

Community Life



Watawa wa Taa





Community Life

What is community life? How does it differ from communal life?

Sisters responded that **community life** is a faith-centered and spiritually grounded way of living together, typically among religious individuals united by a common mission, charism, and commitment to the evangelical counsels. It emphasizes deep relationships, mutual support, shared prayer, and collective responsibility guided by a rule of life or constitutions. Members do not choose each other but are brought together by a divine calling, living in unity and striving toward a common goal inspired by Christ and the Holy Trinity. It involves more than just living under the same roof; it is a bond of love, communion, and shared purpose that reflects the life of Jesus and the early Christian communities.

In contrast, **communal life** is generally understood as a broader, more informal form of shared living. It involves people living together and sharing resources, space, and responsibilities, often without a formal spiritual or religious commitment. While it fosters cooperation and solidarity, it does not necessarily involve a shared rule, spiritual discipline, or common vocation. It can exist in various social settings, such as villages, families, or student groups, and is based on mutual convenience or shared social values rather than a deeper spiritual or religious covenant.

Challenges to community life include the risk of superficial living, conflict avoidance, and rising individualism that weakens spiritual and communal identity.



What markers signal a healthy community life? Which ones show the opposite?

Sisters agree that a healthy community life is marked by love, mutual respect, transparency, shared responsibilities, prayer, open communication, and a sense of belonging. Members support one another spiritually, emotionally, and materially, engage actively in community life, and resolve conflicts constructively. In contrast, an unhealthy community life is characterized by jealousy, isolation, poor communication, power imbalances, unresolved conflicts, and a lack of shared purpose, which lead to division and a breakdown in unity.

Healthy Community Life

- Open, honest, and transparent communication
- Strong sense of belonging and emotional safety
- Active participation in community decisions and responsibilities
- Mutual support, acceptance, forgiveness, and trust
- Shared spiritual life (prayer, retreats, sacraments)
- Balanced living: prayer, work, rest, and recreation
- Conflict resolution through charity and dialogue
- Hospitality, inclusivity, and unity in diversity
- Respect for individual differences and backgrounds
- Fraternal correction done in love
- Accountability and fairness in resource distribution
- A shared mission and commitment to common values and charism
- Celebrating successes and supporting one another during challenges
- Leadership that listens and fosters community growth

Unhealthy Community Life

- Jealousy, gossip, slander, and competition
- Isolation, exclusion, and formation of cliques
- Lack of communication or misinformation
- Power imbalances and favoritism
- Spiritual decline and neglect of communal prayer
- Unresolved or persistent conflicts
- Rigidity, control, and disrespect for individual freedom
- Lack of accountability and transparency
- Indifference, individualism, and unwillingness to participate
- Prejudice, tribalism, and unfair treatment
- Mismanagement of community resources
- Abuse of leadership authority and lack of dialogue
- Violation of confidentiality and mistrust among members
- Disinterest and disengagement from the community mission and values

How can we enhance community life?

Sisters suggest these strategies to help foster a vibrant, loving, and mission-oriented community life while facing the key challenge of balancing modern pressures with spiritual depth and unity:

Spiritual and Personal Growth

- Center community life on Christ and Gospel values.
- Prioritize individual and communal prayer, meditation, retreats, and recollections.
- Foster a transforming and serious prayer life.
- Encourage daily renewal, personal conversion, and commitment to vocation.
- Live out evangelical virtues and the golden rule.
- Practice fraternal correction in love and truth.



Communication and Openness

- Promote open, honest, and respectful communication between all members.
- Create platforms for dialogue and expression.
- Encourage listening, mutual understanding, and transparency.
- Hold regular community meetings for sharing life and challenges.
- Evaluate and review community life periodically.
- Practice assertive and timely communication.



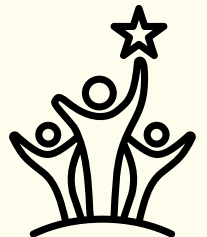
Mutual Support and Relationships

- Build strong, loving, and trusting relationships.
- Practice forgiveness, acceptance, and reconciliation.
- Celebrate each other's milestones and support one another emotionally.
- Encourage hospitality and a welcoming environment.
- Promote unity in diversity and avoid discrimination.
- Accept differences and embrace cultural exchange.



Community Participation and Shared Responsibility

- Empower all members to be involved in decisions and responsibilities.
- Encourage teamwork and collaboration in community projects.
- Foster a sense of shared mission and common good.
- Create a home-like, safe, and inclusive atmosphere.
- Develop leadership that is servant-oriented, transparent, and supportive.
- Encourage everyone to play their role and be responsible community members.



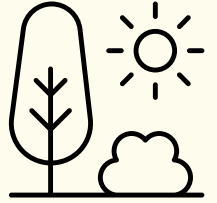
Ongoing Formation and Development

- Provide formation from the novitiate and continue with ongoing formation.
- Organize renewal programs for personal and communal growth.
- Train members in conflict resolution and leadership.
- Support spiritual and professional development of all members.
- Promote awareness of Congregation rules, constitutions, and charism.



Recreation, Bonding, and Community Culture

- Encourage shared meals, recreation, and outings for bonding.
- Celebrate community events and milestones.
- Reduce complaining and practice gratitude.
- Use social media responsibly and promote in-person interaction.
- Ensure balance between work, prayer, and rest.



Values and Attitudes

- Cultivate humility, kindness, maturity, and sensitivity.
- Avoid judgment, selfishness, and individualism.
- Treat each other as gifts from God.
- Accept one another wholeheartedly, even with differences.
- Prioritize sincerity, courtesy, and a spirit of charity.



How should communities be established and determined?

Communities should be established with a clear sense of purpose, mission, and shared identity, grounded in Gospel values, congregational charism, and Church law. The process should involve careful discernment, feasibility studies, and thorough assessment of the needs of the people and the relevance of the mission in a given location. It is essential to consider the sustainability of the community — both financially and in terms of personnel — and to ensure that members are mature, well-formed, and suitable for the mission.

The key challenges in establishing communities include leadership conflicts, limited resources, aging membership, and balancing modern demands with traditional spiritual values. Key factors in determining community composition include diversity in age, background, profession, and personality to promote balance, mutual support, and growth. Community members should be chosen with care, as a strategic and prayerful assignment that considers collaboration, health, and spiritual maturity. Some Sisters responded that regular transfers and reshuffling are important to avoid possessiveness and to foster a missionary spirit.

Emphasizing Gospel values and returning to biblical sources and the example of the apostolic community can guide the establishment of a vibrant and meaningful community.

Establishing communities also involves consultation with, and sometimes invitation by, the local bishop, especially for diocesan communities. Site visits, safety checks, and availability of essential resources — such as a nearby church for sacraments — are critical. Leadership plays a vital role — good, spiritually grounded, and collaborative leaders help unite members and guide community development.

The process should include ongoing formation, open communication, participation of all members, and structures for evaluation and governance. Community life must be rooted in mutual respect, shared responsibilities, and a spirit of unity, ensuring that the community responds not only to internal needs but also to the needs of the wider society.



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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