

TANGAZA COLLEGE

TANGAZA-DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY MASTER'S PROGRAM

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IMPACT OF ECONOMIC STATUS ON SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN NAIROBI

A case study of St. Michael's Archangel Parish, Otiende

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master's in Pastoral Ministry**

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Dedication

I dedicate this piece of work to my late Parents and all the lovers of *Jumuiya Ndogo*
Ndogo za Kikrustu, a new Way of being Church.

Epigraph

“The Spirit leads the company of believers to form a community and to be the Church.
This is the backbone of SCCs”

Cf. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical letter - (*Redemptoris Missio*, 26).

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Student's Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this essay is my original piece of work achieved through my own personal reading, inquiry, scientific research, practicum experience and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Master's in Pastoral Ministry. I am sure that this work has never been submitted to any College, University or any other institute of learning for academic award. All sources used have been fully cited and references acknowledged.

Signed:

Name of Student:

Date.....

This essay has been submitted for the examination with my approval as the College Moderator,

Signed:

Name of Moderator:

Date:

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Abbreviations

SCC	Small Christian Community
SCC's	Small Christian Communities
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
Acts.....	Acts of the Apostles in the Holy Bible
CV.....	<i>Caritas in Veritate</i> (Charity in Truth)
1 Cor.....	First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.
Cf.....	Confer
ed(s).....	Editor, editors
Lk.....	Gospel according to St. Luke.
Mt	Gospel according to St. Matthew
Jn	Gospel according to St. John
Mk.....	Gospel according to St. Mark
LG.....	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
RM.....	<i>Redemptoris Missio</i>
SSY.....	Seminar Study Year.
AMECEA.....	Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in East Africa
BECs.....	Basic Ecclesial Communities.
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS.....	Acquired immune-Deficiency Syndrome
CUEA.....	Catholic University of Eastern Africa.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Small Christian Communities are little Church cells where the mystery is lived directly and with great simplicity and concern in the neighborhood. In the *Lineamenta* (Guidelines) of 2009 of the Second African Synod, SCCs are referred to as “Living Ecclesial Communities where the Church is modeled as a family”. I would like to re-echo these words that “SCC enables Christians to experience the Church directly”¹ as lived today. Our parishes today are functionally supported by these SCCs since they organize the parish activities. From my experience, SCCs have given our local Churches the core foundational value therefore they add greatly to the regular functioning of a parish. Without these SCCs, our parishes risk being rendered dysfunctional and ineffective.

According to Dr. Lukwata, a priest from Masaka diocese-Uganda, says that “the brief history of the Church in East Africa reveals that SCCs were the basis of evangelization of the people around Lake Victoria from the onset that is between 1882 to 1885.”² SCCs have been very important in the life of the Church since time in memorial since they are modeled on the foundation laid by the early Christian Communities. Dr. Lukwata continues to say that it was hoped that in the context of political and ecclesiastical changes in the region, the SCCs would be

¹O. MURPHY, in J.G. HEALEY- J. HINTON, *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, xi

² J. LUKWATA, *Integrated African Liturgy*, 41.

instrumental in creating a self-supporting, self-reliant and self-propagating Church and that is why in the 1970s, the existence of SCCs resumed”³

This study will dig deeper into the impact economic status has on SCCs and whether this impact influences the formation and composition of SCCs.

St. Michael’s Archangel Parish is geographically situated in Langata, Ngei 1 estate, off Langata highway along Chweya Road. It has two serving priests that is Fr. Francis Kariuki who is the Parish priest and Fr. Mukui Joseph his assistant though they are helped by many other visiting priests. There is also a parish coordinator, Sr. Eunice Mueni who is also the one in charge of Sacristy.

The parish is comprised of Christians from different social status mainly the rich from the estate and the poor from the slums. This has also influenced the formation of the Small Christian Communities whereby the composition of the membership goes along with identification of one’s socio-economic class.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

This study is centered on the Small Christian Communities and mostly the impact the economic status of a person has in his/her choice of SCC. This happens because the rich from the estates have high set goals that the poor cannot afford in terms of contributions and fundraisings that take place in the SCC.

³ J. LUKWATA, *Integrated African Liturgy*, 42.

Many of the SCCs in St. Michael's Parish come from the estates known as Ngei 1, Ngei II, National Housing, Akiba, Moi Otiende, Police Dog Unit and Southlands estates. Christians from these estates are mainly working class Christians.

Originally many SCCs from Kibera slum broke away from St. Michael's Parish to join Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Kibera when it was founded. However, there are some few SCCs which still come from the upper Kibera known as Soweto region. St. Charles Lwanga, St. Dominic, St Joseph Kijiji are some of the SCCs whose membership are mainly Christians of low economic status. They are struggling to meet the demands of the parish in terms of contributions, leading Sunday liturgies and participation in parish activities.

In their struggle to meet the demands of the parish and the challenges posed by the rich SCCs, they are still "taken together to offer a glimpse of a Church endlessly re-fired by the Holy Spirit just as it was in the beginning at Jerusalem"⁴. The church as it were in Antioch constantly advocates for oneness in Christ irrespective of one's socio-economic status. A call to be one in Christ as Paul echoed can only work best when we are united and show concern to one another as one family of Christ and in exercising this, Christians of St. Michael's Parish would be seen as birds of the same feathers that flock together.

Small Christian Communities are one important means of renewal and transformation in our international Church in these discouraging times hence serve as a vehicle of parish and spiritual renewal.⁵

⁴ M. O'CONNOR in J.G. HEALEY - J.HINTON, *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, xii.

⁵ Cf. J.G. HEALEY- J. HINTON, *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, 3.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study is aimed at:-

- Helping the researcher to develop affective maturity and love of ministry. This, I would achieve by molding my personality to become a bridge to other Christians in their journey of faith.
- Helping the researcher to be vigilant in ministerial duties with the zeal to cultivate respect in relationships while in ministry. I will relate to all Christians in equal level and respect their opinions.
- Helping the researcher to attain deeper spiritual value and communion with God. This will lead the researcher to attain life in the Spirit as I participate in their Eucharistic celebrations, recollections, seminars, workshops and prayer sessions organized by SCCs.
- Looking at the impact of economic status on Small Christian Communities at St. Michael's Parish-Otiende.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research, owing to its expansiveness and intensity, used Holy Cross Library, Tangaza Library and Catholic University of Eastern Africa Library (CUEA).

There is a great deal of pastoral experience incorporated especially from the researcher's field findings. The researcher also conducted some interviews as reflected in the practicum dossier.

The researcher had series of meetings with the Parish priest, the Parish coordinator, the SCC leaders and the Christians.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research is aimed at fulfilling the requirements of both Bachelor of Arts degree in theology and Masters Degree in Pastoral Ministry. However, the research findings could be used by any other parish in evaluating the SCCs.

The findings gathered may help the parish priests and pastoral coordinators in monitoring the functions of SCC and their contributions in Parish activates. This study opens a way for further research in SCCs.

1.6 SCOPE OF STUDY

St. Michael's Parish comprises of both Christians from the estates and some from the slums. The slums are found in Kibera and Kijiji in Southlands. The study covers the whole of St. Michael's Parish which is situated in Otiende Estate. The study is to discover the impact economic status has on SCCs in Langata owing to the fact that St. Michael's parish has Christians of different economic statuses that is, the rich and the poor.

This research is in the realm of Pastoral Ministry therefore is conducted within the months of September 2011 to May 2012 within the confines of St. Michael's Parish Otiende.

1.7 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As a student majoring in Pastoral Ministry, the research looks at the normal functioning of the SCCs. It emphasizes on the impact of economic status on the SCCs and whether this affects their composition in general.

As a student majoring in Pastoral Ministry, the research aims at echoing the words of Pope Benedict XVI, in his exhortation on Africa's commitment "The disciple of Christ, in union with his Master, must help create a just society where all will be able to participate actively, using their particular talents, in social and economic life" (*Africae Munus*, 26).

Therefore, the impact of economic status of a person has contributed greatly to the choice of the SCC that a Christian joins. In the Church, the Eucharist is the summit of our communion. Separating the poor from the rich may be detrimental to their growth in the Christian faith as Flynn says in his book about the "*Communities for the Kingdom*" that "SCC does not function as a model or image of the Church but as a sign and a sacrament of the people of God, they become the existential witnesses of reality to the Church, which is growing in communion"⁶.

In 1Cor 12:13, we are called to form one body, the family of God thus we are not supposed to be separated by our economic differences. This call to communion irrespective of our differences culminates in Jesus that reminds us that "we should be one as they are one with the Father" (Jn 17: 11).

⁶ Cf. K. FLYNN, *Communities for the Kingdom*, 81.

1.8 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

This study attests that there is a greater impact of economic status of a person on SCC in St. Michael's Parish Otiende. This impact contributes to formation and composition of the respective SCC in this Parish. The rich would want to group themselves together and the poor would also like to group themselves similarly. There is a greater disparity between the rich who live in the estate and the poor who live in the slum much as we are all called to be one in Christ.

Rodrigo Mejia says that we form a parish which is concrete community of Catholics, usually sharing the same neighborhood but most important sharing our own faith in worship and action hence sharing in the same mission of the Church in the World.⁷

1.9 CONCLUSION

In this first Chapter, the researcher presented the framework of the whole piece of work. This includes the intention, the purpose and how the researcher would carry out this research. This is a research based on the researcher's practical and personal experience of SCCs in St. Michael's Parish-Otiende. This personal experience is in line with what *Africae Munus* says that SCCs are fundamental structures for fanning the flame of Baptism and growth in the Christian faith (*Africae Munus*, 131).

⁷Cf., R. MEJIA, *We are the Church: Sharing in Small Christian Communities*, 15.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Small Christian Community is not a new phenomenon in the Church. In Latin America, SCCs are referred to as Basic Ecclesial Community (BECs), and in many other places they are known as Basic Christian Community or New Way of Being Church⁸

This chapter presents the literature review of the related study. In 1971, SCCs started in St. Charles Lwanga in Lusaka Archdiocese in Zambia and in 1973 in Nairobi-Kenya, AMECEA study was basically a conference on “planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980’s”⁹

The official starting points of SCCs in AMECEA countries (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa) began in 1973. Even in AMECEA countries, the beginning of SCCs is traced back in Nyarombo Parish in Musoma Diocese of Tanzania.¹⁰ SCCs therefore developed as a result of putting together the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) into practice.¹¹

In 1969, Seminar Study Year (SSY) in Tanzania, discussed about the concept and praxis of SCCs hence called them “Local Church Communities”. In 1979 in Zomba (Malawi), AMECEA study conference on the implementation of the AMECEA bishop’s pastoral priority of building SCCs described SCCs as effective way of developing the mission dimension of the local

⁸ Cf. J.G. HEALEY - J. HINTON, *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing The New Moment*, 4

⁹ <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa> (Accessed on 16th May 2012)

¹⁰ <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa> (Accessed on 16th May 2012)

¹¹ <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa> (Accessed on 16th May 2012)

church at the most local level where people feel they are really part of the church's evangelizing work.¹²

In April 1994, the first African Synod in Rome discussed about the Church in Africa and her evangelizing mission towards the year 2000. During the first weeks of this Synod, there were 29 interventions on SCCs with regard to Justice and Peace, inculturation and laity. This Synod led to the publication and promulgation of *Ecclesia in Africa* by Pope John Paul II in September, 1995.¹³

In 2002, AMECEA study on deeper evangelization in the 3rd millennium focused on building the Church as a family by continuing to foster and revitalize SCCs. (AMECEA study conference held in Dar es Salaam in 2002). In 2005, AMECEA study conference on Responding to challenges of HIV/AIDS within AMECEA region suggested active involvement of SCCs in reaching out to people with HIV/AIDS as caregivers and counselors (AMECEA study conference on responding to challenges of HIV/AIDS within AMECEA region, Mukono Uganda 2005).¹⁴

In the context of promoting pastoral priority of SCCs and their focus on the ongoing spiritual and pastoral formation, AMECEA study conference held in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania suggested a year of SCC to implement all these. (AMECEA study conference in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 2002).¹⁵

¹² <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa> (Accessed on 16th May 2012)

¹³ <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa> (Accessed on 16th May 2012)

¹⁴ <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa> (Accessed on 16th May 2012)

¹⁵ <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa> (Accessed on 16th May 2012)

In October 2009, the Second African Synod discussed about the Church in Africa in service to reconciliation, justice and peace. In the *Lineamenta* (2006) and *Instrumentum Laboris* (2009), the emphasis was on reconciliation and this must begin from SCCs. This synod referred SCCs as “Living Ecclesial Communities”. The synod perceived the Church as a family of God therefore the main focus is building the family relationships and building SCCs that are involved in reconciliation, justice and peace in the Catholic Church and wider society.¹⁶ This synod led the AMECEA delegates to discussion that came with a new perception of centrality of SCCs in promotion of reconciliation, justice and peace.

In 2011, Pope Benedict XVI promulgated post-synodal apostolic exhortation called Africa’s Commitment (*Africae Munus*), which has sections like 111, 131, 133, 151, and 169 which talks about SCCs.¹⁷

Post synodal apostolic exhortation of John Paul II replies fervently to the *Lineamenta* on SCCs that African Ecclesial Communities are seen as far exceeding expectation. The Church is seen as “walking together” (Church in Africa, 26). Based on the economic status of a Christian, Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Caritas In Veritate* places man before astonishing experience of gift. This encyclical maintains that charity feeds on hope therefore human integral development must be promoted by all means (*Caritas In Veritate*, 34). Pope Benedict XVI continues to say that life in Christ is the first and principal factor of development (CV, 8).

Ad Gentes presents the decree on the missionary activity of the Church springing from the Trinitarian God. This encyclical was promulgated after the second Vatican Council in 1965. (*Ad Gentes*, 2).

¹⁶ <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa> (Accessed on 16th May 2012)

¹⁷ <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa> (Accessed on 16th May 2012)

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church talks about SCCs and the Challenges of reconciliation, justice and peace and mutual forgiveness in African context (*Compendium Social Doctrine of the Church*, 403- 518).

Pope John Paul II in his encyclical on mission states that the Spirit leads the company of believers to form community and to be the Church and this is the basis of SCCs. (*Redemptoris Missio*, 26).

Pope Paul VI in his encyclical on human life stresses the need to strengthen the sacraments especially fanning the fire of baptism to get its expression in other sacraments like matrimony (*Humanae Vitae*, 25).

Pope John Paul II in his encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*, recognizes the many initiatives of help and support for the people who are weak and defenseless by the local Christian communities and even in the civil society (*Evangelium Vitae*, 26).

Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Spe Salvi*, refuses the perception of human person only in economic gain. “Man in fact is not merely a product of economic conditions and it is not possible to redeem him purely from the outside by creating a favorable economic environment”. (*Spe Salvi*, 21)

2.2 Early Christian Communities as a Precursor of SCCs Today (Acts 2:42-46)

The Early Christian Communities as it were during the time of St. Paul, preached unity and togetherness because they were united in heart and mind (*Acts 4: 32-37*). This was a perfect

community of believers since they were united for one goal and purpose. They were joined by the Spirit as they constantly listened to what the Spirit was saying to them. (*Rev. 2:7*).

The Early Christian Communities were moved by spontaneous bursting of the spirit to sell all their possessions in order that the money may be used for the common good of every believer. This should be true in St. Michael's Parish because we are called to be one in Christ. Our wealth and economic status should not separate us from being united to each other. The poor should not see it difficult to form a SCC with the rich and vice-versa. That is why the members of the Early Church felt the need to sell their possessions because they realized that possessions can cause division among the Christians as it happens in St. Michael's Parish.

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the Apostles and to Communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone and many wonders and signs were done through the Apostles. All who believed were brought together and had all things in common. They would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favour with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (*Acts 2:42-46*).

This phrase is the backbone of SCCs. They are founded, as it were in the Early Christian Churches, to bring unity and fellowship that the Church teaches. "The Spirit leads the company of believers to form a community to be the Church.....One of the central purposes of mission is to bring people together, in hearing the Gospel, in fraternal communion, in prayer and in Eucharist" (*Redemptoris Missio no. 26*). St Michael's Parishioners ought to live in fraternal communion which means to be one in heart and mind and not to segregate the poor because of their economic status even Christ mixed with the poor, prostitutes as well as the rich like in the case of Matthew the tax collector (*Mt 9:9*).

2.3 Economic Status of a Christian and its impact on the choice of SCC

St. Michael's Parish has Christians of two economic classes, the rich and the poor. The Church calls for communion through the Sacraments especially in the Eucharist. "It was of no use to remind Abba Bloketi that the first Christian community used to celebrate the Eucharist in their own homes and that they were more concerned with the building and union of the community than the building of the Churches"¹⁸. This same idea is alive at the SCC meetings.

In the Church, members are called to be faithful and should not dwell so much on their successes or possessions as the rich SCCs of St. Michael's Parish do. Pope Benedict XVI in his homily and message to the Bishops and People of Africa says that "For a Commitment to development comes from a change of heart and for a change of heart comes from conversion from the Gospel (Homily during second African Synod, 15). The poor are mostly locked out of joining the SCCs from the estate because they cannot afford to raise the contributions stipulated by the rich. An example is St. Monica Moi-Otiende SCC that organized a retreat to take place in Mt. Tabor in Nyahururu. Each member was to pay three thousand Kenya shillings. They unanimously accepted to pay that money since they never felt any difficulty in acquiring the money because they are working class with well paying jobs.

St. Dominic SCC, on the other hand, organized to buy T-shirts with the name St. Dominic SCC printed on it. They struggled to agree on whether or not to pay five hundred Kenya shillings per *Mwanajumuiya* (a member). Some SCC members felt that five hundred shillings is a lot of money for them to raise for only a T-shirt where as they had other pressing needs at home. However, Guiney says "SCCs must not act only as prayer groups but prayer should lead to

¹⁸ R. MEJIA, *We are the Church: Sharing in Small Christian Communities*, 62.

mission which hinges on solidarity with the sick, the suffering, the poor and the marginalized within the communities themselves and beyond these towards the larger society”¹⁹

The poor Christians should be free to join any SCC as long as they can participate in the activities organized by SCC. Flynn says;-

Small Christian Communities provide the environment and the sociology within which such discipleship can be achieved. In promoting the goal of integral human relationships and the transformation of community through reflection and social responsibility, SCCs seek to achieve the communion that they profess among their members. The persistent call to conversion and the establishment of justice in love is the proclaimed ecclesiological task of SCCs. They understand themselves as Church in their sharing of the Word of God and as Christ’s disciples in the world. Small Christian Communities are the initial cells and the building blocks of the Church.²⁰

The togetherness realized at the SCCs can be used to promote integral development of each member through sharing what they have just like in the early Church at Corinth (*Acts 2:45*). They devoted themselves to seek the common good of everyone. The same should apply to the SCCs springing from the estate in taking the prior role in ensuring that the poor SCCs are empowered to attain integral development. These SCCs within St. Michael’s Parish have to do the same. The Gospel message has to find root from among the poor and rich Christians. Timara quoted by Healey states:

Follow-up action in terms of works of mercy like helping the poor or consoling the sick and the bereaved and in some places concerted effort towards development has brought about the contextualization of the gospel message.²¹

I attended one of the St. Dominic SCC meetings and one of their major concerns was to contribute 20 shillings with the intention of saving it such that it can be used to help the sick each

¹⁹ Cf. J. GUINEY, “*Comparing Basic Christian Communities in South America and Africa*,” in *AFER*, Vol. 30, 1988, 166-180.

²⁰ K. FLYNN., *Communities for the Kingdom: A Handbook for Small Christian Community Leaders*, 79.

²¹ K. FLYNN., *Communities for the Kingdom: A Handbook for Small Christian Community Leaders*, 76.

time they visit their sick members. Every Sunday each member has to contribute this amount. It is kept with the treasurer in case a member falls sick then the money kept in the reservoir can be used to purchase medicine for treatment of that member. This idea is in line with the fact that majority of the members from poor SCCs have no stable jobs. This was a good practical show of what it means to be *Mwanajumuiya* (Member). If the poor St. Dominic SCC can do such a charitable work, what of the SCCs from the estates who are much more capable. In 1 Cor 16:1-3, it states:

Now in regard to the collection for the holy ones, you also should do as I ordered the Churches in Galatia. On the first day of the week each of you should set aside and save whatever one can afford so that collections will not be going on when I come. And when I arrive, I shall send those whom you have approved with letters of recommendation to take your gracious gift to Jerusalem. (*1 Cor 16:1-3*).

The rich SCCs should support the poor SCCs such that there would be mutual help and understanding that letter to the Corinthians talked about. Rodrigo Mejia describes a parish as a center for “Spiritual services run by the Parish Priest. A center for Mass, communion, confession and other sacraments, counseling and other pastoral services as well as social and charitable activities in favour of the poor.”²²

In the word of Dulles, he says the “Church is that community which is formed in response to the faith commitment by those who follow Jesus Christ and build a community of love and service in the world.”²³ This is what St. Michael’s Parish-Otiende ought to emulate. They have to know that they are united in Christ and therefore are called to communion with him as Mejia explains about the function of the parish.

²² R. MEJIA, *We are the Church: Sharing in Small Christian Communities*, 14.

²³ Cf. DULLES, A. *A Church to Believe In: Discipleship and Dynamics of Freedom*, 7-18.

We discover the meaning of life through relationships. Our relationship should not be affected by our social or economic status since Jesus himself was born in a poor family but was able to reach out to people of all sort including the rich as in the case of tax collectors (Mt 9:9). Jesus used the phrase in the gospel of Luke that “Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head” (*Lk 9:58*). This is a call by Jesus to be able to suffer for others even whether poor or rich. Jesus had no properties he owned therefore in a similar way; Christians from the estate should accept the Christians from the slums the way they are. They should not be separated because of their economic difference.

The Christians especially from the estate should know that they are called to be in solidarity with the poor because Church, by her nature, is a family modeled love and trust of all members. This can only be possible in communities where people live in neighborhoods that SCCs try to focus on. Living Christian Communities are living stones of the Church as a family of God. An authentic Church communion requires the unity centered on the Eucharist. Pope Benedict XVI in *Porta Fidei* says that “It will also be good opportunity to intensify the celebration of the faith in the liturgy especially in the Eucharist which is the summit towards which the activity of the church is directed” (*Porta Fidei*, 9).

Christ came for the poor and the less privileged members of our society (*Mt 11: 5-6*). This was evident in the SCC sharing of St. Kizito SCC during the sharing about Lenten campaign on food security. Members gave vivid example that they have been throwing away left-over food while there are some families in Kibera who have gone without food. The members of this particular SCC suggested ways of helping those who are in need especially to participate in the program ‘Kenyans for Kenya’. This was a good show and concern from

members. A member even shared that “Lenten period for her was about going beyond normal sacrifice for the sake of the other person. She related this to Christ’s death for our sake”²⁴.

In some instances, social challenges have contributed to Christian’s leaving the SCCs. The Church demands a lot from them yet they cannot afford to meet even their daily bread. Mr. Alphonse Omolo narrates his experience in the neighbourhoods of Kisumu and how they managed to curb such like problems of St. Michael’s Parish in Otiende that:

They needed to meet their basic needs, especially good health, education, feeding, and clothing of their children. To be able to attend to their needs in an effective way, the SCCs began to assign their members to various ministries to help the needy in their neighbourhood. These activities were mainly intended to bring about a sign of hope to the sick, dying and malnourished children, abandoned and runaway children, alcoholics and other substance abusers, the disabled and the emotionally depressed²⁵.

2.4 Gender Imbalance in the SCCs

In many SCCs around the world and Kenya in particular, the female top the list in SCC attendance and participation. In many of the Churches, women are very active and they contribute to over eighty percent of the total population. In an interview with Tesfaye who is writing about ‘*the role of women in the Church*’, he says “Women form almost 85% in the Church’s participation”²⁶. This is a clear indication that women are very core and foundational in the SCCs.

The researcher has been attending the SCC meetings at St. Michael’s Parish and the case is the same. Women are mostly the majority because out of twenty-five, only three or four are

²⁴J. NEKESA, During the Sharing of SCC meeting held on 4th March 2012.

²⁵A. OMOLO, “Small Communities Light Up Neighbourhoods in Kisumu”, 111.

²⁶A. TESFAYE, An interview about “*The Role of Women in the Church*” on 2nd February 2012.

men and the rest are women. In St. Dominic SCC, leadership roles are executed by women who are very committed.

Rodrigo Mejia in his article says that “most of the SCC’s are composed of a great majority of women and men do not seem attracted to them”.²⁷

The major reason why men don’t attend the SCC meeting is that they are breadwinners therefore they don’t have time to gather with the rest since their major duty is to make sure the bread of the family is on the table. “Many men in the Parish said that they can spend the whole day waiting for a *kibarua*, job. This waiting becomes a cycle that lasts for long periods, can even last for years”.²⁸

This again brings the idea of economy especially of the poor. They struggle to make the ends meet in their families therefore they cannot afford to sit down for sharing that lasts almost four hours and yet they are the ones to provide for the family.

A research conducted in Kibera by Bodewes indicates that many are Catholics are Church-goers but not doers of the word that the Church teaches because her research reveals that “People say Catholics are drunkards, many say they are Church-goers but then they leave that Church to go and drink”²⁹. This leaves men out of the SCC gathering while those from the estate also have the excuse that men have other business meetings that mostly begin in the evening where they meet with people of their social class, the ones they can identify with.

²⁷ R. MEJIA, *Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa 26 Years On, In New Strategies for A New Evangelization in Africa*, 66.

²⁸C. BODEWES, *Parish Transformation in Urban Slums*, 155.

²⁹C. BODEWES, *Parish Transformation in Urban Slums*, 134.

Flynn shares his experience about SCCs that “The absence of the pressing issues within the initial formation of SCCs of social problems like corruption, oppression and poverty can explain the reasons why many men and the youth are reluctant in getting involved in the life and formation of SCCs.”³⁰

2.5 Nature of SCCs Springs from Church as a Sacrament of Communion

According to CCC, Sacraments are “powers that comes forth” from the Body of Christ which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are masterworks of God in the new and everlasting covenant. (*CCC, 1116*). These Sacraments unite us as Children of God and they confer the graces of God as experienced in the SCCs. The liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments.

Code of Canon Law refers Sacrament as “signs and means by which faith is expressed and strengthened, worship is offered to God and our sanctification is brought about” (*Can. 840*).

Kieran Flynn says that “SCCs have helped parish priests in preparing the people for sacraments, (baptism, and marriage), solving family problems, visiting lax Christians and finding other pastoral solutions. Christians now understand that the Church begins in SCCs, not in Church buildings”³¹

³⁰ Cf. K. FLYNN, *Communities for the Kingdom*, 80

³¹ K. FLYNN, *Communities for the Kingdom*, 77

In that similar way the CCC tells us that “These sacraments are of the Church and for the Church because in the Sacrament, Christ’s action is at work through the mission of the Holy Spirit and they are for the Church in the sense that they make the Church since they manifest and communicate to Christians and above all in the Eucharist, the sacrament of communion with the God who is love” (*Cf. CCC, 1118*). Post-synodal Apostolic exhortation of Benedict XVI says that the idea of communion is the beginning of the call to ecumenism with other Churches (*Verbum Domini, 46*).

2.5.1 SCC and the Sacrament of the Eucharist

All SCCs in St. Michael’s Parish are built on the sacrament of sharing which is the Eucharist. In the *Jumuiya* (SCC), members gather in the neighborhoods to celebrate the sacramental life of the Church through the Eucharist or sharing the Word of God. These meetings are for both the Church and personal because each person is able to identify with Christ and at the same time increases the Church’s mandate of witness and mission. This is in line with the CCC’s idea that “The Eucharist is the source and the summit of all Christian life, all other sacraments and ecclesial ministries are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented towards it”. (*CCC, 1324*). The spotless lamb who in each Eucharistic celebration takes away the sins of our divisions and restores unity and communion of the members.³²

Whenever the SCCs gather, they share their lives together, the Word of God and the Eucharist becomes the center of their gathering. This implies a sign of those united in Christ. In

³² R. SARAH, *Church Leaders and Christian Life in the Pastoral Letters*, 34.

CCC, “The Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the people of God by which the Church is kept in being”. (CCC, 1325)

Christopher Cieslikiewicz says in his article based on his experience that “SCCs have very important role to play in the work of evangelizing first of all by being missionaries to themselves by helping members in their spiritual growth, and at the same time by sharing with others their encounters with Jesus in the word of God and in the Eucharist.”³³

The late Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical on mission says that:

The Spirit leads the company of believers to “form a community,” to be the Church. After Peter’s first proclamation on the day of Pentecost and the Conversions that followed, the first community takes shape. (Cf. Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35). He continues to say that one of the central purposes of mission is to bring people together in hearing the Gospel, in fraternal communion, in prayer and in the Eucharist”(Redemptoris Missio, 26).

This is a very practical idea about the Sacrament in comparison with most of the African Cultures. In Kamba culture of Kenya believe that “*food eaten together is sweet*” and among the Luo Culture of Kenya, “*He who closes the door for the visitor during time for meal is not a friend and does not wish you well*”. This brings the idea of the Eucharist which is the sacrament of communion, the sacrament that brings us together in Christ. There is no social class or economic class in Jesus Christ.

In Africa, the relationship is expressed in the eating together. This was evident even in the Jewish culture and that is why Jesus had to organize the last supper to bond his relationship

³³C. CIESLIKIEWICZ, *Pastoral Involvement of Parish-Based SCCs in Dar es Salaam, In Small Christian Communities Today*, 104.

with the disciples. The SCC's are also founded on the similar basis especially during the celebration of the Eucharist. In St Michael's, the SCC's from the estate sometimes prepare tea to crown their meeting at the end. As Eucharist mainly calls us to mind our relationship with our fellow members more so the communion in Christ, Christians should reach out to their neighbors in need.

The experience of Flynn in an urban setting reveals that "the poorer people show greater vigour and interest in SCCs than the rich"³⁴ and yet in St. Michael's Parish, the rich want to alienate the poor Christians from the slum setting simply because they may organize theft based on their knowledge of that particular house.

The major aim of SCCs is to help with the preparations of members to receive the sacraments because they are able to identify those who do not participate in the sacraments. Flynn, in his book, says that;

A Small Christian Community does not function as a model or image of the Church but as a sign and a Sacrament of the People of God. Small Christian Communities become the existential witness of reality to the Church, which is growing in communion, by becoming more what it really is, the body of Christ realized in the world.³⁵

2.5.2 SCC and the Sacrament of Baptism

According to CCC, baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life and the gateway to life in the Spirit and the door which gives access to other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God. We become members of Christ; we are incorporated in

³⁴K. FLYNN, *Communities for the Kingdom*, 76.

³⁵ K. FLYNN, *Communities for the Kingdom*, 81.

the Church hence made sharers in her mission. It is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word. (*Cf. CCC, 1213*). Sarah says “mercy and tenderness are not just virtues, but the bases of a new anthropology arising from the waters of baptism.”³⁶

The sacrament of baptism is very foundational in making one become a member of SCC. One has to undergo the rite of initiation however for those who have not been baptized, it is the duty of SCC to enlighten them to attend the instruction class.

Pope Benedict XVI in his *Porta Fidei* says that “Profession of Faith is an act of both personal and communitarian. It is the Church that is the primary subject of faith. In the faith of the Christian community, each individual receives baptism, an effective sign of entry into the people of believers in order to obtain salvation”. (*Porta Fidei, 10*)

One SCC member from St. Joseph’s Kijiji reminded one member who had not been baptized that “you can only be identified with the group when we are all called Christians and therefore one has to undergo Christian initiation through being born of the water”³⁷

SCC members have been very influential in helping others to undergo this rite. They encourage those who have not been baptized and are members of the SCC to attend the Catechesis classes. Lefebvre says that the sacrament of baptism sets all believers apart for service.³⁸ It is this Sacrament that first introduces a person to the Church. In the SCC, members always call on each other to set good examples by first evangelizing to their own houses, in making sure that all their family members are baptized in the Church as Mrs. Maria Oleche of St.

³⁶R. SARAH, *Church Leaders and Christian Life in the Pastoral letters*, 34

³⁷T. NJUGUNA, *SCC sharing of Thursday 27th January 2012*.

³⁸P. LEFEBVRE, *Ministries and Community for a Church as a Family*, 33.

Charles Lwanga SCC uses the proverb that “Charity begins at home, we cannot evangelize to the neighbours if we have failed to evangelize to our family members”³⁹

This is the sacrament that initiates members to assume their roles as Christians both in the local community and in the Church. Flynn makes the remark that “The image of the Church as the “people of God” promotes the responsibilities and roles of all the members of a SCC in collaboration and participation in the life of the larger Christian Community. Here, the entire baptized are called to conversion in union with the whole Church”⁴⁰

In the same way, Lefebvre says “all baptized are missionaries sent to exercise a certain apostolate. The baptismal initiation is, in fact, a consecration for a mission. The baptized person is called and is sent to be witness in the vocation of Christian society”⁴¹. It is in baptism that the Spirit of God is instilled in us that trigger the fire to always yearn to reach out in SCCs. As it were in the early Church, “when the first evangelizers went down from Jerusalem, the Spirit became even more of a guide, helping them to choose both those to whom they were to go and the places to which their missionary journeys were to take them”(Cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, 24).

SCCs are very active in ensuring that members of the Church are baptized. They function as eyes of the parish since they stay in close fraternity with each other. They are able to know who has not been baptized in the Church.

³⁹ M. OLECHE, *SCC sharing on Sunday 11th January 2012*.

⁴⁰ K. FLYNN, *Communities for the Kingdom*, 31.

⁴¹ Cf. P. LEFEBVRE, *Ministries and Community for a Church as a Family*, 33.

Flynn says that “the Church cannot attain its fullness as the Body of Christ except through the combination and sharing of all her members’ Charisms and gifts. Communion in this sense requires the participation of all the baptized in the fulfillment of the mission of Christ”.⁴²

This is an emphasis on the sacrament of baptism. However, one has to pay Church tithes and dues as a sign of commitment and also must pay other fee set by the parish. To the poor Christians from the Kijiji and Kibera slums, this payment may not be easy to come by since their live is that of survival. To the Christians from the estate, this is a simple thing that they don’t have to wait for the month end before they can complete the payment.

2.5.3 SCC Wedding as a Way of Promoting the Sacrament of Matrimony

In the SCCs, Christians experience the sacrament of matrimony as a way of belonging to the Church with your whole household. Members in the SCC encourage each other to ensure they have solemnized their marriage in the Church. The CCC says that “The matrimonial covenant is a covenant by which a man and a woman establish between themselves as a partnership for the whole life and it is ordered towards the good of the spouses, procreation and education of children. This covenant between baptized Christians has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament”. (*Cf. CCC, 1601*)

The sacrament of matrimony is important in the life of the Church Pope Paul VI in his encyclical on Human Life says “Christian married couple, then docile to her voice, must remember that their Christian vocation, which began at baptism, is further specified and

⁴²K. FLYNN, *Communities for the Kingdom*. 42.

reinforced by the sacrament of matrimony”, (*Humanae Vitae*, 25). This is the reason why hosting SCC meetings in homes is very important. In a way it encourages the husband to attend the SCC meetings and also to make sure they have blessed their marriage in the Church. The husband will shy away from the group if he constantly or the wife constantly brings the SCC meeting at their home while he is not married in the Church. The members can also use such opportunity to remind them to wed. The SCC members can share the financial costs in case it is the wedding of one of their own.

Dr. Lukwata says that in African sense, a home is one’s traditional birthplace and the site where the graves of one’s ancestors are found. Several praying homes will constitute strong Small Christian Community from where the members can enrich the large Christian Community of the whole village or parish⁴³. In many cultures, weddings are celebrated in high moods therefore, Dr. Lukwata says that it is appropriate to hold the Christian liturgies of the funerals, initiations, weddings, graduations and reconciliation in the homes.⁴⁴

St. Dominic SCC normally meets at the parish premise, the reason being that they stay far from each other and therefore the Church would be a convenient place for everybody, however, quoting the words of Catherine Nduku, a member of St. Dominic SCC, she says “If I bring almost 25 people to my small room, where will they sit and yet I only have one chair and the courtyard is squeezed.”⁴⁵. This was an expression that she is willing to host the SCC members but the worry is what to sit on. Indication here shows that she is very poor and yet she wants to identify with other Christians.

⁴³ J. LUKWATA, *Integrated African Liturgy*, 103.

⁴⁴ J. LUKWATA, *Integrated African Liturgy*, 103.

⁴⁵ C. NDUKU, *An Oral Interview conducted on 22nd February 2012*.

A visit to St. Monica-Moi Otiende registers different experience. Chairlady Nancy Mwangale says that she has a big room that hosts everybody and there is no need to sit outside in the cold. She has plenty of chairs and everybody has a place like in the Lord's vineyard".⁴⁶ At the same time Mrs Mwanzia says, her friends in Christ and *Jumuiya* (SCC) will not lack where to sit in her house since she has spacious living room that can accommodate up to 40 visitors. There is no need to sit in the open air since sometimes whether in Nairobi is unpredictable. This brings again the issue of economic disparity among the Church members. Much as Mrs Catherine would want to identify with St. Monica-Moi Otiende, she would not afford because of fearing how to host other SCC members who can host you very well in their homes. She confirms that that is not her class therefore she cannot risk identifying with them.

Members of St. Dominic SCC should not fear to identify with the rich because actually they may understand their case. However much they cannot drive themselves to the SCC meetings like others do, but it is a way to be in solidarity with others leaving a side our differences that separate us. The status should not be an issue since the Church is promoting communion, *Lumen Gentium* says that the Church is, in Christ, a sacrament, a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race". (*LG, 1*).

2.6 SCC as a Domestic Church in Faith Formation

In the SCCs of St. Michael's Parish, people practice their faith in togetherness. However the status of a person determines where one practices his/her faith. The rich from the estate

⁴⁶ N. MWANGALE, *An Oral Interview conducted on 5th November 2011*.

gathers in their own class as the poor also practices their faith as a communion in their class. The role of SCCs is to re-evangelize Christians in the neighbourhood as Mejia says:-

“From Sunday, Christians fulfilling a weekly obligation towards Christians practicing their faith on a daily basis in their own neighbourhood and from a purely devotional spirituality exclusively centered on prayers and liturgical celebrations towards an apostolic spirituality oriented towards the love and service of others”⁴⁷

SCCs are supposed to foster faith formation basing on the fact that “Charity begins at home”. The parents whenever they are going to the SCC should make sure their children are also with them. Because of the family needs, some Christians have neglected this role. They are much concerned with the physical needs of the body than Christian needs.

Bodewes says that “...most if not all are struggling for their daily needs and often do not have time in their evening to meet as Christians communities in the way they should”⁴⁸. This can only be practiced in the SCCs in the estate since for them security is not an issue. They have been able to meet even with their children. The researcher witnessed that the families from the estate involves their children in the bible sharing during the SCC meetings. This is in contrary to what happens in the Slum. The Christians from the slum only meet on Sunday afternoon in which their children are never there only the young ones who cannot be left at home alone.

The different faith experiences that come with different people that gather in the SCCs are very important to the young ones whose faith is still being molded. Bodewes continues to emphasize that because of the different tribes in Kenya, they have different faith experiences in their homes and some their faith have been molded according to their culture and customs of

⁴⁷ R. MEJIA, *SCC in Eastern Africa 26 Years On: Lights and Shadows*, 68.

⁴⁸ C. BODEWES, *Parish Transformation in Urban Slums*, 92.

their home Churches⁴⁹. However, Stuart Wilson quoting Carolyn Butler says that “There has, in my own life, been a flowering faith”⁵⁰.

The domestic Church can only be understood at the point of faith. It is faith that pulls people together to be united in Christ. Flynn says that the Church is understood from the point of faith. It is a faith community, constituted and fulfilled in faith. It is faith in the person of Jesus Christ that is experienced, interpreted, understood and accepted as the self-giving presence of God the father through who humanity is saved, redeemed, recreated and made whole through the action of Holy Spirit.⁵¹

SCCs experience their faith as a group that moves them to act in a manner that portrays God’s manifestation in their way of sharing. “Small Christian Community leaders and other members in the Community are introduced to reflections on the Nature of the Church and the changes involved in forming a local and self-supporting Church”.⁵²

In St. Michael’s Parish, they should form their faith together without looking back at their economic status. This ideology brought by economy should be done away with to enhance theology of communion as Flynn expresses it in his study of SCCs “Formation of SCCs has been an attempt to realize the theology and the images of the Church that have been expressed in the theology of *Communio*.”⁵³ The SCCs should preach togetherness without looking for those things that separate them like social or economic status of a Christian so that they achieve the harmony and oneness in Christ as it were in the Church of Antioch.

⁴⁹ Cf. C. BODEWES, *Parish Transformation in Urban Slums*, 92.

⁵⁰ Cf. S. WILSON, “At your word Lord,” 90.

⁵¹ K. FLYNN, *Communities for the Kingdom*, 41.

⁵² K. FLYNN, *Communities for the Kingdom*, 63.

⁵³ K. FLYNN, *Communities for the Kingdom*, 41

2.7 Conclusion

St. Michael's Parish-Otiende has a well structured leadership. The Parish Priest is a pastoral oriented man who dedicates his whole energy to see the growth and success of SCCs in his parish. The Christians ought to support each other in this journey of Faith. This Chapter has just presented all the obstacles that St. Michael's Parish is going through much as it tries to achieve its goal in proclamation of the gospel and in its work of mission. It has looked at what other researchers have presented about SCCs in relation to economic status and other spheres of life of the Church.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher will look at the practicum experience. This will involve the insertion, social and cultural analysis and pastoral assessment done by the researcher at St. Michael's Parish-Otiende. Lastly, the researcher will conclude this chapter having explained these concepts mentioned above.

3.1 INSERTION

While doing pastoral assignment at St. Michael's Parish, Otiende, the researcher was privileged to attend the Small Christian Community meetings, Eucharistic celebrations done at the SCCs, recollections and workshop organized by SCCs in St. Michael's Parish.

The researcher was present at the site on every Sunday for most of the day. This was done to help the researcher to be able to witness how the SCCs participate on Sunday liturgies. The liturgies on Sundays were led by different SCCs in each mass. They led in turns. There are some SCCs that could meet on Sunday afternoon. These were St. Dominic SCC that met at Church premise, St Joseph Kijiji SCC and St. Charles Lwanga SCC. The researcher could also attend the SCC meeting during weekdays in the estates. The researcher mostly attended the SCC gathering that could meet on Monday, Thursday and Fridays. These SCCs met at night as from six o'clock in the evening.

During this assignment, the researcher was greatly disturbed to note that some SCCs contribute financially well while others do not. SCCs from the estate were fairing on well since they were economically stable while the SCCs from the slums of Kibera and Kijiji were really

struggling to contribute financially. The researcher developed an interest to get into the bottom of the matter since he wanted to know why this was happening.

The discovery revealed that this was happening due to the difference in their economic status. Due to the two existing different economic classes, the formation and composition have been affected. The poor Christians from the slum are not able to fit into the shoes of the rich Christians from the estate. This is evident even in their participation in the Church activities.

In the *harambee* (fundraising) organized by the Church for the development, the SCCs from the estates are always on the lead in their contribution. This may not be taken to mean they are more charitable or committed than the Christians from the slum but the main issue is, the poor Christians from the slum have low income salaries than those from the estate. A vivid example is when there was a fund-raising towards the construction of the parameter wall around the Church premise. The huge contribution came from the Christians from the estate. Many people from within and outside St. Michael's Parish felt that the SCCs from the slum are being irresponsible.

The level of education has also emerged as a factor that has contributed to this kind of grouping. In the normal societal setting, those who are highly educated find it difficult to form grouping with those who are less educated. This has been very evident in their sharing because, most of the SCCs from the estate share in English language while the SCCs from the slum share in Kiswahili language since that is the language they understand best. The rich feel comfortable to join the fellow rich while the poor are left to group together to form Small Christian Communities. The identification with one's group is based on one's economic status.

The parish has eighteen SCCs and out of these, three SCCs are comprised of poor Christians who are struggling to make the ends meet. The rich SCCs comprised of St. Benedict-Onyonka, St. Kizito-Southlands, St. Jude-Ngei II, St. Ann-Uhuru Gardens, St. James-National Housing Cooperation, St. Bridgit, St. Francis of Asisi-Ngei I, St. Monica-Akiba, St. Mary's-Park Estate, St. Elizabeth-Customs, St. Monica-Moi Otiende, St. Andrews-Civil Servants, St Raphael-Rubia, St. Ignatius Loyola-Police Dog Unit and St. Benedette Nairobi Dam Estate.

The SCCs which are struggling are St. Charles Lwanga which is geographically situated in Upper Kibera in what others call Raila, St. Joseph's Kijiji is in the slum near Southlands estate and St. Dominic whose members are spread all over but still feel strong sense of belonging and attachment to St. Michael's Parish. These people find it difficult to break away from St. Michael's Parish because it is in St. Michael that they were first and foremost catechized, their faiths were formed and natured and also they received their first holy communion.

Some Christians are not only members of St. Michael's Parish but also members of SCCs where they feel strongly attached to. They have found members of SCC to be portraying true sense of brotherhood and sisterhood. They are able to identify with one another hence they generate sense of belonging. For them, the point is not economic differentiation but unity in Christ who was also poor like us. An example comes from Vera Muli who testifies that she feels at home with people of the same status than those from the rich because she will look odd among them⁵⁴.

The parish has about 5,000 Christians who participate in the life and activities of the Church. The parish has Christians who don't receive Holy Communion because they have not

⁵⁴ V. MULI, *An Oral Interview Conducted on 9th January 2012*.

had their marriages blessed in the Church. The parish registers a favorable number of First Holy Communion candidates annually⁵⁵. Out of the 5,000 Christians who pray at St. Michael's Parish, the majority are women. They are really committed according to the researcher. They are behind many activities taking place at the parish.

There are some parishes that the youth are very active in the daily life of the Church, a good example is Dandora Parish which has 6 SCCs for the youth. They also have youth choir that compete with other parishes. This is not the same with St. Michael's Parish. The parish has the youth group but they lack sense of direction. It is very difficult to tell when they meet, what they do during their meeting, who guides them and how the youth activities are structured. Dandora Parish, in comparison with St. Michael's Parish, has the youth chaplain who is in-charge of moral behaviour to the youth and directs them on their activities. They highly contribute to the welfare of the church. If there is a parish project to be established, the youth must participate in contribution. They are represented during the parish council meeting that takes place every Sunday.

In St. Michael's Parish, the Church is left for parents or adults. The youth lost touch with the life of the Church. "In those days, SCCs were seen as the work of adults where the youth of the day had nothing to do with this..... one would only need to witness what is happening at Dandora Parish in the Archdiocese of Nairobi to manage to feel the dynamics of the young people within the SCC arena. In this parish, run by the Holy Cross priests, a youth SCC has been established in all the six sub parishes"⁵⁶. The youth of St. Michael's Parish should be challenged by parishes like Dandora Parish so that they may be put to task of evangelization. The researcher

⁵⁵ E. MUENI, *A Religious Sister who works as Parish Coordinator*, (Interview on 21st January 2012).

⁵⁶ F. NJUGUNA, "SCC of Dandora Parish worth to be emulated by others", *In National Mirror*, 20.

through observation realized that the youth have been left out in St. Michael's Parish. They may be there but they lack a person who guides them.

The post election violence that happened in 2007-2008 was due to lack of education and sensitization among the youth. During this Lenten campaign, one of the main issues is to sensitize the youth and educate them so that they may not be used by the greedy politicians. "Voter education is key in preparation for elections. The government and Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission are tasked with civic education on the constitutions and elections. We should also think about our role as the Church and as Kenyans" (*Lenten Campaign, 2012*). This requires that each parish must have well grounded youth groups sensitized on the Church teachings and Kenyan Constitutions.

The economic status of a Christian does not only contribute to the composition of the SCC but also determines the language used in their Bible sharing and participation in the Church activities. The researcher realized that in the poor SCC, the sharing was done in Kiswahili while the rich SCCs, the sharing was done in English. This means that probably the rich SCCs are also educated Christians while the poor SCCs are illiterate or have low educational background.

The Christians who are struggling to earn a living would prefer to join SCC which can accommodate their economic status than to join SCCs that would be stressful to their life situation. The contributions done in the SCC from the rich estates are huge. The poor Christians would not afford to contribute what is higher than their monthly house rent. However, the parish

coordinator expresses her joy in seeing St. Charles Lwanga an exceptional in contribution much as its members are also struggling to make the ends meet.⁵⁷

Members from these poor SCCs are mostly unemployed but they strongly feel they need to serve the Lord not in competition but in humility and acceptance of whatever situation they are in.

Jesus came to call all peoples to be part of the movement that was to make present the reign of God. As proclaimed by Jesus, the reign of God was meant to be particularly inclusive of the marginalized and the outcasts of the society⁵⁸

The parish currently has two serving priests Fr. Kariuki, the parish priest and Fr. Mukui, his assistant. There is also a seminarian on pastoral year. They are actively involved in the parish ministry however; they do get some help from the visiting priests who help in celebrating Sunday liturgies. The parish has 4 masses every Sunday and two masses each day, that is morning at seven o'clock and six o'clock in the evening. The parish also celebrates Saturday vigil mass for Christians who plan to travel on Sunday or work on Sunday. This vigil mass begins at 6 p.m. every Saturday.

There is a sense of competition among the SCCs whenever they lead in Sunday liturgies. The competition is due to the fact that each SCC would want to be perceived as the most active of all. Whenever they lead, they participate in the readings of the day, offertory and gifts to the priest.

⁵⁷ E. MUENI, *A Religious Sister who works at the Parish as the Pastoral Coordinator*. (An Interview on 21st January 2012).

⁵⁸ A.E OROBATOR, (ed), *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: The Second African Synod*, 122.

SCCs meet as per their timetable but mostly during the week as from 6.00 p.m until 9.00 p.m due to the fact that majority of the Christians go to work during the day and can only afford to meet in the evening after work. The only Small Christian Communities which meet on Sundays as from 3.00 p.m. are St. Dominic, St. Charles Lwanga and St. Joseph's Kijiji. These SCCs meet during day time owing to insecurity in the area where they stay. Insecurity issues do not allow a Christian to walk at night for fear of being hijacked or even murdered by thieves. They prefer to meet during day especially on Sundays to solve the problem of risking their lives.

Whereas these poor SCCs fear to hold a SCC meeting at night, the SCCs from the estate hold their meetings at night because it is safe since they have security lights and guards to offer security to them. There is no danger since they have fenced homes with fully guarded entrances. It is even easier for a priest who is visiting to drive to and from the meeting with ease.

Sometimes the researcher gets held up in the traffic jam but this is a minor unforeseen challenge that comes unexpectedly. The researcher has to be at the site by the time of the meeting but only on arranged days which coincide with his formation program. The challenge of finding the house where the SCC meeting is scheduled to take place has been a challenge that the researcher has since adapted to.

The majority of the population from the various SCC is women and children. Men are few however they often get elected to the SCC leadership. The men who are always present are very active in participation however, the women prove to be the most active in SCCs. The composition ranges from 20 Christians to 30 Christians as it is meant to be relatively small and manageable.

The SCCs have the responsibility to organize their own workshops, retreats, recollections and thanksgiving parties but must inform the parish priest prior to the time of the meeting or function. These SCCs take part in the day-to-day running of the parish through participation in the parish activities. The SCC leadership automatically forms the parish council leadership since there is a representative from each SCC. Whenever the parish board meets, a representative from each SCC is given the chance to share with the rest about the progress, suggestions, future plans, complains and activities of their own SCC. They are also expected to deliver back the response from the parish board meeting to their members.

3.2 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANALYSIS

St. Michael's Parish has Christians of all walks of life. They have come from all different cultural background but the majority is made up of Kikuyu and Luo ethnic groups. This has not affected the composition of the SCCs around St. Michael's Parish because they group themselves according to their socio-economic status. The rich form their own SCC as the poor also do the same. Other ethnic groups are also present in the parish.

The researcher observed that bible sharing in the SCCs found in the estate is done in English since majority of them are educated while the poor SCCs do bible sharing in Kiswahili. The culture in St. Michael's Parish is a mixed one and you can hardly tell who is from which ethnic group but one can tell which SCC is rich financially and which one is struggling financially.

One of the reasons that the researcher observed as contribution to this grouping along the lines of economy is because, a poor Christian will struggle to meet the standards set by the rich as pertains to monthly contributions or when it comes to workshop and retreat contributions. Some of these rich SCCs would like to have their retreat or recollections at a well organized place.

Payment is not an issue for them even if it involves paying huge sum of money. A clear example is St. Monica-Moi Otiende which decided that each member contributes Kenya Shillings three thousand five hundred to be able to go to Mt. Tabor, Nyahururu for a retreat of three days where as St. Dominic members are struggling to even contribute Kenya shillings fifty for each meeting.

This is a clear sign that no poor person would want to form an association with the rich. The poor Christian would not be at home among the rich and may even suffer inferiority complex. However, in *John 11:17*, we are called for communion and oneness in Christ, the practicality of this verse still remains a mystery to the poor Christians of St. Michael's Parish-Otiende. (*Jn 17:11*).

The rich SCCs are perceived as extremely generous and this puts the poor ones to task of trying to be like the rich much as it remains very difficult task to achieve. The Christians from the estate are free to invite the gathering at their homes while it is evident that in the poor SCCs, members are begged to allow the next gathering to take place in their homes. Others don't feel comfortable to welcome SCC gathering at their homes since they fear what others may say about their homes.

The priests are eager to visit rich SCCs than to visit the poor SCC due to the fact that, the rich Christians will cater for the priest's transport plus a gift which the poor cannot afford. However, they try to their level best to make sure they meet the standards whenever a priest visits such SCCs.

Socially, the researcher can deduce that St. Michael's Parish has Christians who relate to each other mostly based on SCC level. Members of the same SCC tend to flock together since they have good knowledge of each other better. This happens because Christians who earn good salaries stay in the estate while those who live a life of hand to mouth stay in the slums of Kibera and Kijiji as well. The barriers of relationship are conditioned by their economic status.

The rich would only welcome a member who is willing to pray with them and follow all the requirements and standards set by the SCC. Some of these SCCs from the estate set high standards that the Christians from the slums cannot abide with. Mr. Ojwang' who stays in Kibera and Mama Karuku who stays in Kijiji claim that their house rent is Ksh. 700 and 1,200 respectively⁵⁹. They cannot match with Christians who stay in the estate whose house rent goes up to 30,000 a month. This is a big disparity that it even disturbs one's conscience before you relate to such a person.

There could be other local dialects that are spoken in St. Michael's Parish but the researcher only took notice of Kiswahili and English languages. The SCCs mostly share in those two languages depending on which one you know best and which SCC one belongs.

⁵⁹ T. OJWANG' – R. KARUKU, *An Oral Interview conducted on 20th January 2012.*

3.3 PASTORAL ASSESSMENT

In the pastoral assessment, the researcher found out that SCCs in St. Michael's Parish prefer to use *SEE, JUDGE and ACT* method. This is what others call Pastoral Cycle method. In this approach, the Christians are called to discern the situation in which they are going through basing on their live experience, they later evaluate the situation and finally respond to the situation at hand. This process has been very fruitful at St. Michael's Parish Otiende.

Formation of these Small Christian Communities should be determined by closeness of the families within a particular locality. This enhances easy interaction, better knowledge of each other and solidarity among the members⁶⁰. In St. Michael's parish, this idea applies but for the disadvantage of the poor who reside in Kibera and Kijiji slums. They live in pathetic situations and their houses are made of *mabati* (Iron sheets).

During the day, the experience of the researcher proves that these *mabati* houses are very warm and members don't feel comfortable sharing inside. This has been a contributing factor as to why St. Dominic SCC prefers to meet at the Church. Mr. Baraza reflects with the SCC members that it would be very embarrassing to bring a group of about twenty people in his house meanwhile his house has a capacity of six people. He fears the shame of members lacking where to sit while at the Church, there is plenty space and chairs that the SCC members use whenever they convene a meeting at the Church premise. For Baraza, the fear of what others would say and if it happens to rain, where will he put other people.⁶¹

⁶⁰ <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa> (Accessed on 8th May 2012).

⁶¹ H. BARAZA, *A Sharing During the SCC Meeting that took place on 6th November 2011*.

On the contrary, the researcher also attended St. Benedict Onyonka SCC where the meeting was characterized by high level of education since the sharing was done in English, the room was spacious, enough security even if it rains no member would be afraid of the rain, all of us had somewhere to sit because the chairs were enough. The woman who warmly received us quoted a verse in the gospel of John that “In my father’s house there are enough rooms for each of you” (*Jn 14:2*).

The methodology used in most of the SCCs in St. Michael’s Parish Otiende is mostly inductive method where members begin from their experience and relate it to the Scriptures. I have also attended some SCCs in the same parish where the methodology used is deductive where the members begin from the Bible reading and relate the message to their situation. Both methodologies work depending on the users. However, the researcher has always enjoyed when members begin from their life experience, the problem affecting them then later try to find Jesus Christ speaking to them in that very problem. St. Kizito prefers this method because, members always find what to offer to God in bible sharing.

Most of the SCCs in St. Michael’s Parish Otiende meet at night. Their meetings begin as from six o’clock in the evening till nine thirty o’clock. They chose this time slot because this time finds when most of the members are back to their houses from work. However, the SCCs within the slum cannot risk meeting at night due to many factors like, their houses have small sitting capacity, some houses don’t have electricity, the security is a threat and it becomes difficult to move especially when it rains since the slum becomes muddy.

In the estate, members carry their bibles whenever they attend SCC meetings while in the slum, members have no money to buy bibles. An example is drawn from St. Dominic SCC

where majority have no bibles. One bible is shared among three. Other members cannot afford a bible since it costs almost one thousand shillings.

The parish priest and his counterpart have always arranged to celebrate mass in the SCC in a rotational way. Whenever they go to preside over the mass, they let the SCC to lead everything even reflection about the reading of the day. The presiding priest does not give the homily since it is done in a *Jumuiya* (SCC) way.

In terms of financial contribution, the SCCs in the estate take the lead because they are working class. Members of the estate always feel free to invite the priest for a family visit, something that is rarely experienced among the slum families. They look at the priest as burden to them while the Christians from the estate see a priest as a blessing to the family. The priests in St. Michael's are pastoral oriented in the sense that they accommodate all, whether poor or rich.

The masses on Sunday are scheduled in a manner that all participate. They take turns in leading the Church activities. Collaborative ministry is realized through participation of SCCs within the parish since this is a new way of relating to others via ministry. The SCCs take a person as the starting point which leads to relationship both with God and fellow human beings (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 19).

This cooperation reveals deep Christian and human values to those who cooperate. It could be very important to see the rich and the poor evangelizing each other. In the Church there is a call to communion since we are all followers of Christ.

The laity is supposed to be involved in the lowest level of Christian living that portrays Church as a family and SCC. *Christifideles Laici* says that "The lay faithful participate in the life

of the Church, not only in exercising their tasks and charisms, but also in many other ways, such participation finds its first and necessary expression in the life and mission in the particular Church, in the Diocese in which the Church of Christ, one holy, Catholic and apostolic, is truly present and at work” (*Christifideles Laici*, 25). This collaborative ministry is not just between the clergy and the laity but it is supposed to be even between the Christians themselves.

Time management was not observed by many SCC members. Members always came late and found out that the meeting had begun. Once a member finds when the SCC meeting is in session, they hardly shared about the scriptures. Many apologies could be witnessed for those who did not come. The Christians need to be sensitized about time management in SCCs. Members who could come earlier could feel bored by those who came late but assumed to have read at home.

The change in pastoral team proved to be fruitful to many Christians who had previously refused to collaborate with the old pastoral team. With the new Parish Priest, St. Michael’s Parish indicated some signs of growth and change. The Lenten campaign booklets reached the Christians late therefore members could only share the one that they were given.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter one has mostly dealt with the preamble of the intended research. It has given a quick overview as seen in the background of the study. It has given the objective of the study, description of the study, research methodology employed and research hypothesis. It looked into the scope of the study given the fact that the parish under study has Christian mostly of two

economic classes that is the rich and the poor. It also looked into the significance of this study stating its main problem. The researcher also gave his experience of insertion and socio-cultural analysis of St. Michael's Parish.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents theological reflection of the practicum experience at St. Michael's Parish. This chapter evaluates and discerns the researcher's experience in the light of the gospel. The experience of the poor SCCs in St. Michael's Parish was seen in the light of the gospel. This Chapter also helps the researcher to see how the Word of God motivates and gives an individual strength to react in front of such situations.

4.2 Widow's Mite in the Synoptic Gospels (Mk 12:41-44, Lk 21:1-4)

The gospel of Mark specifies that two mites are together worth *quadrans*, the smallest Roman coin. A lepton was the smallest and least valuable coin in circulation in Palestine, worth about six minutes of an average daily wage.⁶²

Looking at the story of the widow's mite in the gospel of Mark and Luke, the poor woman donates two small coins that she had while the rich donate much more. Jesus takes an interest in the woman and explains to his disciples that the small sacrifices made by the poor people mean more to God than the extravagant donations of the rich. In relation to this story, the researcher reflects on the experience of St. Dominic SCC, St. Charles Lwanga SCC, St. Joseph SCC, Kijiji that their contribution might not be in terms of finance but they contribute spiritually and pastorally in the life of the Church of St. Michael's Parish. An example is drawn from St.

⁶² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/lesson_of_the_widow's_mite (Accessed on 17th May 2012)

Charles Lwanga SCC which helps during the first mass every Sunday with choir. This SCC has its choir comprised of its members. After every SCC meeting on Sunday afternoon, they spend about one hour practicing liturgical songs. Whenever they lead their turn, they also lead the songs during the liturgy. This is an example on how SCC though poor it might be, can contribute to the life of the church.

Looking at the 14 common activities of a Small Christian Community,⁶³ financial contribution is just one of them. There are many other activities that the SCC can be involved in the life of the church. St. Dominic SCC, though poor, contributes a great deal in spiritual and moral dimensions in the church. They organize their retreats and workshops at the parish even though they don't have money to go to Resurrection Garden like the others but still they are able to pray together as a group at the church premises.

Just like Jesus observed the widow giving everything in order that she might rely on God's providence while the rich gave only a portion of their wealth. The poor SCCs of St. Michael's Parish also give what they have though it may not be in terms of finance but presence, prayer, sense of togetherness, involvement in reconciliation, justice and peace as very evident in their gatherings.

The value of a gift to God, is not determined by the quantity, but is determined by the intention of the giver. In this case, the gift doesn't become very important but the intention of the giver as in the case of the widow's mite. She surrendered all she had to God in readiness to rely on God's providence. An example is St. Joseph SCC, Kijiji, however much the houses are squeezed; they still can afford to meet as a *Jumuiya* even when some members sit in the corridor.

⁶³ <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa> (Accessed on 17th May 2012)

They consider God is present among them and He looks into their own problems. Mama Onyango told the *Jumuiya* members during her welcoming word that “feel free to sit even on the bed since God is the giver of the bed.”⁶⁴

Financially the poor SCCs do not contribute a lot but they participate in spiritual welfare of the Church. They too, are involved in reconciliation, justice and peace issues. It was evident in the Lenten Campaign of 2012 (Towards a Transformed Kenya, 2012). SCC members discussed the major themes in the booklet and looked for ways how they can be a united Kenya. Week one theme about general elections brought awareness to many members of St. Dominic SCCs. However, the challenge posed by some members is the fear that many Kenyans have not read the new Kenyan constitutions therefore they still don’t know their voting rights stipulated in the Constitution. Good ideas came up from the gathering giving each member a mandate to ensure sensitization of fellow Kenyans on their voting rights and to continue educating members about the new Kenyan constitution.

The poor, just like in the case of the widow who gave all that she had and Jesus considered her to have given a great contribution, are dedicated Christians who value human person. They believe in divine providence since they draw their energy from the Eucharist (*Humanae Vitae*, 25). The poor SCCs are committed to activities of SCC just like any other existing SCC at St. Michael’s Parish. The problem arises when other Christians especially from the estate use financial criteria to judge the poor SCCs. The researcher believes that even in Jesus’ time, there could be other people or even disciples who did not understand Jesus when he referred to the widow as the one who had contributed greatly.

⁶⁴M. ONYANGO, SCC meeting held on 12 February 2012

4.3 The Crippled Man at the Beautiful Gate (Acts 3:6)

In the words of Peter when he healed the crippled man at the beautiful gate of the Temple in Jerusalem, he said “I have no silver or gold but I give you what I have in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth ‘rise and walk” (Acts 3:6). In this episode, Peter did not give what the crippled man expected that the others had been giving him. It emerged greater than those who gave gold and silver. As in the case of the widow’s mite, she did not give what according to other people’s expectation but in the eyes of Jesus, it emerged to be a greater contribution.

The poor SCCs might not give huge financial contribution as the SCCs in the estate. They contribute in moral and spiritual life of the church. Just like Peter who did not realize how much he could give to the cripple. The woman could not realize how much she could give to the Lord to the extent that her life remains entirely in the hope of the divine providence of God.

The poor people who stay in slums like in Kibera witnessed the emergence of post election violence in Kenya in 2007-2008, they saw their people dying due to negative ethnicity. They did not give up but later used the SCCs as places for reconciliation and forgiveness. Members affirm that it was due to SCCs that they got the courage to forgive each other. They used various biblical texts to attain forgiveness. Their experience of forgiveness and reconciliation is worth more than financial contribution.

Gauging the SCCs in terms of finance alone is missing to see the importance of SCCs. SCCs have become centers for peace talks. They have become centers for fostering family values. The SCC leaders have tried to bring unity among members by the use of the word *mwanajumuiya* (Member). This word brings a sense of belonging even when one is not

financially stable. He/she is seen as possessing fundamental human values just like a Christian staying at the estate. The wealth of a person cannot acquire him the kingdom of God as reflected in the words of Jesus that it would be more difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God than a camel to enter the eye of a needle, (*Mt 19:24*).

In the SCC sharing at St. Charles Lwanga SCC, the members prefer to participate fully even when they run short of funds. They participate in choir, they lead during parish meeting on justice and peace citing their experiences of injustices existing especially in Kibera. These are genuine social concerns that they experience each day.

A member of St. Joseph's SCC, Kijiji gave an example where he hated his neighbor just because of family conflicts. The neighbour's children fought his own children and this generated hatred between the families. Their SCC brought peace between them and now they are good friends and neighbours to each other. This is greater gift to a family like that because now the hatred is not more. Just like in the case of Peter, he told the cripple that I don't have gold or silver to give but stand and walk. The cripple after suffering for long was now relieved and could go and look for his own food. The hatred was no more, the conflict was no more. At last the man could smile at his neighbor. The peace was restored between them just like the legs of the crippled man were restored.

SCCs have restored the value of the sacraments. The researcher's experience reveals that during the time of first Holy Communion or confirmation or even church wedding, the SCCs have taken an active role. This is inclusive of the poor SCCs. They involve members to pray for the members who are undergoing instructions, those who are preparing for their wedding. They

give their financial assistance to these people but the greatest thing done by these SCCs is to accompany them in their preparation for the wedding or during catechetical instruction.

SCC members always educate each other on the importance of the sacraments and their role in salvific plan of God. Bible sharing is a very core foundation in the life of the SCCs. They share about their lived experiences in the light of the scriptures. They try to see how God is active in their situation even when things seem to be hard. Sharing about their life experiences frees them of the burden just like the crippled man at the beautiful gate was freed from the burden of begging every day.

Peter had nothing to give to the crippled man at the beautiful gate but just healing. This is also done by the poor SCCs that are low in economic status but can bring reconciliation and healing among the members. It is worth noting that during the post election violence, preaching of peace and reconciliatory talks began from SCC level. Members had to bury their ethnic differences in order to emulate common good which is peace.

4.4. Conclusion

In this theological reflection, the experience of the poor SCCs of St. Michael's Parish was linked with the experience of the two biblical stories that the researcher felt fitting. It highlighted the role played by poor SCCs despite their financial incapability. Peter the Apostle in the Acts of the Apostles also uses his gift of healing to help the crippled man at the beautiful gate despite the fact that he had no silver or gold to give to the crippled man. He became of great value to the crippled man. The widow's mite also gave all that she had to rely on God's providence. The poor SCCs also give their talents and gifts however much they are not financially stable.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 GENERAL CONCLUSION AND PASTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the whole piece of work. It also gives pastoral recommendations. These pastoral recommendations are as per the researcher's pastoral experience at St. Michael's Parish. These recommendations can be used by any other parish in order to achieve good pastoral results in the parish setting.

5.2 General Conclusion

The research at St. Michael's Parish was pastoral oriented based on experience. The researcher attended many SCCs meeting in order to come up with a conclusion of the hypothesis. The researcher did not have trouble with Kiswahili language since he speaks and understands it.

Chapter One gave a general framework of what the researcher wanted to discover. It gave the hypothesis of the study giving its background and objectives. The researcher observed that much as SCCs in the poor neighbourhood may not contribute financially to the affairs of the local church, they contribute a great deal in the life of the church. Their contributions are in terms of spiritual, liturgical and sacramental life of the local church. It is in the SCCs that the fire enkindled during baptism continues to be fanned in their weekly meetings.

The researcher discovered that there are many encyclicals like *Redemptoris Missio*, *Caritas in Veritate*, *Spe Salvi*, *Evangelium Vitae*, *Humanae Vitae* and *Compendium of the Social*

Doctrine of the Church that talk about SCC in various levels. Chapter Two on literature review revealed this in detailed manner. However, the researcher discovered that there are also many scholars who have researched about SCCs at various levels. They only dealt with how financial contribution of a SCC can be perceived wrongly especially if the parish is composed of Christians of two different social or economic classes.

The main practicum experience of the researcher was presented in Chapter Three since it has the insertion, social and cultural analysis and pastoral assessment. This is forms the core of the research since this chapter is based on researcher's practical experience.

Chapter Four presented the theological reflection in which the researcher chose to use two Scriptural experiences. On the one hand, the researcher found the story of the widow's mite in the synoptic gospels of Luke and Mark (Lk 21:1-4, Mk 12: 41-44) fitting the story of poor SCCs from the slums in Kibera and Kijiji. On the other hand, the researcher found the story of the crippled man at the beautiful gate fitting since Peter had no coin or silver to give but only healing (Acts 3:6).

Finally, Chapter Five concludes the whole piece of work and gives general pastoral recommendation as observed by the researcher. It was a good pastoral experience. The researcher found working with the SCCs very enriching both pastorally and spiritually. Working with the field supervisor Fr. Francis Kariuki and moderator Fr. Joseph Healey was very helpful to the researcher.

5.3 Pastoral Recommendations

In most of the SCCs, the methodology used in achieving pastoral activities is pastoral cycle method based on SEE, JUDGE and ACT. In some situations, the SCCs have failed to act after discerning the problem. An example is St. Dominic SCC, the members refer SCC as a domestic church that gathers its flock as a family. They are all conversant with this ideology but again meeting at homes has been a struggle. The members still meet at the church premise. The researcher recommended that however much our houses may be squeezed, as members of SCC, members need to meet at their homes. This follows *Akan* proverb in Ghana that “*the one who welcomes you at home with water wishes you well in life*”. In Africa, the space at home will always be enough.

The Lenten Campaign booklets were issued on time by the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission but in the case of St. Michael’s Parish, the Justice and Peace coordinator did not attend the meeting where these booklets were issued hence SCC members got them very late when the first theme had passed. The researcher challenges the parish to always elect leaders who are committed to their duties. The Justice and Peace coordinator failed his work to represent the parish in justice and peace meeting. Members are supposed to receive these booklets two weeks before Lent begins so that themes in the booklets can be discussed by members as specified in the booklets.

The researcher also identified a concern that he wished to challenge SCC members. The use of cell phones was very common during the sharing session. The researcher realized that

some SCC members did not give enough reverence to God as their phones kept on ringing during the sharing. The ring tones could cause confusion during the bible sharing because the tones were very loud. The researcher challenges all SCCs to avoid use of phones during bible sharing as this is being disrespectful to God the Creator.

The researcher also noticed that majority of the SCC members do not keep time for the meeting. An example is drawn from the researcher's experience. Members could agree to meet at 2.00 p.m. but some members could come one hour late. Members could miss the most important part of the SCC meeting as some arrived during announcements or when members are concluding. This poses a challenge on time management to the SCC members. The researcher recommended that members should observe time since they meet only once a week. There is need for sacrifice for only two hours in a week.

The researcher observed that majority were not coming with their bibles to the SCC meetings. In the SCC class in Tangaza, I was taught that one cannot go to the garden without a *jembe* as this would be an indication that one is not ready to dig. In the SCCs, bible is our *jembe* just as Liptak says that often the Scriptures are a source of these life shaping moments,⁶⁵ therefore the researcher challenged members to purchase a personal bible to avoid sharing one bible among four members. Cultivating the culture of reading the bible at home begins by purchasing a personal bible where each member is free to underline his favourable verse even a chapter.

The researcher observed that most of the SCCs, the youth were lacking, not because they have their own but because the youth feel that SCC is an affair of their parents. The researcher

⁶⁵ E. LIPTAK, *Discipleship and Ministry*, 47

challenged the members of different SCCs by narrating a story of six youth SCCs in Dandora Parish. This posed a challenge to all SCCs and parents to sensitize their children to form Youth SCCs where they can identify with each other and share the problems affecting them as youth of St. Michael's Parish. The researcher recommended Youth SCCs.

The researcher observed that some Christians especially from the estate tend to forget the 14 activities of SCC. The majority narrow these activities to financial contribution to the welfare of the church. The researcher posed a challenge that even the poor SCCs contribute to the welfare of the church through prayer, liturgical assistance, reconciliation and justice and peace issues. The SCCs from the estate should value the poor SCCs based on what they come with not what they can offer financially.

The researcher observed that the greatest strength of the local church lies in its grassroots that is the SCCs⁶⁶. The parish priests are recommended by the researcher to pay more attention to the SCCs to enhance smooth running of parish activities. The former pastoral team together with the parish priest paid little attention to the SCCs and their empowerment.

The researcher was enlightened by the way SCCs promote New Way of Being Church especially in Africa and as the researcher goes forth for his pastoral assignment in Lake View High School in Uganda, he would like to begin SCCs at the school since it is a boarding school. It may be good way of enhancing deeper evangelization among students and involving them.

⁶⁶ J. ELSENER, *Pitfalls in the Use of the Pastoral Cycle*, 61.

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