



Catholicism between the tradition and the reinvention: new communities, lay consecrated and eremitic life in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte

O catolicismo entre a tradição e a reinvenção: novas comunidades, leigos consagrados e vida eremítica na Arquidiocese de Belo Horizonte

Carlos Frederico Barboza de Souza*

Abstract

This article aims to reflect on the diversity of the expressions of consecration that have occurred in contemporary Roman Catholicism and in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte, that lies in the sharing of ecclesial spaces between new forms of consecration, such as the New Communities, and ancient forms of consecration updated in the contemporaneity, such as lay consecration and hermetic life. In this sense, the article points out to different expressions of apostolic action, understanding of Catholicism and institutional organization. Thus, the diversity that makes up today's Catholicism will initially be discussed; the status of the new forms of consecration, especially the New Communities, differentiating them from other forms of consecration present in Catholicism, will then be considered. Finally, the article will present some of these expressions in a concrete way, briefly presenting their history, charisma and apostolic action. The conclusion points to the perception of a constructive logic of religious experiences, in relation between Catholicism and the cultural, religious, philosophical and theological realities surrounding, present in the different forms of consecration, as well as the existence of a certain porosity between different contemporary groups, which construct meanings through resignifications. In this research, we worked from the perspective of the phenomenology of religion, with information collection techniques based on bibliographic and digital references, as well as unstructured interviews.

Key-words: Roman Catholicism; consecration; new communities; consecrated laity; eremitism.

Resumo

O presente artigo tem como objetivo pensar a diversidade das expressões de consagração que ocorrem no catolicismo romano contemporaneamente e na Arquidiocese de Belo Horizonte, e que se encontram no compartilhamento dos espaços eclesiais entre formas novas de consagração, como as Novas Comunidades, e as antigas formas de consagração atualizadas na contemporaneidade, como a consagração laical e a vida eremítica. Apontam para expressões diferentes da ação apostólica e de compreensão do catolicismo, assim como da organização institucional. Assim sendo, discutir-se-á, inicialmente, a diversidade que compõe o catolicismo hodierno; em seguida, tecer-se-á considerações sobre o estatuto das novas formas de consagração, sobretudo, as Novas Comunidades, diferenciando-as de outras formas de consagração. Por fim, apresentar-se-ão algumas destas expressões de maneira concreta, expondo, brevemente, sua história, carisma e ação apostólica. A conclusão aponta para a percepção de uma lógica construtiva das experiências religiosas na relação entre catolicismo e realidades culturais/religiosas/filosóficas/teológicas circundantes, presentes nas diferentes formas de consagração, assim como para a existência de certa porosidade entre diferentes grupos contemporâneos, que constroem sentidos por meio de resignificações. Para esta pesquisa, trabalhou-se a partir da fenomenologia da religião, com técnicas de coleta de informações pautadas em referenciais bibliográficos e digitais, além de entrevistas não estruturadas.

Palavras-chave: Catolicismo romano; consagração; novas comunidades; leigos consagrados; eremitismo.

Article submitted on March 17, 2019 and approved on August 28, 2019.

* Doctor of Religious Studies from UFJF. Professor at PPGCR PUC Minas. Country of origin: Brazil. E-mail: fred@pucminas.br

Introduction

Catholicism in Brazil has manifested itself in a plural way.¹ As Carlos Rodrigues Brandão (1988) states, there are different ways of being Catholic and participating in this religious tradition. The reasons for that is because the forms of attachment to Catholicism are plural, indicating that, at present, there are “various cultural styles of being Catholic”. (BRANDÃO, 2002, p. 268). And “even within a more canonical Catholicism, practiced in a direct line of relationship with the priestly body, there are some types of trends of doctrine, gestures and rites of the same religion and the same church”. (BRANDÃO, 2002, p. 268).

In this sense, this article presents some forms of consecration that exist in Roman Catholicism, namely: New Communities and ancient forms of consecration updated in contemporary times, such as the Consecrated Laity, Virgins and Widows, in addition to the Hermits. Therefore, in a first moment, the question of religious diversity that arises from the encounter of the Roman Catholic Church with contemporaneity and its cultures and social dynamism will be addressed; then, the focus will be on a reflection on the forms of consecration that are present in the diversity of which Catholicism is composed today. Finally, some different expressions of consecration existing in contemporary Catholicism will be presented, with the purpose of briefly exposing some of the history and charisma of the community and some of its apostolic-evangelizing work in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte.

¹ The diversity present in Catholicism is not a recent novelty. What is new is the intensity with which it manifests itself in contemporary times and “the degree of diversity within a single Church under a single leadership. [...] as a single church, Catholic diversity stands out from the rest and impresses analysts.” (MARIZ, 2006, p. 57). Therefore, “the novelty in contemporary Catholicism would not be, then, its diversity, as this has been constant, but the dimension of this diversity. (MARIZ, 2006, p. 58).

1 Ecclesial community and diversity of expressions of Roman Catholicism in Brazil

According to Faustino Teixeira (2009, p. 19), “the plasticity of the ways of being Catholic in Brazil is the expression of a Brazilian genuineness,² characterized by the great expansion of the possibilities of communication with the sacred or with the ‘other world’. In this sense, it is possible to affirm the existence of “catholicisms”, which Faustino Teixeira (2009, p. 20) typifies in four models: the sancorial catholicism, the scholar or official, the catholicism of the re-affiliated and media Catholicism, revealing the "diversified" Catholic identity (SANCHIS, 2001, p. 12):

Active diversification, which cannot be reduced to that of geographic space, and which multiplies, even within the same complex institution, the Catholic Church, for example, instances of identity reference, systems of attribution of meaning, families of spirit regrouped around worldviews and institutionalized ethos, collective religious labels, products invested with consensual spiritual power, on the one hand. [...] On the other hand - perhaps even above all - analyze themselves also, within these associations and movements, the different ways of adhering to these consensus, belonging to these collectives, sharing these views of the world and adopting the orientation of this ethos; the modalities of belief in these senses and powers; the exclusive or multiple ways of affirming, distinguishing and / or combining these identities, whether assuming a stable position, or "groping" in an itinerary in search, through a thousand paths, of a horizon ... Different levels of diversity, which reduplicate themselves and cross each other. (SANCHIS, 1997, p. 28-29).

The existence of this diversity of expressions in the heart of Brazilian Catholicism points to a perspective that is presented in contemporary times about the appropriation of faith in the lives of practitioners of a certain religion because

much more than in past years, even the religions considered as traditional and consecrated tend to differ greatly within their orthodoxies, in order to offer, especially to the laity, a multiplicity of affiliations of meaning and practice of the faith [that] they involve new meanings of belief and new sensibilities of faith about the very meaning of the sacred. Regarding the logic of the relationship between the person and the celestial beings and, finally, about the spiritual

² Although there are genuine elements of Brazilianness in the phenomena present in Catholicism here, one cannot lose sight of the fact that this diversity is also present in Catholicism worldwide, given the diversity of expressions that can be perceived in phenomena such as World Youth Days.

grammar and practice of the rules of adhesion and options of personal destiny, with meanings and values: ethical, social or political, and focused on 'the commitment to the World'. (BRANDÃO, 2004, p. 278).

Therefore, we can affirm, with Carlos Rodrigues Brandão, that there is a great “religious polysemy” in these last years, a consequence of a flexibilization of the possibilities of religious adherence within religious traditions, a phenomenon that also occurs within the Catholic tradition.” (BRANDÃO, 2004, p. 279).

This great religious polysemy can also be thought of as a consequence, according to Danièle Hervieu-Léger (2008), of strong processes of subjectivation and individualization that were established in modernity as a consequence of the deregulation of the religious field in contemporary times. These processes favor that religious identities are no longer inherited - or, at least, that the dimension of the “inherited” finds its strength diminished -, but constructed, due to successive transformations of the “collective references”, in the middle of “ruptures of memory ”and “reorganization of values”, through which individuals build their faith through bricolage procedures and the deregulation of religious practices and experiences.

In turn, Pierre Sanchis will suggest that part of this polysemy also arises due to the construction of porosities in religious belongings, which allows “intense crossings of flows of a religious character [...] an opening of audiences to the message of the 'other'” (SANCHIS, 2001, p. 31), despite the strong need for identity marking present in our society today, manifested in several fundamentalist and integralist expressions.

And finally, it can be added, according to Cecília Mariz, that the diversity experienced today in Catholicism can go through some internal issues in the Catholic Church, such as the tension between hierarchy and lay people, which can generate the creation of groups that seek relative autonomy in relation to the Vatican and the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

In this respect, Cecília Mariz (2006, p. 58-60), whom I follow almost literally in the formulations below, proposes the identification of four elements that have favored diversity within today's Catholicism in Brazil: 1) the plurality of internal “campaigns” of the Catholic Church. In this topic she lists three main campaigns: romanization, the campaign promoted by Liberation Theology and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement; 2) the "cognitive bargain" with the modern worldview. In this topic, she affirms that contemporary modernity, by itself, is already plural and ends up generating plural visions with an impact on religious traditions; 3) the emergence of individuals with special “charisms” and the occurrence of “supernatural” events, which is of particular interest to this article, due to the emergence of Communities of Life and Alliance and several other groups associated with the charism specific of a founder or founder; 4) interference by institutions religious and non-Catholic in the Catholic world, such as city halls and tourism around large popular Catholic festivals.

In this scenario, a certain paradox is experienced: if, on the one hand, religious institutions are in crisis, they lose part of their strength, on the other, simultaneously, they open up possibilities for the construction of new religious configurations. In other words, if, on the one hand, the loss of memory (characteristics of amnesic societies) and the capacity to transmit a religious tradition ends up generating little adherence to the religions constituted and established in society, on the other hand, the “trajectories of identities ” are fulfilled through the choices of the subjects, through a free articulation of four dimensions: community, ethics, cultural and emotional. In this sense, they generate new and diversified adhesions.

This loss of strength in contemporary religious institutions, according to Peter Berger, is due to the “loss of objectivity” of the religious today, which would generate a weakening of religious certainties and truths. However, this same “weakening” seems to be accompanied, also, by a strong pluralism of religious expressions, which would explain, in part, the strong religious visibility nowadays, as well as the diversity of expressions and resurgence of the Sacred in times that would be expected to deepen religious disenchantment or secularization (BERGER, 1985).

Thus, it can be said, with Carlos Rodrigues Brandão, that

Catholicism seems to be the religion with the most open capacity to adjust to "new times", although it is the religious confession that "most loses faithful to others". When closely watched, we see how it opens up and allows itself to be diversified, in order to offer, in its interior, almost all styles of belief and practice of faith also outside Catholicism. (BRANDÃO, 2004, p. 282).

This "openness" and "plasticity" observed in Catholicism allows, as stated by Cecília Mariz, to understand that "the drop in the proportion of Catholics seems to be accompanied by a relative religious revival, and even more by an intensification of the diversity in the experience of being Catholic." (MARIZ, 2006, p. 53).³ The current context, therefore, generates impacts on Catholicism, providing enormous diversity of understandings and ways of living what is understood as Catholicism, since

the cultural time in which we live and where we are heading, includes an increasing number of styles of spiritualities, of other systems of meaning, of personal and collective combinations of knowledge and values that not only allow, but oblige the religious person itself to interactions of meaning, the integration of choices, the indeterminations of his own destiny as a individual and an identity. [...] This phenomenon of returning to the sacred, now covered with an extraordinary plasticity, with a previously unthinkable power of creation and differentiation, involves the most diverse people, social groups and cultural communities. (BRANDÃO, 2004, p. 284).

If the contemporary moment has facets of diversity, these are realized, it is true, due to individualizing subjectivation processes, but it also has other facets: diversity also represents creative searches for inculturation of the faith and its practices and languages, as well as the desire for dialogue with the cultures and realities that practitioners of the Catholic faith encounter daily.

On the other hand, the diversity present in the Catholic Church is not necessarily a sign of fragmentation, although this reality is also present. It also signals, from a theological perspective, that "just as God is one in the diversity of the three PERSONS, the Church is also unity in diversity". (CNBB, 2016, n. 151).

³ This Catholic "revival" can also be understood, according to Cecília Mariz, from the religious market paradigm of Stark and Iannaccone, as a consequence of the competitiveness installed in Brazil based on the reality of religious pluralism and the loss of believers that have characterized Catholicism in the latest IBGE censuses. Faced with the loss of hegemony and monopoly, there is a phenomenon of "renewal" and "increased fervor" (MARIZ, 2006, p. 55).

In other words, the diversity with which it is constituted and it manifests Catholicism today, in part, is a representation of its Trinitarian vocation and a manifestation of its dimension. As Leonardo Boff says,

there is a fundamental human longing: for participation, equality, respect for differences and communion with everything and with God. The communion of the divine Three provides a source of inspiration in the realization of these ancestral longings of all people and all societies. Each divine Person participates fully in the other two: in life, in love and in communion. Each of them is equal in eternity, majesty and dignity; neither is superior or inferior to the other. Although equal in the participation of life and love, each Person is distinct from the other. The Father is distinct from the Son and the Holy Spirit and so on with each Person. But this distinction allows for communion and mutual surrender. People are distinct in order to be able to give their wealth to others and thus form eternal communion and divine community. The Holy Trinity is the best community. (BOFF, 1988, p. 109-110).

Thus, the Trinitarian dimension, which encourages communion and establishes it as an ecclesiological ideal, is a model of Christian life, with strong social and ecclesial implications, in the sense that valuing diversity and the existence of the different, at the same time, calls for communion, the greater meaning of life in a community of faith in the Christian perspective. If the “Church has as many faces as many incarnations it has known throughout its history” (BOFF, 1988, p. 111), these faces need to be welcomed and understood in the logic of mutual enrichment that only diversity can provide.

2 New Communities: different forms of consecration and ecclesial vocations of full donation⁴

According to the document *Vita Consecrata* (hereinafter VC), consecration is

⁴ This expression is used by Roberto Almada when trying to cover various forms of lay donation in Churches, communities and institutions which are dedicated to the good of humanity (ALMADA, 2013, p. 91-92). Here, its meaning is extended to all types of vocations that are oriented towards an integral dedication to pastoral / apostolic / evangelizing service and to the ecclesial community, demanding an abandonment of professional and work activities; or to a dedication that implies a spousal commitment to God and the ecclesial community, which takes shape in a chaste and celibate life.

a gift from God the Father to his Church, through the Spirit. Through the profession of evangelical counsels, the characteristic features of Jesus - virgin, poor and obedient - acquire a typical and permanent 'visibility' in the middle of the world, while the eyes of the faithful are drawn to that mystery of the Kingdom of God that already acts in the history, but awaits its full fulfillment in the heavens. (VC 1).

In the tracks of this document, what characterizes a consecration is the profession, through votes, of the evangelical councils of poverty, obedience and chastity, as well as a willingness to be a witness in “the middle of the world” (VC 25; 33). In addition to these characteristics, the dimension of fraternal life, “by virtue of which consecrated persons strive to live in Christ with 'one heart and one soul' (Acts 4,32), presents itself as an eloquent Trinitarian confession” (VC 21).⁵

The New Communities⁶, in turn, bring a different perspective and are referred to in the Vita Consecrata as “new expressions of consecrated life” (n. 12) and “new forms of evangelical life” (n. 62), which can also be considered “Ecclesial vocations of full donation” (ALMADA, 2013, p. 91). Its uniqueness and originality are found, above all, in the lay prevalence in its form of ecclesial organization (JOÃO PAULO II, 1998, p. 6), fruits of the conciliar ecclesiology and of the valorization of the laity or of certain expressions of the laity. It is, therefore, a relatively new associative form, which receives this name to differentiate itself from the parish communities, the Ecclesial Base Communities, the religious communities and the New Ecclesial Movements. In canonical terms, they are not defined, unlike the “new movements”.

Within the New Communities, we can distinguish two types of expressions: Communities of Life and Communities of Covenant. The former articulate around lay people, couples and consecrated people who live under the same roof, sharing their livelihood and committing themselves equally to maintaining the Community of Life; the latter are composed of people who

⁵ Check also: (VC 41-42).

⁶ “According to an article published by the journal *Settimana News*, in April 2017, a Census conducted in 2010 (the first since this type of association appeared), by the Italian theologian Giancarlo Rocca, the numbers of the New Communities would be as follows: The Holy See registered 775 New Foundations or New Communities, of which 205 would be in the United States, 200 in Italy, 161 in France, 44 in Brazil and 20 in Spain. The article also informs that the Census found a considerable stabilization of these communities in the last twenty years (pontificate by João Paulo II)”. (SILVA, 2018, p. 51).

joined to the charism of a community, but continue to live in their homes and maintain their professional lives, although linked to the Community.

The organizational form of the New Communities was established from November 30, 1990, when a decree of the Pontifical Council for the Laity established the "Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships" as a Private Association of Pontifical Christian Faithful. At the national level, the organization takes place through FRATER, chaired by Monsignor Jonas Abib (FRATERNIDADE DAS NOVA COMUNIDADES, 2008).

In addition, often,

because they are groups composed of men and women, clergy and laity, married and single, who follow a lifestyle, sometimes inspired in one or another traditional way or adapted to the demands of today's society. His commitment to evangelical life is also expressed in different ways, manifesting, as a general tendency, an intense aspiration to community life, poverty and prayer. In government, clergy and laity participate, according to their respective competences, and the apostolic end meets the demands of the new evangelization. (VC 62).

And more: according to Rejane Maria Dias de Castro Bins (2016, p. 9), the New Communities are characterized by some other elements, already present in the conciliar documents (*Lumen gentium*, IV; *Gaudium et spes*, 43; *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 8; and the decree on the apostolate of the laity, *Apostolicam actuositatem*), such as: the lay apostolate - internal and external -, the right of free association, internal communion and with members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the imperative need for formation and the willingness to participate in the ecclesial mission of evangelizing.

Canonically, however, they can be located as Associations of the Faithful and their norm goes through the norm of these types of associations (CNBB, 2005, n. 25.56), and the Code of Canon Law recognizes them in three different types: "1) associations public, erected by ecclesiastical authority; 2) private associations, set up by the faithful and approved by the ecclesiastical authority; 3) condominiums, which are private associations that were not elevated to legal status in the Church (can. 310)". (CNBB, 2005, n. 19).

Also according to the Code of Canon Law,

in the Church, there are associations, distinct from institutes of consecrated life and associations of apostolic life, in which the faithful, clergy or laity, or together clergy and laity, strive, through a common effort, to foster a more perfect life and promote public worship, Christian doctrine or other works of apostolate, that is, initiatives of evangelization, exercise of works of piety or charity, and animation of the temporal order with a Christian spirit. (CIC, 1983, 298). (CIC, 1983, 298).

Associations of the Faithful and New Communities can be thought of as new ecclesial subjects, bringing together committed people through particular forms of consecration and based on new charisms around a founder or foundress. Hence, they intend, above all, to respond to the pastoral and evangelization challenges that contemporaneity presents.

However, although the creativity brought about by the original organizational format and in new charismatic expressions, the New Communities often represent neoconservative attitudes, thus characterized

when the various elements of the Catholic Church's doctrine - especially that of moral doctrine - are simply reproduced, not taking into account in general the theological, anthropological, cultural basis, which is implicated in the truths of the faith. The contents proposed for the formation of affiliates are lacking, for example, that creativity of communication of Catholic doctrine in an attitude of dialogue with the current culture, seeking the appreciation of the signs of the times: 'their theological-doctrinal emptiness ends up making Catholics not only not evangelized, but incapable of a mission in dialogue with the world and in a spirit of cooperation with other religious denominations and civil institutions'. (BRINGHENTI, 2001, p. 20) (FERREIRA, 2011).

It is known that in order to “communicate Catholic doctrine in an attitude of dialogue”, it is important to think both of formative processes and of apostolic actions that, resulting from a rich formative process, can generate profound and significant evangelization actions. Thus, in terms of pastoral / evangelizing action, it is urgent that the New Communities and Associations of the Faithful are capable of a theological-critical reflection regarding their actions in the Church and in society, as well as a commitment to communion,

above all, with the church pastoral priorities, in order to be part of its organic pastoral life.

According to the document of the IV Conference of the Latin American Episcopate of Santo Domingo, in its n^o 102:

In view of the risks of some movements and associations that may end up closing in on themselves, it is particularly urgent to take into account the “criteria of ecclesiality” indicated in the post-synodal exhortation *Christifideles Laici* n. 30. It is necessary to follow the movements in a more defined inculturation process and to encourage the formation of movements with a more Latin American profile (CONSELHO EPISCOPAL LATINO-AMERICANO, 1993, n^o 102).

This last statement is valid, above all, because many of the New Communities are part of movements of an international character, whose orientations and concerns often do not pay attention to the issues of the local Churches.

CNBB document 105 also quotes Pope Francis in this regard: “do not lose touch with this very rich reality of the local parish and be gladly integrated into the organic pastoral work of the particular Church. This integration will prevent them from being left alone with a part of the Gospel and the Church, or become nomads without roots”. (CNBB, 2016, n. 50). For this, formation in communion with the local Church is fundamental: “it is appropriate to participate in the formation that is held in the diocesan Church”. (CNBB, 2016, n. 221).

The observations above call for the New Communities to avoid considering themselves

self-sufficient, behaving in such a way as if it were not an authentic Christian who did not adhere to such an association or movement; the risk of an intimate spirituality, as it responds more to personal aspirations than to concrete problems of social life; the risk of alienation and lack of involvement with Christians in any diocese, region or country, since the orientation of such groups, in general, comes from a different cultural center, with different problems; they should not forget the evangelical or prophetic option for the poor. (FERREIRA, 2011).

Or, as Cardinal Ratzinger said, there is still the risk that his experience will be “lived not as one of the forms of the Christian life, but as if they were possessors [...] of the evangelical message in an integral way: this can induce to absolutize their own movement, identifying it with the Church itself and interpreting it as a way for everyone”. (RATZINGER, 1999, p. 49).

In this sense, Faustino Teixeira, when discussing the “Catholicism of re-affiliated”, affirms about the ecclesial movements something that can also serve as a reflection for the New Communities: they play an ‘ambivalent role’ within the Catholic Church. On the one hand, it is part of a strategy of clear identity and zeal for traditional Catholic doctrine; on the other, it favors a spiritual dynamic that ends up affecting a perspective of autonomy and transversality with respect to official Catholicism” (TEIXEIRA, 2009, p. 24). This is because an element that can be thought of as characteristic of a large part of the New Communities is its relationship with the New Ecclesial Movements, understood as “a specific type of organization that is part of the broader structure of the Church, but being unified, administered internationally and independent of the local clergy, which” furthermore, “in general, acts or addresses only specific layers or sectors of the Church or society. Most of the time it has uniform practices and styles and it often has a recognized founder”. (MARIZ, 2003, p. 172).

In the organizational perspective, however, the New Communities are characterized by presenting an innovative form in their structuring, at least in some aspects. In general, its structures obey a statute, in which are the procedures for the reception and training of new members, as well as the duties and responsibilities of each member, the organizational structures of the community, coexistence and prayer practices, as well as the modalities of collaboration with the ecclesial community. It is also common for these statutes to make explicit the charisma and the way of evangelizing the community.

Innovation comes from the Strong character of lay aggregation⁷, as well as coexistence, often between celibates, couples and clergy, sharing the same organizational structure and the same spirituality.

In terms of the Associations of the Faithful and New Communities, as in all Catholicism present in the national territory, there are also several “forms of particular variety and liveliness [...] quite different from each other”, but with “profound convergence in the purpose that animates them: to participate responsibly in the mission of the Church” (ChL 29). In this sense, the description that follows aims to present some of the diverse expressions of these communities present in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte, which were selected due to their national significance and the fact that they originated in the archdiocese itself.

In this same archdiocese, in their pastoral and administrative perspective, the New Communities are located in the Episcopal Vicariate for Pastoral Action, in a specific council: the Archdiocesan Council of Associations, Ecclesial Movements and New Communities (CAMENC).

2.1 Canção Nova Community

Founded by Monsignor Jonas Abib on February 2, 1978, the Canção Nova Community is “recognized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity as a private international association of the faithful, endowed with legal personality (cf. CIC, can. 298-311; 321-329) and has its headquarters in the city of Cachoeira Paulista / SP, Diocese of Lorena, São Paulo - Brazil ”. (CANÇÃO NOVA COMMUNITY, 2017, 1, § 1).

⁷ The lay aggregative form is not a novelty in contemporary times. Let us recall, for example, the monastic movements, with a strong lay nature, which are found in the emergence of contemporary monastic orders, as well as in the movement of beggars, such as the Franciscan and Carmelite movements, which in their early days were mostly composed of lay people. One can also think of a diversity of aggregative forms of the laity. Cardinal Lucas Moreira Neves, at the time when they were the prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops, formulated a typology to understand the various expressions of lay aggregation: groups, associations and movements. According to Wagner Ferreira (2011), “the characteristics of these associations concern a certain spontaneity and freedom in their formation and development, in the adhesion and permanence of the members, in the rhythm and content of the meetings, in the concrete and immediate objectives, in the discipline. Associations, by contrast, are, by their nature, much more structured in terms of institutional bases, objectives, membership, and action projects. The movements [...] would be in the middle: they do not lack institutional structures, but the most important and defining thing is, for these, the fact of being constituted around an idea-force that continuously drives action; this force-idea is the mystique that is in all members and brings them together around a charismatic figure who first incarnated it and continually proposes it again”.

Focused on living in community, as “community life is part of the essence of the Canção Nova Community's vocation”, it has a greater and preferential vocation for evangelizing action through the media. However, it also acts "in the areas of education, health, arts, culture and social promotion, with the specific objective of contributing concretely to the transformation of human beings and social structures". (COMMUNIDADE CANÇÃO NOVA, 2017, p. 3).

It is a community formed by

women and men; youth and adults; single, married and celibate, priests and deacons, who assume the most radical experience of the consecration to God made in Baptism and Confirmation, in function of the apostolate, in a life in community, according to the state of each one. Such experience is inspired by the practice of evangelical counsels, adapted to secular life. (COMMUNIDADE CANÇÃO NOVA, 2017, p. 2).

The integration “of these different states in the Canção Nova Community is an essential dimension of the charism” (COMUNIDADE CANÇÃO NOVA, 2017, p. 35). Community members commit themselves, under a promise called “commitment”, made before the president or his delegate. The referred "commitment" has two ways of being carried out: a) "Núcleo": intended for those who dedicate themselves to the apostolate in an integral way; b) “Segundo Elo”, for those who form an alliance with the Nucleus and live their commitment to Canção Nova in the ordinary conditions of life, in the family, profession and social life. (COMMUNIDADE CANÇÃO NOVA, 2017, p. 8-9).

The spiritual path of Canção Nova, with a strong influence of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, is characterized by the following elements: sanctified work, prayer to the rhythm of life, the use of means (maintaining the attention and the search for necessary resources to “cultivate a personal and deep relationship with God”) and strong times (COMUNIDADE CANÇÃO NOVA, 2017, p. 6).

Canção Nova Movement is present in several countries and in many states of Brazil, especially in the South and Southeast regions.⁸ The arrival of these Communities in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte occurred in 2001, where they carry out activities from the perspective of the media. The Communities maintain in Belo Horizonte an open local TV channel (TV Canção Nova, 45.1), for the production and broadcasting of local programs and also on national network. In addition, they render service to the Sanctuary of Piety, relaying the masses that happen to be held there.

2.2 Shalom Catholic Community

Shalom Catholic Community is a Private International Association of the Faithful, founded by Moysés de Azevedo Louro Filho in the 1980s with four other young people, co-founded by Emmir Nogueira. In 1980, during the visit of Pope John Paul II to Fortaleza, Moysés felt himself inspired to dedicate himself to youth. Two years later, in 1982, he founded the “Lanchonete do Senhor”, in Fortaleza, on July 9th, “an attractive place where young people had the opportunity to experience moments of prayer, fraternity and mission, thus growing on their path of faith”. Through this action, his goal was “to create an interface that could speak the language of young people, creating a bridge between them and a personal experience with Jesus Christ and His Church” (COMSHALOM.COM, 2019).

The evangelizing action of the Shalom Catholic Community is diverse and plural, working with young people, children, families, as well as in the world of art, culture, science, human promotion and the media, among others. In short, as found on its website, it acts “through works of mercy that touch the various sufferings that people go through” (COMSHALOM.COM, 2019).

Shalom Catholic Community is made up of men and women, celibates, singles, married or priests, deacons and seminarians, seeking to dedicate their lives to community and missionary experience. From an organizational point of view, it is structured in two complementary dimensions: the Community of Life

⁸ According to data from 2013, Canção Nova maintained 25 mission houses in Brazil and abroad, with 644 members in the Community of Life and 322 in the Community of Aliança (SANTOS, 2014, p. 99).

and the Community of Alliance, having the Community of life as the central nucleus. (CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SHALOM, 2012, p. 71). In addition to these two formats for joining the Shalom Community, two other forms of participation in the “Shalom charism” are also possible: there are members of the Work, who do not profess vows, but participate in community prayer groups and events; and the Friends of Shalom, who live in places where the community is not present, however, adhere to their “style” and formation.

Its spirituality comes from an “experience with Christ” that,

Upon meeting the disciples at Cenacle, The risen Jesus says to them: Peace to you (Jn 20:19), that is, Shalom! In Jesus, this greeting is a real communication of Peace, that is, of all kinds of spiritual and material blessings, the perfect happiness that the Messiah brings us. It is, in short, the announcement and donation of full salvation. (CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SHALOM, 2012, Preamble).

Inspired by Francisco de Assis and Teresa de Jesus, they understand that their vocation is based on a tripod: contemplation, unity and evangelization. Through contemplation, they seek the “life Intimacy with God”, which is the core of community life and is sustained through a life of prayer and the cultivation of “spousal love” with God.

The Shalom Catholic Community, with a significant presence in the Northeast of Brazil, is present in more than 40 countries and almost all Brazilian states⁹ and also having an important role with the Holy See by occupying 4 prominent positions (SILVA, 2019, p. 44).

Its legal personality was recognized by the Vatican on February 22, 2007 and its statutes were definitively approved in February 2012.

⁹ According to data from the Shalom Community website, in 2012 it had 980 members in the Community of Life and 4323 in the Community of Alliance, and is present in 42 dioceses in 19 Brazilian states; and in 23 cities in 19 countries, with a total of 5,303 members. Segundo dados do site da Comunidade Shalom, em 2012 ela possuía 980 membros na Comunidade de Vida, 4323 na Comunidade de Aliança, presentes em 42 dioceses em 19 estados brasileiros e em 23 cidades de 19 países, contendo, ao todo, 5303 membros.

2.3 Sons and Daughters of Poverty of the Blessed Sacrament (Toca de Assis)

The Sons and Daughters of Poverty of the Blessed Sacrament, known as Toca de Assis¹⁰, were founded by the then Stigmatine seminarian - and currently the catholic priest - Roberto José Lettieri, on May 13, 1994, in the city of Campinas, SP. It is a Public Association of the Faithful, whose charism focuses on the continuous adoration of the Eucharist, on the life of radical poverty and on the service and solidarity to the poor, mainly to street people, called by them “sufferers or brothers of street”. In their homes, they welcome poor people, who live with them; and, in their work with street sufferers, they share food, clothes, haircuts and take care of wounds, etc. Their inspiring patrons are: São Francisco de Assis, Santa Catarina de Genoa, São Pio de Pietrelcina and Blessed Alexandrina de Balasar.

They are present in almost all of Brazil, organized into administrative regions or Regional Centers, which congregate their different houses. In addition, they are also present in other countries, where they carry out the same types of activities.

In relation to their homes, it is important to realize that there is a “specialization” regarding the activity they develop. Thus, the houses São Pio (male) and Virgin Mother of the Poor (female) are dedicated to the homeless who have mobility difficulties or who have some type of serious or terminal illness; the São José (male) houses welcome the street population with better health conditions; the Nossa Senhora das Dores (female) houses receive men and women in the terminal illness phase or with impossibilities of self-care; Bom Samaritano houses (male) serve as semi-welcoming houses; the Sacramento do Amor fraternal houses are semi-cloistered female houses; there are also fraternal sites, in regions further from urban centers, dedicated to people who need a certain distance from society to take care of themselves, such as drug addicts. In these houses, normally, his novitiates are located. They also

¹⁰ The name “Toca de Assis” emerged from the beginning of Franciscanism. On its website it is said that it was inspired by the narrative of the Legend of the Three Companions, in which it is said that Francisco with his first followers lived in “an abandoned den or hut”. Another origin of the name Toca is associated with the perception of Fr. Roberto that street people sheltered in cardboard “dens” or “hid themselves” in ruined houses (TOCA DE ASSIS, 2019; PORTELA, 2009, p. 40 -41).

have a specific house in Barreto / SP to care for elderly or sick elders. (PORTELA, 2009, p. 43).

Next to the Association of the Faithful there is an Alliance Community, called the Toca de Assis Fraternity, which is responsible for various supports to the association especially those of a financial nature.

In the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte, the male branch arrives in 1999. The female branch is present in this district since August 8, 2001. Both communities carry out the activities that are common to Toca de Assis, mentioned above.

2.4 Arautos do Evangelho

The Arautos do Evangelho started in the city of São Paulo, Diocese of Campo Limpo, on September 21, 1999, at the hands of their founder, Monsignor João Scognamiglio Clá Dias.¹¹ It is an International Private Association of the Faithful of Pontifical Law, with a canonical erection of February 22, 2001, during the solemnity of the Chair of St. Peter. According to information on its website, it was the first international association to be recognized canonically in the new millennium.

Present in 78 countries (ZANOTO, 2011, p. 280), in Brazil they are found in several states, composed of men and women, who live in separate communities and adopt a consecrated lifestyle. Although they do not profess vows and remain in the lay state - with the exception of some who become elders -, they assume celibacy and chastity, dedicating themselves entirely to evangelizing work. Among its members, there are also the Cooperators, who “cannot fully commit themselves to the objectives [of the community], due to their priestly commitments, to the fact that they belong to some institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life, or to their matrimonial or professional duties”. (ARAUTOS DO EVANGELHO, 2019).

¹¹ In August 1997, under the leadership of João Scognamiglio Clá Dias and two years later a certain connection with the Brazilian Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property (TFP), the Nossa Senhora de Fátima Cultural Association was founded. It was from this association that the Arautos do Evangelho emerged two years later.

Their mission is related to the search for sanctity, perfection and collaboration with evangelization, focusing on a spirituality based on three pillars: the Eucharist, Mary and the Papacy. And its charism, from an architectural, harmonic and hierarchical view of the order of Creation, visible and invisible, seeks to live the love of truth (*verum*), goodness (*bonum*) and beauty (*pulchrum*) of the Universe, as reflections of God. In addition, the search for beauty, "pulcritude", which should mark everyday life, relationships within the community, liturgical celebrations and manifest in evangelizing action through art and culture, especially through theater and music.

They established themselves in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte from June 11, 2002, developing activities in parishes where they are invited by the respective parish priests. In this sense, they work in the formation of groups in the oratory of the Immaculate Heart of Mary; they also carry out preparatory courses for the consecration to Jesus through Mary, according to the method of St. Louis Maria Grignon de Montfort; they have the Choir of the Angels, from the co-workers of the *Arautos do Evangelho* of Belo Horizonte who have been performing in various parishes, both in the liturgical animation of the Masses, in Christmas cantatas and at patron feasts; they cultivate the devotion of the five first Saturdays in honor of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, promoted monthly in the House of *Arautos do Evangelho*; they make visits to the parishes of the pilgrim image of the Immaculate Heart of Mary; and, finally, they visit hospitals at Christmas.

2.5 Comunidade Católica Árvore da Vida

A Comunidade Católica Árvore da Vida foi fundada por Rodrigo Serva Maciel em Belo Horizonte, no dia 21 de junho de 1998, e procura, em seu cotidiano, inspirar-se na vida monástica. A árvore da vida é a cruz de Jesus Cristo, que é vida e deve ser levada a todos os necessitados e aos lugares em que se impera a morte, pois Cristo sofre em todos os sofredores: “no faminto, no desempregado, no deprimido, no doente, no descrente, no materialista, no ateu, no menor abandonado, no sem-teto, no católico mal formado, na família atacada por mentalidades perversas, no jovem que sofre pela falta de referências e pelo vazio interior”. (COMUNIDADE ÁRVORE DA VIDA, 2019).

É composta por homens e mulheres, celibatários, casados e solteiros, vivendo em comum ou podendo cada um viver em sua casa, porém, todos compartilhando o mesmo carisma, espiritualidade, missão e fins apostólicos.

Em termos de espiritualidade, seus membros buscam a intimidade com Deus, cultivando a “amizade com Jesus” e um “amor sponsal”. Inspiram-se em Teresinha do Menino Jesus e da Santa Face e em São Bento, cuja regra por ele elaborada é compreendida como uma referência para comunidade. Também inspirados em sua experiência, suas casas são denominadas de mosteiros. E desde 2018 há uma casa de missão, em Moçambique.

Em 2011 tem a aprovação de seu estatuto por Dom Walmor Oliveira de Azevedo e, logo após a criação do Vicariato Episcopal para a Ação Missionária (VEAM), compõe o seu conselho com a seguinte atividade missionária: a partir da realidade da Arquidiocese de Belo Horizonte e da atividade de evangelização necessária junto às vilas e favelas da Região Metropolitana de Belo Horizonte, realiza uma atividade de levantamento de dados das realidades de cada uma das quase 300 vilas e favelas relacionadas tanto pelo Censo demográfico do IBGE de 2010 quanto pelas paróquias que participaram do trabalho de informações ao VEAM.

2.6 Catholic Community *Árvore da Vida*

The Catholic Community *Árvore da Vida* was founded by Rodrigo Serva Maciel in Belo Horizonte, on June 21, 1998, and seeks, in his daily life, to be inspired by monastic life. The *Árvore da Vida* (Tree of life) is the cross of Jesus Christ, who is life and should be taken to all the needy and to the places where death prevails, because Christ suffers in all the sufferers: “in the hungry, the unemployed, the depressed, in the sick, in the unbeliever, in the materialist, in the atheist, in the abandoned child, in the homeless, in the malformed Catholic, in the family attacked by perverse mentalities, in the young person who suffers from lack of references and from the inner emptiness”. (*ÁRVORE DA VIDA COMMUNITY*, 2019).

The above mentioned community is composed of men and women, celibate, married and single, living together or being able to live in their own home, however, all of them sharing the same charisma, spirituality, mission and apostolic ends.

In terms of spirituality, its members seek intimacy with God, cultivating "friendship with Jesus" and "spousal love". They are inspired by Saint Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face and São Bento, whose rule he elaborates is understood as a reference for the community. Also inspired by their experience, their houses are called monasteries. And since 2018 there has been a mission house in Mozambique.

In 2011, the Catholic Community *Árvore da Vida* was approved by Dom Walmor Oliveira de Azevedo and, shortly after the creation of the Episcopal Vicariate for Missionary Action (VEAM), its council is composed with the following missionary activity: from of the reality of the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte and the necessary evangelization activity in the towns and slums of the Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte, it conducts an activity to collect data on the realities of each of the nearly 300 villages and slums related by the demographic census of the IBGE 2010 and the parishes that participated in the information work for VEAM.

2.7 Nova Aliança Catholic Community

Nova Aliança Catholic Community is a Public Association of the Faithful, of Diocesan Law, approved on 02/22/2008 and founded by Maria Ângela de Melo Nicolleti in Belo Horizonte. It started in 1984 as a prayer group based on the spirituality of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. That same year, on the day of Corpus Christi, it was called Nova Aliança. After organizing several courses with the purpose of evangelization and formation, it is structured as a lay community, in which some dedicated members assume more specific commitments and are closely linked to the Nova Aliança spiritual heritage, which are referred to as *Fraternos*.

Being present in missions in the states of Minas Gerais, Distrito Federal, Tocantins, Pará and Ceará, Nova Aliança mission is to announce the Gospel and awaken in people the love for the Church. For this, it is willing to serve the Church and train its members. It has as saints of devotion, in addition to Our Lady, Mother of the New Covenant, Saint Joseph, Saint Teresinha, Saint Benedict, Saint Teresa of Avila and the patriarch Abraham.

3. Ancient forms of consecration updated in contemporary times¹²

If the New Communities represent attempts at dialogue with contemporaneity, an attempt that is expressed in the search for new formats of consecration, organization, life in common and apostolic-evangelizing action, however, they are not the only expressions of this innovative search in the field of roman catholicism. In addition to differing from other expressions of consecration present in Catholicism, they experience, in their own way, similar phenomena found in other representations of consecration.

Here, we will address some of the expressions that precede, including, the emergence of monastic life and the instituted religious life, existing in the early days of Christianity: the celebrities or continents (which today can be recognized, in some way, by consecrated lay people), the widows and consecrated virgins, as well as hermit life. Hence the option to name them “ancient forms of consecration”, while CODINA and ZEVALLOS (1987, p. 1838) grouped together the forms of consecration of the first three centuries of Christianity under the title “testimony”, including the element of martyrdom. And as they continue to exist today, albeit with reconfigurations in their norms, possible styles of expression and theologies, it was decided to conceive them as “updated in contemporary times”. Part of its update is due to the reconfigurations that the contemporary context itself provides. However, part of its update is due to the internal transformations of Catholicism itself, motivated, to a large extent, by the Second Vatican Council, which also allowed them new regulatory frameworks and new forms of expression, and by the openness “to

¹² I am grateful to Brother Luiz Antônio Pinheiro, OSA, for suggesting this title.

the signs of the times", expression present in *Gaudium et spes*, 11, when he affirms that "the People of God endeavors to discern in the events, demands and aspirations of our times, in which they participate with other men, whatever the true signs of presence or God's designs" (VATICAN II, 1983, p. 153); it is also an expression dear to the document of the Medellín Episcopal Conference, held in 1968 (LATIN AMERICAN EPISCOPAL COUNCIL, 2010, p. 29), in which it is stated that the divine plan of salvation must be read in reality, since this reality constitutes a "theological place" in which are the "questions of God" (EPISCOPAL LATIN AMERICAN COUNCIL, 2010, p. 7, 13).

In the New Testament, we have news of women who dedicate themselves entirely to the community, to prayer, to service and to life with God (cf. Ac 21,89; I Tim 5,5,9-10; 1 Cor 7,8), living often a "domestic asceticism"¹³, without withdrawing from social life, because "the secular city was the space where their commitment was consolidated" (FIORES; GOFFI, 1993, p. 1171).¹⁴ In addition, they translated an image of the Church as the wife of Christ (II Cor 11,2; Ap 19, 7-9; 21, 2-3.9; cf. also ESI, 1), "a special eschatological image of the celestial Spouse and the life to come, when, at last, the Church will fully live her love for Christ the Bridegroom" (VC 7). And even at the beginning of the patristic period there are mentions of them,¹⁵ and from the 4th century onwards there has already been a liturgical rite of consecration performed before the diocesan Bishop.

With the development of the cenobitic monastery, the Church associates virgin life with community life. With this, "Gradually, over the centuries the original life form of *Ordo virginum* disappeared, with its typical rooting in the local community under the guidance of the diocesan Bishop". (ESI, 5, our translation). And it is only with the Second Vatican Council that interest in this

¹³ The Dictionary of Spirituality, when establishing a typology about religious life, typifies with this nomination the case of consecrated virgins and widows; see Fiore; Goffi (1993, p. 1171).

¹⁴ Also check out Codina; Zevallos (1987, p. 18-19), in which he states: "What characterizes, in a more appropriate way, these first centuries is the secular style of the life of Christians".

¹⁵ There are very old testimonies in this regard, in letters by Clemente Romano and Ignatius of Antioch.

form of consecration resurfaces.¹⁶ And it resurfaces with vigor, experiencing, as well as the Novas Comunidades, a wealth of expressions and innovative possibilities.

However, in relation to the innovative capacity of the Novas Comunidades to be nuanced in what sense this happens. This is because these new forms of organization cannot always be considered innovative. As researcher Júlia Miranda questions, noticing a certain paradox in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement that, in my opinion, can be applied to the Novas Comunidades: "is it a renewal here that remains attached to the existing organization and its structure?" (MIRANDA, 1999, p. 53). Júlia Miranda asks this question when she realizes that many groups, in a sociological perspective, remain linked to an ecclesial structure that, in large part, reproduces structural-institutional aspects of Catholicism, experiencing little of a creative dimension that is born from the innovation and singularity that a charisma provides. And one can go a step further: often, experiencing a limited theological-pastoral creativity.

Regarding hermitic life, the same can be said when the consecrations of celebrities, virgins and widows were approached in their creative perspective. The impulse that some men and women have and had to live in solitude is not recent in human history. There is already news of hermitic life in the 6th century BC, in Confucianism and Taoism. Ancient Greece also developed a "philosophy about loneliness"; likewise, the Hindu tradition presents itself with a similar ancient practice.

¹⁶ in the conciliar constitution on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, n. 80, it is provided that the liturgical rite of the consecratio virginum be revised. As a result, the new *Ordo consecrationis virginum* was enacted on May 31, 1970, by special mandate of Paul VI, which comes into force on January 6, 1971. The Code of Canon Law (can. 604) provides canonically on this form of consecration. More recently, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (nº 922-924) and the document on religious life, *Vita consecrata* (numbers 7 and 42), contribute to clarifying "the ecclesiastical place of *Ordo virginum* among other forms of consecrated life, highlighting the peculiar bond that is established between consecrated virgins and the particular and universal Church" (ESI, 7). Finally, in 2018, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life promulgated the instruction *Ecclesiae sponsae imago*, which aims to guide and promote this type of consecration. Nowadays, this method of consecration flourishes: "A reason for joy and hope is to see that today the old Order of Virgins flourishes again, whose presence in Christian communities has been witnessed since apostolic times." (VC 7). According to pontifical data mentioned by the Brazilian cardinal João Braz de Aviz, "in 2016, during the Year of Consecrated Life, an approximate statistic estimated the presence of more than five thousand consecrated virgins in the world, in continuous increase." (SCARAMUZZI, 2018).

In terms of Christianity, hermitism dates back to the Desert Fathers and Mothers. It is one of the first types of male consecrated life, together with celebrities, still in the 3rd century BC, initiated by Santo Antônio (250-365), the “Father of the monks”, who was inspired by the evangelical text of Mt 19,21, embraces domestic asceticism and then retreats to the desert, assuming an eremitic life. However, later, the Council of Trent forbids this lifestyle, especially the diocesan hermits, forcing them to join some religious order. The canonical condition about hermitism came only with the 1983 Code of Canon Law, in its canon 603:

§ 1. In addition to the institutes of consecrated life, the Church recognizes hermitic or anachoretic life, from which the faithful, by a more rigid separation from the world, by the silence of solitude, by assiduous prayer and penance, consecrate life to praise of God and the salvation of the world.

§ 2. The hermit, as dedicated to God in consecrated life, is recognized by law if he publicly professes the three evangelical councils, confirmed by vote or by another sacred bond, in the hands of the diocesan Bishop, and if he maintains his own way of life under his guidance. (CIC, 1983, 603).

The word hermit comes from the Greek *eremia* and the Latin *eremus*, which means desert. Therefore, a hermit means one who leaves the desert for a life of solitude, silence, prayer and penance. They are also called anchorites, that is, those who are “without a choir”, since the choir is a characteristic of the cenobitic monacato.

However, there is an enormous diversity of hermitic proposals with a diversity of charisms, lifestyles and ways of organizing. There are urban hermits; hermits that inhabit rural areas and even desert regions; hermits associated with Religious Orders (Carthusians, Camaldolians, Carmelites); hermits who live a religious eclecticism or distinct religious belongings; hermits who are directly linked to a bishop (diocesan hermits).

However, regardless of format and style, eremitism is formed by men and women who, even “in the depth of their solitude, do not withdraw from ecclesial communion; on the contrary, they serve it with its specific contemplative charism”. (VC 42). Thus,

through the interior and exterior separation from the world, they testify the provisional character of the present time, and by fasting and penance they attest that man does not live only on bread, but on the Word of God (cf. Mt 4,4). Such a life 'in the desert' is an invitation to individuals and the ecclesial community to never lose sight of the supreme vocation, which is to always be with the Lord. (VC 7).

In the following, we will present expressions of these ancient forms of consecration present in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte.

3.1 Consecrated Lay Missionaries

Having as founder Don Serafim Fernandes de Araújo and co-founder Sister Maria Dolores de Nazareth, the Consecrated Lay Missionaries started on April 5, 1995, in the city of Belo Horizonte, being called as Consecrated of the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte. On March 10, 2005, they assume the name of Consecrated Lay Missionaries and on November 8, 2017 their status is approved (Decree 29/2017), assuming the name of Missionaries Servants of the Tenderness of God and the status of ecclesial movement.

With a charism and mission aimed at the Christian formation of the laity and evangelization, this Association has a Rule of Life and Statutes. Within this missionary family there are several groups: Consecrated Missionaries (they issue religious vows), Missionary Couples, Laity Sent (take religious vows and work pastorally on missions), Special Group (generally, elderly people with limitations, but who can collaborate

In some way with missionary action) and Cooperating Missionaries (people who are committed to supporting missionaries through prayers). Although each member lives in their environment, they organize themselves into Fraternities and meet monthly for formation, sharing and evangelizing action.

3.2 Consecrated Laywomen of the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte

Consecrated Laywomen is the way in which the *Ordo Virginum*¹⁷ are called in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte, that is, the Order of Virgins, which, in the case of this circumscription, also includes Widows.

In this archdiocese of Belo Horizonte, the consecration of women before the Archbishop and with the commitment to the local Church began with Ivone Faria, who asked to take the vows before Dom Serafim Fernandes de Araújo, in the 70s. Later, widows join this group. Later Still, the group was structured and began to have frequent meetings for the practice of the prayer of the liturgy of the hours and for sharing; in addition, a formative perspective has been established for these consecrated women.

Consecrated through the vow of perpetual chastity as a sign of the Kingdom of God, they dedicate themselves “to prayer and service to the Church”. (VC 7). Their action is related to the insertion of each one in daily life (in the century, according to VC 42), being salt of the earth and light of the world, leaven in the dough wherever they are, whether in working world or in apostolic action. In this way, some operate in their parishes; others work in pastoral care; and still others act in the administrative structure of the Church itself.

3.3 Hermitic life

In Minas Gerais, and in the territory where the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte is located today, eremitism flourished, mainly due to the action of consecrated lay people who lived around shrines. That was the case with the hermit Feliciano da Costa (Sanctuary of Senhor Bom Jesus de Matosinhos), who died in 1765; the hermit Lourenço (Sanctuary Nossa Senhora Mãe dos Homens, in Serra do Caraça), who died in 1819; the hermit Félix da Costa (who is at the origin of the Macaúbas Monastery, in the 18th century); the hermit Antônio da

¹⁷ As explained by Spanish archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo, secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, the term “*Ordo virginum*” wants to be an “expression analogous to those used to indicate other ‘Ordines’ (*Ordo episcoporum*, *Ordo Presbyterorum*, *Ordo diaconorum*, *Ordo viduarum*).” (SCARAMUZZI, 2018, O Bracara (+ 1784).

Silva, Bracarena (+ 1784). Subsequently, this hermitage became the Nossa Senhora da Piedade Sanctuary, where five more hermits were gathered. Later, Sister Germana and Sister Dionísia lived as hermits until 1843, when they were forced to retire at the Macaúbas Monastery. 18 Finally, Friar Rosário Joffily, op, lived as a hermit in Serra da Piedade (+ 2000).

Currently, there are still hermits present in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte, both from the perspective of urban hermitage, experienced in the midst of the buildings of the city of Belo Horizonte, and from the perspective of rural hermitage, with even interesting pastoral proposals that dialogue with contemporary environmental issues, with the excluded and the laity.

Conclusion

It is notorious to perceive, in contemporary Catholicism and, above all, in the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte, the diversity of which it is composed. In some way, this diversity exists in the plurality of groups, proposals, theologies and lifestyles. In addition, within each group, there are also diverse proposals, with plural purposes and ways of organizing themselves. This is how we can perceive in the Novas Comunidades that some are from the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, while others arising as Novas Comunidades and canonically understood as Associations of the Faithful, have their origin in other groups, with different theological conceptions from those of Catholic Pentecostalism. The same is true of the ancient forms of consecration. New groups appear, different styles of living consecration in these groups also exist and proposals for interaction with the challenges of contemporary times also appear.

All this plurality points to a “constructivist” perspective of these expressions of consecration, understanding constructivism as a process in which different groups and communities make use of the repertoire present in Catholic culture, society and tradition and build, through processes of bricolage, based on its uniqueness and understanding inspired by the Holy Spirit, new ways to dialogue with the challenges of contemporary times and with the Catholic tradition, seeking to update and renew it. At the same time, renewal takes place

through complex interactions between communities, traditions, cultural and social elements that are remodeled and reframed, taking on very particular perspectives that provide identities to these diverse groups. Thus, it is possible to perceive the existence of a certain porosity among different contemporary groups, constructing and resignifying meanings and practices in a polysemic way.

When lived in communion and in respect for differences, this referred diversity, generates wealth in the pastoral-apostolic-evangelizing action and in the self-awareness processes of each believer who adheres to the Christian-Catholic perspective, which will be perceived from their uniqueness in the face of the various possible Christian lifestyles.

However, there is an urgent need to invest in communion in the archdiocesan ecclesial community and, at the same time, efforts should be made to train all those involved with some form of consecration. Only with such initiatives it will be possible that this plurality of groups, proposals, theologies and lifestyles will be able to dialogue with contemporary society of Belo Horizonte and, in some way, make a difference where they are, especially for the current moment in archdiocesan history and in the Catholic Church.

REFERENCES

AGUIAR, Geraldo. O caminhar dos cristãos leigos e leigas: avanços, recuos e desafios. *In: GRUPO DE REFLEXÃO DA COMISSÃO EPISCOPAL DE PASTORAL PARA O LAICATO DA CNBB. **Sujeitos eclesiais**: sal da terra e luz do mundo. Reflexões sobre o documento 105. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2017. p. 103-114.*

ALIANÇA DE MISERICÓRDIA. Disponível em: <https://misericordia.com.br>. Acesso em: 12 fev. 2019.

ALMADA, Roberto. **O cansaço dos bons**: a logoterapia como alternativa ao desgaste profissional. São Paulo: Cidade Nova, 2013.

ARAGÃO, Gilbraz. Os desafios dos movimentos e das novas comunidades. *In: GRUPO DE REFLEXÃO DA COMISSÃO EPISCOPAL DE PASTORAL PARA O LAICATO DA CNBB. **Sujeitos eclesiais**: sal da terra e luz do mundo. Reflexões sobre o documento 105. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2017. p. 93-102.*

ARAUTOS DO EVANGELHO. Disponível em: <https://www.arautos.org/>. Acesso em: 12 fev. 2019.

ARQUIDIOCESE DE BELO HORIZONTE. **Estatuto do Movimento**. Movimento Eclesial Missionários Servos da Ternura de Deus. 2017. Mimeo.

- BERGER, Peter. **O dossel sagrado**: elementos para uma teoria sociológica da Religião. São Paulo: Paulus, 1985.
- BÍBLIA DE JERUSALÉM. São Paulo: Paulus, 2002.
- BINS, Rejane Maria Dias de Castro. Eclesialidade, novas comunidades e concílio Vaticano II. As novas comunidades como uma forma de autorrealização da Igreja. **Cadernos de Teologia Pública**, São Leopoldo, ano 13, v. 13, n. 106, p. 3-23, 2016.
- BOFF, Leonardo. **A Trindade é a melhor comunidade**. Petrópolis, Vozes, 1988.
- BRANDÃO, Carlos Rodrigues. Fronteira da fé – Alguns sistemas de sentido, crenças e religiões no Brasil de hoje. **Estudos avançados**, São Paulo, v. 18, n. 52, p. 261-288, 2004.
- BRANDÃO, Carlos Rodrigues. Ser católico: dimensões brasileiras. Um estudo sobre a atribuição da religião. In: SACHS, Viola *et al.* **Brasil & EUA: religião e identidade nacional**. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1988.
- BRIGHENTI, Agenor. **A Igreja do futuro e o futuro da Igreja**: perspectivas para a evangelização na aurora do terceiro milênio. São Paulo: Paulus, 2001.
- CARRANZA, Brenda; MARIZ, Cecília Loreto. Novas comunidades católicas: por que crescem? In: CARRANZA, B.; MARIZ, C. L.; CAMURÇA, M. **Novas comunidades católicas**: em busca do espaço pós-moderno. Aparecida: Ideias & Letras, 2009. p. 139-170.
- CARRATO, José Ferreira. **As Minas Gerais e os primórdios do Caraça**. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1963.
- CNBB. **Os cristãos leigos e leigas na Igreja e na sociedade**. Documentos da CNBB, 105. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2016.
- CNBB. Subsídios doutrinários da CNBB. **Igreja particular, movimentos eclesiais e novas comunidades**. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2005.
- CÓDIGO DE DIREITO CANÔNICO (CIC). São Paulo: Loyola, 1983.
- CODIN, Victor; ZEVALLOS, Noé. **Vida religiosa**: história e teologia. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1987.
- COMSHALOM.COM. Disponível em: <https://www.comshalom.org/>. Acesso em: 30 jul. 2019.
- COMUNIDADE ÁRVORE DA VIDA. Disponível em: <http://comunidadearvoredavida.com.br/po/missao/>. Acesso em: 02 ago. 2019.
- COMUNIDADE CANÇÃO NOVA. Estatuto Canônico da Comunidade Canção Nova. Disponível em: https://img.cancaonova.com/cnimages/especiais/uploads/sites/11/2017/03/CancaoNova_Estatuto_Canonico_230614.pdf. Acesso em: 13 fev. 2019.
- COMUNIDADE CATÓLICA NOVA ALIANÇA. Disponível em: www.novaalianca.com.br. Acesso em: 30 jul. 2019.
- COMUNIDADE CATÓLICA SHALOM. **Estatutos**. Aquiraz: Edições Shalom, 2012.

CONGREGAÇÃO PARA OS INSTITUTOS DE VIDA CONSAGRADA E AS SOCIEDADES DE VIDA APOSTÓLICA. **Ecclesiae sponsae imago (ESI)**. 2017.

Disponível em:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/rc_con_ccsclife_doc_20180608_istruzione-ecclesiasponsaeimago_sp.html. Acesso em: 12 ago. 2019.

CONSELHO EPISCOPAL LATINO-AMERICANO. **Conclusões da Conferência de Medellín** – 1968. Texto oficial. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2010.

CONSELHO EPISCOPAL LATINO-AMERICANO. **Documento de Santo Domingo**. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1993.

FERREIRA, Wagner. **As novas comunidades no contexto sócio-cultural contemporâneo**. Cachoeira Paulista: Editora Canção Nova, 2011.

FIORES, Stefano de; GOFFI, Tullo. **Dicionário de espiritualidade**. São Paulo: Paulus, 1993.

FRANCISCO, Fernando Rodrigues. As contribuições das novas comunidades cristãs para a teologia do laicato. **Reveleto**, São Paulo, v. 6, n. 9, p. 39-54, jan./jun. 2012.

FRATERNIDADE DAS NOVAS COMUNIDADES DO BRASIL. **Novas comunidades: primavera da Igreja**. São Paulo: Editora Canção Nova, 2008.

GERALDO, Denilson. As formas de vida consagrada como dom do Espírito Santo à Igreja. **Revista de Cultura Teológica**, São Paulo, v. 19, n. 74, p. 87-109, abr./jun. 2011.

GRUPO DE REFLEXÃO DA COMISSÃO EPISCOPAL DE PASTORAL PARA O LAICATO DA CNBB. **Sujeitos eclesiais: sal da terra e luz do mundo**. Reflexões sobre o documento 105. São Paulo: Paulinas, 2017.

HÈRVIEU-LÉGER, Daniele. **O peregrino e o convertido: a religião em movimento**. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2008.

JOÃO PAULO II, Papa. **Christifideles laici**. São Paulo: Paulinas, 1990.

JOÃO PAULO II, Papa. Messaggio al Congresso mondiale dei movimenti ecclesiali. **L'Osservatore Romano**, 28 maggio 1998.

JOÃO PAULO II, Papa. **Vita consecrata**. São Paulo: Paulinas, 1996.

MARIZ, Cecília L.; LOPES, Paulo Victor Leite. O reavivamento católico no Brasil e o caso da Toca de Assis. *In*: TEIXEIRA, Faustino; MENEZES, Renata. **Catolicismo plural: dinâmicas contemporâneas**. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2009. p. 75-108.

MARIZ, Cecília. A Renovação Carismática Católica: uma igreja dentro da Igreja? **Civitas**, Porto Alegre, v. 3, n. 1, p. 169-186, jun. 2003.

MARIZ, Cecília. Catolicismo no Brasil contemporâneo: reavivamento e diversidade. *In*: TEIXEIRA, Faustino; MENEZES, Renata. **As religiões no Brasil: continuidades e rupturas**. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2006. p. 53-68.

MIRANDA, Júlia. **Carisma, sociedade e política: novas linguagens do religioso no político**. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 1999.

MISSIONÁRIOS CONSAGRADOS. **Regra de vida dos Missionários Consagrados(as)**. 2005. Mimeo.

PINHEIRO, Luiz Antônio. Expressões leigas da vida do Povo de Deus na Arquidiocese de Belo Horizonte. *In*: BOSCHI, Caio César; PINHEIRO, Luiz Antônio. **A arquidiocese de Belo Horizonte e o laicato**. Belo Horizonte: Editora PUC Minas, 2015. p. 95-158.

PORTELA, Rodrigo. **Em busca do dossel sagrado**: a Toca de Assis e as novas sensibilidades religiosas. 2009. Tese (Doutorado em Ciência da Religião) – Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, Juiz de Fora, 2009.

RATZINGER, Joseph. I movimenti ecclesiali e la loro collocazione teológica. *In*: PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM PRO LAICIS. **I movimenti nella chiesa**. Atti del congresso mondiale dei movimenti ecclesiali. Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1999.

RUMSTAIN, Ariana; ALMEIDA, Ronaldo de. Os católicos no trânsito religioso. *In*: TEIXEIRA, Faustino; MENEZES, Renata. **Catolicismo plural**: dinâmicas contemporâneas. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2009. p. 31-55.

SANCHIS, Pierre. As religiões dos brasileiros. **Horizonte**: revista de estudos de teologia e ciências da religião, Belo Horizonte, v. 1, n. 2, p. 28-43, 2º sem. 1997.

SANCHIS, Pierre. Religiões, religião... Alguns problemas do sincretismo no campo religioso brasileiro. *In*: SANCHIS, Pierre (org.). **Fiéis e cidadãos**: percursos de sincretismo no Brasil. Rio de Janeiro: Ed UERJ, 2001.

SANTOS, Rocélia Barbosa dos. **Novas comunidades católicas**: gênese, confrontos e desafios comunicativos na sociedade contemporânea. 2014. Dissertação (Mestrado em Comunicação Social) – Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2014.

SCARAMUZZI, Iacopo. Virgens consagradas. O Vaticano identifica um fenômeno em expansão. 2018. Disponível em: <http://www.ihu.unisinos.br/78-noticias/580579-vingens-consagradas-o-vaticano-identifica-um-fenomeno-em-expansao>. Acesso em: 10 ago. 2019.

SHALOM. **Estatutos da Comunidade Católica Shalom**. Fortaleza: Edições Shalom, 2012.

SILVA, Emanuel Freitas da. Como se produz um novo católico carismático: elementos da espiritualidade da comunidade Shalom. **Caminhos**, Goiânia, v. 17, n. 1, p. 43-64. jan./jun. 2019.

SOUZA, Carlos Frederico Barboza de. A Conferência Episcopal de Medellín: inspiração para uma mística latino-americana e caribenha. **Horizonte**, Belo Horizonte, v. 16, n. 50, p. 698-728, maio/ago. 2018.

TEIXEIRA, Faustino. Faces do catolicismo brasileiro contemporâneo. *In*: TEIXEIRA, Faustino; MENEZES, Renata. **Catolicismo plural**: dinâmicas contemporâneas. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2009. p. 17-30.

TOCA DE ASSIS. Disponível em: <http://tocadeassis.org.br/>. Acesso em: 10 jun. 2019.

VATICANO II. **Compêndio do Vaticano II**: constituições, decretos, declarações. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1983.

ZANOTO, Gizele. Os Arautos do Evangelho no espectro católico contemporâneo. Disponível em: <http://www.dhi.uem.br/gtreligiao/pdf9/13.pdf>. Acesso em: 06 maio. 2019.