

A Public Servant Rooted in the Catholic Doctrine

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Assumption of Roles and Influence of the Environment

I write this to you as a woman, Christian, mother, grandmother, diplomat, senior government official, farmer, friend and member of the community and many other roles I care not to mention. Each role has some form of initiation process that underscores its core values and norms. Roles like “friend and community member” require that one has personal values set, otherwise there is the danger of being led astray or being influenced by mob psychology. Each role has some guiding tenets that shape one’s life in one way or the other. Some of the guiding principles come from the family environment, the community, the schools and the work setting. I can only sum it up in Pope John Paul II's words when the European Union removed religion from being an integral part of the European Union constitution. He argued that they were removing the very foundation of their culture! Western culture then was an epitome of its religious values. So, whether one went to church daily or not, they were cultured to live the life of a Christian. Hence, Pope John Paul II was mourning the disappearance of such values from Europe’s everyday life. Since then, many western countries have legalized same sex marriages, a thing that was unheard of in the past.

Likewise, all the titles I have put down for myself would not be true if they do not have a given cultural base to support them. By the same token, each one of those roles has, in some way, influenced my life. The ethics and values I have been groomed in at various stages, have influenced the way I have performed each of those roles.

Primary Socialization

What should guide one as a Christian? One's Christian foundation is nursed in primary socialization of the individual, that is, in the family and the immediate community around; and it is later couched through secondary socialization, obtained in school and from the people around. All these, in later life, will play an important role in how one finally turns out to be. Psychologists and Saul Mcleod identify some key phases that influence people's lives as follows:

- ♣ What happens up to the age of five can influence our adult lives (Saul Mcleod, 2018); and

- ♣ Experiences of the teenage period and their grounding effect.

The best opportunity would be the under-five period when the child is forming and sharpening the cognitive skills. The teenage period is, in a way, seen as the remedial phase where the foundation is reinforced, failure to which the individual would be overwhelmed by a wave of numerous value bases. There, one could be blown by the wind.

The architecture of a family that prepares itself for the role of primary socialization.

Taking my life story as a guinea pig, what could have influenced how I eventually turned out? Well, I was born in a family of nine that had a strong Roman Catholic foundation. My grandfather was a prince of the Chipunza clan, who was educated by the Jesuit Missionaries, while his elder brother was educated by the Anglican Missionaries. To this day, the two religions remain rooted in the two families.

When the priest in charge of Monte Cassino Mission was called to go to take part in the First World War, Boniface, my grandfather, was asked to remain as the caretaker at the Mission. There, he met the love of his life, my grandmother, an orphan from "Chitendero" who had grown up under the tutelage of the Precious Blood Nuns at the Mission. Their children went to Monte Cassino Mission. Later, the

girls went to Empandeni Mission while the boys proceeded to Kutama Mission (Marist Brothers).

On my mother's side, my granny was a staunch Wesleyan Methodist, but my grandfather was an orphan who had attended night school at Chishawasha Mission while he was herding cattle there. He attained enough literacy to be employed in the post office in Hartley (now Chegutu). This stint was to play an influential part in his children's education. For him, Catholic education was all he ever wanted for them.

So, my mother and her siblings were sent to Monte Cassino Mission from lower primary educational level. My father was already studying there. My mother did exceptionally well in Standard six that she went on to become the first non-religious nurse trained at Makumbi Mission.

My parents had first met at Monte Cassino, so tying their knot was easy. Monte Cassino remained influential in our family. I also studied there, Forms I to IV, together with my young brother who also did his primary education there.

This couple worked as a team such that if one strayed, the other would act as a checkmate. I can recall that my father was a very frank person, but my mother would always tone down the rhetoric, if she felt that the other person was receiving a raw deal. At times she would send him a note with a little child to call him for a phone call. This was in the days of land line calls. When he got inside, he would be given a little pep talk, such that by the time he went back to his earlier discussion, all the venom would have dissipated.

My parents sent me to Catholic mission schools from primary to secondary level. At some point, my dad was transferred to a place where there were no Catholic schools. We went to a Methodist school for half of the year. In the meantime, he literally begged Bishop

Lamont and the local Chief to establish Catholicism in Marange. St Thomas Primary School was established then to meet our Christian needs. Today, St Thomas boasts as the first seminary of the Congregation of the Most Holy Ghost (Spiritans) in Zimbabwe.

Role of Parents in Primary Socialisation of a Child

Post modernists carve out a clear role for the family in the primary socialization of a child. As such, I do not wish to take credit that is not mine. It is clear from what I have said so far that primary socialization of Catholic values came from my family. My parents taught us to listen to our conscience. My mother would talk about one's conscience and say before doing anything, be sure it will please God. Mwari haafariri chakaipa (God does not condone evil) was her mantra. This combined with "do unto others what you would want done to you" ensured that we gave due respect to each other when we were taking decisions among the nine of us. It is these little nuances that continue to influence us long after she is gone. She taught us how to talk to God; how to communicate with Our Lady through the rosary, using our fingers (which I still use to this day) and how to be empathetic when talking about how Jesus suffered for us. I can recall her making us feel the pain associated with Good Friday. She made it so real that I cannot eat meat on Friday for whatever reason.

I joined the Legion of Mary when I got the first opportunity at boarding school, because it reminded me of the way my father used to recite the Magnificat when we were praying as a family at home. He had become a member when it was introduced at St Benedict Mission. To this day, I find myself attached to it through the Our Lady of Perpetual Help novena.

From a very early age, we were taught to appreciate the life of a priest and the sacrifice he made of dedicating his life to God. Our parents tried to offer the parish priest a home away from his home (the United States of America). Each time the priest came to our school to say

mass, my mother would prepare a good meal (in those days it was chicken and rice).

On the other hand, dad used his office to reach out to local traditional leaders to pave the way for the missionaries' work. In no time, the Catholic Church, which was hitherto unknown, had a mission and several out stations in Marange. Every Sunday, I mean every, our father made sure we all attended mass. Later on, when I was living alone abroad, mass attendance on Sundays became second nature. I still felt guided by the culture my parents had inculcated in me. Ironically, though they have been gone for years, my daughter still points out to characters that my mother would not have approved of. She still says, "That one never attended ambuya's (grandmother's) school of ethics."

Lessons Learned

From the foregoing, I learned that as parents, we have a huge responsibility of ensuring the development of Christian rooted values in our children. If we fail, we will not only have failed our own children, but those we interact with and those who will interact with our children. No need to talk about it, but children should feel it in their daily interaction with others, that it becomes a second nature for them. When we are far, or long gone, they should feel it as part of their conscience.

We owe to the future generation a legacy what will be their guiding principles. More importantly, we should teach our children to pray. I do not mean to narrate prayers, but to communicate with God, especially when they are down in the dumps, or passing through a phase of uncertainty. That ability to regard a prayer not as a shopping list, but as a way of deepening one's contact with God will help our children when we are long gone. As Catholics, we seem to have failed. Our children are getting attracted to music in Pentecostal churches. Sometimes they are attracted by the singing and dancing, without

having that opportunity we have had to create that special bond and closer relationship with God. There are times in life when they will need to be able to communicate with God as a friend and guardian.

Secondary socialization: Role played by schools and the immediate communities in which I grew up and or live.

Most of my secondary Christian socialization came from the various religious groups of nuns that nursed me along the way at Mount Melleray Mission, Monte Cassino Mission and Maryward at St Ignatius. If after all I have said you still see me as a Catholic, then you have them to thank for that.

I am definitely a product of many congregations of nuns namely: Presentation Sisters, Precious Blood, Maryward Sisters and, of course, the LCBL. Through them, I became a member of the "Legion of Mary" which later changed to "Our Mother of Perpetual Help", from the time I was in primary school. This came with its own values and ethics. In my teens I was a girl guide and proceeded to be a ranger. This too, came with a set of values that influenced my life.

I can recall that one time I had the option to select one subject out of nine that I could drop in Form III. I told my class teacher, a Precious Blood Nun, that I was going to drop Bible Knowledge, and she retorted "You heathen". That was enough to tell me that that was a non-starter. In the end, I proceeded with all the nine subjects and passed them.

Many priestly orders left their mark as well as I was growing up and continue to do so to this day. They include the Carmelites, the Jesuits, the diocesan priests, the Spiritans, the Franciscans, the Order of St Egidio and the Redemptorists. Each one of them left an indelible mark in my life. My Parish, St. Gerards also continues to build on the basic understanding I have of my faith through the various Parish programmes.

As a diplomat, the issue of the ego was put to rest, because one is taught ways of putting messages across without humiliating the other person. Again, I found that diplomacy and my mother's school of thought were not far apart. Not surprisingly so, diplomacy originated in European Royal families during the Middle Ages, when young men of royal households were trained to be the envoys the kings and queens could trust. You will recall from my introduction that Europe then shared one culture; namely, Christian values! So, my new found profession drew heavily from the European Christian culture that is underpinned by the Vienna Convention. This served to buttress what I might have already acquired along the way.

Knowledge of diplomatic protocols enables one to know how to make the other person "feel special"; in service delivery, this goes hand in glove with Ubuntu. An unintended but very positive outcome of my stint as a diplomat, was being stationed in Rome, where the Vatican, the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church is situated. Not only did I have the chance to encounter the Christian history in everyday life, but I also benefited from St Helena's foresight. She brought multitudes of Christian relics from the Holy Land that have helped to recreate the life of our Lord Jesus in Rome, to assist Christians visiting the eternal city understand the history of the Church and some of the origins of the theology they have. Among these are:

- a. The holy steps from Pontius Pilate court showing the number of steps a prisoner had to crawl;
- b. Veronica's cloth that is supposed to have wiped the face of Our Lord during his time of agony;
- c. A piece of the wood taken from the Bethlehem manger which is in Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica;
- d. Piece of the scourging pillar in the Basilica of Santa Praxedes. It is believed that this is the pillar on which Our Lord was scourged;
- e. The Holy Cross Basilica where a chip of the real cross on which Our Lord died is exposed;

- f. The remains of St John the Baptist's personal property in the Basilica of St John the Laterano;
- g. The Shroud of Turin which is believed to have wrapped Our Lord;
- h. Loretto and the reconfiguration of the house in which Our Lady lived with her family and the surrounding legend of how the statue of Our Lady of Loretto is supposed to have survived a huge fire that engulfed the church at one time;
- i. The Icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help at St Alphonsus' House and its history;
- j. The Catacombs and the history of torture of early Christians;
- k. "Quo Vadis" steps, marking an apparition of Our Lord to St Peter, when he had given up and was leaving Rome to go back. He was asked the question "Where are you going?"

The list is long. I cannot list them all, but they all helped to recreate the life of Our Lord in my imagination. Suffice to note that each one contributed to my deeper understanding of the religion I am following.

Though not accredited to the Vatican, as the Ambassador to the Italian Republic, I handled all the issues Italy handles for the Vatican and worked with an International Order of the Community of St Egidio on consular matters. Suffice to note that in all this, St Egidio interfaces with public officials as equals when handling secular negotiations and related interfaces. I had worked with them during the Mozambique government negotiations with Renamo without knowing who they were. In hindsight, this interface taught me: To appreciate the need to be accommodative in the course of my assignments; and not to single apart my Christian practices at work. Instead, they should be practiced as part and parcel of my normal work setup. They should not be separated from "me".

I had the opportunity of studying at the largest papal university, the Gregorian University. Whatever programme one was pursuing there, "Social Teachings of the Church" was a mandatory module. That went a long way in adding value to my theological understanding of issues

in the Catholic Church, particularly, it's relationship with the Jewish religion. This, too, helped me to appreciate that the Catholic doctrine can be approached from many various angles as well as to appreciate inter-religious differences. It further assisted me to accommodate certain challenges one faces at Parish level that have very little to do with church practices.

What Should be the Guiding Principles in the Life of a Catholic?

Put simply, I believe that one should live like an ordinary human being who is guided by the social teachings of the Catholic Church and whose ego does not overshoot each time a misunderstanding breaks. *Zviya zvekuti ndinombonzi aniko ini?* (Do you know who I am!) Or *nhasi wanondiguta* (I will square everything with you today) have no room in the personality we are trying to put across. Better to be confused for an ordinary person than to be considered switched on for the wrong reasons. People should see and read Christian values in the simple things we do. Two ladies whose lives have underscored this in my view are St Therese of the Little Child of Jesus and Mother Teresa of Calcutta. They both highlighted the need to please God with the little things we do, not to dwell on some far-fetched activities that go against promoting love among those we live with.

What is expected of a civil servant?

The Public Service promotes professionalism underpinned by honesty, integrity and a high dosage of humanity, Ubuntu. This should be observable during service delivery. I am not impressed by mission statements that clad our offices, yet service delivery from the very offices is so far from reality that one would not miss them. I would hazard to say that Ubuntu was the traditional version of observing humanity in all we do. Thus, if we look at one of the Christian guiding principles *Ida mumwe wako sekuda kwaunozviita* (love your

neighbour as yourself), while observing humanity in all we do, nobody would go away dissatisfied.

What is expected of a Catholic public servant?

As stated above, one should give due respect to all being served. When responding to or delivering the common goods, we have to address the felt needs in an even-handed manner. Everyone should be made to feel human. We should have a listening ear and ability to put ourselves in the other's shoe. If done well, we respond to the basic values of a human being as enshrined in the United Nations Human Rights Charter that draws heavily from Christian values. The Holy See diplomats always keep watch on the wording of these international or multilateral accords that cater for varying interests. Note, the Holy See is the only non-state office allowed to sit in United Nations meetings as a registered observer. Hence, it ensures that the Christian ethos is maintained in most of the international accords that shape our daily lives.

Language is critical in service delivery. True, I would draw from both diplomacy and the concepts of the psychology of managing relations so that one can convey one's views to people with opposing views, but without clashing with them. The same applies to ego management in everyday experiences. Knowing the correct tactics to put other people at ease would prepare one to manage one's own and other people's egos. One psychologist, the late Dr Forbes Madzongwe, taught me as a junior officer, how to manage other people's egos. I had asked him how he managed to keep quiet when people were yelling at him, but responding to them in the calmest of voices. His response underscored the need to contain one's ego while preparing a response in a message that was so well wrapped that you could be telling someone to jump through the window and one would do it with a smile on the face.

Our experiences and the additional knowledge we acquire as we mature have an important role in ensuring that we have many schools

of thoughts that can influence how we respond to issues. We do not know it all. We should always be open to other people's ideas and avoid rigidity in views. Therefore, as social beings, we should read widely and continue to grow with time despite our age. Prof. Robert White of the Gregorian University, Rome urged us as students that at the end of each single day, we should be able to identify something new that we would have learned.

I would also hazard to add that one discipline that can be very useful is the mastering of comparative studies on given topics. That way, one has different angles to view and deal with the issues encountered along the way. Further, it may help one navigate some difficult moments one will come across in life. For instance, you are going to meet people who claim to "know it all" and will make big noises while the information they have on the subject is sketchy. This is where your pool of knowledge helps. This is the most difficult path to navigate as a Christian to avoid polarization among fellow mates. Applying demonstrable knowledge of the topical issue may be the only way out in trying to dissipate issues that may otherwise threaten the evolution of a healthy team spirit.

We should clearly differentiate between actions and acting out in whatever we do. We should be able to ask ourselves at any stage to define how we are living our lives. This is a checkmate on whether we are living by the standards expected of a Catholic Christian, in other words, living in a Christ like manner? Or, are we acting out to be Christians, when in reality, the guiding principles we are observing are very far off the mark? Unfortunately, many of us choose to act the part, and we happen to be very good at it. As a result, the *amai* (mother) at home or work is not always the same as the one at church! In the household the example we set is even worse, so we end up confusing our own children. Reference to a recent message circulating in the social media, in which a child asked his mother which Jesus she was referring to in her teachings, after realizing that the life she led was incongruent with the paragon of virtue she was painting.

Conclusion

In all this, I would be lying if I say I never stumbled along the way. I had gone into a mixed marriage when I met my first real test. My marriage broke down! I knew what it meant for me as a Catholic. End of the road. I found myself interrogating God as to why he had landed me in this. I had no peace, but I continued with the interrogation, and cried every night. I did not go to church, but I sent the children. My mother had to take time from work every month to come and soothe me. I literally cried in her arms each time she came.

God eventually answered my anguish by showing me a loving couple in which one of them was on the death bed. That seems to have been my Damascene moment, I began to understand that love was voluntary. If my husband did not love me anymore, so be it. My cure started there and then. I started going to church with the children.

Eventually, I was assisted to submit my case to the Vatican and my marriage was annulled on the grounds that my partner had gone into it without full commitment. He later died but I was already a free woman. By then, I had learned to communicate with God in my own way. What is certain is that the church and my family stood by me. I pity my little girl who had to comfort me every night as I cried, instead of it being the other way round. All I can say is that I emerged from this a stronger Christian who could communicate all my moods to the Almighty better than before. This experience has helped me when I have faced trying times at home and in the office.

In time, I met a partner who understands my values, a staunch Anglican who has helped me to deepen my faith. As a Roman Catholic, I have seen many similarities in the Anglican practices that make me understand my partner better. When Pope John II opened one of the Holy doors in 2000 with Archbishop of Canterbury I realized the closeness between the two churches. This in a way helped our relationship at home.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that we have to be clear about the values we want to be known by and live by them all the time, adhering to them to the letter and striving to be a model Christian, parent, worker, colleague that we intend to be known by throughout. It's not easy, but that should be the target. It would make it easy for those around us to write our template with certainty. So, there is no magic formula, but let us be our true selves and live by the Christian values we have received and internalized along the way.

End Notes

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