

# **TANGAZA COLEGE**

**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

**EVANGELIZATION AMONG THE POOR  
POVERTY: A CHALLENGE TO THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH  
IN KENYA (MAKINA MAKONGENI SUB-PARISH)**

**A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Ecclesiastical Degree of Baccalaureate in Theology.**

**By**

**AUGUSTUS BYARUHANGA, OFM.**

**MODERATOR: Rev. Dr. Fritz Stenger, M.Afr.**

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## STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this Long Essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflections. It has never been submitted to any other College or University for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed- AK Byaruhanga OFM

Name: Augustus Byaruhanga, OFM.

Date- 12 Jan 2004

This Long Essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as Moderator.

Signed-----

Name: Rev. Dr. Fritz Stenger, M. Afr.

(Moderator)

Date- F. Stenger

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to all the Christians of Makina Makongeni Sub-Parish. For them and all those whose faith is challenged by poverty, that they may never despair.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere gratitude goes to Fr. Mario Debatistta Ofm., who encouraged me during my pastoral year to have experience with people living in the Slums (Kibera). His concern for the poor, guidance and support enabled me to give it a trial. I wish to thank in a sincere way Fr. Romano of “Guadalupe Parish”(Adams Arcade) who accepted me to do pastoral work in his Parish. Together with Fr. Mario, they initiated me to the cry of the Christians living in the slum of Makina Makongeni. I am grateful to the Guadalupe Parish Pastoral team, who used to invite me to share with them, my joy, observation, fears and suggestions that I experienced through visiting the Small Christian Communities and the families.

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Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Rev. Dr. Fritz Stenger, M.Afr. my moderator who encouraged me to go a head with the choice of my topic “**Evangelization among the Poor**”. His close supervision, guidance, scholarly advice, patience and corrections enabled me to complete this work.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Act.= Acts of the Apostles  
AD= Ad Gentes  
AIDS= Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome  
Am= Amos  
CA= Contesmus Annus (On the Human Person)  
Cor= Corinthians  
Dt= Deuteronomy  
EN= Evangelii Nuntiandi (On Evangelization in the Modern World)  
Ex= Exodus  
Ezek= Ezekiel  
Gen= Genesis  
GS= Gaudium et Spes (On the Church in the Modern World)  
HIV= Human Immunodeficiency Virus  
Hos= Hosea  
Is= Isaiah  
Jer= Jeremiah  
Jn= John  
LK= Luke  
Mk= Mark  
Mt= Matthew  
Phil= Philipians  
Pr= Proverbs  
Ps= Psalms  
Rom= Romans  
RN= Rerum Novarum ( On the Conditions of Workers)

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# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## MOTIVATION AND AIM OF THE ESSAY

My objective in writing this long essay is to explore the theological basis for the Church's involvement in evangelizing the poor. This has to be done following Jesus' example during his public ministry on earth. Jesus identified himself with the needy and the poor "as long as you did it to one of these little ones, you did it to me (Mt 25:40)" Jesus acted in solidarity with the poor during his entire earthly ministry.

Having done pastoral work among the people of Makina Makongeni Sub-Parish for the last three years, I have come to realize that:

- 1-The poor need people of faith to teach them the Good News of Jesus Christ, who is the liberator, consoler, comforter and source of love.
- 2-For the poor to come out of their material, political and economical poverty, they need people to address the oppression and injustice they are facing.
- 3-The poor remind us of the role they play in God's plan and in the kingdom.

The mission of the Church is no other than the mission of Jesus who was sent into the world by the Father and who sent the Holy Spirit to continue and complete his saving work. "*The Church on earth is by its very nature a missionary since, according to the plan of the Father; it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit*"<sup>1</sup>. The proclamation of the Good News to those who do not know Jesus is in fact the grace and vocation of the Church, her deepest identity. The Church is the hope of the poor, the oppressed, homeless, destitute, orphans and widows of this world.

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<sup>1</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Decree On the Church's Missionary Activity*. AD GENTES 2, (Bombay: St Paul's Publications, 7 December 1965), p.815

Those who are suffering and weeping truly expect words and actions that bring them Good News. Through evangelization, the poor discover the true love of Jesus Christ who came to comfort and console them. Evangelization confronts poverty, injustice, oppression, exploitation and the conditions and social structures that breed these evils. The Church as Christ's body ought to continue this ministry by preaching the Good News to the poor, proclaiming the Gospel that sets the oppressed free and bringing wholeness to the broken hearted. The Church helps the poor to overcome and transcend the fear of death and believe in the life here after.

## **WORKING METHODOLOGY**

In this long essay I will try to focus on the kind of life the people of Makina Makongeni sub-parish are living. The work starts with general introduction where I explain the terms that appear in the topic and sub-topic. In Chapter One, I give the location of the place, the back-ground and the situation of the people, my working experience among them and the poverty they are experiencing. Chapter Two discusses the effects of poverty such as: sexual immorality, alcoholism, HIV/AIDS pandemic, Kibera street children, and despair. In Chapter Three I will present the poor in the light of the Scriptures and Vatican II. In this Chapter, there are three sections: The poor in the Old Testament, Jesus and the poor in the New Testament and what the Church says about the poor in Vatican II. The Fourth Chapter is a call to action in as far as alleviating poverty and evangelizing the poor people is concerned. Some of the pastoral proposals suggested are: Conscientieization, Solidarity with the poor, Sharing responsibilities/Common planning, Collaboration between the Church and the State and Recognition of Human rights. The Conclusion of the thesis brings together issues in light of what I have said in previous Chapters.

## MEANING OF TERMS

### EVANGELIZATION

In the Catholic Church today, the term “evangelization” is common and generally used. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, Evangelization is “An –inclusive term the Church proclaims and communicates to the world the saving message of Christ. The literal sense of the word deriving from *euangelion* (Good news or Gospel)”<sup>2</sup>

In this context, by evangelization I refer to how the Church can continue her missionary activity of announcing the message of salvation (Acts 13:26) leading people to faith in Jesus Christ and transforming individuals and society. To the poor, Christ and his Gospel are not yet completely known. Evangelization is the primary task of the Church “--woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel (1 Cor 9:16)” Evangelization is not the personal initiative of the individual but an “*ecclesial act*”<sup>3</sup>

### POOR

The term “poor” gives a negative impression. It is attached to the person, people or a country. There are different ways in which people can be poor: material, spiritual, cultural and intellectual. Poor people lack the satisfaction of basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, education and health. Poor people are those who find themselves in a situation of weakness, dependence, humiliation, and lack of means, lack of power, social consideration, and lack of money, relationship, intellectual ability, personal freedom, and dignity. The poor are those who are unjustly deprived, the impoverished, the oppressed,

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<sup>2</sup> Stravinskias Peter M.J, ed. *Catholic Encyclopedia*, (Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Inc. 1991), p.377.

<sup>3</sup> Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation. Evangelii Nuntiandi*. (Bombay: St Paul's Publications, 8 December 1975), No. 60.

the unfortunate, the afflicted, the needy, the destitute, the sick, the abandoned and the refugees of today.

The poor of today are the people who have no possibility of changing their miserable economic state without the help of another. The poor are those children under the age of discretion who do not attend school, those who are orphaned or abandoned by their parents due to death, wars, those who are HIV positive and are left to harsh and aggressive society with nobody to take care of them. The poor are those women who are not considered as equal to men in many African societies, those who are battered by their husbands, and those who do not inherit property from their parents and those who are victims of civil wars.

## **POVERTY**

Many people today understand poverty as deprivation of material necessities of life. But there is certain weakness in this understanding of poverty. What is regarded, as a necessity in one society may be considered as luxury in another society. The term “poverty” therefore is a collective social phenomena that does not only refer to lack of basic materials that are considered essential for human existence, but it is also understood in terms of human poverty like the violation of human rights by the privileged minority in the society, exploitation of the vast majority, detention without trials, tortures, oppression of women in the society and in working places, ignorance and brain washing. Therefore, poverty is not merely economic but also human and Christian.

A poor man in Kibera slum was asked to explain what he understands by the word “poverty” and he replied: “Don't ask me what poverty is because you have met it outside my house. Look at the house and count the number of holes. Look at my utensils and clothes I am wearing. Look at everything and write, what you see is poverty”<sup>4</sup>. Material poverty is considered degrading and should be eliminated

## **MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

The existing and mission of the Church depended on the out-pouring of the Spirit on Pentecost day. For the Church to be is to be on mission. The Holy Spirit was given to the disciples to bear witness to Jesus, his death and resurrection (Acts 1:8). The spirit makes Apostles missionaries, witness of Christ's resurrection, martyrs of God and of Christ. “The ultimate purpose of mission is to enable people to share in the communion which exists between the Father and the Son”<sup>5</sup> The goal of the mission of Jesus Christ and of his Church is that all may have communion with the Father, through him and the Spirit. This is what Jesus prayed for, “I do not pray for those only, but also for those who believe in me through their word that all may be done” (Jn 17:20-21)

“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”<sup>6</sup>. To live in fraternal communion means to be on one heart and soul (Acts 4:32) establishing fellowship from every point of view that is: human, spiritual and material. The Church must continue the mission of Christ of restoring the kingdom of God. Mission is the purpose for which the

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<sup>4</sup> Narayan Deepa, *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?*, (Oxford University Press for the World Bank, 2000), p.30.

<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate Redemptoris Missio*, No.23, (Rome: Vatican City, 7 December 1990) p.40.

<sup>6</sup> John Paul II, *op.cit.*, RM No.26, p.44.

Church has been “*sent*” mandated by Christ <sup>7</sup>. The Church sees itself as sent like Jesus to bring the good news of God’s love to people through out the world.

## **LOCATION OF MAKINA MAKONGENI SUB-PARISH**

Makina Makongeni is a Catholic Sub-Parish of “Guadalupe Parish” near Adams Arcade. The Parish belongs to the Archdiocese of Nairobi. It is about three kilometers from the city of Nairobi off-Ngong road. Makina Makongeni sub-parish is found in the middle of Kibera slums. It is bordering with Christ the King Catholic Parish commonly known as “Line Saba Parish”. The people of Makina Makongeni are marginalized, unemployed and have no social security. They are the forgotten dwellers of urban areas. They live under constant fear of starvation and death, and everyone is preoccupied by survival. There is constant fear of attacks by thugs and firebreaks.

The place is very congested. The housing structures are very close to another with very little space between them. All the housing structures are poorly constructed. The materials used for construction are timber, poles, mud, old iron sheets and tins. About 8-10 people live in a single room. The house rent is between 700-1000 Ksh. per month. This is too much for those who are underpaid, unemployed and for casual workers.

The people of Makina Makongeni have poor sanitary conditions. There s no place to throw the rubbish, garbage, plastic papers and piles. The old buildings and filled toilets have been turned places for garbage disposal. The garbage and human fieces are thrown

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<sup>7</sup> Gregory Banum, *The Harper Collins: Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, ed. by Richard McBrien. (Harper Collins Publishers Inc. 1975), p. 871.

on the paths and remains uncollected while rotting and stinking. There are few toilets in the area. These few toilets are filthy and dirty. Ten to fifteen families share one toilet. Others use the paper bags inside the house and throw the shit outside either on the paths or on the sewage. Wastewater is disposed through mud channels that form the sewage system. These trenches are often blocked by garbage or soil making the whole sewage to flow everywhere. Overflowing toilets are open, when it rains they flow into the few trenches available down stream.

# CHAPTER ONE

## SITUATION OF THE PEOPLE

### 1.1 MY WORKING EXPERIENCE

Makina Makongeni sub-parish is composed of six Small Christian Communities. For the last three years, I have been doing pastoral work among the Christians of these communities. My apostolate has been; being with them during Bible sharing, visiting the families, visiting the sick, preparing those renewing their marriage in the church, teaching catechism and preparing those for confirmation. I have conducted several seminars with them on different areas such as; family life, human relationships, human rights, abortion, AIDS pandemic, caring for the sick and above all Bible study and the Sacraments of the Church.

These people are very poor as they experience hardships due to various problems such as: single parenthood, unemployment, orphans, lack of security, lack of good shelter, lack of food, water, health care, oppression and exploitation. Most of them are experiencing material poverty, which is “*lack of economic goods necessary for human life*”<sup>8</sup>. Apart from material and economic poverty, they also experience spiritual poverty. Most of them long to know more about God. They need care and love of God who is their consolation. Despite of the tough life they are experiencing; they still welcome who ever comes closer to them. Their hope is that may be one-day things will be better. It is impossible to have

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<sup>8</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *A theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, (Maryknoll: New-York, Orbis Books, 1973), p. 288.

the exact figure of the Christians in this sub-parish because people are constantly moving by changing the residence.

## **1.2 ROOT CAUSE FOR THE POOR OF MAKINA MAKONGENI**

The Makina Makongeni people have experienced in their struggle barriers to their social mobility. Most of them have come from areas that are densely populated or areas that are affected by drought every year. There is not enough fertile land to grow crops in the rural areas where they have come from. Most of them could not afford taking children to school due to lack of money. According to Judith Bahemuka, some come from “*draught prone areas that often experience water, food shortages and other endless problems such as poor soils, unemployment, large families, landlessness and low income*”<sup>9</sup>. After experiencing excessive suffering in the villages, they have opted to moving in urban areas to seek income hoping to satisfy their basic needs. In the urban areas, these people have faced the challenge of job competition. Most of them cannot be employed because of lacking qualifications. The majority are staying in the slums where life is cheap, with a relative or renting a house hoping to get a job one day. These people being in the slums are materially poor, economically disadvantaged and some times physically deprived persons. They do not have regular jobs or perhaps no job at all. They may be hired for daily work “**kibarua**”<sup>10</sup> with no contract, no insurance and at a salary that cannot even take care of the essential expenses of the family.

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<sup>9</sup> Bahemuka Judith, *Poverty Revisited: Analysis and strategies towards poverty Eradication in Kenya*, (Nairobi:Ruaraka Printing Press Limited, 1998), p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> “**kibarua**” is a Kiswahili word meaning “casual labor”. It can be for hours, a day or two. It is temporary not permanent.

On the other hand, poverty among the Makina Makongeni people is due to the stagnation of the economy and high inflation rates without forgetting the major role played by corruption. Few of these people who are employed in the near by industries, factories and shops of Indians are underpaid. They can be sacked or retrenched any time without any notice. Work is difficult to find and even more difficult to give it a meaning. These people are poor because of the unjust systems that tend to exploit people. The rich are becoming richer as they are concerned with profit, domination, exploitation and oppression. The rich never help the poor as much as the poor help them.

### **1.3 THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL INTERGRATION**

There are many ethnic groups represented in Makina Makongeni sub-parish. There is a large group of Luhyas from Western Kenya, the Luos from Nyanza province, the Kikuyu from central province, the Kamba, the Kisii's, the Taita and Giriama from the coast. Each tribal group uses its own vernacular among its members and some have prayer groups that meet and pray in their own language.

In Church however, the national language of Kenya, Kishwahili is used for Mass, liturgy, catechism, sacraments, bible sharing and seminars. Their ethnic and multi-cultural background does not hinder them from evangelizing themselves. They pray together in the Small Christian Communities, they visit one another, they visit together their sick members and above all they help each other during the “**matanga**”<sup>11</sup> The parish has done much in cultural re-education, cultural development and especially intercultural communication with in the sub-parish.

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<sup>11</sup> “**matanga**’ is a Kiswahili word meaning “funeral arrangements”. When one dies, the body is taken to the mortuary while the members of the family, relatives and friends organize several meetings to collect money for the coffin, transport, food , drinks and everything needed for the funeral.

In the Small Christian Communities, responsibilities are shared regardless of gender and ethnic group. Most of the leaders are women above all single mothers. The leaders work hand in hand with the parish pastoral team and the parish priest.

#### **1.4 MAIN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES**

Although these people left their rural areas seeking for employment, their dreams have delayed to become a reality. Others have qualifications for specific trades but have faced the challenge of competition. Life has not been so easy for the majority especially getting money for food, house rent, treatment and education for their children.

It is hard to describe the main economic activities of these people since some are employed somewhere while the majority are self-employed. Most of the women work in hair salons while men do “**Jua kali**” jobs.<sup>12</sup> The rest whether men or women or children are selling; vegetables like sukuma wiki (kales), tomatoes, cabbages, onions, alongside the road or outside the house where they stay or in public markets. Others sell; chips, mandazi (doughnuts), ground nuts, passion fruits, roasted cassava, roasted maize, smoked fish, cooked sweet potatoes, ripe bananas, boiled meat and soup.

There is a good number of them who are involved in brewing local beer commonly known as “**changaa and busaa**”<sup>13</sup> Others buy this kind of local beer and re-sell it either in the bars or in their homes. There are thousands of sewing machines in the area for

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<sup>12</sup>“**Jua kali**” In Kiswahili jua means sun, kali means tough. Jua kali job may be any kind of work done under the sun, with out any shelter. Such tough jobs are like metal welding.

<sup>13</sup> “**changaa**” is the type of strong liquor. It is a distilled spirit with the combination of sugar and other chemicals. “**busaa**” is the type of local beer prepared from maize, millet and other grains.

those who are experts in sewing clothes, repair, and reducing sizes of the second hand clothes. Most of the youth are working in the video halls that are all over the place. Still others beg from house to house to earn their living.

## **1.5 ECUMENICAL CHALLENGE**

Various religious groups surround Makina Makongeni sub-parish: Muslims Anglicans, Pentecostal churches, Born-again, Winners Chapel, Legio Maria and so on. Public preachers using loud speakers characterize the reformed churches in Makina area. During the weekend preachers who conduct the services in the open-space occupy the whole area. In their preaching's, the preachers promise support to the families of those who join them. Later on, the members are asked to support their preachers financially.

There is fear among the Christians of Makina Sub-parish that the reformed churches may one day win the Catholics. The Catholics are attracted by the charisms of these reformed churches such as; giving long intercessions while closing their eyes, giving testimonies during prayer meetings, spending much time singing, moving from house to house asking people to join them and quoting scriptures to prove their arguments. Sometimes during the bible sharing, they put much emphasis on the Old Testament. There is high competition among the Catholics of Makina and the members of the reformed churches. As the Catholics tend to be interested in promoting Christian unity, the reformed churches are interested in outside relationships especially attracting new members to their own community.

All in all, the Catholics of Makina Makongeni partake in their Church functions; they participate fully in Church's liturgy and other celebrations. They adequately participate in

the Church's sacraments. They prepare children for the sacraments of initiation; they help in the running of the adult catechumenate. Others are also involved in other relatively new movements which at times are house based such as: charismatic groups, rosary prayer groups, family life groups, and justice and peace groups.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **EFFECTS OF POVERTY ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN MAKINA MAKONGENI SUB-PARISH**

#### **2.1 SEXUAL IMMORALITY**

Prostitution and Commercial sex are means of surviving for some women and young girls of Makina Makongeni. A big percentage of people living in this place are single mothers, widows, and divorced women who have come from broken families. Lack of job and the demand of basic needs lead such people to get involved in prostitution and commercial sex in order to survive and feed their children. Among those involved in this trade are young girls who are deceived by men while giving them little sums of money for clothes and food. These young women are engaged in commercial sex by moving around with men who have money. These are usually men living in slums while their wives live in the rural areas. Such men pay house rents for the young women in exchange for sexual favors. Some of the women especially the single mothers are prone to commercial sex with men who are working for security and economic reasons. As a result, most of these men have abandoned their wives and children at home. Others have been forced to run two families of which they are unable.

The reality is that those involved in commercial sex and prostitution wants to cope with the situation hence they are compelled to do such things for survival. *“Prostitution of women and children is one of the commonest ways of making a living in the slums. The preponderance of male migrants, the need for female economic independence, the phenomenon of street children and the reality of the crowded living conditions all favor*

*it. The absence of normal family relationships and morally disorienting experience of shanty towns favor sexual promiscuity*"<sup>14</sup>. For some, it is the only means of getting their daily bread, getting money for house rent, school fees, clothing and water so they turn to prostitution for survival. The environment especially the structure of houses also influences sexual immorality. There is no privacy, the majority stay in one room; parents, children, relatives and visitors. Their rooms do not have ceiling or even strong walls. What is taking place in one room is not a secret in another room.

## **2.2 THE KIBERA STREET CHILDREN**

The Kibera children especially in Makina Makongeni live under extremely difficult circumstances. They have little or no access to basic services such as education, health care, nutrition, shelter and clothing. The Kibera street children are not street children in the sense that they roam in the streets of Kibera. There are no streets in Kibera as such. The so called Kibera street children are vagrants struggling to survive by moving from one corner to another sorting out rotting food stuffs from the dust bins. These children are exposed to total denial of basic needs such as food, protection and love. In most cases, they engage in harassing people, begging, thefts, bag snatching, children prostitution, lethal fights and drug abuse.

The Kibera street children are at a risk of dying anytime as they are exposed to mob-justice, drug abuse, starvation and malnutrition, skin diseases and other infections. At times, they also eat poisoned or contaminated food. According to the Article of Kariuki, *"The street children are caused by aberrant families who abandon abuse or neglect their*

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<sup>14</sup> Aylward Shorter, *The Church in the African City*. (New-York: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 51.

children. This abuse is occasioned by things such as teenage pregnancies, extra marital relationships, pregnancies arising from rape, sexual abuse in domestic setting or domestic violence”<sup>15</sup>. These children are a result of parental negligence, maltreatment, domestic violence, family breakdown, abuse and neglect. Those without parents usually find themselves without food at home while they have to search for their own money and support themselves. These children live in hardships as they experience police and public harassment as well as potential violence and threat to personal safety.

The main activities of the Kibera street children are: collection of cardboard papers, tin products, waste papers and scrap metals which they later sell at specific buying price in the locality. Others do casual work for hawkers, shoppers, traders, for little sums of money. When there is no food, these children beg or become involved in petty theft and other anti-social activities. In such situation of poverty, children eat the left over thrown in the dustbins. Because of boredom and hopelessness, they develop the habit of glue sniffing. When they reach that level, they rarely think of going back to their families, instead they become “*children of the street*”<sup>16</sup> There is a growing number of orphans left behind by AIDS victims and abandoned children who have made the streets their home.

## **2.3 ALCOHOLISM**

Hardon defines alcoholism as “*Habitual excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages. It is characterized by abnormal and persistent desire to drink ethyl alcoholic to excess and*

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<sup>15</sup> Sue Jones and Nici Nelson, *Urban Poverty in Africa: The street Children and their families in Kenya*, ed. by Kariuki Priscilla, (London, 1999), p. 138.

<sup>16</sup> “**children of the street**” These are children who do not have parents, who can afford to keep them at home or in school. So these children wander through the streets looking for ways to support themselves. (See Kariuki Priscilla ,Ibid .page 139).

*also describes the condition that results from such drinking”*<sup>17</sup> As regards to women and men of Makina Makongeni, they drink locally brewed alcohol excessively so as to forget their poverty. Drinking much is one of the behavioral characteristics of the poor people. One would wonder where they get money everyday for buying the liquor. In every five to ten houses, there is a place where local brew is sold depending on how much money one has. *“Alcohol has always been the refuge of the desperate and the destitute, and there is a constant demand for it”*<sup>18</sup>.

## **2.4 THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC**

The spread of HIV/AIDS among the people of Makina Makongeni may be related to poverty, unemployment and lack of education and proper discussion that results into prostitution. Most of the patients with HIV/AIDS are with at least one or more children. The majority are those who have had trial marriages with the fathers of their children, but parted because of poverty.

The disease in general has aggravated poverty mainly because those dying are the productive young people leaving behind widows and orphans who become dependent on other members of the family. Those afflicted with AIDS also consume resources, as they require drugs and special food. Some families are forced to sell household properties so as to take care of the expenses. In order to cope with poverty, women are more susceptible to heterosexual transmission of HIV because of lack of skills for employment hence depending on men for economic support. *“The government of Kenya declared HIV/AIDS a top priority disaster that must be given immediate attention. Current*

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<sup>17</sup> Hardon John A, *Modern Catholic Dictionary*. (New-York: Doubleday& Company, Inc. 1980), p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> Aylward Shorter, op. cit., p. 50.

*estimates reveal that about one million Kenyans are infected by HIV/AIDS. If the current trend continues, HIV/AIDS will have devastating effect on the structural and long term performance of the economy”*<sup>19</sup> Talking about HIV/AIDS on Kenyatta day, the president of the Republic of Kenya Mr.Kibaki urged Kenyans to be vigilant and emphasized the need for change in behavior and attitude. *“With about 29 people dying of HIV/AIDS in the country every hour, the disease is a disaster that we must fight with every weapon at our disposal”*<sup>20</sup>

There is no AIDS clinic in Makina Makongeni. People with HIV or other related symptoms are lacking treatment in the houses. Through the compassion of the Medical Missionary Sisters, the patients gather at the sub-parish on every Tuesday afternoon for counseling, distribution of food, and some medicines to keep them survive for a day or two. Those with AIDS are not charged for the medication which consist only basic drugs such as antibiotics, cough linctus, gentian violet and oral dehydration salts. Usually the Sisters refer patients with symptoms of AIDS for blood test and more counseling.

## **2.5 DESPAIR**

The Makina Makongeni situation is currently characterized by poverty with its accompanying misfortunes of hopelessness, misery, anxiety, fear, depression, anger and confusion. Because of experiencing *“anthropological poverty”*<sup>21</sup>, people’s daily experiences give rise to the question: what does it mean to live or to be human? Is life all

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<sup>19</sup> Bahemuka Judith. op. cit., p. 17-18

<sup>20</sup> Rugene Njeri and Mugonyi David, *Graft: Day of reckoning has come, says Kibaki in Daily Nation News Paper*, (Nairobi Tuesday, October 21,2003). p.4

<sup>21</sup> Engelbert Mveng, *Impoverishment and Liberation: A theological Approach for Africa and Third world in Rosino, ed; Paths of African Theology*, (Maryknoll, New-York: Orbis Books, 1994), p.156  
*“Anthropological poverty”* Mveng meant a denial or absence of all that contributes to the “being” essence and dignity of the human person, culturally, socially, economically, politically and spiritually.

about eternal suffering? These people have undergone a lot of suffering; economically, socially, politically and spiritually.

Lack of income makes them vulnerable because they are unable to make ends meet on a daily basis. Most of them do not see any future improvement on proper housing, clean water, health care, education for children, food, respect for human dignity and freedom of thought remains elusive to most of them. Some have interpreted their misery as a punishment from God that leads them to death. They see their poverty situation not as part of human nature, instead a threat and an enemy to human life. Comparing themselves with others, they do not understand their identity, dignity and their essential human rights. Thus they are subjected to suffering, dehumanization, exploitation and deprivation of a meaningful and abundant life.

## CHAPTER THREE

### LOOKING AT THE POOR IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE AND VATICAN II

#### A. THE OLD TESTAMENT

##### 3.1 CONCEPT OF THE POOR IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Most of the statements about poverty and the poor in the Old Testament are found in the Psalms and in the wisdom literature. The Psalms echo unceasingly the “cry of the poor” (Ps.9:10, 22:25) which reaches the ears of Yahweh. There are instances where the Old Testament looks at wealth as a blessing and poverty as a divine chastisement and retribution in (Gen 49:25, Dt 28:3-8). Poverty is often regarded as a curse, the punishment for sloth intemperance and frivolity (Ps 10:15) on the other hand however, the Old Testament shows much concern for the poor, the needy and helpless. The poor are Yahweh’s special client (Ps.10:25). The poor person is the friend and servant of God (Ps.86) .The poor fears and seeks Yahweh (Ps.34)

Proverbs 13:18 associate poverty with disgrace sees it detrimental to honor and considers it a curse for rejecting correction. According to (Prov 20:13), lazy persons are cursed with poverty. But, “*though in the book of proverbs poverty is generally seen as the fault of the poor themselves, the poor are the object of love and attention.*”<sup>22</sup> In the Old Testament a poor person is some one who has been alienated, marginalized and denied of access to resources that would enable him to live a fully human life in the society. The poor are the

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<sup>22</sup> Ukpong Justin, “*Option for the poor: A modern challenge for the Church in Africa*”. AFER Vol.36 ,Gaba (December 1994), No.6, 350.

afflicted, the oppressed and those wrongly disposed of their rights. The poor need material help from others to be able to exist and who ever is kind to the poor is kind to God who will pay him the kindness done (Prov 19:17). The one who takes pity of them is blessed (Prov 14:21). The enemies of the poor are God's enemies (Ps.18:28).

In the Old Testament, God is the helper of the poor. He defends the poor and cares for them especially for orphans and the widows, he hears their cry (Prov 22:22-23) and defends their cause (Jer 20:11-130). Therefore the God of the Old Testament is the God of the poor.

### **3.2 WHAT DO PROPHETS SAY ABOUT THE POOR?**

The prophets are God's messengers who defend the poor and denounce exploitation and oppression especially in the time of monarchy which seems to be an occasion that breeds riches and poverty. Yahweh, through the prophets strongly defends the poor. The prophets exhorted the Israelites to take care of the poor as part of their covenant with Yahweh. They had to treat the needs of the poorest among them such as widows and orphans justly. The social problem created by the gap between the rich and the poor at the time of king David shows the concern of Yahweh whereby oppression of the poor, denial of that basic dignity and harsh exactions of debts are crimes rebuked in Amos 2:7, 4:1,5:11. The prophets speak in defense of the poor (Is 10:2). Oppression of the poor and needy is a crime for which Yahweh will destroy the kingdom (Ezek 22 and 29). Justice must be rendered to the poor and needy by judges.

The poor of Yahweh are not just any poor people but they are the people of God who have been cast into misery by their nations (Is 43:26). According to prophet Isaiah, the fulfillment of eschatological time includes proclaiming the Good news to the poor, proclaiming the release of captives, restoring the sight to the blind and bringing liberation to the oppressed hence proclaiming the arrival of God's time of favor to his people (Is 61:1-3).

The prophets speak clearly in support of the poor. They condemn every kind of abuse, every form of keeping the poor in poverty and making more people poor (Hos 12:8, Amos 8:5, Mic 6 and 10, Is 3:14) Yahweh does not praise poverty and hopes that it is overcome.

### **3.3 GOD THE CARE TAKER OF THE POOR**

God does not love poverty but loves the poor and cares for them. *"The old Testament leaves us in no doubt that God has a special care for the poor. The oppression of God's people in Egypt moved Yahweh to save them as the book of Exodus recounts"*<sup>23</sup> God cared for Israelites who were slaves in Egypt by giving them the Promised Land. While settling in the Promised Land, the poor among them found themselves being oppressed by the wealthy and powerful of their own people. God was not pleased with such kind of behavior; he cared for them by sending the prophets to protest against this injustice and to proclaim God's care for the poor.

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<sup>23</sup> Donal Door, *Option for the Poor: A hundred years of Catholic Social Teaching*. (Maryknoll, New-York Orbis Books, 1983), p. 6.

The Scriptures make it clear that those who are poor and defenseless have no body to turn to but God. God has special care for the victims of injustice and those who are poor. He cares for them always. He protects them, although at times they can also turn away from God.

## **B.THE NEW TESTAMENT**

### **3.4 THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS TOWARDS THE POOR**

In the New Testament, the poor are referred to as the needy, indigent, the poor who are meek and calm. The ministry of Jesus opens with Good news for the poor (Lk.4:18, 7:22, 12:13-21, 15:19-31) Luke's Gospel is the Gospel of the poor. Jesus Christ is the Messiah of the Poor. Jesus opted for the poor and showed them preferential treatment. The mission of Christ is directed to the poor in the first place and the kingdom of God would bring peace, well being, happiness, wholeness and prosperity to the poor and reverse their situation. Christ does not polarize poverty and wealth. He is balanced in his attitude towards the rich and the poor. Jesus came so that all may have life and have it in full. Our attitude towards the poor must therefore be a positive one that endeavors in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to change poverty in which ever form it is found.

Those whom he turned his attention in the Gospel by a variety of names as poor are; the blind, the lame, crippled, lepers, hungry, miserable (those who weep), sinners, tax collectors, demoniacs, persecuted, captives and all who labor and are overburdened. All these he defends and he is compassionate to them. He fed the hungry with bread (Mt 14:13-21). He cured the blind (Jn 9). The ministry of Jesus is to be understood as a mission of consolation to the suffering. Jesus preached the kingdom of God and

befriended the poor. The poor are blessed because God is merciful and not because of their poverty. It is not poverty for its sake that is blessed, but poverty in the context of being called to hope and trust in God (Lk 12:33, 14:33).

### **3.5 JESUS' FREE ATTITUDE TOWARDS PROPERTY**

#### **(DANGER OF WEALTH, RIGHT USE OF PROPERTY)**

It seems that Jesus took for granted the owning of property in his immediate surroundings. He and his disciples were supported by the means of well-to-do women who followed him (Lk 8:2-3, 10:38). Jesus did not avoid contact with the rich and privileged, he was invited to banquets by the rich particularly by those with worst reputation (Lk 7:36ff, 11:37). His opponents even used to call him "glutton and drunkard" a friend of tax collectors and sinners (Lk 7:34).

The Lucan Jesus teaches us something about the danger of wealth and property. The rich are anxious about the worldly material possessions and are not seeking the kingdom of God (Lk 12:16-21). Having much material wealth can constitute a hindrance for entering the kingdom of God (Lk 18:18-27). Jesus also teaches the right use of possessions, property and wealth that are entrusted to humans by God, who requires stewardship of them (Lk 16:1-3). Jesus appeals to his disciples for complete detachment (Lk 5:11) so as to focus on God's kingdom. Almsgiving is highly recommended as a practice of charity (Lk 6:30).

### **3.6 ESCHATOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF SERVICE TO THE POOR**

Concern for the poor was a primary focus of Jesus earthly ministry and as such, it ought to be seen as a constitutive dimension of the Church's mission today. Mathew's Gospel however gives us another reason for the concern of the poor. In Mathew 25:31-46, the message is expressed in practical action has an eschatological dimension. It is an expression of concern for Jesus himself and is the criterion for eschatological judgment.

The Gospel of Mathew makes it clear that with Jesus, God comes to abide with his people thus inaugurating the eschatological age of salvation<sup>24</sup>. The climax of Mathew's story of Jesus as "God with us" is given in (Mt 25:31-46), particularly verses 40 and 45. Here Jesus identifies with the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, and those in prison. In short, Jesus refers to the needy in our midst. Jesus thus continues to be with us and to make God present in our midst through the poor and the needy that we encounter daily. Whatever treatment we give them is encountered as given to Jesus and becomes the criterion for eschatological judgment.

So, in its mission, the Church ought to be concerned for the poor not only because by so doing it continues the mission of Jesus but, also because such concern has Jesus himself as the object and is the basis for attainment of eschatological blessedness.

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<sup>24</sup> Kingsbury JD, *Matthew as Story*. (Philadelphia Fortress, 1985), p. 42.

## C.VATICAN II

### 3.7 WHAT DOES THE CHURCH SAY ABOUT THE POOR?

Poverty as lack of necessities is seen by the documents of the Church as a threat to the dignity of human person. The Church documents not only condemn the structures of promoting this evil but also propose ways of alleviating poverty. The common good is seen by the documents as being based on the respect on the human person, universal, destiny of earthly resources for good of all and the unity of human family.

Modern Catholic social teaching on the question of poverty begins with Leo XIII, deeply moved by the conditions of the unemployed workers living in urban areas, he remarked that *"the poor must be speedily and fittingly cared for, since the great majority of them live undeservedly in miserable and wretched conditions"*<sup>25</sup> Pope John XXII who convened the council makes it clear that *"the Church wants to be in particular the Church of the poor"*<sup>26</sup> His motivating reason was the dreaded state of poverty in the underdeveloped countries with his inspiration, the council gave much attention to the underdeveloped countries.

The Church calls us as God's privileged people, to respond to the appeal of the poor following the example Christ who identified himself with the poor. The council further called upon Christians to pay attention to the poor and the needy and try to alleviate their state of poverty and hunger. The Church wants us to awaken the consciences of all on the

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<sup>25</sup> Leo XIII, *On Conditions of Workers* 1891 No.5.

<sup>26</sup> Paul VI, Second Vatican Council, *Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious*, (29 June 1971), No.17

misery of the people and to demands for social justice made by the Gospel and the Church.<sup>27</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* pointed out the right of all people to share the goods of the earth as well as the right of the poor to take from the rich. “*If one is in extreme necessity, he has the right to procure for himself what he needs from the riches of others*”<sup>28</sup> All Christians have a social obligation to care for the poor and to contribute to the common good through their productive capabilities.

The Church has also expressed through the Papal encyclicals its concern about poverty and hunger. Pope John XXIII did this in his encyclical “*Mater et Magistra*” and “*Pacem in Terris*” (The Church Mother and Teacher, and Peace on earth respectively). Pope Paul VI expressed the concern in “*Progressio Populorum*” (progress of Peoples) where he emphasized on the urgent need for assistance to the needy people. United as God’s family, we ought to stand and fight against poverty because it is an evil force. In his response to the poor on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, Pope John Paul II observed: “*Love for others and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Jesus Christ himself is made concrete in the promotion of justice.*”<sup>29</sup> This is a call to be interested in the poor, to love them and to see them as an essential part of the whole family. Justice for all calls not only for new measure to deal with poverty, but for a new way of looking at poverty and the poor.

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<sup>27</sup> Paul VI, *ibid* No. 18

<sup>28</sup> Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. *Gaudium et Spes*, (7 December 1965), No.69. p.975.

<sup>29</sup> Pope John Paul II, *On the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, (Boston: St Paul’s Books, 1991), p.5.

### 3:8 ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND THE POOR

The time of St. Francis of Assisi is marked by the divisions and classes among the people. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, there were three groups of people: the upper class, the middle class and the lower class (the poor). St. Francis being a son of the rich merchant from the middle class reacted against his class in favor of defending the poor who were in the lower class. He loved the poor and discerned their needs. The poor during the time of Francis were the beggars, the sick and the lepers who were in the streets of Assisi. Francis did not only show love to the poor, but he became poor himself. His radical conversion and voluntary poverty in solidarity with the economically poor was a vision to overcome their oppression and misery. He followed the Gospel literally by selling what he owned and distributing money to the poor. For Francis, the poor depend on God since most of them are powerless to change their situation.

St. Francis came to understand poverty through the poor. Poverty is not a virtue for him nor a method to attain holiness but a fact, an encounter and even a person "Lady Poverty" that is to say, persons-the poor. It was external poverty of Christ that attracted Francis and led him to accept it as a characteristic of his life, but gradually came to understand more fully the inner poverty of Christ's emptying (Phil.2:7) of the incarnate word and sought to empty himself. St. Francis became poor and loved the poor so as to imitate the poverty of Christ. For Francis, Christ is not an Ideal but a person whom he loved. "*The Lord made himself poor for us in this world*".<sup>30</sup> For Francis, the poor revealed Christ to him. He used to urge his brothers, "*Brothers, when you see a poor man, you have before*

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<sup>30</sup> Blady Ignatius, *The Marrow of the Gospel*. Chicago 9, Illinois: (The Franciscan Herald Press, 1958), p.156

*you a mirror of the lord and his poor mother. So too is the sick, so consider the infirmities which the Lord took upon himself for us”* <sup>31</sup> For Francis, the poor are a living symbol of the Christ who saved us by his poverty. He used to tell his brothers that poverty is a special way to salvation. He bade his brothers to make the poverty of Christ the foundation of their life. When he spoke to them on poverty, he would point to the words of the Gospel: “The foxes have dens, the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has no where to lay his head” (Mt.8:20). The Franciscans embrace not poverty but the poor Christ, who was not ashamed for our sake to be poor and without means to live by alms. The spiritual poverty of Francis opens the way to be in solidarity with the economically poor in their protest against oppression.

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<sup>31</sup> Habig Mariana, *St. Francis: Omnibus of Sources*. Fourth Revised Edition, 2Celano, no.85, Quincy University: Franciscan Press 199, p.433.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CALL TO ACTION (PASTORAL PROPOSALS)

#### 4.1 CONSCIENTIZATION

The poor themselves are part of poverty alleviation. First, they have to be conscientized about their poverty. They should know why they are poor and always think on how they can get rid of such an evil. Conscientization makes them aware of whom they are, their dignity and human rights. It convinces them that they are not powerless, that they they have the capacity to change their situation. Conscientization aims at making people aware of the institutions that account for their marginalization. As long as there is ignorance with regards to the structures that enhance poverty, there are few chances for conversion or social action. Any fight against ignorance is in the long run a fight against poverty and social injustice. A person who is oppressed and not aware of the miserable situation to which he is subjected can do very little to come out of it. Conscientization raises the conscious of the person and society with regards to the obstacles that prevent them enjoying their human rights.

The poor of Makina Mkongeni need knowledge and skills necessary to challenge their government leaders who are accountable for the inhuman situation they are living in.

Conscientization *“equally makes them understand the socio-economic systems at the international level and to appreciate the global interdependence”*<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Kivutha Kibwana, *Learning together to build our Nation: A political guide on how to do Civic Education*, (Nairobi: Clan Press Ltd, 1998), p.11.

Conscientization helps them to know where to go, where to seek legal assistance in case their rights are violated and to use a non-violent approach to bring positive social change.

#### **4.2 SHARING RESPONSIBILITIES/COMMON PLANNING**

The Church reminds all, that each person is endowed with talents that not only enhance personal standards of living, but also can build the human community that has nurtured the individual. Christians of Makina Makongeni need to be united in their fight against ignorance, poverty and disease through the Small Christian Communities. As co-creators with God they should realize that works of poverty alleviation are their responsibility in establishing God's kingdom on earth. The Small Christian Communities should uphold Christian values such as sharing, caring for others, loving each other, concern for the common good and commitment for integral development in the society.

The Small Christian Communities together with the Parish Council should plan and implement actions for transformation together. Both should gather their courage and initiative to begin to create changes. The process of transformation should reject division and domination and seek instead unity and equal collaboration. The parish priest should involve the poor when planning for them because they know their situation better and therefore will be great supporters of these plans.

#### **4.3 SOLIDALITY WITH THE POOR**

By the virtue of solidarity, we are supposed to commit ourselves to the common good for the good of one's neighbor and readiness to sacrifice oneself in the service of the other. Solidarity is to participate in the life of that community in a way that promotes the common good. *"The attitude of solidarity is a natural consequence of the fact that a*

*human being exists and acts together with others. Solidarity is also the foundation of a community in which the common good conditions and liberates participation serves the common, supports it and implements it*<sup>33</sup>. We are a family and we should always feel that we are interconnected and have responsibilities towards one another especially the poor. The more fortunate people have to be ready to share with what they possess and fight against the sinful social structures that subject them to inhuman conditions. The rich amongst us should feel that they have an obligation to help the poor. The Christian principle of solidarity is grounded on the greatest commandment of love as proclaimed by Christ. To be a Christian means to love God and the neighbor. To love the neighbor would imply acting in order to change anything that makes him/her suffer.

Solidarity therefore calls for the participation of every person and nation to the growth to the whole person and for all persons. It remains our duty to work tirelessly to remove structures that subject our brothers and sisters to the dehumanizing conditions. The call “option for the poor” is a commitment by individual Christians and the Christian community at every level to engage actively in a struggle to overcome the social injustices that mar our world. One aspect of option for the poor has to do with sharing in some degree in the lives, sorrows, joys, hopes and fears of those who are on the margins of society.

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<sup>33</sup> Donal Dorr. *op. cit.*, p.304

#### 4.4 COLLABORATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

The poor of Makina Makongeni belong to the Church and to the state. The Church is not expected to just watch as the people of God suffer from poverty; the same applies to the state. For the Church to make any meaningful impact on the society she must be the Church of the poor and above all the message of Jesus Christ was meant to meet the religious and social demands of the poor. The Church would therefore be seen as a community of the poor and the collective poverty would be lived by solidarity.

Poverty alleviation is the responsibility of the State and the Church that together have to facilitate the people's efforts. It is the duty of the Church and the state to be involved in hospital work and education. The State and the Church can fight: ignorance, poverty and disease by providing facilities for health and education sector. The state should see it that the poor get education and training which may enable them to be employed so as to better their lives. *"The state has to improve the general economic, sanitary, ecological and cultural welfare of the entire citizenry. It must do that by creating the conditions of social cooperation in all these areas and ensuring that all citizens enjoy a proportionate share in the fruits of their cooperation"* <sup>34</sup>.

In their common duty, the Church, the state and charitable organizations should pay attention to the urban poor especially those in the slums. Speaking prophetically on behalf of the poor, the Church is not asking too much when it insists that Christians be actively involved in the struggle against poverty. According to Pope John Paul II, every

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<sup>34</sup> Gakuru O.N, Oshomuvwe Joe and Baitu Juvenalis, *Evolving Strategies for Alleviating Poverty in Kenya*:

individual is called upon to play his or her part in a campaign, conducted by peaceful means to promote development in peace to safeguard nature and the world around us <sup>35</sup>. While commenting on the terrible conditions in Kenya, where values are destroyed while politicians struggle for power, the Kenyan Bishops wrote: *"There has never been so much poverty in Kenya as in these days. Kenya can certainly grow enough food to feed its people, but these days a terrible number of people are not getting enough food, and this includes many children. Not only is it an affront to human dignity, but also such condition is the crime breeding ground of social unrest and crime. The government is still spending billions for luxury projects whilst the education, health and social service system has become a scandal to the taxpayer and a burden to the wananchi"* <sup>36</sup> The politicians should not deprive all people including the poor from social services. There is increasing taxation, corruption, theft and mismanagement of public funds. It is the duty of the government leaders to fight against this virus and give all Kenyans the same service.

#### **4.5 RECOGNITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

All human beings would like to enjoy their human rights. Human rights are ultimately based on the dignity of the person. The recognition of human rights by all people especially the poor seems to be a dream. Thousands of poor women, young girls, children, are abused, tortured and harassed by those who have power over them. The Christian aspect that all women and men, children young and old are all equal and children of one Heavenly Father is gone.

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The significance of Christian Ethical principles in Alleviation of societal problems by Juvenalis Baitu, Nairobi: CUEA, 1999, p.36.

<sup>35</sup> Pope John Paul II, *On Social Concern*, ( Washington D.C: U.S Catholic, Conference, 1987), p. 13.

<sup>36</sup> Rodrigo Mejia, ed. *The Conscience of Society: To serve peace reach out to the poor*, A message of Catholic Bishops (14 of September 1993) (Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 1995), p.180.

We are all called to be co-creators and co-redeemers and ultimately called to one destiny-heaven. In our modern world the demands of equal rights for minority groups especially women and children deserves special attention. The discrimination of women and child labor are practices and attitudes of mind, which are incompatible with the dignity of human person and the well fare of the society. Each individual is called to enjoy fundamental rights to life that are: legal equality and protection, property, freedom of expression and political participation, rights to social security, work, free choice of employment, family wage, rest and holiday, social insurance and education. Unfortunately, to the poor especially those of Makina Makongeni, this is a dream.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

This long essay has tried to discuss poverty as the challenge to the mission of the Church in Kenya. Poverty is a scandal to the Christian faith as it degrades people their divine dignity. Poverty is a theological challenge to which the Church must respond The Church and the State in Kenya have been involved in poverty alleviation, but still more support is needed. Evangelization among the poor as an invitation to listen to them, to become part of their lives, to respond to their needs and work with them needs more attention. The Gospel of Jesus Christ encourages the Church to support more the option for the poor, the suffering and the marginalized. The Church and the State stand in the position of promoting liberation of the poor from their poverty. The sermons delivered in our Churches should reflect concern for the poor, while condemning the greed, selfishness, injustice and materialism. If evangelization is to be effective, it needs to be linked to human promotion towards the integral development both culturally and economically.

The Old Testament is the ground on which the Church stands on Social matters for a just society. In the book of Exodus, God saw the suffering of his people and decided to go and liberate them. The Church in Kenya needs people of good heart who are ready to defend and care for the poor. Like God, no body loves poverty, but the poor should never be forgotten. The option for the poor dominated Jesus' mission. Jesus came so that all may have life and have it in full. He fed the hungry with bread, cured the sick and converted the sinners. The ministry of Jesus which is understood as a mission of consolation to the needy is still our first priority in evangelization.

The poor today are looking for God who takes care of both their spiritual and economic needs. The poor will always be amongst us since for many centuries; they have been an essential part of the whole family. It's our duty to identify them, show them love and take care of them since they are our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. The poor however, are not meant to be used as an apparatus or occasion for us to shine in the exercise of charity. There is room for those who wish to express their solidarity with the poor in an extraordinary through individual acts of benevolence. The Church certainly needs people like Blessed Terese of Culcutta and St. Francis of Assisi who totally identified themselves with the poor.

In as far as poverty alleviation is concerned, once the poor are remembered and conscientized, they become part of poverty eradication. It is her duty, the Church to work for the dignity and rights of everyone, both individually and collectively. Through the liberating message of the Gospel, the Church plays a big role of promoting and defending human rights. To avoid the traditional practice of alms giving as a solution to the challenge of the poor, the Church has to develop a culture of justice, responsibility, civic education against the culture of greed and profit.

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