

Evangelical Counsels



Watawa wa Taa





Life-Giving Vows

How can the vow of poverty be life-giving for African women religious and the Church?

The vow of poverty is built upon a spiritual and theological foundation. It encourages Sisters to foster a deep reliance on God's providence and renounce material goods to follow Christ. Poverty is a witness to the Gospel and challenges materialism.

The vow of poverty fosters a strong community life and solidarity. Inspired by the early Christian communities, women religious share everything in common and seek contentment with communal provision. Poverty encourages detachment from individualism and a focus on the common good.

The vow of poverty allows for personal transformation and witness. Sisters live simply, acquiring and using only what is necessary, fostering a sense of humility. Some Sisters advocate for a shift in terminology from "poverty" to a more life-giving term such as "simplicity" or "sharing."



The vow of poverty has ethical and practical implications. It encourages wise use of resources and promotes transparency and accountability. We are stewards of the earth's resources, not owners.

The vow of poverty orients us toward service and mission. We are better able to reach out to the underprivileged and marginalized and live lives of service and charity.

The vow encourages a simple life, helping Sisters focus on their calling.

The vow of poverty calls for detachment from worldly goods, allowing sisters to focus on spiritual wealth.

How can the vow of obedience be life-giving for African women religious and the Church?

The vow of obedience is built upon spiritual and theological understanding. Jesus Christ is the model of obedience, even unto death. We emulate this obedience, thereby participating in Christ's salvific mission and deepening our communion with Him. Obedience lies at the core of consecrated life, supporting the vows of chastity and poverty.

The vow of obedience is built with dialogue, discernment, and freedom. It is not merely blind submission, but rather encourages mutual listening as well as maturity and responsibility.

The vow of obedience allows for personal growth and inner transformation. It requires humility and openness to spiritual growth. The ability to adjust to change and see God in everyday situations makes it life-giving.

The vow of obedience is a community- and mission-oriented practice. It binds the community and supports harmony and collaboration, while encouraging creativity and participation in fulfilling responsibilities. When aligned with justice and compassion, obedience becomes a source of liberation and empowerment.



Obedience is seen as the 'mother of all vows.' If a Sister is obedient, she can also live poverty and chastity faithfully.

The vow of obedience is about responding to God's call, not just human authority.

Obedience requires both Sisters and leaders to listen carefully to one another.

Obedience is a joyful experience that aligns with Christ's mission.

How can the vow of chastity be life-giving for African women religious and the Church?

The vow of chastity is built upon a spiritual foundation and intimacy with God. It frees the heart for total dedication to Christ.

The vow of chastity allows for universal love and mission. Sisters do not form exclusive relationships, but rather give unconditional love and care to all. Chastity promotes radical availability for service to all.

The vow of chastity promotes personal integrity and emotional maturity. It encourages healthy boundaries and fosters mature relationships with others built on respect and purity of intention.

The vow of chastity strengthens community life. It enhances the freedom to live an independent life while being fully present in the community. Community development involves forgiveness, open communication, and strong, loving relationships.

The vow of chastity is a witness to Christian values. We live a life of modesty and dignity rooted in respect for creation and others.



Vow of Poverty - Insights

- Trust in God for sustenance fosters humility and faith.
- Emphasizes communal sharing of resources, modeled after early Christian communities.
- Encourages mutual support, solidarity, and simplicity.
- When lived authentically, it promotes generosity — sharing knowledge, gifts, and talents.
- Fosters empathy, interdependence, and unity among Sisters.

Vow of Poverty - Challenges

- Difficulty in detaching from material goods; Western influence fosters materialism.
- Growing desire for titles, wealth, and modern comforts.
- Some Sisters do not submit all earnings or gifts to the community.
- Misappropriation of community goods for personal benefit.
- Inequality in the practice of poverty within congregations.

Vow of Obedience - Insights

- Obedience means listening to God and the Church through legitimate authority.
- It is a spiritual act that mirrors Christ's obedience, even unto death.
- True obedience involves conversation and mutual understanding, not blind submission.
- Collaboration in discernment fosters openness to the Spirit and builds trust.
- Obedience calls for self-denial, letting go of personal desires to embrace God's plan.

Vow of Obedience - Challenges

- Superiors may misuse power, leading to unhealthy dynamics or imposed decisions.
- Blind obedience without discernment can feel like slavery rather than a vocation.
- Failure to engage in meaningful conversation creates misunderstandings and resentment.
- Important decisions (e.g., postings) made without consultation cause tension.
- Difficult postings or lack of preparation for new roles cause frustration and spiritual distress.

Vow of Chastity - Insights

- Chastity implies respecting one's own body and ensuring that others are never treated as objects.
- Living chastity frees the heart from burdens, enabling total dedication to Christ.
- It is a sacrifice of self for mission, making Sisters radically available for service.
- Sisters avoid exclusive relationships and offer love and care to all without discrimination.
- Chastity promotes freedom to love all, avoiding segregation and tribalism.

Vow of Chastity - Challenges

- Some Sisters form exclusive friendships, leading to gossip and scandal.
- Lack of emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills hinders free, universal love.
- Some Sisters become cranky or harsh due to unaddressed emotional needs.
- Sisters sometimes feel happier outside the community than within it, leading to internal conflict.
- Families compare Sisters to others who build houses or provide material support, creating guilt or distraction.



Watawa wa Taa Consecrated Women of Light

Watawa wa Taa can be loosely translated as “Consecrated Women of Light” in Kiswahili. The name was chosen as an ode to the remarkable presence and works of women religious in Africa.

Whether as members of international, missionary or local Congregations, holding pontifical or diocesan status, African Catholic Sisters can be found at the forefront of society, working for sustained and systemic change in the areas of health care, education, social work, pastoral care, agriculture, and many more.

Watawa wa Taa acts as an incubator of ideas, thoughts, and inspirations of African Catholic Sisters from around the continent as they reflect on this shared and unique way of life and together seeking the Holy Spirit’s invitation as to how to move forward together.



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