two religious congregations; local and international, eighty-nine participants were made of bishops, sisters, priests, former sisters and former brothers and practicing Catholics. The sample consisted of fifty-five sisters, two bishops, ten priests (religious and diocesan), eight former sisters, eight former brothers and six practicing Catholics. The ages for the participants ranged from twenty-four to eighty-two. All the respondents were purposively selected for the study in four towns (Lusaka, Kabwe, Monze and Ndola towns. While results cannot be generalized to all congregations in Zambia, they nevertheless, give an insight into the extent to which inculturation of religious life has occurred in Zambia.

The instruments used to collect data were interviews, focus group discussion, observations and document analysis. Interviews were used to collect data from bishops, priests, former brothers and former sisters, practicing Catholics and sisters. Documents of the congregations such as the constitutions were analyzed.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed manually using the constant comparative method (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The procedures which were used in analyzing data involved arranging field notes according to the themes and concepts, which were relevant to the objectives and research questions. They described and explained emerging thematic and conceptual patterns in the contexts in which they occurred. Since the study used a qualitative approach significant portions have been quoted from the responses obtained.

### **Limitations of the study**

There are significant benefits in the qualitative research paradigm but there are also critical limitations. Therefore, these limitations must be taken into account when interpreting findings and

making conclusions. There are thirty religious congregations in Zambia (Zambia Catholic Directory, 2010), but only two congregations were studied as the sample shows and only four provinces were covered. Thus, the said sample may not be very representative. For this reason, with some caution, the findings should not be generalised. Due to the free style of qualitative research, the researcher had the opportunity to make and adjust decisions, exercising a great deal of discretion. As such it is difficult to replicate studies in qualitative study like this one due to the flexibility, subjectivity and discretion. Also, the fact that human behaviour is contextual and dynamic makes replication difficult, it is virtually impossible to replicate the social setting. Another point is that the researcher was intimately involved in the collection and analysis of qualitative data, thereby making it difficult for another researcher to reproduce identical data and arrive at the same conclusions.

Another limitation is the similarity of the variables under analysis. In case of documents, choice of data to record from them was based on the research questions, which constituted the major themes from the investigation. Although being a former sister was a big limitation, it was also an advantage because the researcher was able to easily understand some of the issues in religious life and about the congregations. The self was actually the crucial source.

Despite the above limitations, the findings of the study were consistent with the reviewed literature. In addition, the sample was fairly representative.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### *Reasons for the inculturation of religious life*

This section presents the reasons for the inculturation of religious life given by all the respondents. Data gathered showed that

all the respondents except one supported the inculturation of religious life. Reasons were given as to why religious life should be inculturated.

The findings indicated that the African religious persons are in favour of inculturating their religious life in Zambia. The study findings and literature related to the study revealed that the religious persons are in support of inculturating or integrating their life style with African cultural values. The following reasons accentuate the importance of domesticating religious life; survival of religious life, credibility, a sense of feeling of being at home and maintaining African identity. One sister had this to say: “For religious life to survive, to have meaning and relevancy, it should be inculturated”. Another sister added her reason for the inculturation of religious life by saying that, religious life needed to be inculturated because:

I think that’s the only way to survive. There is no other option, if we don’t integrate religious life with our culture, there would be dissatisfaction, unhappiness, and eventual disintegration of religious life.

The participants in the study were of the view that religious life should be inculturated. Another sister said: “I believe religious life should have a meaningful and relevant to the time and culture of the people and that it should carry the richness of the local culture into it”. Referring to the relevance of religious life, one former brother said: “when religious life is inculturated, it will be relevant and valuable to the Church in Zambia according to the time and circumstances”.

It is important to note that most of the sisters who took part in the study were mostly those with final vows. They had joined religious life as young girls and had known no other adult life other than religious life. It is also significant to note that the future

of the Church is in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This is also true for religious life.

A sister from an international congregation stated that, “with the inculturation of religious life, Europeanisation of religious life would come to an end”. Another sister had the following to say: “by inculturating religious life, religious colonialism such as religious formulations, Church laws and liturgical rites which are considered sacred and nobody could change them would be gotten rid of”. Most of the sisters from the local congregation indicated that they would want foreign European elements of religious life to be discarded. One sister stated that once the foreign elements were removed, sisters would be able “to bring into religious life the good Zambian values so that the life they were living would not appear foreign and European, and they would also get rid of the Roman thing and European influence”. A practising Catholic had a similar view when he said: “inculturation will help the sisters to live according to their traditions and culture and they would not depend on Western culture which they seem not to understand”. Some of the sisters supported inculturation of religious life because they felt that inculturation would bring “a sense of feeling of being at home” and the sisters would be rooted in the African culture.

Referring to the ‘sense of feeling of being at home’ and being rooted in the African culture, the bishops, priests, former religious brothers and sisters said that inculturation of religious life would create a sense of feeling of being at home and therefore, the sisters would be rooted in the African culture. Consequently, other African values such as ‘family’, ‘joy’, ‘*umunthu*’ (people) respect for culture and family would be experienced. The above respondents also pointed out that inculturation would make religious life become rooted or grounded in the African culture and experience, which seems to be missing now. The respondents

(former sisters) went on to say that if the religious persons became true to their roots they would then live a fully African Christian life.

Another reason cited for the inculturation of religious life was that it would be rooted into the African experience and will not be separated from the lived experience of their people in the community. In addition, the respondents (the practising Catholics) pointed out that (the meaning) of religious life would be understood in an African way. “The good African values would be taught what could benefit the sisters for example, the value of life”. The respondent (practising Catholic) gave such a response because the religious persons take the vow of chastity, which the laity interprets as the sisters rejecting procreation thus the sisters do not value life.

One sister had a contrary view, she said religious life would be difficult to inculturate because it was a foreign life that has been imported into Africa, so it would be a challenge to inculturate it.

The research sought to provide reasons for the inculturation of religious life in Zambia. These reasons are discussed under the emerging themes; meaning, relevance and survival of religious life and the ‘sense of feeling of being at home’ and being rooted in African culture.

### ***Meaning, Relevance and Survival of Religious Life***

With regard to the meaning, relevance and survival of religious life, all the respondents indicated that for religious life to be meaningful, relevant and for it to survive, it needed to be inculturated. In other words it is important for religious life to be integrated with the local culture so that it lasts long and does not disintegrate. These views by the sisters and other respondents indicated that they support the indigenisation of religious life. The respondents’ views further indicated that religious life was still relevant in the Church and inculturating it would enrich it.

This finding is consistent with Kiaziku (2007: 22)'s view point that the religious institutes or congregations in Africa have an urgent need to inculcate religious life.

In addition to the foregoing views, some religious women had stated that the religious persons were dissatisfied and frustrated due to cultural imperialism and in order to help end this problem and make the religious persons comfortable, there was need to inculcate religious life. Similarly, views were reported by Sempore in Kiaziku (2007: 86) that inculturation of religious life would make religious life even more eloquent and credible if it was witnessed in an African context with religious persons being fully African and fully consecrated. If the religious persons were not happy with the life they received from the white missionaries, then there was need to inculcate it so that they were at home with it. This was consistent with views of the sisters expressed in the 1970s that their religious life needed to be domesticated so that the foreign elements which they had inherited from the white missionaries could be removed. The *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Synod on Consecrated Life ( Par. 93) expresses similar sentiments in support of localising religious life by stating that:

The task of expressing consecrated life in the cultures is today one of the great challenges for its future, in the face of great diversity of environment, races and cultures, and the mission of the Church to evangelise all the people of the earth.

The above quotation expresses the significance of inculturating religious life so that it could bring vitality and meaning to religious life. Inculturation was a necessary process and if it was genuinely carried out, religious life would be deeply rooted in African culture and its witness would be valuable and attractive to the Africans. Stressing this point, Kiaziku (2007: 84), states that “it is clear that inculturation is an undeniable necessity for the equilibrium of the individual and of groups”. The *Vita Consecrata*



(document on religious life no. 79) also stresses the importance of inculturating religious life when it says, “all the elements of consecrated life demand to be inculturated, these include charisma, ways of formation, prayer and liturgy, the principles and values of the spiritual life, the structures of government, the forms of the apostolate and the style of life”. Similarly, the *Instrumentum Laboris*, par 93 of the Synod of Bishops on Consecrated Life stresses the value of inculturation in the same words:

Inculturation, therefore, involves the whole of consecrated life: the charisma that characterises a vocation; the lifestyle; the manner of formation and of apostolate; prayer and liturgy; the principles of the spiritual life: and the organisation of community and its administration.

Among the reasons for inculturation revealed in the findings was the desire to end foreign elements in religious life and to do away with Europeanisation of it.

However, some respondents were rather ambiguous about the issue of inculturation. On one hand they desired it but on the other hand they claimed that there was no policy. This ambiguity extends to the Church authorities who encourage inculturation while ensuring that it was controlled and not allowed to blossom. As Knights (1999) puts it, “inculturation is within the control of the Church leadership meaning that the implementers of inculturation have to abide by what the Church wants, they cannot go beyond the limits”.

The reasons for this problem are perhaps historical. According to O'Reilly (1996: 5), “religious life was presented to Africa as a pre-packaged deal offered to Africans on a take-or-leave it basis, it was a form of life which appears as foreign as any other ecclesial institution that was brought to Africa by the missionaries”. It was true that when religious life was introduced in Africa there were no local structures. The missionaries needed a base to introduce

religious life; they had to use foreign structures. However, more than 100 years of Catholicism in Zambia, the integration of African values and religious life has not been very successful. So the words of Kiweto in Kiaziku (2007: 85) still hold water:

The lifestyle that is generally followed within the institutes of consecrated life is widely seen by the African members as an 'importation from outside.' A feeling of unease seems to spread throughout religious communities, where the religious sisters seem to suffer loss of their African identity and their ability to live as consecrated persons in the totality of unity of their being.

It was true that when one enters religious life there was a loss of the African identity because the life that one embraces in the convent is not African. So inculturation would bring about good African or Zambian values into religious life so that religious life does not appear to be 'foreign' or 'European.' Currently, important African values such as the care for siblings and parents were disregarded in religious life (Nwugwa, 2008). Inculturation would ensure that in religious life the good Zambian values are retained and appreciated. Indeed the Synod of Bishops at the African Synod (1994: 372) pointed out that inculturation would bring back and re-affirm the cultural identity of the African Christian as an adult and a full member of the universal Church and it would heal the cultural alienation as religious life would be rooted in the local culture.

Worth noting is the fact that the Bishops pronounced inculturation as a panacea to cultural alienation, yet as early as the 1970s, the Zambian religious women had begun to advocate for the inculturation of religious life to suit the Zambian situation. In 1973, the Zambian sisters questioned the religious life they were living. They wanted it re-defined to suit the African situation.

Concerning the end of Europeanisation of religious life, the researcher noticed elements which were still foreign in the congregations where the study was conducted. The sisters still used many of the things that they inherited from the missionary sisters. Thus community life was still structured the way the European sisters left it. In the structure of the community, there was a superior who was in charge of the community and sisters who could number 2-10. Prayers and meals were done and taken together, while community meetings are conducted once a month. Even the structures of the government in the congregations were still European-oriented. The onus was on the sisters who wanted to get rid of European influence to change a number of things in the congregations (such as the structure) and adapt them to their African culture. Though care should be taken that it was not just change for the sake of change, it had to be meaningful change. Some basic organisational structures were the same elsewhere because the universality of the church should be prominent. However, they had to be careful so that they did not do things against the authorities in Rome, just as Pope Paul VI stated in 1975, that the integration of faith and culture had to remain Catholic.

### ***The “Sense of Feeling of being at Home” and Being Rooted in the African Culture***

An important point related to the foregoing was that inculturation of religious life would create a sense of feeling of being at home. According to the respondents, African values such as ‘family’, ‘joy’, ‘Ubuntu’ and respect for the family and culture would be experienced. Kiaziku (2009) concluded that there was a split between the Gospel and culture in the Church and religious life. In 1975, Pope Paul II also said, “a faith that does not become culture is a faith that is not fully accepted, not entirely thought out, not fully lived”. Pope John Paul II’s principle should be

applied to religious life; that, religious life and culture had to be integrated so that African culture can be lived through religious life and the ‘Africaness’ could become a living experience. Culture which was undermined by missionary Christianity is a very important component of a human being because that is what makes a person different from animals. As one sister pointed out that with inculturation, the good African values could be taught to the religious persons who would benefit from them and value African culture especially those who do not appreciate African culture.

On the other hand, while it was good and important to integrate the African culture with religious life, it was a difficult task because the young people who were joining religious life today are already exposed to multi-culturalism and globalisation. Globalisation was a secular process that has had no regard for religion. So the congregations have to work hard to change some of the values or ideas that potential religious persons go with to the convent. Another problem was that there are times when the religious persons have not supported or encouraged the appreciation of the African values and in some cases they have even removed from the constitution anything to do with African. As O’Reilly (1993: 251) puts it: “They set about removing from the constitutions anything which might make them appear as a local congregation or, for that matter ‘African’”. All these factors tend to make the preservation of African culture through inculturation of religious life very difficult, though not impossible.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear from the foregoing that, there are several reasons that have been identified supporting the inculturation of religious life in Zambia. It was argued that with the inculturation of religious life, life for the religious persons would be meaningful, relevant, a feeling of living the superficial religious life would end and that

it would survive and stand the test of time. The paper has also shown that inculturation of religious life in Zambia and Africa as a whole is justifiable because it's a necessity for the credibility and survival of religious life in Africa.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Church leadership should be flexible and give freedom to the religious persons to implement the integration of African values and religious life. One way the religious persons could do it is by creating forms of consecrated/religious life in Africa by the Africans using their own cultural, religious and socio-economic horizons which of course would be guided by Christ and His Gospel values.
2. The policy makers in the congregations should put a deliberate policy on inculturation of religious life.
3. The religious persons should take risks by embracing the process of inculturation and revise religious life as it has been passed on by adapting it to the African context.
4. More research on the inculturation of religious life. The literature review revealed that not much research has been done in line with the inculturation of religious life, thus it is the area which is still new. Therefore, more research should be encouraged and done by religious persons themselves.

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