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Sudden Spring: 6th Stage Sisters
Trends of Change in Catholic Sisterhoods
A Sociological Analysis
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PREPARATORY GROUNDWORK (p. 1)

Sudden Spring, published in 1983, was written by Sr. Lillanna Kopp, in response to the perception by some analysts of Catholic sisterhoods that Catholic religious life for women was, in effect, dying in the two decades following the Second Vatican Council. This perception was based upon the significant exodus of sisters from traditional communities during the late 1960's and 1970's. Sr. Lillanna, a sociologist by profession, while acknowledging this decline, offered a new interpretation. She observed a new trend during this period in the emerging of new style sisterhoods characterized by circular structure, authentic community, and expression of Kohlberg's highest state of moral maturation. (Moral decision-making is based upon universal ethical principles).

TARGETS OF THIS STUDY (P.1)

Sr. Lillanna defines six goals for her study, 1. To provide renewing and newly emerging sisterhoods with a common frame of reference for communication for understanding changing patterns of sisterhood, 2. To provide detailed information about Vatican II- oriented sisterhoods such as Sisters For Christian Community, 3. To stimulate discussion between sisters about the new lifestyles and models for renewal, 4. To explore explain the nature and role of **SIXTH STAGE SISTERS** (see definition of 6th stage in above paragraph). 5. To share the research of this study in a concise and understandable form. 6. To facilitate awareness of the need for ongoing communication so that all sisterhoods might move in the direction of renewal and authentic community.

Sr. Lillanna identifies three emerging trends in sisterhoods (p. 2)
From fixation on outdated patterns toward planning for creative change.
From tentative and cautious modification toward creating brand new structures.
From continued conformity to patriarchal authority to increasing respect for women's unique gifts.

NOMENCLATURE DILEMMA (P.2)

In 1975 the new canon law replaced the term "religious life" with "consecrated life" to describe new expressions of Christian Community. Sr. Lillanna takes this a step further, If all Christians are consecrated by baptism and are called to a life of commitment and witness, then the terms such as religious life, consecrated life, and priestly people, rightly describe all the People of God and not reserved for the ordained and the vowed

THE FUTURES SHOP CONFERENCE (P.3)

In 1975 a Futureshop Conference was held in Bethesda, Maryland in which

individuals representing traditional and new communities met to ferret out future trends that were developing quietly within existent sisterhoods. Out of their data three distinct directions were identified:

- Toward completely new patterns of commitment to Christ
- Toward a renewal of traditional patterns
- Toward structural death

The convener of this conference, Passionist Cassian Yuhaus, envisioned three categories of sisterhood (p.3)

1. **EMERGING COMMUNITIES** (180-200 new groups, mostly non-canonical)
2. **RENEWING CONGREGATIONS** (many of the traditional groups)
3. **DIMINISHING CONGREGATIONS** (4-7-10 groups in each major city of the United States where traditional sisterhoods were represented)

WILL THE REAL SISTERS PLEASE STAND UP? (p. 4)

The Sisters For Christian Community (origin, 1970) are the largest and best known of the new communities. Their expression of commitment to Christ is rooted in an understanding of scripture as it was practiced in the Primitive Church (early Church). Their paramount authority is the New Testament, replacing the cultural beliefs and devotional practices of medieval tradition commonly associated with "religious life". Poverty for Sisters For Christian Community is characterized by readiness, the giving of self, availability to others, and resilience in the presence of radical culture change. It is not a financial statement. It is also a renunciation of the **ELITISM** associated with the social structures and religious life styles associated with traditional, canonical forms of sisterhood.

By its very nature, culture, as a design for living and surviving, is the product of a certain group of people living in a certain era.. As such, culture patterns must be adapted to the on-going and ever-changing needs of each generation if their life is going to continue. Sr. Lillanna cites the following quotation from a document dated August 12, 1980 that confirms this need for chang (p. 5)

"The Spirit, who is constantly raising up new forms and institutions of the consecrated life in response to the needs of the times, also animates those in existence and renews their capacity to come to grips with changed Ecclesial and social contexts.

(See *The Pope Speaks* , Vol. 28, Nov. 26, 1981, p.106

RESEARCH METHOD (pp. 5,6)

Sr. Lillanna identifies the purpose of her study as "to describe and analyze the psycho-sociological phenomena of internal and external changes in world sisterhood during the past few decades..." (see p. 5). It is her hope that this information will motivate greater cooperation, understanding, and effective communication between the various forms of sisterhood represented in our world today.

GROUNDWORK CONCLUSIONS (p. 6)

Sr. Lillanna describes her book as "a lamp raised to illumine the roads over which we are currently traveling as we strive to blaze new trails of **WOMEN-IN-CHRIST**.

Chapter I

PRELUDES TO SPRING: CATAclysmic CULTURE CHANGE

CUT LOOSE FROM EXCLUSIONARY GOALS (p.7)

Since Vatican II the patterns traditionally associated with the consecrated life seem, in Sr. Lillanna's words, to be "spinning out of control." Such significant social changes are affecting all forms of Christian life in families, parishes, dioceses, monasteries, chanceries, seminaries, and Vatican offices.

As a result of these changes some sisterhoods are disintegrating while others are retooling. Still others are being born. Though culture patterns continually change, one thing continues; new, vital forms of Christ-commitment continue to come into being.

CUT LOOSE FROM OLD ROLES (pp. 7,8)

In a January, 1982 report presented at the Oregon Archdiocesan Council of Women Religious noted that in the "era of the laity" lay men and women would be assuming roles formerly held by Sisters. Thus, after training their replacements, Sisters would be released to discover for themselves new forms of ministry and service (p.7).

This raises an important question. Is this proposed replacement of sisters taking place because of the decline in the number of sisters? Or is the Holy Spirit preparing the Church for some totally new expressions of sisterhood? If the latter is true, then what are some of the major directions in which sisterhoods are striving as they seek to develop new forms of ministry or totally new forms of Christian witness?

VISIBILITY CHANGE IN SISTERHOODS (pp. 8, 9)

Sr. Lillanna identifies two notable changes in which most sisters of the world are moving:

1. From high visibility in holy habits toward invisibility in secular dress
2. From subculture seclusion (living in convents) toward dominant culture penetration (living out in the community)

These changes represent a radical departure from the Pre-Vatican II concept of sisters as celibate Christian women who had freely "withdrawn from the world" (p.8).

This also represents a forward movement of sisters in three significant aspects.

Toward the Scriptural value of being leaven in the world

Toward a Christ-like mingling with the masses

Toward a vital synthesis of sacred and secular values

Of course, the deliberate loss of visibility on the part of sisters raises some concerns in the light of Pope John Paul II's appeal that "the permanent sign of a simple and suitable religious garb" (for sisters) be retained or reinstated (p. 9). Yet many American sisters regard his statement as one of preference and not of requirement.

SISTERS AS LEAVEN IN THE WORLD (pp. 9,10)

The movement toward sisters toward being leaven in the world is based upon a statement in Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium Et Spes* which called for a revolution in the Church's relationship with the world.

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“The Church exists in the world, living and acting within it... She serves as a leaven, and as a kind of soul for human society as is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into God’s family.” (*Lumen Gentium*, Chapter III, 40)

This transformation of the Church-world relationship can be described in its three stages (p. 10)

1. The Pre-Vatican II stage in which the Church Triumphant was above the world and could be described as inerrant, aloof, condescending, ruling Christendom, and keeping the Christians as passive recipients
2. Post -Vatican II stage in which the Church Transforming was still inerrant but also collegial, was becoming immersed in the world, reaching out to people, serving but not ruling the world, and inviting all Christians to some level of participation
3. The Vatican II ideal stage in which the Church will truly be community-in-Christ, collegial decision-making will exist at all stages, all will be involved in mutual ministry, all people will be brought to peace and oneness, and the Church will truly be the light of the world (*Lumen Gentium*).

Sr. Lillanna observes that since Vatican II there has been a divergent response to change on the part of the various sisterhoods. This has caused some sisters to scatter in such different directions resulting in separation, isolation, and even alienation between some groups.

DIVERGENT RESPONSE TO CHANGE (pp. 11-13)

Sr. Lillanna identifies **THREE CLASSIC MODELS OF CHANGE.**

1. **THE EQUILIBRIUM MODEL** in which change is initiated through an order from the top
2. **THE CONFLICT MODEL** in which change is initiated through revolution from the bottom
3. **THE EGALITARIAN MODEL** in which change is initiated through processes of group dynamics and voting.

In addition to these models, Sr. Lillanna adds a fourth model.

4. **THE COLLEGIAL COMMUNITY MODEL** in which change is initiated through the charisms (gifts) and consensus of the community members

1. THE EQUILIBRIUM MODEL OF SOCIAL CHANGE (pp. 12, 13)

In this model the status quo is represented as the good, normal, and healthy condition of a group. Any attempts to change or challenge this model are viewed as disruptive or destructive of what is considered its “harmonious balance” (p.12).

A major criticism of this approach to cultural change is its tendency toward conservation which prevents change, even which such change can be advantageous in the long run.

2. THE CONFLICT MODEL; CHANGE THROUGH AGGRESSION FROM THE BOTTOM (p. 13)

Such conflict does not necessarily imply violence but may involve disagreement over values including those affecting the process by which decisions are made. Conflict can impact a sisterhood when issues divide persons so that some may win and others may

lose. Conflict can even be beneficial when it promotes survival of the group or needed change.

CHANGE MODELS ONE AND TWO COMBINED (p.13,14)

In recent years it has been discovered that change models one and two can be effectively combined in such a way that conflict and continuity of structure are compatible. Such a model recognizes the value of group equilibrium (maintaining of balance). Such balance depends upon maintaining group's essential values, norms, and goals. Flexibility, innovation, and creative change are both welcome and necessary.

This model recognizes the damage that can be done by the "edict from the top" approach (p.14). Thus it makes use of a democratized bureaucracy giving all group members a voice in management. Administrators are elected by the group rather than appointed.

3. THE EGALITARIAN MODEL: CHANGE THROUGH SHARED DECISION-MAKING (pp. 14,15)

This model bases division of labor upon its members' skills. It has some functional leaders but no decision-making administrators. Leadership may be exercised by any member on the basis of their natural persuasive ability and their appeals to the group's values. Interpersonal reciprocity and cooperation are emphasized. This model assumes a subsistence economy with no surplus goods because the latter might make some members more powerful than others.

INTO AN UNMAPPED TERRAIN (p.15)

Today some of the pioneering sisters of the Post-Vatican II age can share well-tested models of structural change that they, themselves, designed and implemented effectively for this current era of Church history. One such model has been used successfully by Sisters For Christian Community since its inception in 1970.

4. THE COLLEGIAL COMMUNITY MODEL: CHANGE THROUGH CHARISMS AND CONSENSUS (p. 15,16) (See Sister Lillanna (Audrey) Kopp, *New Nuns: Collegial Christians*, 1958)

This model envisions the consecrated life as community-in-Christ. It aspires to spiritual unity even when sisters are geographically separated from each other. All members are considered co-equals and co-foundresses, sharing the responsibility. The community sees itself as ever-evolving. Change is viewed as an inevitable and natural developmental process. Decision-making involves a group-shared process as guided by the Holy Spirit.

Through the consensus of all members it is agreed that there will be no motherhouse, convents, retreat centers, group funds, administrators, or centralization (only an international communications team). Change is effected through group **CONSENSUS**. The Holy Spirit directs the community through the **CHARISMS** of its members.

CHANGE THROUGH CONSENSUS AND CHARISMS (pp. 16, 17)

(as in Acts 15)

The practice of **CONSENSUS** is based upon the passage in Acts 15 which says, "It has seemed good to us, having come to one accord to choose men and to send them to you....For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden..." (Acts 15)

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 1 (p. 17)

Sr. Lillanna observes sisterhoods moving in the following directions:
 From traditional pyramidal structures toward entirely new patterns of community
 From subculture seclusion (with convent life being the norm) toward dominant culture penetration (being out among the people)
 From canonical monism (as opposed to pluralism) toward pluralism and diversification.
 From following classic change models toward initiating change through the Collegial Community Model

CHAPTER II

TOP-HEAVY GROWTH: THE X THAT TRIGGERS THE EXODUS

EVIDENCE OF EXODUS (p. 18)

Sr. Lillanna notes three significant trends in the Church since Vatican II which raise the question "why has there been an exodus?"

In 1965 there were one million sisters world-wide. By the 1980's there were roughly half a million.

In 1965 64.4 percent of Catholics in the West attended Mass weekly. By the 1980's this percentage had dwindled to 25 percent.

In 1965 theological schools enrolled all men. By the 1980's half of the enrollment were women.

CAUSES FOR THE ALIENATION OF CHRISTIANS (p. 19-22)

In this section (p. 19) Sr. Lillanna acknowledges that some have attributed the **GREAT EXODUS** of Christians from the Church to off-the-cuff projections that attribute the problem to personal defects of individuals who have left the Church. (See list on p.19)

Rather she concludes that the real alienating forces causing the exodus have been the dominating patterns within the Church, be they monarchical, patriarchal, sexist, classist, racist, or otherwise elitest. These forces betray the Church as **COMMUNITY-IN-CHRIST**.

Sr. Lillanna contrasts the **COMMUNITY** as a **WE**-group in which each member is a participant, an acting person, a maturing person, and a self-actualizing ego with the **WE-THEY** group or **BUREAUCRACY**. In the latter the so-called X group dominates the Y group as a subordinate (see diagrams at the top of p. 20) The subordinated Y group becomes inactive, alienated, estranged, closed in personality, stunted in maturation, and ultimately separated from the group.

For centuries most groups of sisters shared a pattern termed by sociologists as **TOTAL INSTITUTION** in which a small supervisory staff exercise absolute control

over inferiors. Sisters in such communities were required to break from their past, have limited contact with their families, were urged to relinquish personal property, and were issued institutional clothing (habits). They lost their autonomy for decision-making and were assigned jobs without consultation or preparation. Such limitations and others that were imposed upon these sisters contributed to loss of initiative and deformation of their personalities. No wonder, we see a mass exodus of sisters in the 1960's from these **TOTAL INSTITUTION** communities.

During this time frame two movements took place in religious communities:
 From total institution toward democratized bureaucracy
 From democratized bureaucracy toward collegial or consensual community (p.21)

Sr. Lillanna offers a detailed comparative description of those communities that took the full journey from total institution toward free-form consensual community in two columns on p. 22/ .

CULTURE UPROOTING: PSYCHIC WRENCHING (pp. 23, 24)

Sr. Lillanna believes that the full extent of damage done to individual sisters by **TOTAL INSTITUTION** will never be fully assessed. However, the effects of this damage led to research in the 1970's addressing the question of why such extreme culture-uprooting was considered necessary for women entering religious life (p.23). Some examples of questioning included the following. Does a vocation to serve the Church necessitate that one leave one group-made culture (family and community) for a totally different culture? Can sisters really witness to the beauty and livability of the Christian experience if they leave the dominant culture for a wholly different one? If yeast is to elevate dough, must it not be **within** the dough rather than in another subculture? If sisters are to be role models for Christian community, must they not live in the same settings in which other Christians and non-Christians struggle for perfection?

DETOTALIZING TRENDS IN SISTERHOOD (p. 24)

It is difficult to accurately assess the reasons for differing rates of loss among the various communities of religious sisterhood. Yet we can reasonably assume that such rates usually correlate with a community's ability to adapt to current needs. One thing, however is evident. At the time Sr. Lillanna wrote this book, traditional patterns of consecrated life were experiencing radical disruption. Some sisters, perhaps out of a sense of powerlessness, allowed themselves to be victimized by undirected change. Others, however, began to assert their womanhood and become shapers and catalysts within their communities. Still others chose to develop new expressions of the consecrated life, combining their charisms and informed convictions. Out of these came three categories of sisters: **EMERGING, RENEWING, and DIMINISHING**

DIMINISHING SISTERHOODS (p. 24)

By the time this book was written the world-wide Catholic sister population had decreased from approximately one million in the 1960's to roughly half of that by the early 1980's.

THE DANGER IN MONOFORM SYSTEMS (p. 25)

Sr. Lillanna concludes that it is a reasonable policy for sisterhoods to let go of traditional monoform systems and encourage the use of a variety of forms in life styles, formation experiences, and ministries. Furthermore, research suggests that even though the **TOTAL INSTITUTION** approach fostered dependency and lack of personal autonomy, it cannot be concluded that women drawn to religious life are more insecure and dependent than their peers. Rather, contemporary sisters tend to be more emotionally stable, capable of leadership, and mature than the average college student.

SURVIVAL CONCERNS (p. 25,26)

The primary concern among sisters today is how well a group is able to witness to the authentic meaning of community-in-Christ. This raises three questions:

1. Which sisterhoods encourage interpersonal relationships which foster the development of each member's growth and sense of self worth?
2. Which sisterhoods have initiated social structures that challenge each member's sense of responsibility for the welfare of the group and for persons beyond the group?
3. Which sisterhoods encourage their members to attain the moral development associated with Kohlberg's **STAGE SIX** (see p. 1 of commentary).

Clearly those communities that hold fast to the **TOTAL INSTITUTION** model are losing members. And one of the founding-goals of Sisters for Christian Community was to support some of these sisters until they found alternate support systems. Yet, this raises another question. Who at the time of the writing of *Sudden Spring* assumes responsibility for the those sisters whose convictions forced them to leave the **DIMINISHING SISTERHOODS** (p. 26)?

PERPLEXITIES IN PARADISE

Based upon her observation, Sr. Lillanna observes that there is no such thing as a "conflict-free utopia" among women's religious communities (p. 26) Conflict in such communities may come in the form of psychological warfare and may be disguised and low-key, often in the form of rivalry between members. Yet, conflict need not be destructive and can, in fact, serve as a catalyst for positive change.

CONFLICT: A CATALYST FOR CHANGE (p.26)

Conflict may, indeed, be a manifestation of growth, life, development, health, and hope for a community. One example of this realization was a quote from Sisters For Christian Community: "We have consensus on Gospel values, but a multitude of shifting coalitions on all else (p.26)."

Such shifting coalitions describes the differing views and values of individual members concerning common issues.

CONFLICT: AN EVER PRESENT CONTEST (p. 26)

Conflict is an ever-present human condition that manifests itself in ethnic, gender, economic, environmental, political, and other struggles affecting human beings at national and international levels. Conflict can be violent or peaceful but the absence of conflict is virtually impossible.

CONFLICT: THE CORE OF AMERICAN HISTORY (pp. 27,28)

Throughout the course of American history we note the perennial problem of the powerful few attempting to control and exploit the powerless many. Such domination comes into direct conflict with the American ethos that upholds the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Clearly this American ethos comes into conflict with the values of the universal Church with its teachings on male supremacy, the misinterpretation of Scripture to justify female inferiority and subordination to males, and a clerical system resistant to the democratic process or communal decision-making (p.27).

The outdated ethos of authority has created situations at all levels in the Church and in religious communities that underestimates individual members' rights of self-expression and self-determination. In such structures passivity poses as peace, absence of conflict is seen as the presence of virtue, and submission to willful authority is equated with submission to God. Such abuse of authority underestimates the capacity of individuals for moral growth and creative decision making. Such structures definitely do not contribute to the development of virtue. Rather, in reality, those "powerless" group members who are never in conflict with their leaders may be the most passive, fearful, and poorly informed members of their community.

According to Sr. Lillanna, sisters of previous centuries have viewed themselves as a deprived minority in the Church. As **CHURCH SERVICE PERSONNEL** they and other women have been dominated by the pope, cardinals, the curia, bishops, and priests. In the **PARISH PYRAMID** they and other women have been dominated by the pastor, associate pastors, and the men of the parish. And in their **LIVING SITUATIONS** they have been dominated by the mother general, general councilors, mother provincial, provincial supervisors, and sister superior (p. 28).

THE ERA THAT CHALLENGES THE X (those who dominate) (pp. 28,29)

Only when the bishops of the world at Vatican II responded to the Holy Spirit's leadership and redefined the Church as The People of God did questions involving the bureaucratic model of organization and decision-making come to the fore. At this time there was discussion of developing an organizational structure that would involve the entire Christian community in decision-making reminiscent of the Council of Jerusalem (See Acts 15). When the bishops returned home these proposed changes in the structure toward consensual decision-making did not happen.

Nevertheless, during this period of time a growing number of sisters regarded consensual decision making as a chief concern in sisterhood renewal (p.28). These sisters envisioned themselves as being a "unity of co-equals-in-Christ," open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, seeking to make consensual decisions for the common good (p. 29).

The fact that the old patriarchal and matriarchal structures of the Church still exist is evidence of the widening discrepancy between the real and the ideal concepts of what the Church and religious life could be (p. 29)

THE X THAT TRIGGERS THE EXODUS (pp. 29,30)

At the time *Sudden Spring* was written, one thing was quite evident. The Church service personnel that peaked in the mid-Sixties was in a state of steady decline.

conflict is an unwelcome departure from their norm and is simply unacceptable. For others, conflict is accepted and even welcomed as a creative and healthy type of human interaction with the potential for positive action.

THE ULTIMATE GLUE HOLDING SISTERHOODS INTACT (pp. 32, 33)

This section addresses the question of why some groups fall apart and lose members while other groups continue to grow and become more socially cohesive?

CONFLICT THEORISTS would maintain that the "ultimate glue" is coercion. Such communities see that their sisters are aware of the possible losses and challenges they would encounter were they to leave their community such as loss of financial security and the difficulty of finding new employment, friendships, and housing.

FUNCTIONALISTS believe that, to remain intact, groups must stress conformity to existing rules of the organization and organizational policy. As such, they could not accept the concept of **PROCESS-COMMUNITY** in the sense of a consensually based group characterized by ongoing openness to the Holy Spirit.

Combined **CONFLICT-FUNCTIONALIST THEORISTS** would maintain that a group is held together by a democratic process of shared decision making (p. 32).

The membership of **COMMUNITY-IN-CHRIST** cannot be explained in terms of these conventional groupings because it is, first and foremost, a spiritual phenomenon. Hence, it merits study by another variety of theorists, **COLLEGIAL COMMUNITY THEORISTS**.

COLLEGIAL COMMUNITY THEORISTS postulate that the glue that ultimately connects persons in loving unity is the concept of **CONSENSUS** in which group members are completely open to the ongoing guidance of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul says that the Holy Spirit "speaks where it will, to the least as well as the greatest, to persons of every rank for the up building of Christian Community (p. 33)." If this is true, then the only process that can enable a group to arrive at a collective decision is **ALL LISTENING TO ALL** (p. 33).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF CHAPTER II (pp. 33, 34)

In this chapter Sr. Lillanna draws the following conclusions.

1. Sisters are not leaving "religious life" but are leaving **TOTAL INSTITUTIONS**.
2. Young people are not alienated by the ideal of Christ-commitment but by the concept of such commitment within bureaucratically dominated structures.
3. If congregations are to survive into the 21st Century, they must abandon all traces of **TOTAL INSTITUTION** including its modernized forms such as **DEMOCRATIZED BUREAUCRACIES**.
4. The Church at all levels, parish, diocese, and curia, must abandon its outdated bureaucratic models for authentic Christian Community to become a reality.

On an encouraging note, sisters of the world see institutional exiting as a structural problem. They recognize paternal and maternal domination as deterrents to the social and emotional maturation of their members. They recognize the value of respectful expression of conflict. They equate Christian equality and **LISTENING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT** with obedience as defined in the Gospels and Christian Community.

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CHAPTER III

SPRING PRUNING: THE LIFE-SAVING BUREAU-ECTOMIES'

THE ORGANIZATION NUNS (p. 35)

While acknowledging the efficiency of organizational nuns (counterpart of the industrial world's organization man), Sr. Lillanna points out that their bureaucratic system ultimately compromises them in two ways: ministry and the consecrated life.

DISAFFECTION, DISESTEEM, DEPLETION (pp. 35, 36)

When American and European nuns entered third world mission fields, they inadvertently negated much of their effectiveness by imposing their Western bureaucratic organizational structure upon the people of those countries. As a result, millions of people became alienated from Christianity. In the process, came an increasing disrespect, loss of esteem, and membership depletion from religious life. Sr. Lillanna raises the question, "Can the Church and the sisterhoods extricate themselves from bureaucracy and oligarchy in sufficient time to stem the exodus and renew world respect (p. 35)?"

As a result of the reform proposals of Vatican II some questions arose. (See p. 36)
How do we distinguish between **COMMUNITY** and **BUREAUCRACY**?

If the Church began as a consensual, collegial community of the faithful, how did it evolve into an authoritarian, hierarchical, and sexist power structure?

If **COMMUNITY-IN-CHRIST** is the essence of consecrated life, how can it be that some sisterhoods have evolved into community-destroying bureaucracies?

Is it possible for egalitarianism to become a basic aspect of the transforming Church or is the **IRON LAW OF OLIGARCHY** an unchangeable aspect of the Church?

Is there any evidence to show that all members of the **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY** are considered participants in the ministry and the priesthood because they have been consecrated through baptism?

This chapter will focus on the distinction between **COMMUNITY** and **BUREAUCRACY** as well as the nature of participatory management models being used in the Post-Vatican II era.

COMMUNITY FROM A CROWD IN CHAOS ...A Scenario (pp. 36, 37)

This section describes a hypothetical shipwreck in which a group of survivors organize themselves into a **COMMUNITY** of co-equals sharing their skills and communicative abilities in an effort to survive. Their struggle for survival is characterized by a sense of unity, mutual effort, and shared values and goals.

BUREAUCRACY ON THE BEACH: AN ALTERNATE CHOICE (pp. 37, 38)

This section contrasts with the previous one in which another group of shipwreck survivors organize themselves into a two-layer bureaucratic structure of superiors (powerful) and inferiors (powerless) for the purpose of regaining a sense of security. Sr.

Lillanna defines this approach as "oligarchy" or the "rule of the few" (p. 37). In this model, the promise of security takes precedence over the opportunity for mutual sharing and caring among community members.

THE IRON LAW OF OLIGARCHY (p. 38)

Some individuals, including social historian Robert Michaels, believed that there was no viable alternative to the bureaucratic system. In *Political Parties* (1911) he defended a theory of the **IRON LAW OF OLIGARCHY**. Furthermore, Michaels believed that the masses were being controlled by leaders who paid little attention to the opinions of those under their leadership. He described this law as being pervasive throughout history. It was a system in which the elected would always dominate the electors and the delegates would always over-ride the delegators. The administrators would assume power over the workers. Mass membership would have no influence over the powerful elites. Leaders would exercise superior skill in manipulating and influencing the masses under their leadership. And the masses would not have the skills or the time to exercise any degree of self-determination. Within this structure, **ORGANIZATION** equaled **OLIGARCHY** (p. 38).

In the context of religious life, this **IRON LAW OF OLIGARCHY** required that **COORDINATORS MAY NOT REPLACE SUPERIORS**. This contrasts sharply with the words of Christ to his disciples, "I shall not call you servants but friends...He who is the greatest among you, let him be as the least..." (See p. 38).

COLLEGIAL OR CONSENSUAL COMMUNITY CONTRASTED WITH COMMUNISM (pp. 38, 39)

Some right-wing conservatives within the Church connected the Marxian dream of a classless society with the Post-Vatican II concept of a collegial community. For them, this represented an anti-authority trend within the Church. At the top of p. 39 Sr. Lillanna describes the Marxian concept of a classless society in terms of a movement from **FEUDALISM** toward **CAPITALISM** toward **SOCIALISM** toward **COMMUNISM**.

Yet we note that the concept of a classless society, in reality, has yet to be achieved. Some insist that a classless society or a consensual community cannot be achieved because they believe rulers are necessary for guiding the masses.

RUSSIAN REVOLUTION IDEOLOGY (p. 39)

Lenin, unlike Michaels, considered the masses to be ignorant and incompetent to make their own decisions. Consequently, he believed that an informed elite actually played the vital function of serving the masses through making their decisions for them.

CONSENSUAL REVOLUTION IN CONTRAST (p. 39, 40)

Sr. Lillanna observes that traditionally sisters in convents were socialized to "turn the other cheek" and avoid the unpleasantness of direct confrontation even when their right to self-determination was at stake. To do otherwise would violate their vow of obedience and canon law pertaining to religious life. Thus the majority of these sisters would rather conform to what was expected of them rather than question authority. Sr. Lillanna identifies one opportunity for the more assertive sister would be to find a

ministry position outside of one's own congregation. Sisters choosing to take ministry roles outside of their own congregation is one expression of the **PENETRATION PRINCIPLE** of Vatican II (p. 40). And for such women moving into these new ministries, when asked if bureaucracy is an inevitable part of "religious life," their answer is no. Even the most conservative congregations are facing the option of freeing their sisters to penetrate the whole of society in ministries compatible with their training and abilities.

MAX WEBER ON CHARISMATIC UPHEAVALS (p. 40)

Max Weber saw bureaucracy as inevitable because democracy would depend upon it for carrying out administrative functions. Furthermore, he believed that society depended upon bureaucracy for its very existence. At the same time, Weber saw bureaucracy as an "iron cage" which human beings had designed and in which they were entrapped (p. 40).

WEBER'S ONE SMALL HOPE: A CHARISMATIC RENEWAL (p. 40)

According to Weber, the one small hope that could release society from the bureaucratic system was a charismatic upheaval or catalyst). Weber understood **CHARISM**, in its secular sense, as "an irresistible, irrational force...a creative initiative...(p, 40)."

REASSERTION OF PERSONHOOD (pp. 40, 41)

Max Weber's insights proved to be true in that the decade of the 1960's became a decade of charismatic renewal. Personhood was reasserted through resistance to the established power circles. Leaders such as Pope John XXIII, John F. Kennedy, and Martin Luther King gave hope as they called people to more active commitment to Church and country. This was an age of active grass-roots involvement in social justice issues such as fair labor practices and the immorality of war. During this period the Sisters For Christian Community developed as a charismatic response to bureaucracy in religious communities.

BUFFER UNITS IN BUREAUCRACY (p. 41)

There were, however, those who saw no need to abolish bureaucracy. Rather they suggested developing buffer units (ombudsmen, provincial councils, etc.) to protect both the subordinates and the administrative bureaucrats. Many sisterhoods adopted this approach. Even though this might be considered an improvement, **BUFFERED BUREAUCRACY** does not equal collegial **COMMUNITY** because it does not incorporate the Gospel ideal of the latter.

THE MYTH OF EFFICIENCY (p.41)

Bureaucracy has been considered by many as the most efficient model of organization available to society. To this we attribute its popularity and widespread usage.

BUREAUCRACY AND ALIENATION (pp. 41, 42)

Columbia University sociologist, Robert Merton, identified several dysfunctional

elements in the bureaucratic method (p. 42). These included the system's relative rigidity and the injustices imposed upon persons by a system whose rules could not be questioned. Furthermore, leaders bureaucratic systems, by virtue of their limited training and experience, could not "see the forest for the trees." Subordinates in such a system were expected to obey unquestioning, having little opportunity to exercise their own creative judgment. Finally, members of such communities, being controlled by their job descriptions, felt increasingly alienated from other community members.

SYMPTOMS OF BUREAPATHOLOGY (p. 42)

BUREAUCRACY, as a system, took a psychological toll on its members, producing tension, anxiety, feelings of personal inadequacy, and meaninglessness from the work routine. People feared rejection, became apathetic, and despair because organizational survival took precedence over the achievement of goals and personal growth. Furthermore, people felt manipulated as a means to an organizational end, rather than appreciated as individuals capable of exercising their own gifts and growing as persons.

MEDIOCRITY AND THE MANAGERS (p. 42)

It has long been recognized that those who attain top management positions in bureaucracies are not necessarily the most competent or talented members of the organization. Indeed, the most capable individuals are often perceived as threats to the organization. Today this phenomenon is known as the Peter Principle, or the promotion of persons to positions beyond their level of competency.

COUNTER-REACTION IN THE CONVENT (p. 42, 43)

A few years prior to the writing of *Sudden Spring* few sisters would have associated the bureaucratic pattern fitted the convent life as they experienced it. Today, however, according to Sr. Lillanna, this lack of awareness is changing. Sisters have become increasingly aware of bureaucratic issues as they affect every aspect of Church and convent life. Some are employing alternate forms of government. Some, such as Sisters For Christian Community are making use of collegial (consensual) decision-making. Some sisters are engaged in ministries outside the enterprises of their own congregations. Some sisters who are members of dying congregations are wondering if getting rid of the bureaucracy altogether (**BUREAU-ECTOMY**) can save their congregation.

It has been observed that large bureaucratic organizations including sisterhoods using the traditional congregational model pass through four phases within their life span (p. 43). These include:

1. An initial period of rapid growth
2. A period of plateauing
3. A period of gradual decrease (deceleration)
4. A death phase

Sisters are becomingly more interested in these phases as they observe the closure of institutions served by their congregations, lower enrollment in Catholic schools, the drop in vocations, and the dramatic exodus of sisters from traditional congregations.

THE GENESIS AND GROWTH PERIOD OF RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS
(pp. 43, 44)

Based upon research done by Max Weber, it has been discovered that no bureaucracy can be self-sufficient. This applies as much to religious congregations as to secular organizations. In order to survive, it must show prolonged evidence of its ability to provide worthwhile services to some group that can sustain it through voluntary contributions. Thus its survival depended on its ability to acquire a monopoly on provision of specific services. For sisters, these roles included hospital work, education, and the care of orphans. Sisterhoods survived because those who shared their values considered their services indispensable.

LIFE-PEAK PERIOD (p. 44)

In the mid-1960's, after vocation rates had reached an all-time high, a sudden decline and exodus from religious congregations began. What was the cause of this sudden change that bypassed the "plateau" stage (See p, 42)? For one thing, public hospitals, schools, and social service agencies developed that provided services comparable to that provided by religious congregations. Also lay persons were being hired to staff schools, hospitals, and social services in positions that had previously been held by sisters. As a result, sisters began to question who they were in terms of their future roles in the Church. They began to ask, "Who are we?" "What makes us unique?"

THE DECELERATOR STAGE (p. 44)

The changes described above brought about what Sr. Lillanna calls the "decelerator effect.: This occurs when an organization experiences significant membership loss because the organization 's social function is reduced. When organizations are in this stage, its leaders can do one of two things:

1. Depart the organization, or
2. Change their role from **PROMOTER** to **CONSERVER**

Groups going through this decelerator stage often console themselves, by assuming that quantitative loss (decline in membership) will be offset by qualitative gain. During this stage goal displacement is also likely to take place. By goal displacement, we mean that the means used to achieve a goal often become more important than the goal itself.

GOAL DISPLACEMENT IN THE DECELERATOR STAGE (pp. 44, 45)

In religious congregations such goal displacement may mean putting efficiency through the elaboration of rules as well as structural complexity ahead of the original goals and services for which the congregation was founded. For example, schools and hospitals that were founded to serve the poor have become out-priced for the sake of their survival and maintenance. Because of this the poor can no longer afford to use their services.

These cost-prohibitive services come into direct conflict with the Vatican II document on education which called for "special concern for those who are poor in the goods of the world (p.45)." For sisters entering religious life at the time of Vatican II with a special sense of call to serve the poor, choices had to be made. Some of these sisters left

their congregations to align themselves with local, state, and national poverty programs where their gifts and experience could be used to serve the poor. As a result, the median age of active religious sisters rose rapidly. At the time *Sudden Spring* was written, 27 per cent of the operating revenue of women religious was being used to cover 68 per cent of the cost of care for elderly sisters (p. 45).

CONSERVATION EFFECTS IN THE DECELERATION STAGE (p. 45, 46)

Sr. Lillanna observes that sometimes an old congregation may appear to be highly stable when, in effect, it is highly inflexible. Such a congregation puts high importance on the conservers in its membership because they are the ones responsible for preserving the way in which the group functions.

As might be expected, the innovators in a decelerating group are considered undesirable. Consequently they may choose to leave the congregation although some choose to remain, hoping to be able to alter the group's structure from within.

As the number of innovators in such congregations decrease, the number of administrators increases because more conserver-administrators are needed to preserve the group's function.

The sisters who are most likely to leave are the youngest and most gifted ones who are less inclined toward becoming conservers and who have more opportunity to find alternative expressions of the consecrated life. One such alternative expression which developed in 1970 is Sisters For Christian Community. For these sisters, religious life was a new expression of the consecrated life as a witness of the community nature of both the Trinity and the Church.

BUREAU-EXITING OR BUREAU-ECTOMY (p. 46)

For many sisters reject the role of conserver, there remain only two options. The vocation-negating bureau must go or they must leave their bureaucratic traditional communities. This is especially true for "sixth stage" sisters (see p. 1 of commentary).

In the minds of some sisters, including those who choose to leave their communities and those who intend to remain, the bureau-ectomy (eliminating the bureaucratic elements of congregational life) is imperative for the survival of religious life.

THE ILLUSION IN DEMOCRATIZED BUREAUCRACY (pp. 46, 47)

Religious life, if it is indeed a **LIFE** and not merely a work, must offer patterns for life and not simply patterns for institutional work. Despite the steps toward democratization of the bureaucratic structure, something more is needed for these **LIFE** patterns to become a full reality. The next step forward is that of collegial or consensual community based on Gospel patterns.

Sr. Lillanna defines **DEMOCRACY** as the rule of the **PEOPLE** (in polis) in the form of a pyramid structure consisting of 1. the presiding officers, 2. elected or appointed representatives or agents, 3. the electorate or the governed (p. 47)

She defines **COLLEGIALITY** as the rule of the **SPIRIT** (in community) in which friends participate in all aspects of community concern. The latter sets the stage for promoting **COMMUNITY CONSENSUS** and encourages all-inclusive participation. In

Sisters For Christian Community this all inclusive participation is facilitated through the **ALL-TO-ALL** newsletter and **ASSEMBLIES** which all members are encouraged to attend. For detailed information contrasting bureaucratic democracy with collegial community, see the two columns describing **DEMOCRACY** and **COLLEGIALITY** (p. 47).

In the collegial (consensual) group there are no superiors or inferiors, administrators or persons being administrated. The communication coordinator simply facilitates communication so that decision-making for the common good of the community can take place. Decisions are made by consensus in which charisms and the best judgment of each member of the community are pooled together. This pooling process, while possible in a collegial community, does not lend itself to be used in a bureaucratic community (see p. 48, paragraph 1 for reasons). However, both the Sacred Congregation for Religious Life and the new canon law presume the continuation of the bureaucratic model for religious life. In response to this, **THE NATIONAL COALITION OF AMERICAN NUNS DECLARATION ON CANONICAL STATUS** was published in January, 1983. In this statement various sisterhoods declared their suspicion of various efforts on the part of Church hierarchy to make efforts which destroy the Vatican II-inspired collegiality. Such efforts included imposition of religious garb and the requirement that every community have "superiors" as their ultimate decision makers. They opposed authoritarianism because it prevents attainment of full personhood. Finally, they called all religious congregations and their members to **"ACCEPT FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE REGULATIONS AND PRINCIPLES GOVERNING OUR LIVES IN COMMUNITY. AT PRESENT, THIS INVOLVES THE ACCEPTANCE OF NON-CANONICAL STATUS."**
(P. 49)

OLD BUREAUS' RESISTANCE TO THE DEATH PHASE (p. 49)

In summary, of this section it has been observed that bureaucracies are not only resistant to change but are equally resistant to death even when their usefulness can no longer justify what it costs to maintain them. See examples in the second paragraph of this section (p. 49).

ESCAPE TO COMMUNITY: THE ULTIMATE GOAL DISPLACEMENT (pp. 49-50)

Sr. Lillanna notes a significant bureau-negating process that is taking place in some sisterhoods. More and more sisters from decelerating congregations are taking new positions in systems outside the corporate works of their own particular congregation. Some of these sisters are also choosing options outside of institutional living. By making these changes, these sisters may actually be working toward the displacement of the bureaucracy itself, in preparation for a new form of community.

THE BREAK WITH BUREAUCRACY IS BEGINNING (p. 50)

In many bureaucratic organizations the administrators, be they popes, bishops, pastors, mother generals, provincials, or others, are blamed for the slow progress of renewal in the Church. However, some of these individuals, through their charismatic

leadership, are actually enabling their groups make a break with bureaucracy and move into a new era of Church organization.

THE SHAPE OF ORGANIZATIONS TO COME (p. 50)

According to Sr. Lillanna, it has been speculated that the new ecclesiology of Vatican II will motivate existing sisterhoods in a brand new direction of simplicity, consensual decision-making, and collegial community. If after a reasonable number of years such changes fail to occur, then many sisterhoods will choose non-canonical status in order to maintain their integrity and authenticity as a specially bonded community.

Before presenting the Sisters For Christian Community model of organization, Sr. Lillanna describes two new non-bureaucratic organizational models being carried out in Europe and America. Examples cited are **THE YUGOSLAV EXPERIMENT AND RELATED PARALLEL MODELS** (p. 51) and **THE GAMBLE THAT PAID OFF FOR PROCTOR AND GAMBLE** (pp. 51, 52).

In observing the various sisterhoods it becomes quite obvious that some communities are quite avant-garde for their humanistic policies exercised within the spirit of Vatican II while other communities have basically remained unchanged. Only those communities that can become truly collegial will attract potential members who desire egalitarianism and full realization of their personhood (p. 52).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY (pp. 52 - 54)

Sisters of the 20th Century were well known for their ability to operate large, efficient, bureaucratic congregations. These congregations focused on their works in health care, education, and social services. Problems arose when the work and living patterns of these organizations became virtually inseparable. Sisters lived 24 hours per day under formal rules and constant supervision. Their contact with family members and friends was severely restricted. Such limitations on their lifestyle discouraged new vocations and caused a mass exodus of highly capable and dedicated members who felt called from bureaucracy to community.

Vatican II provided the stimulus for releasing these sisters from these initiative-stifling bureaucracies toward a new type of Christian community characterized by loving unity, the **PEOPLE OF GOD** (P. 53).

Sisterhoods responded to Vatican II in three definite directions:

1. AGAINST VATICAN II'S COUNSELS FOR CHANGE OF STRUCTURE by sisterhoods that viewed Pope John XXIII as an irresponsible leader and the Second Vatican Council as being overly liberal.

2. AWAY FROM TOTAL INSTITUTION TOWARD DEMOCRATIZED BUREAUCRACIES believing that vested interests in their schools, hospitals, or social service agencies made it unwise for them to move toward collegial community.

3. TOWARD FULL COLLEGIAL COMMUNITY being moved to express the Vatican II - inspired concept of Christian community to be witnessed through their living arrangements and their Christian communities of mutual ministry and concern.

As we see, some sisterhoods responded to Vatican II by exercising **PRUDENCE** causing them to play it safe, cling to tradition, retain bureaucracy, and maintain the past. Other sisterhoods exercised the **COURAGE** required to relinquish old forms, respectfully confront patterns of domination by Church administrators, and embrace collegial community. This latter group are the ones identified by Sr. Lillanna as **SIXTH STAGE SISTERS**. She describes the new-found transformation of the new form of sisterhood as "freedom on the hill of the wild olive, a fruit of the **COLLEGIAL REVOLUTION** (p. 54).

**CHAPTER IV
FROM SEED TO TENDER SEEDLING:
The SFCC EMERGENCE**

A WHOLLY NEW-STYLE SISTERHOOD (p. 55)

In response to the spirit of Vatican II, the Sisters For Christian Community came into being in the spring of 1970. Having begun in the continental United States, they spread to Canada, and soon spanned the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. They represented a completely new pattern of consecrated life, embodying the Vatican II concept of the **CHURCH RADIANT**, characterized by community, simplicity, and love.

The focus of this chapter is to present an overview of the SFCC rationale for having come into being.

THE PAST THAT URGED THEIR PRESENCE (p. 55,56)

The Second Vatican Council made it clear that an era of Church history was coming to a close, the era of bureaucratization. The Church, in its entirety, was being called to be a transforming Church of penetration, communication, responsibility, and community. Such transformation was the work of the Holy Spirit that would prompt a radical revolution in the Church's sense of self-identity.

THE VISION THAT CALLED FOR THE SFCC EMERGENCE (p. 56)

In response to the call of the Holy Spirit to respond to this new identity, the Sisters For Christian Community developed as a group of women who, in Sr. Lillanna's words, "were willing to live consistently on the cutting edge of the Church (p. 56)."

THE CATAclysm THAT FREED THE SEED FOR BECOMING (pp. 56, 57)

SFCC formed in response to the need of thousands of sisters who left their traditional congregations because their convictions prevented them from embracing the **TOTAL INSTITUTION** or the democratized bureaucracy models of religious life. Yet, these same Christ-committed women had a deep sense of vocation and every intention of remaining vowed. It was with courage and determination that they left their communities before any alternative congregations were even available.

Sr. Audrey (Lillanna) Kopp, a well known sociologist-anthropologist, recognized the need for Spirit-directed, collegial communities of co-equal women penetrating the total culture with Christian values. Such communities would bear sharp contrast to traditional congregations with their bureaucratic organization and corporate ministries. As a consultant for religious life, she presented this need for radical transformation to sisterhoods throughout the nation through verbal and written forms of communication.

A DREAM WITHOUT RENTS AND PATCHES (57)

As Sr. Lillanna visited various religious communities she discovered that other sisters beside herself were also envisioning a completely new style of sisterhood, embodying the spirit of Vatican II based upon the Gospels alone. In March, 1970 the **PROFILE** of this new community came into being and was published in **TRANS-**

SISTER (p. 57).

THE RISKS THAT SUMMONED ALL THEIR COURAGE (p. 57)

The gathering of Christian women into the simple spiritual unity of Sisters For Christian Community began. Some of these women retained membership in their original communities after becoming SFCCs becoming what is termed, **DUAL** members. Becoming SFCCs without remaining members of their former communities meant embracing a new expression of poverty and obedience including assuming responsibility for financial and personal needs.

THE SFCC ROLE IN THE TRANSFORMING CHURCH (p. 58)

The SFCC role in the transforming Church can better be appreciated when such a Church is seen in the context of its historical development. Marcel LeGaut, renowned French theologian and philosopher, traces the history of the developing Church (p. 58).
The **PRIMITIVE CHURCH** - the beginning of community
The **CHURCH OF THE CATACOMBS** - the suffering community
The **TRIUMPHANT CHURCH** - identified with the temporal power (political and governmental activity of the Pope) and monarchical organization
The **CHURCH OF THE REFORMATION** - A Church bureaucratizing
The **CHURCH OF THE COUNTER-REFORMATION** - A Church declining
The **CHURCH RADIANT** - A Church returning to simplicity, community, and love

It is with the **CHURCH RADIANT** that SFCC identifies and feels called to promote, living out its qualities of simplicity, community, and love.

PROFILES OF THE SISTERS FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

On pages 59 through 61 Sr. Lillanna presents the original 1970 edition and the **REVISED PROFILE OF 1979.**

CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY (p. 61)

The emergence of Sisters For Christian Community represents a movement from 20th century **TOTAL INSTITUTION** and democratized bureaucracy toward 21st century collegial communities. The Church transforming becomes the **CHURCH RADIANT**. Sisterhoods evolve from a 4th stage level of moral development (law-and-order mentality) toward a 6th stage level of maturation in which respectful questioning and confrontation is appropriate and expected. The new form of consecrated life develops from a bud form toward a growth spurt and flowering.

CHAPTER V

SIXTH STAGE SISTERS: A GROWTH SPURT TOWARD FLOWERING

THE OVER-Arching HYPOTHESIS (p. 62 - 64)

In this section Sr. Lillanna cites the results of a study of **TOTAL INSTITUTIONS** that shows that the use of autocratic, "law-and-order" authority cannot be defended because they inflict serious damage on the personalities of those being governed. During the Post Vatican II era, sisters who had previously been governed in this manner sensed a need for a break from authority that demands unquestioning obedience. Simultaneously they experienced a "growth-spurt in self-determination."

Their new-found self-determination manifested itself in the development of grass-roots groups of sisters designed to confront and challenge traditional patterns of authority in the Church and society. Sr. Lillanna cites some of these groups at the bottom of p. 62.

Sr. Lillanna cites a study done by Marie Augusta Neal, professor of sociology at Emmanuel College in Boston (April, 1982). This study suggests that, indeed, many sisters of that time were moving from a need to conform to traditional authoritative patterns toward a conscious sense of need for social justice (p. 63).

The goals of chapter V are twofold. 1. To review that patterns of change that transformed the methods of sister socialization. 2. To explore the forces that led to a new level of consciousness regarding social justice. Sr. Lillanna suggests that both of these patterns may be heralding the coming of the **CHURCH RADIANT** (see p. 21 of commentary).

For many sisters the challenges of Vatican II set them free to realize their freedom as children of God, to follow the direction of their own reasoning, to assume more responsibility for Church and society, and to help eliminate those structures that have kept Christians from attaining maximum levels of personal and moral maturity.

THE NATURE OF SOCIALIZATION (p. 64)

In this section Sr. Lillanna contrasts the somewhat lengthy **FORMATION PROGRAM** of traditional sisterhoods with the shorter **BECOMING PROCESS** of non-canonical sisterhoods such as SFCC. The latter process recognizes, affirms, and intensifies the potential sister's need for a life-long orientation toward "witnessing community-in-Christ".

She also recognizes the need for all individuals to be socialized for more effective performance as members of the groups to which they belong. Such socialization enables members to do the following: 1. Internalize the group's values, goals, and norms. 2. Learn a specific sets of culture patterns. 3. Embrace those patterns so deeply that they become part of one's own personality.

REQUISITES FOR SOCIALIZATION (p. 64, 65)

In order for a person to adopt the culture of the group to which they seek membership, three components are essential. 1. **AFFECTION** - The culture must be

shared in a warm and accepting atmosphere. 2. **COMMUNICATION** - There must be a free, give-and-take sharing of all group information. 3. **INTERACTION** - Interaction must be characterized by mutuality and cooperative actions.

The expression **BECOMING PROCESS** implies that a potential sister is continuing a process already begun earlier in her life and that this process leads to her becoming a full Christian woman without having to enter a convent setting to be re-formed. If **BECOMING** can be seen as an extension of her previous Christian formation, the **BECOMING PROCESS** becomes a more appealing and realistic endeavor.

Sr. Lillanna recognizes three distinct approaches in the tradition of preparing women for consecrated life in religious communities: re-socialization, **FORMATION**, and **BECOMING** (p. 65).

SOCIALIZATION FOR PASSIVE PEASANTS (pp. 65, 66)

When a young girl entered the convent world of a traditional **TOTAL INSTITUTION** religious community she entered an intense process of training in which she was cautioned to "forget the world" enter a "state of perfection." This philosophy focused on developing young women into the current concept of a proper sister, while assuming that one concept was proper for all young women, regardless of their individual personalities or gifts.

This type of formation grew out of the renaissance philosophy that assumed human nature to be naturally aggressive, selfish, and solitary (Hobbes' *Leviathan*, 1651). Such "human nature" in a group setting would lead to interpersonal conflict. Thus, to prevent such conflict, it was believed that community members must be forced to submit to authority for their own good (p. 65).

Since girls in the medieval society were already socialized to be passive, submissive, silent, and dependent, this process of training was not as difficult as might be assumed. Sr. Lillanna notes that this currently obsolete model of religious life survived long enough to be included in the conservative Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life of Vatican II (p. 66).

THE CONTRASTING AMERICAN PERSONALITY TYPE (pp. 66,67)

In contrast to the medieval women, American women were shaped by a pioneer spirit that influenced them to be self-assertive individuals who valued their family freedom, friends, courage, and determination to overcome all odds. Thus, before American women entering convent life could be re-socialized into the medieval model of sisterhood, they had to be stripped of their natural qualities of self-reliance and personal initiative. **TOTAL INSTITUTION** demanded that they be taught submission to ready-made rules, unquestioning obedience, and even adopt new guidelines for her conscience. The candidate for religious life was surrounded by over-seeing administrators, senior sisters, and various means of acknowledging and calling attention to her faults combined with the ever-present possibility of not being accepted at some point to continue the process of pursuing her final vows.

Entering religious life under this model required a candidate to suppress her natural American character with its emphasis upon creative initiative and independence. Yet the question arises as to whether these American women had really internalized with

genuine conviction this traditional canon law model of religious life based upon the medieval system? After all, after Vatican II thousands of these American sisters requested dispensation from their traditional orders and returned to their American **HOME WORLD**. Was their pioneering American spirit still a part of them and waiting to be renewed through a new form of consecrated life in Christian Community?

VOCATION DIRECTION DILEMMA (p. 67)

Because of the wide continuum of sisterhoods along what Sr. Lillanna describes as the **CHANGELESSS-CHANGE CONTINUUMS**, she identifies six questions to be considered by professionals responsible for guiding women who considering the possibility of entering consecrated life (p. 67). These questions recognize the fact that three orientations of religious life are available to women in the Post-Vatican II era; **TOTAL INSTITUTION, RENEWING CONGREGATIONS** (democratized but still bureaucratized), and **COLLEGIAL COMMUNITIES** such as SFCC. Questions address some of the following concerns: helping candidates select communities compatible with their personal spirituality and temperament styles, selection of qualified and non-biased formation personnel who are familiar with all three orientations, understanding why some sisterhoods appear hesitant to welcome new members, and which sisterhoods are broadening their perspectives to include women representing a variety of styles and ministries.

MODAL PERSONALITY RESEARCH (pp. 67 - 69)

Sr. Lillanna observes that persons tends to adopt the values, beliefs, ways of acting, philosophy, and religious beliefs of those with whom they associate. This observation is known as the modal personality theory. Furthermore, the careful screening processes used by most sisterhoods probably prevented most candidates who departed too far from a congregation's norm from entering or progressing in their formation process.

Furthermore a congregation's formation personnel, appointed by their administrators, would seek to perpetuate the group's collective personality. For example, those with authoritarian personalities would socialize others to be passive and submissive in the lower ranks but dominant and assertive when in positions of power.

Sr. Lillanna cites a Sisters' Survey done in the late 1960's that included a device for measuring authoritarianism. This survey recognizes the widespread prevalence of authoritarianism associated with the **TOTAL INSTITUTION** pattern (p. 68).

Considering this information along with plans for the Sister Formation Movement which gave rise to SFCC pointed out the need to recognize that a variety of structure patterns, modal personality types, and views on the nature of religious life can coexist within the same sisterhood (p. 68). Furthermore, when vocation directors were able to take modal personality into account, they could more effectively refer potential candidates to sisterhoods most appropriate to their temperaments, styles of spirituality, and needs.

MODERNITY ORIENTATION NO RESPECTOR OF AGE (p. 69)

Sr. Lillanna notes that research indicates that old age must not be equated with spiritual stagnation at the personal or the community level. She notes that thousands of older sisters survived under the **TOTAL INSTITUTION** orientation because they were

strong, indomitable, fearless women who yearned for a return to community. She cites research in cross-cultural modal personality research done by Alex Inkeles indicating that orientation to modernity transcends national boundaries and chronological age (p. 69).

VOCATIONAL SCREENING IN SISTERHOODS (pp. 69 - 72)

The use of psychological testing for screening purposes has been a controversial issue for some sisterhoods. Opponents to such testing maintain that many saints and even foundresses of communities might have been denied membership had they been subjected to such testing. Sr. Lillanna presents a two act scenario demonstrating the negative dimensions of personality testing when used in the Church or convent.

While acknowledging the disadvantages of psychological testing as part of the vocational screening process, she identifies seven rationale that support the use of such testing when properly administered and evaluated (p. 71). Testing can be beneficial when it expresses a sincere concern for the mental and emotional health of candidates and when it helps identify a person's strengths as well as their weaknesses.

The Sisters For Christian Community do not require psychological testing, but maintains an open-door policy, a policy in keeping with their founding goal of being a "bridge over troubled waters" for sisters leaving the **TOTAL INSTITUTION** model.

KOHLBERG'S PARADIGM OF MORAL MATURATION (p. 72)

In this section Sr. Lillanna outlines and describes six levels of moral maturity as identified by Lawrence Kohlberg in *The Development of the Modern Mind, Thinking and Choice in Years 10 - 16*, 1971. Stage VI represents the most advanced stage of moral maturity. An individual at this stage makes conscience-based decisions based on personally chosen values regarding social justice, human rights, personal dignity, global concerns, and universal values.

SIXTH STAGE SISTERHOODS (pp. 72, 73)

The rule-oriented, law-based approached to socialization for religious life used in the past can no longer be defended in a Post-Vatican II era that affirms conscience as the ultimate guide for decision-making. Despite reluctance and ambivalence to promote such a viewpoint universally, some American bishops have taken courageous public stands on certain social justice issues related to war and financial aid to the poor. On the other hand, comparatively little effort was given in the twenty years after Vatican II to racial justice and women's rights. Despite their high level of education of Catholic sisters in America, the majority of sisters are still perceived to be at a 4th stage law-and order-based level of moral maturity. (See Stage 4 definition of Kohlberg's paradigm on p. 72.)

SIXTH-STAGENESS: A REQUISITE FOR AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY (pp. 73, 74)

Only 6th stage sisters are truly capable of internalizing and acting upon the values, norms, and goals of Christianity despite the personal and social risks associated with the practice of authentic Christianity. Sr. Lillanna identifies the real revolution as being an expanding **BONDEDNESS** with all women, a growing global consciousness, and a call to confront practices of unjust domination of persons. Developing one's ability to practice

authentic Christianity is a life-long **BECOMING** process toward **WHOLENESS, ONENESS, COPRESENCE, AND COMMUNITY**. Here "copresence" suggests the idea of togetherness or being present along with others. Only when we are capable of moving toward others rather than away from them or remaining in isolation can we be truly God-centered.

BECOMING: -- A NECESSARILY PERSISTENT MOVEMENT (pp. 74 - 76)

In this section Sr. Lillanna notes that the process of **BECOMING**, in the sense of developing into a whole person is a gradual and life-long process through which human beings discover more about God's reality and their own reality. The need for this process is supported by her own research and the research of Kohlberg and Karen Horney (p. 74).

She identifies and describes the following stages: Stage I - **PLEASURE-PAIN MOTIVATION**, Stage II - **BASIC NEED SATISFACTION MOTIVATION**, Stage III - **SECURITY IN FAMILY AND PEER APPROVAL**, Stage IV - **SECURITY THROUGH CONFORMITY TO LAW AND CUSTOM**, Stage V - **SOCIAL CONTRACT AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS MOTIVATION**, Stage VI - **CONCERN FOR UNIVERSAL ETHICAL VALUES AND WORLD PEOPLES**.

VOCATIONS TO CONFRONTATION: THE SILENT REVOLUTION (pp. 76 - 83)

Sisters who entered religious life prior to Vatican II had been trained to believe that they should submit to the views and judgments of their superiors. Yet Sr. Lillanna notes that after Vatican II thousands of those same Sisters dared to challenge and confront the Church hierarchy concerning its well-established patterns of domination.

We might wonder what forces were in play that gave these sisters the courage to engage in **SILENT REVOLUTION**. They included higher education for women, new understanding of old myths, and breakthroughs of understanding in theology, scripture, and the function and nature of the Church. At the same time, however, certain negative forces were also at work including clerical dominance, a nuclear race for world domination, and discrimination against women.

It is difficult to explain why Sisters began moving toward vocations of confrontation and 6th Stage Moral Maturation. At this point, Sr. Lillanna presents a small fictionalized scenario, a letter from Sister Clara to Sister Fran to help us understand this new found motivation to confront. In her letter to her fellow Sister, Sister Clara identifies four major forces that motivated her to resign as a college professor and department head to accept a position as a teacher of foreign languages for Peace Corps volunteers in the Philippines. These forces include **1. WORLD WAR AND AFTERMATH, 2. THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE, 3. THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF SUPERIORS GENERAL, and 4. CONTRADICTIONS AND AMBIGUITIES IN CONCILIAR DOCUMENTS**.

Sr. Clara responds to the fourth force by citing the Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium*, The Dogmatic Constitution On the Church with its renewed emphasis on Paul's theology of the Holy Spirit. In this section she also contrasts **THE CONSTANTINIAN AUTHORITY MODEL** used prior to Vatican II with **THE COLLEGIAL MODEL** with its renewed emphasis on the Pauline theology of community. In **THE**

CONSTANTINIAN AUTHORITY MODEL superiors receive spiritual gift for all, thereby making them responsible for all. In **THE COLLEGIAL AUTHORITY MODEL** all members of the Christian community receive spiritual gifts for all, giving them shared responsibility for the common good (pp. 80, 81).

At this point the fictional "Sr. Clara" cites the *Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life* with its contradictory message on **EGALITARIANISM** which seems to be advocating a movement from the **CONSTANTINIAN** pattern of classism and elitism (two or three social levels in one sisterhood) toward the **COLLEGIAL** pattern of egalitarianism (one level of sisters distinguished only by their diversity of works). Yet the same document includes, "It also devolves upon **SUPERIORS** to see to it that the **BEST PERSONS** are chosen for directors, spiritual guides, and professors... (p. 82)."

Sr. Clara describes this contradiction regarding egalitarianism as the Bunny Hop or the **JACK RABBIT SYNDROME**. Indeed, she sees this document as, in reality, describing and going back and forth between four different organization models: Patriarchal, Bureaucratic, Monarchial, and Collegial (pp. 82, 83).

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY (p. 83)

In Chapters II and III Sr. Lillanna concludes that sisters are not leaving religious life, as such, but are leaving **TOTAL INSTITUTIONS** or **DEMOCRATIZED BUREAUCRACIES**. Similarly, in Chapter V we conclude that **SISTERS ARE NOT LEAVING RELIGIOUS LIFE (AS SUCH); RATHER THEY ARE LEAVING PRECONVENTIONAL AND CONVENTIONAL STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT**. (For explanations of **PRECONVENTIONAL** and **CONVENTIONAL** stages, see p. 72 of *Sudden Spring*.)

CHAPTER VI
FRUITING TIME:
VOCATIONS TO CONFRONTATION
(A Case Study of Counterelitist Sisters)

VOCATIONS TO CONFRONTATION (pp. 84 - 88)

In the Old Testament times God called forth prophets to confront or criticize the political or religious leaders. In modern times God forth various religious communities to perform this ministry of confrontation, one such community being the SFCC. Unlike their docile predecessors, these Sisters respond to the Holy Spirit's challenge to free people from the destructive domination that denies them their God-given, inherent rights. This challenge is, in fact, the goal of Jesus Christ.

The unique goal which distinguishes Sisters For Christian Community from other communities is to help remove from the Church the ancient accumulation of dominating structures, policies, and practices that undermine the essence of Christian Community.

Sisters For Christian Community strive to identify with all human beings who have experienced oppression, subordination, or degradation, regardless of gender. Having emerged from their own experience of oppression, they identify with the courage of Jesus Christ when he overturned the money-tables in the temple. (see Matthew 21: 12)

These Sisters are convinced that unless **THE PEOPLE OF GOD** can overturn all forms of administrative authoritarianism in the Church, the Church will continue to alienate people rather than be a community of simplicity and love(p. 85)

Sr. Lillanna notes that in spite of efforts on the part of Vatican II bishops to promote human dignity, freedom, and collegiality, much needs to be done to make the hoped-for **CHURCH RADIANT** a reality. She poses the question as to why such well known male groups as the Jesuits, Benedictines, Dominicans, Franciscans, Passionists, and other groups have not addressed these issues of domination. Yet she notes that these scholarly groups have been relatively quiet over issues of sexism, racism, elitism, classism, secretiveness, and censorship. For whatever reasons these groups have hesitated to speak out, it seems clear that the Church's historic patterns of domination make it a most ineffective instrument for peace and egalitarianism in today's world.

Sr. Lillanna identifies the most noted and obstructive "mote in the eye" of Church administrators is **SEXISM** which she defines as "the idolatry of maleness accompanied by the denegration and oppression of women" (p. 86). Unfortunately, some of the instigators and perpetrators of sexism are officials of Judaism, Islamism, and Christianity. To correct this problem, the Church must portray God as God truly is, as **PURE BEING** or **PURE ACT**.

Sr. Lillanna believes that in order to have an authentic image of God, God must be freed from all hint of **SEXISM** as portrayed by those who present God exclusively as a male deity who created man in his own likeness and woman as an afterthought. She identifies five ways in which the attribution of exclusive maleness to God is a misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the true nature of God (p. 86, paragraph 4).

SEXISM in all of its forms, as a distortion of God, woman, or man, is a distortion

of truth, a social injustice, and a most devastating form of evil. Because of this, increasing numbers of Christians and Jews, particularly women, are being forced by their personal convictions to accept one of two alternatives:

1. To face the pain of **DISASSOCIATION** from their accustomed place of worship, be it temple, church, or synagogue
2. To face the pain of **CONTINUED ASSOCIATION** while engaging in **RESPECTFUL CONFRONTATION** with sexism in its various expressions: through persons, structures, policies, and practices

Sr. Lillanna notes that religious officials within sexist organizations, while noting the serious decline of membership, are blind to its primary cause, their own **SEXISM**. Because of this, confrontation tactics are inadequate and ineffective when applied to persons with serious psychological disturbances influencing their prejudice against women. However, respectful confrontation when dealing with psychologically healthy individuals who have inadvertently subscribed to culturally based patterns can be a most effective catalyst for consciousness-raising and change.

MEANS OF CONFRONTATION IN THE CHURCH (pp. 88 - 90)

Due to the diverse life experiences and gifts of its members, there can be no single SFCC position statement regarding the community's views on sexism or any other issue within the Church. The SFCC consensus is firm only on its values and goals as expressed in its **PROFILE**, namely, its goal of promoting the **CHURCH RADIANT** as "a community of simplicity and love" (p. 88).

The title of these sisters is, in itself, a means of confrontation through the use of the word **FOR**. These sisters are **FOR** Christian Community in contrast with Christian Bureaucracy. These sisters confront the Church in a spirit of love through their presence in much the same way that sisters confront their brothers or friends confront each other. Their goal is not to call attention to themselves or to wound others but to promote healing and wholeness. They see themselves as the People of God in pilgrimage committed to social justice **WITHIN** the Church. They are in quest of a **CHURCH RADIANT**.

1. THE RESPONSE OF BISHOPS TO SFCC (pp. 88, 89)

The first Sister For Christian Community explained the nature of the proposed group to Pope Paul VI in a letter written in 1969. Her request for a papal appointment was never answered. Thus we may assume that by 1970 SFCC became known by one pope and the Sacred Congregation for Religious.

In Canada and the United States some bishops who know members of Sisters For Christian Community have been quite open and welcoming to this community. Furthermore, these bishops have expressed no particular concern over the fact that SFCC does not have canonical status. Sr. Lillanna suggests three possible reasons for this lack of concern:

- A. At the time this book was written, after Vatican II, a new canon law was being considered and it was not available to a new, emerging sisterhood.
- B. They believed that a new Vatican II-oriented sisterhood must have the freedom to explore and develop its charisms.
- C. They were well acquainted with the documents of Vatican II that encouraged

expressions such as that of SFCC.

2. RESPONSE OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION TO SFCC'S CONFRONTATION OF SEXISM (p. 89)

Sr. Lillanna cites the example of Eduardo Cardinal Pironio, Prefect and Augustine Mayer, OSB, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Religious (1980) who encouraged women to proceed in the direction taken by Sisters For Christian Community.

“Religious women are encouraged to persevere in their undertakings for the advancement of women ... which best correspond to their nature and talents“

3. THE RESPONSE OF “SACRED PASTORS“ AS MANDATED BY THE COUNCIL (p. 89)

“Let (pastors) encourage lay persons (including sisters) so that they may undertake tasks on their own initiative....Further let pastors respectfully acknowledge the freedom that belongs to everyone...In this way the whole Church, strengthened by each of its members, can more effectively fulfill its mission.” (*Lumen Gentium IV, 37*)

4. POPE JOHN PAUL II's RESPONSE TO SFCC (by inference) (pp. 89, 90)

Based upon a study of Pope John Paul II's monograph, *The Acting Person*, it can be inferred that he would completely support a sisterhood such as SFCC that was committed to removing alienating structures from the Church. Yet another question remains to be asked. “What might be the attitude of the Pope toward women who openly Disagree with the male-accepted patterns of domination in Vatican City? Sr. Lillanna suggests the probability that the Pope would be in supportive solidarity with the values and goals of Sisters For Christian Community (p. 90).

Pope John Paul II recognized three categories of individuals **WITHIN** the Church who did not agree fully with all aspects of Church structures, policies, and practices. These categories might be designated as *the indifferent*, *the antagonistic*, and *the conscientious objectors*. For descriptions of each category, see p. 90 of *Sudden Spring*.

Since Pope John Paul II freely spoke out regarding injustices done to people regarding their basic rights as human beings as it affected their work, their rights of free assembly, of free speech, and of worship and travel. Thus we might presume that he, being a man of integrity, would recognize Sisters For Christian Community for what they are, a **SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT** on yet another injustice front.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY (pp. 90, 91)

Sr. Lillanna defines Christian hope as “a creative and determined action toward a goal” (p. 90). God does not simply provide instant solutions to problems of **SEXISM** and other dominating forces. Rather God empowers human beings with the hope that such evils affecting the Church and society can be obliterated. And persons who possess this hope are working toward this goal of obliteration. Every effort of every Christian woman or man toward opposing **SEXISM** helps to make a difference.

Sr. Lillanna recognizes four significant movements occurring within the process of Christianity being promoted by sixth stage Christian feminists and counterelitists.

FROM andocentric theology (emphasis on the masculine point of view) **TOWARD** androgynous theology (a blending of the masculine and feminine)

FROM seeing God in purely masculine images **TOWARD** seeing God as Mother/Father/God, as a Parent, a Friend, a Companion, and a Counselor.

FROM seeing women as a "misbegotten male" (Thomas Aquinas) toward seeing woman as a human person, a co-partner, a daughter of Mother/Father/God, and as Imager of the Son by reason of Baptism

FROM Neo-Thomistic Theology (modern revival of the philosophy and theology of St. Thomas Aquinas) **TOWARD** Confrontation Theology

CHAPTER VII TRELLISES: FRESH FRAMEWORKS FOR COMMITMENT

THE VOWS IN CHANGING CULTURAL CONTEXTS (p. 92)

Inspired by new scriptural and theological insights, the Sisters For Christian Community adopted a contemporary expression of the traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, interpreting them as **SERVING, LOVING, and LISTENING**. These terms express the same basic commitment to God and to the consecrated life as before while affirming the need to reframe traditional values in contemporary terms.

NEW EXPRESSION POSSIBILITIES (pp. 92, 93)

In choosing words to express their commitment, the Sisters For Christian Community considered **CONSERVATION** (a responsible use of property), **CELIBACY** (a responsible loving and respect for persons), and **COLLEGIALITY** (a concerned and responsible sharing of authority in community). They chose instead to use the words **SERVING, LOVING, and LISTENING**, believing that these words better express their relational and communal values.

One reason for substituting the words **COMMITMENT TO CONSERVATION** or **COMMITMENT TO SERVING** for the traditional vow of **POVERTY** is the connotation that poverty has in the American culture. In America the word poverty connotes despair, disease, physical and mental illness, low self-esteem, and the lack of resources necessary for the fulfillment of human potential. **COMMITMENT TO SERVING**, on the other hand, expresses the ancient evangelical vow of serving the poor, the incapacitated, the aging, and the uneducated. Members of such a community recognize and embrace their responsibility to be accountable **STEWARDS** of the world's natural resources, using them for the common good of all.

POVERTY IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS (p. 94)

The **VOW OF POVERTY** is based in the Gospel account in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus refers to poverty as a spiritual quality: **BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT...**

Jesus did not demand the renunciation of material possessions but for the renunciation of self-centered and destructive attitudes such as **PRIDE, ARROGANCE, CONCEIT, ARROGANCE, ELITISM, SEXISM, and RACISM**. Jesus not only taught but demonstrated a commitment to service in his words **I AM AMONG YOU AS ONE WHO SERVES** (Luke 22: 27).

Sr. Lillanna describes Jesus' call to **POVERTY** as being wholly revolutionary by instituting a pattern of **INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP** rooted in mutuality, renunciation of all forms of subordination, and **CONFRONTATION** of domination.

POVERTY IN THE FIRST ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY (pp. 94, 95)

In this section Sr. Lillanna contrasts the **DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE** practiced by the early church community, as recorded in the Book of Acts (2: 44-45). This differed

from Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount to be "poor in spirit." For a description of **DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE** see p. 94 of *Sudden Spring*. This **ECONOMIC SYSTEM** created a pooling of the wealth of the early Christians that created a **MIDDLE CLASS** by eliminating the classes of the very rich and the very poor. This **MIDDLE CLASS** required a living together in community, a practice that necessitated a well-developed system of organization and administration. It also required community members who were willing to be dependent upon the group for their survival.

As Christianity spread, this economic form of **DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE** was eliminated without question or explanation because it did not represent the teachings of Jesus who called for poverty of spirit and not for a renunciation of material well-being.

On pages 95 and 96 of *Sudden Spring* Sr. Lillanna offers an explanation of the vow of poverty as practiced by the **EARLY HERMITS, EARLY BENEDICTINES, EARLY CISTERCIANS, CARTHUSIANS, MENDICANT ORDERS,** and **APOSTOLIC CONGREGATIONS** such as those of St. Theresa and St. Ignatius. She also shows changes that have taken place in these apostolic congregations with respect to the practice of poverty in the 19th and 20th centuries. On p. 97 she describes the concept of poverty as practiced by the contemporary **URBAN AND RURAL FRATERNITIES** in Europe including Little Brothers of the Poor and Little Sisters of the Poor in which material poverty is seen as one facet of a **SPIRIT OF POVERTY**.

POVERTY IN THE EMERGING NEW COMMUNITIES using SFCC as a case example (pp. 97 - 99))

Sr. Lillanna identifies five distinguishing factors of **POVERTY** as it is observed in emerging new communities ([. 97).

1. Places exclusive emphasis on the **SPIRIT OF POVERTY** as described in the Sermon on the Mount
2. Expresses **POVERTY** as **SERVING** through availability to others
3. Expresses **POVERTY** as personal responsibility for oneself and for others
4. Makes each sister personally responsible for her own education, work position, personal business matters, living expenses, retirement, and burial expenses
5. Sees **POVERTY** as the renunciation of all forms of **ELITISM**

THE POVERTY CONCEPT OF THE SISTERS FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY REPRESENTS A MOVEMENT...

FROM canonical **POVERTY** - **TOWARD** a biblical **POVERTY**

FROM a concept of **POVERTY** - **TOWARD** a concept of **POVERTY** based upon the based on the Acts of the Apostles synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke)

FROM poverty of purse - **TOWARD** poverty of spirit

FROM corporate, congregational ownership - **TOWARD** individual responsibility for Stewardship

FROM abandoning personal possessions - **TOWARD** sharing of personal possessions

FROM poverty of dependence - **TOWARD** poverty of responsibility

FROM having all one's needs met if one asks - **TOWARD** having all one needs if one works

FROM typical middle class comfort in the convent or the parish - **TOWARD** self-selection of one's living level in keeping with one's gifts or work role

FROM apostolic labor in the institutions owned by one's own congregation - **TOWARD** ministries that penetrate the entire social system

FROM a **POVERTY** associated with permission, dependency, and renunciation - **TOWARD** a **POVERTY** associated with responsibility and moderation

FROM a **POVERTY** of giving up things - **TOWARD** a **POVERTY** of giving up destructive attitudes

FROM a **MATERIAL POVERTY** that gives up personal possessions - **TOWARD** a **SPIRITUAL POVERTY** that gives up past symbols of consecration

FROM rank and prestige associated with one's role - **TOWARD** accepting each member as equal whether she plants or waters (see I Corinthians 3:8)

FROM a poverty that extricates one from the work-a-day world - **TOWARD** a poverty that immerses one in the work-a-day world of ordinary persons

FROM a poverty of **WITHDRAWAL** - **TOWARD** a poverty of **INVOLVEMENT**

FROM a negative **POVERTY** that sees matter as a risk and as dangerous - **TOWARD** a positive **POVERTY OF SPIRIT** that sees the owning of matter as an opportunity for sharing and caring

CELIBACY AS A VOW TERM FOR CHASTITY (pp. 100, 101)

In this section Sr. Lillanna explains the decision to change the vow term from **CHASTITY** to **CELIBACY**. She considers the concept of **CHASTITY** to have chauvinistic connotations, implying that a woman is "property" to be manipulated by instilling fear of moral transgression (p. 100). **CELIBACY**, on the other hand, recognizes a woman as a human being of inherent dignity, and equality rather than a thing or an object. A **CELIBATE** woman sees herself as a **WHOLE PERSON** with the ability to support herself and make her own decisions. Whereas **CHASTITY** implies restraint, **CELIBACY** implies freedom.

Sr. Lillanna notes that since Vatican II a significant evolution has taken place in sisters' understanding of the concept of **CELIBACY** (p. 100). They have moved **FROM** seeing **CELIBACY** as a negative in terms of renunciation and sacrifice - **TOWARD** seeing **CELIBACY** as a positive way of affirming one's union with Jesus and a vocation to love others freely as Jesus loves

FROM sexuality as being limited to the sexual union of husband and wife - **TOWARD** mature sexuality that fosters the healing, emotional sustenance, comfort, and personal growth.

FROM a celibacy that avoided friendships and all expressions of human affection because they were considered a danger to chastity - **TOWARD** a celibacy that recognizes relationships as God's greatest gifts for providing unity, restoration, renewal, and affirmation of the human spirit

These sisters do not see **CELIBACY** as an end in itself but as a means through which one can find the freedom to love more expansively. For this reason Sisters For Christian Community choose to name this second expression of commitment simply as **LOVING**.

OBEDIENCE TRANSLATED AS LISTENING (pp. 101 - 105)

Sisters For Christian Community have chosen to use the word **LISTENING** to express the concept elsewhere translated as **OBEDIENCE**. In authentic Christian community, members listen attentively to each other while seeking to be sensitive to the direction of the Holy Spirit as expressed through the various members.

Likewise, the word **OBEDIENCE** in the New Testament transcends submission to the law and means a **LISTENING TO THE SPIRIT**. Indeed we find examples in which Christ's **LISTENING** to the Father and the Holy Spirit actually put him in conflict with the law and with the religious authorities of the Israel.

Furthermore, at the Council of Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15: 2-16, we read that all **LISTENED** to one another until they could respond as a group, declaring "**THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WE HAVE DECIDED....**" (p. 102)

Sisters For Christian Community have adopted the model of **OBEDIENCE** as practiced in **THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH**: a **LISTENING** to the Holy Spirit speaking through community **CONSENSUS**

Sr. Lillanna describes the practice of **OBEDIENCE** as exercised in four types of religious life: the first **ANCHORITES** (persons who have retreated into seclusion for religious reasons), **MONASTIC ORDERS**, **APOSTOLIC CONGREGATIONS**, and the **NEW COLLEGIAL COMMUNITIES** such as Sisters For Christian Community (p. 102).

The concept of **OBEDIENCE** as **LISTENING** affirms Vatican II's **GAUDIUM ET SPES** (from the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World , literal translations of the words are "Joy and Hope.") See quotation at the top of *Sudden Spring*, p. 103.

A CONFLICT IN TIME SEQUENCES (pp. 103 - 105)

In this section Sr. Lillanna notes the perception that the **NEW CANON LAW** of the 1980's appeared to be out-dated from the beginning in areas pertaining to the consecrated life. She notes that members of the New Canon Law Commission were males who lacked familiarity with sisterhood renewal experience and with the emerging new communities. Moreover, the commission, acting under the pressure of time, simply made assumptions and acted on them. And since the sisterhoods appeared to be doing "business as usual" apart from their decline in numbers, the commission saw no reason to make any significant change (p. 103)

Nonetheless, she noted significant process among the new and renewing sisterhoods in some significant concepts of philosophy and practice.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| FROM unquestioning acceptance of the hierarchical and bureaucratic models | - | TOWARD envisioning the Church and consecrated life as a unity of co-equals in Jesus Christ |
| FROM the unquestioning obligation to submit to one's superiors | - | TOWARD the counsel to LISTEN to the gifts of the Holy Spirit as expressed through members of the community |
| FROM unquestioning acceptance of the belief that SUPERIORS SHOULD RULE THEIR SUBJECTS as CHILDREN FOR THE GOOD OF THE INSTITUTE (1981 draft of Canon 544) | - | TOWARD the belief that members of Christian Community exercise their God-given to act on behalf of the COMMON GOOD OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY |
| FROM canonical, rule-driven obedience | - | TOWARD biblical obedience by LISTENING to the Holy Spirit speaking through CONSENSUS |
| FROM compliance with superiors' directions | - | TOWARD cooperation with co-equals |
| FROM subjecting one's will to that of another | - | TOWARD freely seeking God's will with other members of the community |
| FROM self-effacement in giving up one's responsibility to make personal decisions | - | TOWARD self-development in responsible decision-making |
| FROM obedience to a human superior | - | TOWARD obedience to the Holy Spirit within us |
| FROM obedience to external law | - | TOWARD respect for internalized ideals and community consensus |
| FROM being part of a political or organizational unity | - | TOWARD being part of a SPIRITUAL UNITY |

FROM being a congregation divided by a hierarchical pyramid (p. 105)

TOWARD being a united community of friends, peers, coequals united to Christ who affirmed: "I will not call you servants but **FRIENDS**" (John 15: 15)

CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY (p. 105)

Sr. Lillanna concludes that sisters of the world are definitely on the move as they journey ...

FROM expressing the vows as **POVERTY, CHASTITY, and OBEDIENCE**

TOWARD expressing the evangelical counsels as **SERVING, LOVING, and LISTENING**

FROM seeing the vows as a renunciation of personal responsibility

TOWARD seeing the evangelical counsels as a call to assume personal responsibility for sharing one's material resources and loving others more freely

FROM being bound by vows

TOWARD being freed by vows

EPILOGUE

BEYOND CONFRONTATION: 7TH STAGE SISTERS (pp. 106, 107)

Sr. Lillanna poses a question. "WHAT IF... the clerical caste of the Catholic Church were to train inquisitional guns on the challenging female confronters as they quest forth in search of more authentic Christian community?"

Lawrence Kohlberg (see pp. 74 - 76 of *Sudden Spring* or p. 26 of Commentary) speculates that 6th stage sisters would survive by moving toward yet another stage of moral maturation: **CONVERSION** which is a radical God-ordained reorientation of one's entire life. Such a conversion is so rare that it can only be described as "conversion *from* religion to God." according to Walter E. Conn, Professor of Religious Studies at Villanova University (See Fall, 1982, **CROSS CURRENTS** . p. 327)

Sr. Lillanna predicts that the consecrated life in the Church will be as everlasting as the Church, itself. But specific patterns for bonding in community will be precisely determined by the ongoing response of consecrated persons to the direction of the Holy Spirit. Such sisters, though cut free from their traditional roles and excluded from clerical status will, nonetheless continue to be co-shapers and designers of the **CHURCH RADIANT**.