

UNDERSTANDING PASTORAL MINISTRY IN A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE IN THE EVANGELIZATION OF MERU CATHOLIC DIOCESE, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The Church in the world is expected to lead her children and the whole society to Good Christian living. She has to bear witness to others through her teaching and apostolic zeal. The Church has to use effective methods to reaching out to people and converting them to Christ. The model of Church as people of God has a theological connotation that will influence the people to respect God and themselves. Ministry is just what official designated ministers do but rather a function of the faith community. Ministry in the fullest sense means meeting the pastoral needs of the members of the community. Therefore, it would seem that one of the most important ministries of officially designated ministers is to facilitate the doing of ministry in the congregations. The paper captures the Challenges affecting the pastoral ministry in Meru Diocese. Pastoral planning as a factor that affects the effort of evangelization in the SCC. Practices of evangelization that affect African People/Family. We have admitted the existence of complacency in observation of the commandment of God and Christian tenants in the local diocese of Meru. Challenge of Evangelization as regards the goal of Christian communities. We know that the option of the SCCs was inspired by a certain number of challenges. These challenges are problems that were affecting the growth of the Church and evangelization. The community therefore is where mutual relationship and love is expressed amongst members. The new community of Christ is expected to show love and charity towards the brothers and sisters by proclaiming the good news to all nations.

Keywords: *Pastoral Ministry, Evangelization, Small Christian Communities, Church as Family of God, Meru Catholic Diocese, Christian Community*

1.0 Introduction

The Church in the world is expected to lead her children and the whole society to Good Christian living. She has to bear witness to others through her teaching and apostolic zeal. The Church has to use effective methods to reaching out to people and converting them to Christ. The model of Church as people of God has a theological connotation that will influence the people to respect God and themselves. According to Rahner therefore “the relationship thus repressed in the term “people of God” provides the foundation for the people’s pledge of royalty to this real and actual God of his honesty (covenant) and for its hope in his promises.¹ Our hope lies with God who created heaven and earth. He gives us his son to establish a new covenant with him. (1cor1: 25) with his lord. “He called a race made up of Jews and gentles to be one, not according to the flesh, but in the spirit, and this race would be the new people of God.² The new people of God look beyond their country of origin and societal status. As St. Paul tells us that “there is neither Greek nor Jew were, rather, Christ who is everything in all of you” (Cor 13:11). The law of love will bind this new people together, as Christ has loved us. The final end of people of God “ is the kingdom of God, which has been began by God himself on earth, and which is to be further extended until it is brought to perfection by him at the end of time.³

2.0 Ministry and the Christian Community

2.1 Ministry Meets the Pastoral Needs of the Members of the Community

Ministry is just what official designated ministers do but rather a function of the faith community. Ministry in the fullest sense means meeting the pastoral needs of the members of the community. Therefore, it would seem that one of the most important ministries of officially designated ministers is to facilitate the doing of ministry in the congregations. While it is evident that officially designated ministers will themselves minister (e.g., Engage in sacramental and other ministries), it seems just as evident one of the principals’ tasks of officially designated ministers is to encourage all the members of the community to participate in its ministry.⁴ It is impossible for officially designated ministers to take care of all the pastoral needs of the members of the communities to which they minister. All who is the name of Jesus Christ in such a way as to meet since portion of the pastoral needs of community are by that very fact exercising pastoral leadership (system leadership). They are doing the works of Jesus and the members of a community of faith can have the rewarding experience of exercising this kind of leadership.⁵

2.2 Small Christian Communities Support Each Other through Evangelization

A small Christian community is the coming together of Catholic Christians in order to share bible services, contemplate about them and put them in their daily life. Thus coming together creates a bond or a relationship among them, and culminates in the formation of uniting of people and hence the SCCs. The members are meaningful and enlightened in all aspect of life. Its communities live in community that is radiant. A SCC can also be described to be a group of religious people who have close relationship, living together, assisting each other and supporting each other in another way through which evangelization is aimed at. Among the beneficiaries of evangelization are the Christians. It is a fact that if Christians are not spiritually

¹ Karl Rahner and Herbert, Vorgimler, People of God in Conscience Theological Dictionary, 2nd ed (London: Burns and Oates, 1983), 375

² Dogmatic constitution on the church, LG, 9

³ Vatican Council II: constitution on the Church (Notre Dame, Indiana: fide Pauline’s, Inc 1965), 24

⁵ Evelyn Faxon Whitehead, The parish in Community and ministry. (New York. Toronto: Paulines Press, 1978.) 77

fed them risk starvation hence their evangelization is of fundamental importance, if they are to grow in holiness and with deep relation with God. For this reason, the groups reflect upon in Jesus Christ, observe or hold certain rural values and rules, sharing hope and charity among others.

The gospel which the beginning of SCCs, it was Jesus who instituted the group and therefore its origin can be traced to him. When Jesus began giving sermons, he was not alone but with company of this twelve apostles (Luke 8:1-23). More so a close look on Jesus' life with apostles portrays some apart of brotherly life. (Luke 8: 21 mt 12.48-50). On the day of Pentecost, the apostles were together and Jesus sent down the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2: 22-7; 52)

When Christians meet in SCCs their faith and unity among themselves is strengthened. In the Acts of Apostles where this way of life is rooted, the newly converted made a community of united Christians, living together and sharing the gospel. The individual people who constituted the group sold off their properties and shared it among themselves as per each one's needs. Being assiduous in prayers and embracing communal life in all they did, they attracted many to Christian way of life. However, it has been a struggle for the diocese to have other SCCs because of marriage problem, lack of proper planning and zealous Christians

2.3 Small Christian Community as a Family of Evangelization

The community therefore is where mutual relationship and love is expressed amongst members. The new community of Christ is expected to show love and charity towards the brothers and sisters by proclaiming the good news to all nations (Mat 28: 18-20). Every member of the people of God is expected to contribute and exercise his or her role in building the community. In building this community there is need for dialogue. This dialogue should be done at all levels, and according to the African synod in the Church it has to be "between Bishops' conferences and the Vatican, between Bishops' conferences of the different nations between the bishops, priests, religious faithful workers and the lay faithful in each diocese: between leaders in the same Church."⁶ Magesa attests that unity ought to be the nature and essence of Family. God constituted the visible Church from the beginning and it as to "bear the needs of being truly a family of God".⁷ The family in Africa is viewed as the place of security. The synod urged the Christian faithful to be considerate of others, prioritize solidarity, warmth in human relationships, accepting others, and promote dialogue and trust. As Magesa asserts that the more the Church moves towards universal solidarity, the more it becomes generally a family "embraces everyone irrespective of class, gender, race or ability."⁸ Mbiti states that "I am because we are and since we are therefore I am"⁹ therefore we also thought that in the Church I am because we are and since we are therefore I am. Mbiti notes that African people are notoriously religious. We are therefore either to bring ourselves closer to God according to the needs of the individual and community. Africa always pray where there is a need. There is no moment in the African man or woman pray where there is no need.

In his exhortation after the African synod, John Paul II had the view that "the Church as family cannot reach her full potential as Church unless she is divided into communities small enough to foster close human relationships."¹⁰ He said this is support of the African bishop's idea of promoting a family model of the Church. This model was recommended during the synod and

⁶ Vatican Council II: constitution on the Church (Notre Dame, Indiana: fide Pauline's, Inc 1965), 24

⁷ Laurenti magesa "Christ spirit as empowered of the Church as Family" in the model of Church as family" Meeting the African Challenge, ed, Patrick Ryan (Nairobi; CUEA Publications, 1999) no. 29

⁸ Laurenti magesa "Christ spirit as empowered of the Church as Family" in the model of Church as family" Meeting the African Challenge, ed, Patrick Ryan (Nairobi; CUEA Publications, 1999) no. 2

⁹ John Mbiti: African religion and Philosophy (London: Heinemann, 1969), 108

¹⁰ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa (The Church in Africa), (Nairobi: Pauline's Publications Africa, 1995). No. 89

SCCs were said to be the ideal means of fostering such model, the following passage from the message of the synod explains the point clearly. “The Church, the family of God, implies the creation of small communities at the human level, living or basic ecclesial communities. In such communities, which are cells of the Church as family, one is formed to live concretely and authentically the experience of fraternity. In them the spirit of disinterested service, solidarity and common goals reigns. It is such communities that will provide the best means to fight against ethnocentrism within the Church itself and more, widely, within our nations.”¹¹

2.4 Evangelization in the African Community

The history of Christianity in Africa has provoked mixed teachings among Christians and their leaders in Africa. Although Christianity brought many blessings to the African people, the African situation seems to challenge the relevance of the Christian faith.¹² The synod fathers define evangelizations “proclamation by word and witness of the good news of Jesus Christ. The proclamation of the good news, whose main goal is “sanctity, the living expression of our configuration to Christ must take into account and touch every aspect of life of the African people. The African situation is not only about what the African people endure in their daily life, it also encompasses what African people believe and cherish deep in their heart. The bishops stated that “the African believes in God from his traditional life and religion and thus, is also open to the full and definitive revelation of God in Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, the word made flesh. Jesus the good news is God, who saves the African, who loves the African. Who gives the African rain and life and children and health and prosperity and saves him from oppression and slavery”.¹³

2.5 Formative Community

Formation is a process which enables one to accept himself and herself as he or she is and to feel accepted and to learn to love and to be loved. Giorgini notes that formation was to form men and women who live in community, with Christ at its center, involving the apostles, poses all things in common that they may truly be one in heart and soul in Christ who is the head, the shepherd and the provider for all.¹⁴ In this process, one can develop or grow into the person one is called to become. Formation aims at the integral part of a person and therefore lasts for a life time. The universal love in the very part of community life and the religious formation. Thus formation encompasses all aspects of our human maturity, namely cognitive, affective and behavioral. The formation ought to lead an individual to inner peace. However, ongoing formation of pastoral ministers is geared towards the spiritual and human growth of the person. Therefore, communities should be places where people take charge of shaping and forming their lives together ground mission. Peck asserts that “community is an amphitheatre where the gladiators have laid down their weapons and their armour, where they have become skilled at listening and understanding, where they reject each other’s gifts and accept each other’s limitations, when they celebrate their differences and bid each other’s wounds, where they are committed to a struggle together rather against each other.”¹⁵ Orbe states that “ongoing formation is not merely recourse for spiritual subsistence and for a process of healthy human maturation. Moreover, for those with personal responsibilities, ongoing formation is vital necessity and should be looked upon as serious moral obligation. Therefore, in line with

¹¹ African Synod. Pope's Opening Homily, Message of the Synod, Message of the AMECEA and IMBISA BISHOPS (Nairobi: Pauline's Publications Africa, 1994) 20-21

¹² Cecil Mc Mary, “the Implications of the synod: Discussions for the church in Africa”, in AFTER VO. 37.1 (1995) 15-33

¹³ Cecil Mc Mary, “the Implications of the synod: Discussions for the church in Africa”, in AFTER VO. 37.1 (1995) No. 4

¹⁴ Andrian van Kaaman, the vowed Life: dynamics of Personnel and spiritual unfolding. (Denville: dimension Books, 1968) 222

¹⁵ M. Scott peck, the different Drum: Community making and Peace (New York: a touchstone Book, 1988) 71

vankaan we can claim that formation is neither education nor information but a process of growth in ones' life. Physical, spiritual and psychological it is to become a complete and mature person. Mc Alister notes that "in order to establish some foundation for the psychology of the community, it is important to understand that the community in which an individual lives is largely structured by the past memories, present needs and persistent anxieties that live within the individual"¹⁶ community life involves direct and meaningful commitment between the individuals and members. Community requires mature personalities, experienced freedom and self-determination.

2.6 Vocation and Christian Community

According to *gaudium et spes* the duty of fostering the vocation to priesthood falls on the entire Christian community, which should discharge it principally by living full Christian lives, in particular families make the greatest contribution.¹⁷ Vatican council II describes vocation as a response to an action of divine providence which endows with appropriate qualities and helps with divine grace those who have been chosen by God to share in the hierarchical priesthood of Christ. However, vocation is one of the fundamental notions of scripture and Christian tradition. It is a key concept in the councils' ecclesiology.

The second Vatican council noted that scripture has two related concepts. However, vocation: the divine call to all human beings to either into communion with God, from universal vocation and in the service of it. Vocation involves a calling out of an individual or group, chosen from among others, distinguished and given a special mission and destiny.¹⁸ It is in context of this common vocation of humanity that Vatican Council II sees the role of the Church in manifesting Christ. The Church reveals to operate her true situation and calling: the Church serves this universal vocation. In this sense the Church is for the world. Her role is to lead humanity to communion with God, which is their vocation. This is the vocation of the Church as whole and every Christian is called to participate in to Church's mission.¹⁹

Those who God calls he also consecrates. Baptism is the consecration of those called to the church. For this reason, all baptized persons poses a common dignity of members, deriving from their rebirth in Christ, a common vocation to perfection, one salvation one hope and undivided charity.²⁰ This universal baptismal vocation is a call to apostolate. Also needed primarily is a call to holiness because without holiness, the apostolate would not be fruitful. The signs must contain what it is to signify, because the Church is is holy. All in the church are called to holiness.²¹ There is a wonderful diversity in the Church of natural and supernatural; gifts of grace and charity. This variety of gifts corresponds to variety of vocations. Among them are vocation to the priesthood, to consecrated life, to lay life or marriage because they are constitutive; they are mutually irreducible, each with its own purpose and *modus*. However, ordained priesthood and the state of counsels serves the whole Christian people, but indifferent ways and at different levels. Their presence is necessary if the Catholicity of the Church is to be fully realized. It is my believe that Vatican council II has opened a new perspective on life, consecrated by profession of the evangelical councils.

¹⁶ Robert J. Mc Alister, *conflict in community* (Collegeville: St. John's university Press 1969) 36.

¹⁷ *Gadium et spes*, declaration on religious Liberty, No 29. Vatican City.

¹⁸ Olline Dicks, *Mutual relations* second edition (Chicago, Franciscan Herder press, 1986) 4-44

¹⁹ Rahner Karl, *The love of Jesus and vocation* (University of Notre Dame Press 1997) 91

²⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, 23

²¹ *Lumen Gentium*, 39

3.0 Challenges Affecting Pastoral Ministry in Meru Diocese

Noble common elements in the parish are active role of the people of God, mission and structures to support life and mission. Paul VI addressed the Roman clergy in these words “ we believe simply that this old and renewable structure of the parish has an indispensable mission of great contemporary importance: to create the basic community of the Christian people: to initiate and gather the people in the accustomed expression of liturgical life; to converse and new faith in the people of today; to serve as the school for teaching the salvific message of Christ; to put solidarity in practice and work the humble charity of good brotherly works.”²²

3.1 Challenges Affecting Local Clergy

After the local clergy had taken control, still some problems are eminent. Priests have been viewed as forming a development social class leading luxuries life. Some priests are considered to be squandering money, drunkards brutal, practically involved behavior contrary to their vocation. This has led, some Christians to abandon their faith. Some priests are considered to be limited to the parish surroundings only: they do not pay visits to various Christian families and thus do not labour to know their flock. Some people consider priest as segregated people. All those manifested behavior is thought to be an outcome of the training offered in seminaries. The Europeans left and the Africans still continued to use the same methodology. Though the priests attained firm theoretical training, it could not come to terms with the actual life of the indigenous people.

3.2 Untrained Catechists

In the Catholic Diocese of Meru especially in parishes with many outstations, catechists preside over liturgical assemblies such as services on funeral liturgies. Some of them “are also co-workers in the ministry of preaching, visiting the sick, carrying catechetical instructions for the sacraments and as ministers of the Holy Communion.”²³ There are also other causes of poor comments of an intellectual nature, which are often done to the behavior of these agents of evangelization. The language of communication would not have been a problem, since most people of the area understand and speak Kiswahili language. The way some catechists handle the audience causes problem. Due to poor skills in communication some messages give distorted meaning and the people of God are left at a loss. Other times some of them, instead of speaking because they have something to communicate simply speak for the sake of speaking only. Such communication eventually end up annoying the audience and do not achieve much some other catechists do not time well when to communicate and when not to, and end up training communicate to ones who are well disposed and the end results is hurting people.

3.3 Challenge of Evangelization in Dealing with the Problems of the People

This problem consisted of the inability of the ordinary agents of the evangelization to deal concomitantly with the institutions of the Church to be run and real deep problem of the people, and yet there was possibility to free the agents of evangelization from the responsibility of institutions by entrusting them to the lay people. Unfortunately, no much had been done in order to train the laity to run those institutions. They had to rely on priests, religious and sisters who were the agents of evangelization. As this explains why early evangelization remained at this surface without going deeper in the very life of the people hence this lacked deeper evangelization. In brief the decreasing number of missionaries on the other hand, and the increasing number of Christians on the other hand disfavored deep evangelization. The patent

²² Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici* (CL) London: CTS, 1988. No. 26,24

²³ Lukwata, John, *Integrated African Liturgy*: (Eldoret; AMECEA. Gaba Publications. CUEA Press,2011). 42

fact that local Churches were growing up but still being relying on the human and material resources provided by benefactors from western countries. This was sign of Church not yet developed and a hidden challenge which in some way was affecting evangelization in Africa. There was a great need of more evangelizers because the missionaries were few. There is the Challenge of Christian faith and the traditional beliefs. The problem of faith mostly concerned the dichotomy between Christian faith and the traditional beliefs. In other words, there was lack of a suitable synthesis between the two realities. Indeed, Christianity, being associated with the colonialism, was considered as foreign religion whereas African religions were seen by missionaries as satanic; superstition, devilish. The truth is that the missionaries did not penetrate the true life of the people when evangelizing. Hence this lead the people to live double standard life.

3.4 Challenge of the Community Dimension of Christian Life

However, the study has shown that the challenge was with pastoral ministers thus the bishops of Eastern Africa. For them, the practical life of the faithful of the independent churches and some section groups was a kind of challenge to the Catholic Christians. Indeed, the faithful seemed to more convincingly than the –dimension of a genuine African, that is to say each individual African feels in his/ her body to belong strongly to his /her community that he/she lives, works, and celebrates different events of life and vice-versa. Unfortunately, in the life of Catholic Christians, those teachings were not noticeable. However, one observes that was a Catholic and does not know his fellow Catholic but know his brothers and sisters thus look ridiculous.²⁴ This challenge remained unresolved even today as the relationships among the Catholic Christians are get to be renewed. However, some Catholic who leave the church site such as the region for then to desert the church. The Catholic dioceses of Meru under the leadership of Bishops, Silas Njiru and Salesious Mugambi respectively, inspired the rest of the diocese in Kenya to involve the laity in the work of evangelization of the Church.

Those structures were genuine administrative and decision making bodies. The laity were first described in contrast with the clergy and religious. Their mission was to assist in an apostolate which in reality was that of the hierarchy. They were to evangelize people in places where the priests asked them to go. As such, the laity therefore were auxiliaries of the successors of the apostles who were the Bishops assisted by priests. However, the laity cannot dare to sanctify; teach or make independent decisions without hierarchical consultation and directive. The sacraments of baptism and confirmation make the laity mature and responsible evangelizers and agents of Christ, the laity must conquer new currents and disciples for Christ and spread the kingdom of God. There is need on the side of the laity to have confidence and trust in the Church and its hierarchy. The laity task was to detect the negative elements in society that militate against Christian values.

Catholic action however, was seen in the 1950s as a general united action of all Catholic laity. An organized way of evangelizing society, often carried out by a few zealous laities. It was a mission performed under the direction of the hierarchy but accomplished by the laity themselves. It was a sharing, by the laity, in a specifically hierarchical apostolate and therefore structural and institutional by definition. This implied, that it was complementary and subordinate to the hierarchical apostolate and it was seen to be invariably dependent on the authority of the hierarchy. The relationship between Catholic teachers and the Catholic leadership is not that of employee to employer. It is rather that of mutual collaborators in the ministry of integral evangelization in which the school institution is a key instrument. The active role of laity is a protagonist of integral evangelization earthly realities. There has been a

²⁴ B.Hearne ‘The church in Africa’ in a new Missionary Era,(Ed0 Flanager (Maryknoll. New York: Orbis Books,1982) 50

general practical shift from the Catholic action model of lay participation of the Pre-Vatican II era.

4.0 Pastoral Planning and Evangelization in Small Christian Communities

There are a number of barriers to pastoral planning that affect the effort on evangelization. Pastoral agents experience obstacle in pastoral planning. Inadequate involvement of the laity in pastoral planning. Consequently, in some parishes and SCCs planning of activities is done by SCCs members alone without the pastoral ministers thus priests, religious and catechists. Poor planning on the side of pastoral personnel in the parish affect evangelization. A parish is an organic community where people are formed, organized and assisted to actively perform their responsibilities in their mission of the Church in the world.²⁵

4.1 Pastoral Planning and Its Effect on Evangelization

An organization depends very much on the way the top ministers wants it be done. Every diocese depends very much on the way Bishop wants it to be run. A strategic plan may be there but if a bishop or parish priest in the parish finds it not worthy or necessary we may ignore it. However, for a pastoral plan to be implemented by the members a legislature or competent authority has to endorse it. If he does not, then the whole planning process becomes flawed. Like any type of secular planning, pastoral planning has its barriers. These barriers can be caused by pastoral agents, lack of competence in finance, fear of change, fear of being evaluated and so on. Consequently, all these barriers in one way or another affects the evangelization process.

4.2 Obstacles Experienced by Pastoral Agents in Pastoral Planning

“One of the most common obstacles to pastoral planning within the Church’s institution is that some pastoral agents feel threatened by new changes and new ways of doing things.”²⁶ Most people feel comfortable to remain in the status quo. Anything new usually has its demands and this makes most pastoral agents to feel unhappy where they are. Pastoral planning exposes the strengths weaknesses, opportunities and threats of any organization or institution. This is threatening scenario to some people particularly if their weaknesses are exposed either in parish or diocese. They would prefer to trust the idea of pastoral planning. Note that a pastoral plan is like a microscopic tool that can expose one easily during evaluation, so this makes most managers dislike it. Infact very few pastoral agents feel at ease when evaluated.

However, planning automatically becomes a threat to one’s personal lack of security or confidence. The best remedy then is to fight it and keep the maintenance of the status quo. Another reason why some pastoral agents refuse to cooperate in pastoral planning is that it involves collaborative ministry. “Collaborative ministry brings together various gifts to accomplish the mission of Jesus Christ. The gospel of collaboration is to discover ways to identify, release, utilize and unify the gifts of all the baptized Christians”²⁷ this sometimes causes a big problem to a pastor who feels that his position is threatened. Also he becomes worried of the new challenges that his contribution will bring. So then pastoral agent’s foreseeing these problems find it much easier or frustrated all together if it was already started.

²⁵ Cosmas O. Aluende “ The parish as the primary place for mission in Africa.’AFTER,55 1&2, p 48

²⁶ Mejia’from life to Pastoral Theology the Cycle” 111

²⁷ Louslan Sofield, carrol Juliano, Collaborative Ministry Skills and guidelines (Notrine Dame, Ave maria Press ,1987) 16

4.3 Poor Planning in Dealing with Pastoral Personnel in the Parish

A parish is an organic community where people are formed, organized and assisted to actively perform their responsibilities in their mission of the Church in the world.²⁸ The parish provides an environment for the realization of new theological thrust and models that present the Church as a communion and family in the sociological concept of Africa.²⁹ In the new evangelization we are invited to renew the nature and role of the parish in the life and mission of the Church.³⁰

It has to be a location where the necessary resources, both material and personnel, can be found and where the community lives and breathes, most especially in and through the liturgy and prayer.³¹ Lack of a clear planning on accountability as a tool for good stewardship in the parish, lowers morale in contributing funds for parish projects. This has developed and is always the source of conflict between catechists, parish priests, families and lay elders. Secondly, the lack of planning is disappointing Christians and making them vulnerable to the mushrooming religious movements and sects and susceptible to secularism and negative popularity piety.

Thirdly, the lack of policy to guide Christians in pastoral offices has created irregularities during political campaigns, conflicting charism among Christians, and relapsing traditional religious. Fourthly, the lack of planning is creating confusion among particular parish priests with regard to record keeping. This is affecting records on baptism, first Holy Communion, confirmation matrimony and death. Fifth lack of planning is causing negligence among the pastoral ministers e.g. Parish priest, catechist, teacher's parents, lay apostolate movements, SCCs, youth and children on catechetical instructions, join lay apostolate associations, dialogue, justice and peace, promotion and planning in SCCs for deeper evangelization in the diocese of Meru.

5.0 Practices of Evangelization Affecting the African People and Family

Practices of evangelization refers to the different areas where evangelization take place and affects the life of the African people. These areas are diverse and yet can be grouped in two main categories; dialogue and liberation. Dialogue includes the many types of dialogue that the church in Africa must engage in its mission; dialogue with African Tradition religion (ATR), with other Christian denominations or Ecumenical dialogue and dialogue with other religion in which the synod fathers mentioned in a special way, dialogue with Islam. Interestingly, the proposition includes the dialogue within the Church as family of God.³²

The area of liberation take a special place in the propositions given to the Holy fathers by the synod fathers. Indeed, the synod fathers noticed the situation of injustice in Africa which compromises the respect to human dignity. Needless to remember the context in which Africa found itself in the 1990s, the synod fathers' message was addressed not only to the Christians but also the African leaders. Among the many issues addressed by the synod fathers, it is important and worth to note the issue of women. While acknowledging the "indispensable contribution which Africans women make to the family, Church and society" the synod fathers defended the existence of "customs, practices which deprive women of the rights and the respect to them"³³ the Church as family of God must pay attention to the place and role women in the Christian community and the society in general.

²⁸ Cosmas O. Aluende "The parish as the primary place for mission in Africa." AFTER, 55 1&2, p 48

²⁹ Africae Munus No. 133

³⁰ USSSB, The Parish: a people, A Mission, as structure, Washington. D.c.US conference of catholic Bishops, 1981 p 30

³¹ Anthony Barret, "evangelization, mission and pastoral strategies"

³² "African Synod Hailed as Historical event", The tablet 2118 8023 (May 14, 1994) 29

³³ "African Synod Hailed as Historical event", The tablet 2118 8023 (May 14, 1994) 47

The foregoing presentation of the history of the synod as well as the themes is important as we embark on the theological reflection stipulated in this study. It is always important to retain the fact that although the theme/image of the Church as family of God contributes the ecclesiological pillar of the synod, its importance and relevance must be understood within the framework of the synod in general.

5.1 Pastoral Activities Affecting Evangelization Due to the Large Population

Meru diocese is a vast area with large population as noted in the study and it's densely populated. As earlier realized of the parishes are ninety encompasses a large population of Christians. Meru diocese has over one million Christians. It has many outstations and SCCs serviced by around two hundred priests alone who resolve to provide both spiritual and pastoral needs to ninety parishes and over four thousand SCCs and over two hundred Catholic sponsored schools notwithstanding the sacramental celebration. Thus in pastoral view, the diocese needs an urgent and focused plan on formation to address and remedy the need. Demographic statistics from the Kenya government national council for population and development (NCPD) shows that an average every woman in Meru gives birth to between five to six siblings. The Church in Meru diocese has undoubtedly a high population of youth, but the diocese youth office is coordinated by a parish priest whole time and pastoral work initiates the need for proper full time ministry of youth. There has never been an elaborate strategic plan for youth ministry with clear guidelines and goals in the diocese of Meru it is assumed every parish has much groups and programs in existence. Assumption must be based on plans programs, action and measurable input and output.

5.2 Church as Family of God and Small Christian Communities

As mentioned earlier, one may take the choice made by the synod fathers on the image of church as the family of God, as the central theme of the synod. However, one has to be careful not to neglect the bigger picture of the synod. In the other words, the image of the Church as family of God must be understood within the scope of the integral evangelization of the African people. The Church in an African context of course, the mystery of the love of the triune God is the origin, model and purpose of the Church, according to the second Vatican council, but for the synod fathers such a mystery "finds suitable expression in Africa in the image of the church as family."³⁴ In this image, the synod fathers appreciate the communitarian aspect of the African culture and its important impact on the understanding, the meaning and the mission of the Church in Africa, the image of the church as family impels the Church in Africa to bring the goodnews to the grassroots where in African reality occurs in all its dimensions. The synod fathers insist on the role of SCCs which, they say, "Should be permeated by the universal love of Jesus Christ is known, loved and served in personal and communal way"³⁵. In other words evangelization begins with and takes place in and through the family as the domestic Church.³⁶

5.3 Catechesis as a Pastoral Ministry of the Church

Catechesis as pastoral ministry of the Church implies the ministry of the word. This ministry of the word in the Church takes many forms or dimensions of which catechesis acquires a secondary but vital position next to proclamation of the word. Other dimensions of this ministry are proclamation, or missionary preaching and apostolic witness. There is also the liturgical or sacramental dimension and then the theological form that is the systematic treatment and scientific investigation of the truth of Christian faith. The catechetical form of this mission of

³⁴ Lumen Gentium No. 8

³⁵ Lumen Gentium No. 9

³⁶ Lumen Gentium no 14

the Church is that which is intended to make the faith of men and women a live: conscious and active through the light of religious instruction.

In whatever case, the concrete reality of the pastoral mission or ministry of the church reveals that these dimensions are closely brought together. The catechesis Tradende by John Pul II Notices that catechesis cannot be dissociated from the Church's pastoral mission as whole. That catechesis as a stage in evangelization is built on certain number of elements of the church's ministry that have a catechetical aspect that prepares for catechesis, or that springs from it. Those elements are the initial proclamation of the gospel message through the kerygma to arouse faith, apologetics or examination of the rational for belief, experience of Christian living, celebration of the sacraments, integration into the ecclesial of Christian community living, celebration of the sacraments, integration into the ecclesial or Christian community and apostolic witness. In all these, catechesis as the pastoral ministry was a close link with each so that they integrate and complement each other in the pastoral mission of the Church. Through the ministry of catechesis as better understanding of the mystery of salvation is achieved. We have now come to realize that catechesis cannot be isolated from the other pastoral activities of the church because it can only function properly within the frame work of the Churches total pastoral mission.

These form of pastoral ministries thus, evangelization, leading and preaching etc. encompass not only catechesis but also the task of awakening the right attitude for the reception of catechesis without which its mission is justice. By catechesis here we mean the enlightening of human existence as Gods saving activity, by giving witness to Christ's mystery in the form of the proclamation of the word, for the purposes of awakening and fostering growth of faith. This is to stimulate men and women to live a real life of faith that comes to them through the medium of dissemination of the words "go therefore and make disciples of all nations' (Mt29:19). Faith depends on hearing and hearing on the word of Christ and this goodnews needs a coherent instruction for it to adhere and bear fruit in the one who hears it. "This proclamation of the word frees the other pastoral activities of the Church from their ambivalence and vagueness and serves as a norm manifesting their meaning."³⁷

Amalarpavadas in his article catechesis as a pastoral task of the Church, observes that between the first and second coming of Christ, between his paschal and Parousia, the Church has to fulfil her eschatological mission by announcing the mystery of the kingdom of God. That this one mission he continues to be the fundamental sacrament of salvation is triple, prophetic liturgical and doctrine. The church fulfills this triple mission by a threefold pastoral ministry: the ministry of the word through the mediation of proclamation, the ministry of worship through the mediation of celebration and the ministry of guidance through the mediation of organization and education of the Christian community in charity and maturity and service.³⁸

This mission of proclaiming the word is a fundamental ministry or mission of the church as Jesus himself has shown in his ministry of establishing the kingdom of God. The scripture says" he went round the whole of galilee teaching in their synagogue" (Mt4:23, Mk13, 13). The apostles took after the example of the master and devoted themselves to same talk saying "we shall devote ourselves to prayer and the service of the word' (Act14). Although catechesis is an enlighten and educative way. It is addressed to those who profess the faith already and to converts or those who have made the first act of faith as a response to evangelization. This is

³⁷ Making all thins new, Formation and programs of a new catechesis of Nitmegen (Holland,Divine word Publications Teaching, Illeinois,1968) 51-52

³⁸ D.S. amalorpavandas> "catechesis as apastoral Task of the church" In lumen Vitae Vol 27 No 2, 1977,259

done in view of awakening nourishing and educating them in the faith and deepening to complete their initial conversion.³⁹

Without the ministry of word from where catechesis taken of per se everything degenerates: liturgy into magic and ritualism, the law into legalism and Jurisdiction, institution, into institutionalism and pastors into administrative bosses.⁴⁰ A prophetic effort in the ministry of teaching is demanded to control this deviation and degeneration of the church by staying focused to her pastoral ministry of continues institution

6.0 Deeper Evangelization in the Local Church

We have admitted the existence of compliancy in observation of the commandment of God and Christian tenants in the local diocese of Meru. We have specified that compliancy is quality leading to superficiality of Christian life and even less percentage of those having communion with the Catholic faith. The compliancy appears in multiple forms: externalism, superficiality, confusion, historical innovations, syncretism, indifferentism etc, and in almost every constitutive aspect of evangelization; liturgy, sacraments and sacramental, devotions, life of prayer, SCCs and missionary activities. It is important for the diocese of Meru to renew herself and take up her evangelizing mission with fresh enthusiasm. Evangelizing with new enthusiasm is the way forward for the church in the third millennium according to Pope John Paul II. He wrote in his encyclical *Novo Millennio Invenire*: “Now is the time for each local Church to assess its fervor and find fresh enthusiasm for its spiritual and pastoral responsibilities by reflecting on what the spirit has been saying to the people of God in this special year (2002) and indeed the longer span of time from second Vatican Council to the great Jubilee.”⁴¹ Pope John Paul II exhorts the church to further explore into the mystery of Christ and first remains complacent after the year of great Jubilee. He says that “we must put Christ into the deep trusting in Christian words: *duc in altum*” what we have done this year cannot justify a sense of complacency, the experience we have had should inspire in us new energy and impel us to invest in concrete initiatives the enthusiasm which we have felt. In the cause of the kingdom there is no time for looking back, even less for setting into laziness much awaits us, and for this reason we must set about advancing upon effective post Jubilee pastoral plan.⁴²

Jesus Christ as the leader of Christian transformation has been manifested by his entirely public ministry of the proclamation of the kingdom of God, which has meant to summon people to become his followers. Therefore, Christ gathers around his followers and disciples’ initiatives through the proclamation of the goodnews. At a later stage, in his public ministry: Christ commissioned his apostles to go out to the whole world, preach the goodnews and baptize all those who believe. Since baptism is the gate way to other sacraments and therefore necessary for salvation, any efforts of renewal in the process of evangelization must begin with it. In other words, effort must be made to understand the meaning and implication of the sacrament of baptism to be able to live worthy Christian life. In the sacraments, the faithful encounter Jesus as the leader of transformation. Jesus the ideal minister is the universal messiah who wishes to invite all mankind into his wisdom. The evangelist Luke and others describes Jesus ministry as directed not only to the house of Israel but also to all people; the salvation which you have made ready in the sight of the nations, alight of revelation to the gentiles.” Lk2:30-32. Jesus Christ prayer over his followers indicates that he was authority over humanity and he wish that no single one should be lost (Jn; 1-24)

³⁹ D.S. amalorpavandas. “catechesis as a pastoral Task of the church” In *lumen Vitae* Vol 27 No 2, 1977,260

⁴⁰ D.S. amalorpavandas. “catechesis as a pastoral Task of the church” In *lumen Vitae* Vol 27 No 2, 1977,260

⁴¹ John Paul II, *Novo Millesio Invete*, No.3

⁴² John Paul II, *Novo Millesio Invete*, No.15

6.1 Ministry in the Parish

The ministry of the word and Eucharist are vital in any liturgical celebration. In a celebration the table of the word becomes the Eucharist which is the climax of participation. The bone of contention is not the word nor Eucharist but the active participation in the liturgy of word and Eucharist. To attain that full, active and conscious participation one needs to be fully prepared. The minister of the word will responsibly make people participate if only he/she can proclaim his word and God speaking to His people. The skill of communication and charisma in the ministry of the word will not be achieved just by worship but by instruction which must be ongoing. The faithful in the celebration participate also by being attentive if the reader proclaims articulately and clearly. Listening is part of participation if only the reader can be able to hold the assembly together with his voice. Then listening will be an active participation if it is added by the proclaimer "listening is a timely active participation." Listening both to the proclaimed word and the performed music can be full conscious and active participation.⁴³

The issue of the ministries of the word and Eucharist is to help us see the systems or the institutes that are supposed to be there. The other question on our mind is that what then after the institutes. The answer is the ongoing formation and the result is the active participation in the Church's ministry. This is the pastoral programme for the priest in parish which reminds him of the sacrament of ordination. Ordination to participate fully in Christ's ministry and make others participate by offering his service. By his service means affecting the ongoing instructions to those working tirelessly to instruct the lay ministers from time to time will make the whole assembly live with vigor and love of Christ whom they celebrate in any liturgical celebration.

The work of a catechist is a place of honour. Apart from doctrinal, moral and spiritual formation of catechist, he needs pastoral formation on pastoral ministries. As a teacher of the faith, he has a programme in the parish. If this is assiduously done, the catechist will be able to work well with fellow laity, the religious and the clergy in the relation of the pastoral programme of the parish. As some Christians become idle, ignorant in Church issues, unaffected by the gospel message and are tempted to take refuge in drugs or influenced by the modern fashion of materialism and secularism. The special training we are advocating for will not only quell their curiosity but also tap into the gift of their youthfulness and attract them in ministry in the Church. They will become more practical and productive in the Church and society.

6.2 Ongoing Formation and Training of the Whole Community

Ongoing formation and training is a need for every Christian. However, all Christians need a continuer's personal growth so as to reach a state of maturity. The journey to spiritual maturity is reality hence we mature into our true selves by actually living with others, by growing together and being one in Christ (Eph1:10). The formation of those who will form others is to be developed through appropriate course or suitable schools. Those who will be given the responsibility to form others have to receive proper formation⁴⁴. We see that ongoing and whole formation takes place within a Christian formation community. In the following subsections we look at the Christian formation community and all the elements that constitute a Christian community of formation.

6.3 Christian Formation Community

A true Christian community is a mystery. No human effort can create it without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Without Spirit's inspiration, we can never guarantee a formation community

⁴³ Sacred Music and liturgy Reform after Vatican II. Rome consociation internationalis Musicae sacrae, 1969.

⁴⁴ Chesly Jones, Geoffrey Wain Wright, Edward Yarwood, Eds. The study of spirituality (New York : Oxford University Press 1986) 586

in Christian sense. Human scene alone cannot account for its existence and continuation.⁴⁵ Susan marto in the book entitle commitment key to Christian rationality explains the role of the Holy spirit, by stating that “only a community of Christian formation that relies also on the power of the Holy spirit can become a pneumatic community as distinguished from merely “humanistic” community. We see that a humanistic community which is founded on human effort needs to be sustained not only by human effort and success but mainly by the power of the Holy Spirit. Susan moto states that “the pneumatic community that is the community of the Holy Spirit nourishes us before we mentally know what is going on in our general togetherness.⁴⁶ Any Christian community of formation finds its true expression in ecclesial communion, the mystical body of Christ. All the faithful are united in Jesus Christ. Susan moto further explains that some people may have some difficulties in relating with others. The Holy Spirit who is present in Christian community inspires the members to surpass personality differences and to live in harmony.

In his epistle to Galatians, St. Paul preaches to newly baptized that no matter the work or status, they are liberated by Christ. (Gal3; 28). The deepest affinity of Christian souls does not reside in a kindred collection of tastes, qualities and styles of life but Christ through baptism⁴⁷. Susan moto emphases that Christians are called to complement one another of their different contributions to the self being of the community.eg. One member of a Christian formation community may be blessed with more reflective powers, another with practical aptitudes together they constitute indifferent ways to the community⁴⁸. God given each person a different talent. All have to complement one another while living a Christian community of formation. In the next section we look at the spirituality of a Christian community of formation.

6.4 Spirituality of Christian Community Formation

The Holy Father pope John Paul II, writes in the apostolic letter “Novo Millennio invete”, that we need to promote a spirituality of communion, making it the growing principle of education, whenever individuals and Christians are formed. Whenever the ministers of the alter, consecrated persons and pastoral workers are trained, whenever families and communities are being built up.

The spirituality of communion introduces above all the hearts contemplation of the mystery the trinity dwelling in us and whole light also we might be able to see, shining on the faces of the brothers and sisters around us. The spirituality of Christian community of formation also means the ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of mystical body and therefore as those who are part of us.⁴⁹

This makes us to share their Joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and to attend to the needs, to offer them deep and genuine fellowship. The spirituality of community of formation implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and to prize it as a gift from God, not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it divinely but also as a gift for me.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Susan marto, Adrian van Kaam, comment key to Christian maturity (New Yok: Paulines Publications,1989) 124

⁴⁶ Susan marto, Adrian van Kaam, comment key to Christian maturity (New Yok: Paulines Publications,1989) 125

⁴⁷ Susan marto, Adrian van Kaam, comment key to Christian maturity (New Yok: Paulines Publications,1989) 126

⁴⁸ John Paul II, at the beginning of the new Millinium : Novo Millenete” Nairobi: Pauline’s Publications,2001) No, 43,36

⁴⁹ John Paul II, at the beginning of the new Millinium : Novo Millenete” Nairobi: Pauline’s Publications,2001) No, 43,36

⁵⁰ John Paul II, at the benging of the new Millinium : Novo Millenete” Nairobi: Pauline’s Publications,2001) No, 43,36

Living in communion with others in Christian community requires that we appreciate the others take way they are and appreciate their talents. We accept them the way God loves them, as persons created in the image and likeness of God. A spirituality of community of formation or communion life means, to know how to make room for our brothers and sisters each other's boarders. (Gal6;2) and realizing the selfish temptation which constantly beset us, provoke competition, collection, distract and jealousy.

6.5 The Witness of the Believing Community

In Meru diocese the community as a number of challenges raging from tension and division within religious communities. Some of the major causes of tension and division among the pastoral agents include disagreements on the sharing of responsibilities, the handling of property and personnel of the parish or religious community and a struggle for power and prestige. Among the pastoral agents there is lack of transparency. Some pastoral ministers thus priests and religious run parishes and other institutions as if they are not supposed to be accountable to their pastoral co-workers and the Christian community. This often brings conflicts in communities when other members suspect that there is something wrong and they are not given clarifications. Most parishes have a parish council and a financial committee, but they are normally not given enough opportunity to control or to suggest how the parish should be run. All this reduces the credibility of the leaders of the Church when they preach about justice and transparency in relation to civil leaders. The general attitude of grassroots and other Church leaders towards the ordinary faithful is another area where they fail to witness to the gospel of Christ whose preferential option is for the poor and marginalized. However, the ordinary people still feel more at home with church leaders than with civil leaders.

There is an ever increasing tendency on the side of Church leaders, to feel more at ease with politicians and other members of the elite class than with the ordinary people. The Church is one of the institutions which pay low salaries to their employees. The way these employees are handled is not always exemplary either. Some priests and religious abuse the fact that people have confidence in them and are respectful towards them. Consequently, they develop a paternalistic leadership with their employees and other people who come to them for help. Some will be ready to help their employees financially but they will be reluctant to increase their salary even when it is clear that a reasonable increase would resolve their problems once for all. The way some institutions of the Church are run is another area where there is lack of prophetic witness to gospel values in institution run by priests and religious there are cases of instances of corruption and also irresponsibility among the pastoral ministers. However, the hierarchy and lay faithful are expected to give a life witness to the gospel in their daily activities when interacting with others. The way parishes are governed is also another pastoral challenge to the communion to which believers should witness. They are divided into SCCS with one not equal sometimes have big numbers than others.

6.6 The Structure of Community: Toward Forming the Parish as a Community

The catholic parish today is being called to community. Some of the voices said from within the church. come of the most significant declaration of Vatican II has been its call for the church to understand itself has its call for the church to understand itself as the people of god and to experience tis life as a life together in community. These ideals of the parish as a community can generate a renewal commitment on the part of these in Christian ministry whose locus is the parish. But these ideals can also serve as stabling blocks. The goal of community can seem too distinct from the facts of parish life that one experiences the task of community formation, too monumental: the gap between the rhetoric and the reality, too broad to be listed.

A way out of this "small group verses organization standoff may be found in a clarification of the notion of community itself. There are two uses of the term common in current discussion.

Often the word is used to indicate a particular quality of interpersonal experience. We say community when he wish to point to a sense of belonging, an awareness of support a relation of interdependence, a recognition of shared values, a feeding of communion. But there is another, somewhat different, sense in which the word is lord. We say community when we wish to designate a particular social form, way in which people are organized or brought together in a manner that will reflect communication and interaction and thus, it is hoped, lead to experience of community. Within sociability and social characteristics of community as seal form a better grasp of this sociological understanding of community as a form of group life will enhance ministerial efforts to realize the ideals of the parish as a community of faith.⁵¹ Vatican II instead “the parish exists solely for the good of souls⁵², this is one way to understand that reality.

7.0 Challenges of Evangelization Regarding the Goals of Christian Communities

We know that the option of the SCCs was inspired by a certain number of challenges. These challenges are problems that were affecting the growth of the Church and evangelization. How then the SCCs can be considered as a response to those problems and factor of renewal of the Church. First of all, it is important to identify those challenges. After that we shall look at SCCs as factor of renewal and as an answer to the challenges the Church is faced with. We can identify the following challenges faced by the Church and which hamper the true blossoming of the same Church; problem of faith, problem of the community dimension.

7.1 Small Christian Communities as a Way of Being Church as Family of God

From the early stage of its preparation to the Papal Apostolic Exhortation, the importance of SCCs had been reiterated by the synod for Africa, John Paul II, in the Exhortation respects what the synod fathers proposed. SCCs are primarily should be places engaged in evangelizing themselves, so that they bring goodnews to others, they pray and listen to God’s word encourage the members to learn to live an ecclesial life and reflect on different human problems in the light of the gospel. These communities are to be committed to living Christ’s love for everybody, a love which transcends the limits of the natural solidarity of clans, tribes or other interest groups.⁵³ Synodal father’s idea is not something new, but a confirmation of what had already been happening in the African Church even before the synod.⁵⁴ The pope himself, in his earlier apostolic Exhortation on the participation of the lay people in the Church as communion, christifideles laici, indicated the role of the SCCs where “the faithful can communicate the word of God and express it in service and love to one another, these communities are true expression of the ecclesial communion and centers of evangelization, in communion with their pastors.⁵⁵ By borrowing words of laurenti Magesas concerning statement by saying “SCCs were meant to be cells where the Christian faith would be intensely lived and shared. They were in fact seen as the extension of the African extended family or Church.⁵⁶

7.2 Small Christian Communities as a Means of Inculturation

Culture shapes the human voice that answers the voice of Christ aid the Bagkak world mission conference in 1973 and the Salvador conference strongly affirmed that “ there is no way of

⁵¹ Evelyn Whitehead, *The parish in Community and ministry*. (New York. Toronto: Pauline’s Press, 1978.) 37

⁵² Jose ignasio tores ed; *communidecle chritians de base* (Bogota: indo American press service ,1971) 58

⁵³ John Paul II, *The church in Africa: Post-synodal apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa* ,No.89,69

⁵⁴ Joseph G’ Haley “ Historical development of Small Christian communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities” in inwals Kramer and Klaus vellegath, *Small Christian Communities: fish stemless for formal looking church*,185-197

⁵⁵ John Paul II, *Post-synodal Exhortation Christifidels laici*; 26: AASs 81 (1989) 440

⁵⁶ Laurenti Magesa, *anatomy of inculturation: Transforming the church in Africa* (Marhill, New York: Orbis Books ,2004) 43

being human without participating in culture, for it is through culture that identity is created.”⁵⁷ Today, inculturation is important both as a concept and a process, inculturation has roots from (John1; 14) which says that the word was made flesh and dwelt among us just as Jesus took flesh in a particular place and time, so too goodnews has to become “embodiment” incarnate” indifferent cultures with which people live.⁵⁸ This process is called inculturation. The working paper for the African synod had this to say on inculturation: “the process of the Church’s insertion into the people’s cultures is a lengthy one. It is not a matter of purely existential adaptation, for enculturation means the intimate transformation in Christianity and insertion of Christianity into various human cultures.”⁵⁹

The SCCs are privileged places in which inculturation can happen and a powerful unit of promoting it. O’Halloran maintains that the small groups are indeed indispensable instruments of inculturation. But what kind of transformation of culture and society does the goodnews call for. According to the encyclical *Evangelii nuntiandi*, for the church to evangelize is to bring the goodnews into all the strata of the human race so that its power it may permeate the depths of humanity and make it new”⁶⁰. John Paul II reaffirmed this “by becoming inculturated indifferent areas the Church comes to know and to express better the mystery of Christ’ (Rm52). The AMECEA Bishops have always wanted a theology of inculturation where the gospel is able to penetrate the whole of the people’s culture and way of life. In this way the gospel is to become the judge of the culture in a way that is both unifying and life giving.

7.3 The Small Christian Community as an Agent of Evangelization

The SCCs in the Church are new word phenomenon. They are found in Latin America, Africa, and Asia countries.⁶¹ The history of the SCCs is in fact as old as the Church. In so far as its origins go back to the New Testament. The early Christian Church lived as one family in one community, we can say that, this was the first SCCs in the Church. In the modern understanding of evangelization, the SCCs has a big role of preaching the gospel of Christ indifferent ways. As we believe that, every Christian is a missionary, therefore, they must live and preach the gospel, so as to transform persons and transform the world: in short to promote the kingdom of God. Through their Christian life, members of SCCs are obliged to promote the gospel values in the knowledge that they not only make persons fully Christian, but also fully human. They are to do so through their life styles and witnessing the risen lord in words and deeds which evangelize more than words. Lastly we can say that, commitment in SCCs is of great importance as place of the persons that make SCCs, it is the commitment of total giving of themselves to Christ and her gospel.⁶²

7.4 Small Christian Communities as Agents of Conversion

Conversion is one of the aspects of evangelization. SCCs acts as agents of conversion where members make a u tern from evil and embrace God in new life with the spirit. With conversion, one grows to the full structure of Christ (Eph 4; 13). As SCCs members move towards an unrevealing process of conversion they become Christ-like where like Paul they affirm that “it is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me.’ (Gal 2: 3) SCCs constantly seek reconciliation with God and with neighbor. The aim of evangelization from a personal and communal point of view is to promote conversion through integral Christian spatiality.⁶³ SCCs

⁵⁷ Statement of the mission by the WCC,76-77

⁵⁸ D. Dorr, mission in today’s world,94

⁵⁹ Justice and peace commission of Kenya Bishops Conference,3

⁶⁰En18-19)

⁶¹ James o’Halloran, Living Cells (Dabline, Ireland: Doman Publications New relation ,1984) 95

⁶² James o’Halloran, Living Cells (Dabline, Ireland: Doman Publications New relation ,1984) 95

⁶³ D. dorr, mission in Todysa world.,89

strive to do what the gospel invites each of us to do: I have come to call not the upright but sinners to repentance. (Lk5:32). The kingdom of God is close at hand, repent and believe the gospel.(Mk:1:15). SCCs are at the forefront of what Paul puts before his converts: do not be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you may discern what is the will of God, what its good and acceptable and perfect (Rom12:2) the grace of conversion leads to SCCs building communities of the kingdom of God.

8.0 Conclusion

The community therefore is where mutual relationship and love is expressed amongst members. The new community of Christ is expected to show love and charity towards the brothers and sisters by proclaiming the goodnews to all nations (Mat 28: 18-20). Every member of the people of God is expected to contribute and exercise his or her role in building the community. In building this community there is need for dialogue. This dialogue should be done at all levels, and according to the African synod in the Church it has to be” between Bishops conferences and the Vatican, between Bishops conferences of the different nations between the bishops, priests, religious faithful workers and the lay faithful in each diocese: between leaders in the same church.⁶⁴ Magesa attests that unity ought to be the nature and essence of Family. God constituted the visible Church from the beginning and it a’ bear the needs of being truly a family of God”.⁶⁵ The family in Africa is viewed as the place of security. The synod urged the Christian faithful to be considerate of others, priorities solidarity, wrath in human relationships, accepting others, promote dialogue and trust. As magesa asserts that the more the Church moves towards universal solidarity, the more it becomes generally a family” embraces everyone irrespective of class, gender, race or ability.⁶⁶ Mbiti states that “I am because we are and since we are therefore I am⁶⁷ therefore we also thought that in the Church I am because we are and since we are therefore I am. Mbiti notes that African people are notoriously religious. We are therefore either to bring ourselves closer to God according to the needs of the individual and community. Africa always pray where there is a need. There is no moment in the African man or woman where there is no need.

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⁶⁴ Vatican Council II: constitution on the Church (Notre Dame, Indiana: fide Pauline’s, Inc 1965),24

⁶⁵ Laurenti magesa” Christ spirit as empowered of the Church as Family” in the model of Church as family” Meeting the African Challenge, ed, Patrick Ryan (Nairobi; CUEA Publications,1999) no.29

⁶⁶ Laurenti magesa” Christ spirit as empowered of the Church as Family” in the model of Church as family” Meeting the African Challenge, ed, Patrick Ryan (Nairobi; CUEA Publications,1999) no.2

⁶⁷ John Mbiti: African religion and Philosophy (London: Heinemann, 1969),108

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