

# Identity



Watawa wa Taa









# Identity

***Is there an identity specific to us as religious women? If yes, what is it, and what has informed it?***

Sisters responded that the identity of religious women is deeply rooted in their life of prayer, the faithful living of vows such as poverty, chastity, and obedience, and their commitment to community life. Their spiritual journey is shaped through formation, charism, and service to the marginalized, with a strong emphasis on being women of prayer and sacrifice.

While there is sometimes tension between the ideal of religious life and the human struggle to live it fully, these women are recognized by their conduct, their mission, and often by external signs such as habits, crucifixes, or distinct dress. Their apostolic work, dedication to Gospel values, and embodiment of spiritual motherhood make them visible and respected figures both within the Church and broader society. Even when external signs are not present, their demeanor, way of living, and service often reveal their identity as religious women.



## ***Would Jesus recognize his teachings in how we live out our life in community and mission?***

There is a shared sense among religious women that Jesus might both recognize and question the way his teachings are lived out in their communities and missions. On one hand, many strive to embody Gospel values through prayer, simplicity, compassion, humility, forgiveness, and service to the poor and marginalized. They work to live in unity, share in community, and uphold the vows they have taken, all in the spirit of following Christ.

On the other hand, there is also an honest admission that human weaknesses often obscure these ideals. Some Sisters acknowledge that personal ambition, selfishness, division, neglect of prayer, and even hypocrisy have crept into religious life. In certain cases, religious life has become more about status or survival than about spiritual authenticity. While Jesus may see the effort and faithfulness in some areas, he might also be pained by the contradictions, lack of charity, and failures in community living.

Ultimately, many believe that Jesus would see both the sincere attempts to follow him and the pressing need for renewal and deeper faithfulness.

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**Jesus would recognize us in some ways because of our compassion and our longing to be his witnesses and to witness to Gospel values and to live that out. And yet at the same time there's also contradictions that take away from that such as greed, selfishness and laxity in our vowed life.**

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## *How can we more closely align our lives with the Gospel values?*

Sisters provided a wide variety of suggestions:

### **Spiritual Deepening**

- Deepening personal and communal prayer life
- Frequent participation in the sacraments (especially Eucharist and Reconciliation)
- Meditation, spiritual reading, and Lectio Divina
- Annual retreats, pilgrimages, and spiritual direction
- Discernment guided by the Holy Spirit
- Going back to one's calling and congregational roots
- Strengthening relationship with God through Scripture and the Eucharist

### **Living Gospel Values in Community**

- Living the vows faithfully (poverty, chastity, obedience)
- Embracing humility, forgiveness, and reconciliation
- Promoting love, compassion, and care for others
- Practicing servant leadership and putting the community first
- Encouraging mutual support, understanding, and accountability
- Accepting and embracing others without judgment

### **Personal Transformation and Witness**

- Practicing self-reflection and examination of conscience
- Letting go of selfishness, pride, and personal agendas
- Seeking authenticity and integrity in religious life
- Giving good witness through words and actions
- Making conscious efforts to carry one's cross and follow Christ
- Being prophetic and responsive to the signs of the times

### **Practical Actions for Renewal**

- Establishing centers for accompaniment and spiritual renewal
- Creating space for dialogue and community engagement
- Encouraging transparency, honesty, and simplicity in lifestyle
- Avoiding materialism and focusing on service
- Promoting love and peace in relationships within and outside the community



## ***What are the major stumbling blocks to religious life at the moment?***

Sisters identified a number of challenges and agreed that the culmination of internal and external obstacles has led to a crisis in religious life. There is a profound need for religious communities to reclaim their true mission, renew their focus on prayer and spiritual growth, and foster a deeper sense of community. Overcoming these stumbling blocks requires a return to the core values of simplicity, humility, and service, as well as a renewed commitment to living out the calling of religious life authentically.

### **Individualism and Self-Centeredness**

- Prioritizing personal interests over community needs
- Individualism manifesting as selfishness, isolation, and lack of responsibility
- Formation of cliques or tribal/ethnic divisions within communities
- Lack of collaboration and communal spirit

### **Materialism and Worldly Desires**

- Love of money, power, and recognition
- Desire for fashionable lifestyles and personal wealth
- Using religious life as a steppingstone for personal gain
- Sisters engaging in financial misconduct or prioritizing money-making ministries
- Pressure from families for financial support

### **Weak Spiritual Life**

- Spiritual dryness and loss of zeal
- Tepidity and decline in commitment to vows
- Routine or mechanical participation in spiritual activities
- Disconnection from God and lack of true prayer life
- Infidelity to religious vows and double lives

### **Technological Distractions**

- Overuse of phones, internet, and social media
- Technology eroding prayer life, community time, and focus
- Exposure to harmful ideologies (e.g., secularism, relativism, counter-Gospel movements)
- Online scandals and abuses damaging reputation and trust

### **Community and Relationship Issues**

- Generational misunderstandings and lack of mutual respect
- Gossip, pride, disrespect, and lack of transparency
- Unresolved conflicts and absence of true love in community
- Poor communication and judgmental attitudes
- Abuse of authority and internal power struggles

### **Moral and Ethical Challenges**

- Hypocrisy — appearing holy externally but lacking virtue internally
- Scandals involving immorality
- Declining authenticity and integrity
- Disobedience and resistance to correction
- Moral failures damaging the credibility of religious witness

### **Institutional and Societal Pressures**

- Decline in vocations and difficulty attracting new members
- External cultural secularization and societal pressure to conform
- Marginalization of women in Church leadership
- Financial instability within Congregations
- Political instability and social challenges





biso e  
obakisa biso e  
obakisa biso e  
obakisa biso e  
obakisa biso e

yo tsekwa  
Efilimo  
bana ba yo  
yango nye e Tata  
Nizambe banso ba yo  
banso bay o  
Mwana wa Nzambe wa solo  
oyoka biso  
andimela biso

na sweet man O (Pidji)

368. Jesus na sweet man O (Pidjin)

1. Jesus na sweet man O  
Who nor know am call am bitter  
man  
Na sweeti sweeti  
Who nor know am  
man

2 Jesus na good man O  
Who nor know am call am yeye  
man  
Na goodu goodu  
Who nor know am  
man

3. Jesus na holy man O  
Who nor know am call am bitter  
man  
Na holy holy  
Who nor know am call  
man

4 Jesus na strong man O  
Who nor know am call am weak  
man  
Na strongi strongi  
Who nor know am call am weak  
man

1. O Fils de Dieu ne tardes pas  
Par votre corps, donnez la vie  
A notre monde en désarroi  
Redites nous encore  
De quel amour vous nous aimez  
Tant d'hommes vers vous aspirent  
Venez / Venez / Venez /

2. A Bethléem les cœurs ébranlés  
Que le meilleur de vos chemins  
C'était le don de votre pain

4 Quand vous voudrez  
poser le monde sur l'autre  
Que nous venions pour le  
porter !  
Que vous nous nous posiez

# 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.





# Connect With Us

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