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**TANGAZA COLLEGE**

**THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

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**YOUTH SCCS: A Critical Analysis of How the Youth SCCs can  
be an Effective means of Evangelization in the Archdiocese of  
Lusaka, Zambia**

Moderator

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A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Bachelors of Arts in Religious Studies

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## DEDICATION

*To my dear parents who have always wanted the best for me. May the loving Lord continue to bless you in all you are doing. In addition I would like to remember my brothers and Sisters for your Prayers and support and Fr. Gerard, sma my all season friend.*

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However, to begin with, I would like to pass my gratitude to Rev Fr. Gerard Noom, SMA who was a great source of support when I decided to leave the Society of African Missions. He proved a faithful friend to me indeed. My sincere thanks and gratitude also goes to Fr. Christian Van Spen, SJ, my former spiritual Director who has always stood by me even in times of great difficult. In a very special way I would like to thank Br. John Mayuka, S.C., for his brotherly care and support.

I would like also to acknowledge the following people for the variety roles they played in making me the person I am today: Frs. Fritz Stenger, M.AFri, Rozani Rinaldo, MCCJ, Michael O'Shea, SMA, Tim Redmond, S.P.S. To you all will always cherish the various gifts I recognized and cultivated through my years of interaction with you. You helped me realize such a stock of wealth in the field of learning from which I hope to model my practice.

A vote of thanks also is due to my former confreres: Rev Deacon Peter Makasa, SMA, Ghislain Inai, SMA and Ramsden Tembo, SMA. Guys I will always live to remember the kind of support you rendered. I feel very much indebted also to my family, Fr. Fergus Conlan, SMA, and in a very special way to Catherine Ndanu for their support in times of great need

# STUDENTS DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Bachelors Degree in Theology. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed

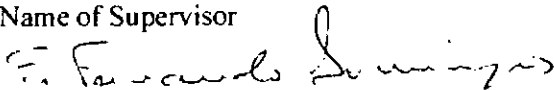


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This long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor

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# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## **Motivations, Objectives and Goal of my Research**

In my first three years as a student in the Society of African Mission (SMA) 1995-98, I was involved in the weekend apostolate with the SCCs in my home parish, St. Charles Lwanga in Kabwe, Zambia. My work involved visiting the SCCs and helping them in anyway they wanted. However, I was intrigued to discover that in all the 30 SCCs I visited, most of the Youths and most of the Men were missing. During a couple of occasions, I tried to ask the members who were present of which the majority were women as to why there was an apathy especially among the Youths. The answer I got was that 'the Youths of nowadays are just too difficult to understand. We have tried to encourage them to come but all our efforts have been fruitless'. On one or two occasions, I tried to engage my Parish Priest on the same issue but his response was that, 'the Youths of these days have rebelled against the church. We just hope the Holy Spirit is going to intervene soon'.

These responses never satisfied my whims. Therefore after four years, I decided to revisit the same issue through this opportunity, which we have been given here at Tangaza College. I was motivated to analyze critically this issue and find out what are the main reasons, which make the Youths not to attend the SCCs. I chose the Youths because

I believe that the quality of Church of tomorrow depends on the quality of the Youths of today. This has been my main goal in this research; to try and go to the root causes that make the Youths lose interest in participating actively in the SCCs and then try and offer some suggestions on how this apathy could be alleviated.

### **Historical background**

In July 1976 in Nairobi, the *AMECEA* plenary session adopted unanimously the SCCs as a pastoral priority for the *AMECEA* countries. The *AMECEA* is comprised of Zambia, Malawi, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia. Currently it encompasses 7 Catholic Bishops' Conferences with Seychelles as an associate member. The idea behind this adoption was that the bishops felt that the church in Eastern Africa had reached maturity. They clearly stated that,

...It is time for the church to become really 'local' that is self-propagating, self-ministering and self-supporting. We believe that in order to achieve this we need to insist on building church life on basic Christian Communities in both rural and urban areas.<sup>1</sup>

This decision came about as a, "result of a logical consequence of the whole trend of pastoral thinking, planing and experimentation's in these countries."<sup>2</sup> In the same year of this declaration, the Zambia Episcopal Conference (*ZEC*) endorsed this pastoral priority and reaffirmed their desire to see the implementations of the SCCs in all the dioceses of Zambia. They stated that, "We the bishops of Zambia remind ourselves once again of our commitment to build Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in line with the *AMECEA*

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, 'An Overall View on Building Christian Communities', in *Afer* Vol. 18, No5, 261

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, 'An Overall View on Building Christian Communities', in *Afer* Vol. 18, No5, 261

study Conference held at Nairobi in July 1976.”<sup>3</sup> They further stressed that, “this will be a national effort and is to be considered as a key means of evangelisation.”<sup>4</sup>

After almost 30 years of this declaration we have seen some success of this pastoral priority (SCCs) in the Archdiocese of Lusaka as well as some failures. Since the endorsement of this declaration by the ZEC, we have observed that most of the Youths in the Archdiocese of Lusaka do not participate in the SCCs actively. Therefore, just as we believe in the circular world that the Youths are the leaders of tomorrow even in the religious sphere, the same idea applies. The quality of the Youths of today will determine the integrity of the church of tomorrow. Hence, we decided to look critically at the issues which prevent them the Youths to participate actively in the SCCs because their continued absence threatens the future of the church in the world and in particular in the Archdiocese of Lusaka.

### **Statement of the Problem**

AMECEA held an Evaluation Conference in 1997. The essence of this evaluation was to analyse how the SCCs have been working in Eastern Africa since 20years of their plantation. This evaluation brought out a lot of challenging points. Some of them are that, “there was a total absence of the youths in most SCCs and the trend was alarming.”<sup>5</sup> At the end of this conference, a declaration was issued which stated that, “If the church is built on the SCCs and the Youths are not there the whole generation may be lost.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, this declaration clearly shows that there is a general acceptance among the AMECEA countries that the Youths of today are an important component for the church

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<sup>3</sup> *The church at the grassroot Level, SCCs reflections on its development in the Archdiocese of Lusaka,*4

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<sup>5</sup> ADS,NO472,1997,10-11

<sup>6</sup> ADS. No. 472,1997,10-11

of tomorrow. Now a question arises if the Youths continue to miss and participate actively in the SCCs how are they going to be integrated in the pastoral plan of the SCCs? In order to involve and encourage them, should they form separate SCCs? If yes how are they going to lease with the adult SCCs? The general view by the *AMECEA* and *ZEC* is that the SCCs are the best place where evangelisation should take place and this was reaffirmed by the African Synod. These are some of the problems, which this research paper has tried to critically analyse and at same time leave some questions for further research.

### **Limit, Scope and Approach**

This research paper is only focused on the pastoral challenges, which the Pastoral priority of the SCCs has posed to the Youths of the Archdiocese of Lusaka. Further on, our research concentrated only in the urban parishes of the Archdiocese. We believe that though the problems of the Youths of Archdiocese of Lusaka might be similar as to those of other Youths in the other *AMECEA* countries, the views and recommendations in this paper are based on the result of the questionnaire we sent to the Archdiocese of Lusaka. Therefore, the suggestion may only be applicable to the Archdiocese of Lusaka. In addition, our data was mainly derived from the Literature Review, Personal interviews with the people involved with working with the *AMECEA*, Youths in the Parishes of the Archdiocese of Lusaka and finally the author's pastoral experience and, his personal experience which he gained whilst working with the Youths in Zambia, Egypt and Kenya.

## **Methodology**

Our methodology has been based mainly on Literature Review derived from the Documents and Articles written on the SCCs in the *AMECEA* countries and other literature written on the SCCs in the world at large. However, in order to get the hard information, we used also a questionnaire, which we distributed, randomly in the Archdiocese of Lusaka. Our target was the urban parishes of the Archdiocese. In the chosen parishes, the questionnaire was distributed randomly among the Youths who attended the Sunday mass when the questionnaire was distributed. We did this in order to get a diverse view from the Youths.

## **Organization of the Chapters**

### **Chapter 1**

In chapter one, we have tried to show how the Church has been moving consciously reading the signs of the time and develop a contextual pastoral theology. In this chapter we see how the theology of the Parish shifted, from the Parish –Parish Priest Centred Church during Pre Vatican 1 to the Parish Priest Community cantered Church. We have done this by showing the Church documents from Vatican One to the Synod of Africa.

### **Chapter 2**

Due to the foundation which we have built in chapter One, in this chapter, we have shown how the *AMECEA* took the challenge of Vatican II which encouraged the Local Episcopal Conferences to create local theologies '(Community Centred Churches), In line with this empowerment, the *AMECEA*, through a logical consequence of pastoral thinking, planing and experimentation's, unanimously decided to adopt the SCCs as their

Pastoral Priority. Therefore, the journey towards the adoption of this pastoral plan occupies the discussion in this chapter

### Chapter 3

Since all *AMECEA* countries accepted the pastoral option of the SCCs, in this chapter we have analysed critically on how one the Archdiocese of the *AMECEA*, Lusaka took this pastoral option of developing SCCs in the Archdiocese and the challenges it has encountered till today

### Chapter 4

We have analysed critically the questionnaire, which we sent to the Youths of the Archdiocese of Lusaka in which we asked them on how they perceive the pastoral option of the SCCs. We asked them whether they feel fulfilled by them or not. Based on the response we got from the questionnaire and other sources related to this topic we have given our own critical suggestion on the way forward of the SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lusaka. We have concluded that it will be good to encourage and develop the Youth SCCs in the Archdiocese if the pastoral option of the SCCs is to bear an integral fruit for the church in the Archdiocese.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research has been very crucial in that many youths do not attend the SCCs at the same time how to integrate them into the SCCs has been problematic. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the formation they receive today will determine the quality of the church of tomorrow. If they don't value and cherish the SCCs when there are still young then the input which our Bishops and other experts had put in to come up with this pastoral option will be just go to waste. Thus finding reasons as to why the Youths do not

attend SCCs is not only crucial but also urgent and necessary in order to facilitate the mechanism and approach that will appeal to them and encourage them to participate effectively

## CHAPTER 1

# THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES.

### **Introduction**

The idea of the SCCs did not just emerge from without. After a century of evangelisation, there was a great feeling among the faithful to congregate and share their faith in-groups that were small. In this chapter we have analysed critically on how this desire to meet into small groups found a great support at the inception of Christianity. We do this by giving the most important passages from the New Testament. Further on we also try to give a brief elucidation on the development of the Small Christian Communities from Early Christianity (Acts of the Apostles and Pauline communities) up to the African Synod. We have done this by showing briefly the distortion which happened along the way and how the African Synod found it appropriate at that time of history (1976) to adopt the model of the Church as Family, –of which the proper facilitation of this are the SCCs.

## 1. The Scriptural source of the SCCs and its Dynamics.

It could be said that the birth of Christianity marked the beginning of SCC. In the scriptures especially the New Testament, we find that before Christ embarked on fulfilling the mission of his Father (which was the spreading of the message of salvation to the house of Israel); he first and foremost, “invited his disciples into the community where they were formed into the ways of discipleship of Jesus Christ.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, as the message was beginning to be entrenched in the lives of the people we find that after the Pentecost, “the community of the disciples shared the good news as they travelled, preaching, baptising and gathering the people together into small Christian communities, which met in homes.”<sup>8</sup> It is in fact these small groups of adherents, which provided the basic structures of the early Christian communities. They acted as beacons of their respective localities and at the same time gave strength and inspiration to their members in front of the hostile circular world in which they lived.

The life in these SCC’s reflected the core of the message of Jesus Christ. Its centre was the ‘breaking of the bread’ and fellowship. In addition, due to their small size group of about 15-20 families living in the same neighbourhood, “the members of the early Christians knew each other more intimately and shared everything in communion following their growth in their understanding in the person of Christ.”<sup>9</sup> What motivated this unity was their strong common belief in Jesus Christ and the experience of him brought them together.

<sup>7</sup> T. -A. Kleissler, M. -A. Le bert, M. -McGuiness, *Small Christian Communities*, 6

<sup>8</sup> T. -A. Kleissler, M. -A. Le bert, M. McGuiness, *Small Christian Communities*, 6-8

<sup>9</sup> T. A. Kleissler, M. -A. Le bert, M. -McGuiness, *Small Christian Communities*, 6-8

This knitting and being in each other of the early Christians through faith and true witness, “determined the extraordinary expansion of Christianity into the socially fragmented Greco-Roman world.”<sup>10</sup> In the letter of the Ephesians, we find the author stressing that

It was he who gave gifts to human kind; he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and leaders. He did this to prepare all God's People for the work of Christian service in order to build up the body of Christ. cf. Ep4, 11-12

This is just one of many passages of New Testament scriptures which reflect the desire of Jesus Christ, “inviting all those attracted by his message to community life which invokes participation and co-responsibility.”<sup>11</sup>

In the Gospels, we find Christ himself giving us the model of community life as the basis of effective evangelisation. He encourages his disciples to continue his work. Their lives became imbued with the values, which Christ had inculcated in them that of, “mutuality, and faith sharing, mutual support in their faith, communal decision making, partnership and collaboration.”<sup>12</sup> For example in the gospel of Mark we read that the disciples are instructed to be companions to each other and are to be sent out to preach with the power to cast out demons (cf. Mk 3,14). Therefore, Christ believed that his commissioning of his disciples – ‘...to go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News’ (cf Mt28, 19) – could only be effectively done when those who accept and believe his message of salvation live in a community.

In addition to this command, to work as a community for effective evangelisation the

<sup>10</sup> T. –A. Kleissler, M. –A. Le bert, M. –McGuiness, *Small Christian Communities* 6–8

<sup>11</sup> *We are the Church: Pastoral Directives on Co-Responsibility in the Church*, 4

<sup>12</sup> *We are the Church: Pastoral Directives on Co-Responsibility in the Church* 5

Gospel of John adds another important dimension. In John 20, 21, we find Christ once again encouraging his disciples to live and work in small communities. He says, “Just as the Father sent me so I am sending you” cf. Mt 28, 19

Therefore, the early Christians took up the command of Christ and lived their Christian lives in sharing and co-responsibility. They lived a life of *Koinonia*. In the Acts of the Apostles, we find a concrete realisation of this way of Christian life. It says, the community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possession was his own, but they had everything in common (cf Acts 4, 32).

In the Pauline communities, the Christian communities had the nature and characteristics, which symbolised a new approach to the way the Christians, are expected to live. It was in way a continuation of the kind of life the early Christians shared as St Luke reports in the book of Acts. Paul clearly elucidated this new way of life which these new Christian communities were supposed to embrace when he emphasised that they should, consider their working and living as the life of one single body where all participate in one life and one action (cf 1Cor12, 6). In this body, there is no passive member. God in this organisation, “does not only allow them to participate but he urges them to do so.”<sup>13</sup> This idea of community organisation was in contrast with the way the contemporary communities were organised. They were mostly organised hierarchically and sharing was non-existent, rather rarely heard of. The position which one wielded in the society and the social status, which he occupied, determined the role one played. Thus the higher status one had the more say he had in the running of the of affairs of his community; and the lower the position one had the weaker voice he had in determining

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<sup>13</sup> *We are the Church: Pastoral Directives on Co-Responsibility in the Church, 7*

what was the way forward for his community. However, in these Christian communities, believers were not separated by the power they had or the privileges they possessed. They experienced conflicts but they served as purifying moments rather than contamination opportunities. A strong example of this could be seen when two strong personalities Peter and Paul clashed over the right way of welcoming non-Jews into Christianity.

As E. Whitehead creatively analysed, “Having fought and compromised, – Paul could say with satisfaction, so James, Peter and John, those leaders, those pillars shook hands with Barnabas and me as a sign of *Koinonia*.”<sup>14</sup> (cf. Gal 2, 9)

In each Pauline Community, each member had a specific role to play depending on the giftedness of an individual. Paul gave young communities a long list of tasks and offices to be fulfilled explaining that God wanted some to be apostles others to be prophets, others to be evangelists... (cf Eph 4, 11). These communities exhibited a life of co-responsibility and participation of each member. It is in this spirit that Paul and Barnabas were enabled to achieve, “a reality of going from community to community training and appointing leaders.”<sup>15</sup> In Acts 14, 25, we find a confirmation of this practice. In each church which Paul and Barnabas visited they appointed elders and with prayers and fasting they commended them to the Lord. The leaders who were appointed came from diverse backgrounds and each had different talents rather gifts. Thus, from this testimony we can conclude with the *IMBISA* (The Inter-Regional Meeting of Bishops Conference in Southern Africa)

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<sup>14</sup> E. Whitehead, J. Whitehead, *Community of Faith*, 7

<sup>15</sup> *We are the Church: Pastoral Directives on Co-Responsibility in the Church*, 7

That, “the apostles considered everybody called and able to participate. Responsibility was shared by all Christians.”<sup>16</sup>

Diverseness played a significant role in shaping the life of these early SCC.

Whitehead emphatically declares that, “Just like in God there are three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not the same but one”<sup>17</sup>—the same became evident in the early SCC’s. In addition we find that even the way the four gospels report the mystery of salvation is different hence reminding us that the faith though one was interpreted differently. Also, we read that, “the followers of Jesus in Antioch crafted expression of belief different from those in Jerusalem.”<sup>18</sup> An important aspect which we can deduce from these experiences of the early Christian communities is that even though they lived a life of mutuality, co-responsibilities and sharing there was a great deal of diverseness which brought a richness to these communities instead of competition and jealousy as unfortunately found in some SCCs today.

## ***2. The Theology of a Parish according to Vatican II***

Even though a new breeze hovered in the church around the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the coming of Vatican II did not completely revamp the classical perception of the parish. However, a credit at the same time should be attributed to the Vatican II for it tried to enhance the understanding of the parish to fit the new realities of the time; a desire to empower the lay people have some autonomy and manage their parochial activities with some independence from the Parish Priest (clergy). Therefore, D.M Ngonu on his comment over the Vatican II’s view over the parish organisation, he says the Fathers of

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<sup>16</sup> *We are the Church: Pastoral Directives on Co-Responsibility in the Church*, 7

<sup>17</sup> E. –E. Whitehead, J. –Whitehead, *Community of Faith*, 8

<sup>18</sup> *We are the Church: Pastoral Directives on Co-Responsibility in the Church*, 7

the council still maintained the old definition of the Parish that it is, “a territorial unit of the church created for the effective pastoral ministry.”<sup>19</sup> They emphasised that a parish was a cell rather an area, which exists within a diocese for the good of the faithful and it, acts as an effective way of doing pastoral work. Thus, the council held that, “the laity will continuously cultivate the feeling for the diocese of which the Parish becomes a kind of a cell; they will always be ready on the invitation of the bishop to make their contribution to the diocesan undertakings.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, with this definition, the Parish becomes a cell, which lives within a living body. The diocese in this context is the living body. Hence, the Parish “must remain part of the diocese, it cannot be a total church by itself.”<sup>21</sup> To cream it all D.M. Ngonu describes this relationship between the parish and the diocese in the following allegory,

Just as the universal church is concentrated in each of the Episcopal conferences, so it is the diocesan church concentrated in the bishop who animates each parish. Thus it is that the diocese can be the universal church communicated; and thus it is that the parish becomes the participating local church.<sup>22</sup>

This understanding of the parish as a cell, which is part of the living body, is further clarified in the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy. In this document, we find the Council Fathers elucidating the importance of the hierarchy. They underlined that, “the bishop is to be considered as a high priest of the flock from whom the life in Christ of his faithful is in the same way desired upon whom it is in some way depends.” S.C 41. Therefore this document invites the faithful to conceive that, “the principal manifestation of the church consists in the full, active participation of all God’s holy people...especially

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<sup>19</sup> D. -M. Ngonu, *Small Christian Communities*, 101

<sup>20</sup> D. -M. Ngonu, *Small Christian Communities*, 102

<sup>21</sup> D. -M. Ngonu, *Small Christian Communities*, 102

<sup>22</sup> D. M. Ngonu, *Small Christian Communities*, 103

in the same Eucharist, in one prayer, at one altar at which the bishop presides surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers.”<sup>23</sup> On the practical level this conception of the church is impractical. The geographical situations inhibit the bishops to effectively preside at every liturgical celebration. This document is mindful of this situation thus it states, “...It is impossible for the bishop always and everywhere to preside over the whole flock in his church. He must out of necessity establish groupings of the faithful and among these parish set-up under a pastor who takes the place of the bishop, the most important thing is that in some way they represent the visible church constituted throughout the world.”<sup>24</sup>

The Council Fathers brought another innovation to the understanding of the Parish as compared to the description, which is found in 1917 Code of Canon Law. The latter emphasised that, “(The territory and the office of the pastor so much so that the parishioners are assigned as objects to the parish”<sup>25</sup> – therefore the centre of all parish activities becomes only the office of the pastor. In this state of affairs, the pastor became the only wise and spiritual person from whom every parishioner sought spiritual solutions. The result of this was as D.M.Ngona describes,

Only practising loyal Catholics would come to see the pastor regularly when problems of faith arose or on occasion of death, marriage or birth or to make requests for the masses of their dead relatives. All those who would not make such calls at the pastors office might be drifting away; but then they were only seen as lapsed members who were expected to return one day to the church asking for forgiveness and favour of the pastor to re admit them as full and practising members<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> S.C., 41

<sup>24</sup> S.C., 42

<sup>25</sup> D. -M. Ngona, *Small Christian Communities*, 106

<sup>26</sup>D. -M. Ngona, *Small Christian Communities*, 106

However, Vatican II went further and widened the horizon in which the parish should be understood in order to make the pastoral activities at the parish level all embracing and all accommodating. It clearly stated that, “a pastor who realises his responsibility as shepherd cannot limit his care to a limited handful of the faithful who still come to consult him. He must reach out even to the sick. He must consider even the non-Catholics who are within the territory of his parish.”<sup>27</sup> Deudonne acknowledges this new approach to the pastoral creativity of the parish, “as not of the one of waiting but one of getting down into the valley from the top of the hill to meet the people.”<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, one is left to wonder whether this new approach to pastoral ministry will enable the Parish Priest manage his office and at the same time meet the needs of his parishioners in the outlining areas.

To answer this pertinent question, the Fathers of the Council gave revolutionised response that changed the whole concept of what it means to be a catholic. The Fathers of the Council acknowledged the vital role which the laity could play in order to make the evangelisation effective and make the good news of Christ take root in the hearts of those who accept his message of salvation. In the decree on the Apostolate of the Lay people, the Council Fathers stated, “the laity should develop the habit of working in the parish in close union with their priests, of bringing before the ecclesial community their own problems, suggesting and requesting man’s solutions, to examine them together solve them by general discussion,”<sup>29</sup>—Just as we saw earlier on in the early Christian communities. cf. *Presbyterorum Ordinis* No 3. This was a complete *metanoia* from the

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<sup>27</sup> J.A. Corydon ed, *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, cf. Canon ,771

<sup>28</sup> D. -M. Ngona, *Small Christian Communities*, 107

<sup>29</sup> Cf *Apostolicam Actuositatem.*, No 3 in A.Flannery,OP, General Editor, *Vatican Council II*, 679

previous teachings of the church, which exposed the lay people as only passive objects in the economy of salvation.

Therefore, with this innovation, the council made the understanding of the parish more, “as the family in which everybody has something to contribute in which members work together for the common welfare.”<sup>30</sup> Hence, this approach to the pastoral life of the church created a new role for the pastor. The role, which compelled him to take his rightful place among his brothers and sisters. His rightful place entailed that, “he should shy of the superiority complex and be ready to sit down with his brothers and sisters to discuss their problems without pretending as if he is the only one who knows everything and he can dictate to others what to do.”<sup>31</sup>

In conclusion we can boldly say Vatican II brought vitality to the pastoral ministry and added a communitarian altitude to the understanding of the Parish as opposed to the hierarchical and ‘dictatorial’ way, which had engulfed the understanding of the parish as from the middle Ages till Vatican II. In other words, the Church Fathers of Vatican II tried to go back to the church organisation which the early church exhibited as found in the Acts of the Apostles and Pauline letters and contextualised it to fit the challenges which the 20<sup>th</sup> century was posing to the church (cf Acts 4, 32).

### 3. *The African Synod's teaching on SCCs*

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The African synod marked another landmark in the desire to go back to the way the early Christian communities were organised in the early church. However, this development is concomitantly linked to the new and amicable environment, which

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<sup>30</sup>Cf. A.A., No 4 in A.Flannery, OP, General editor, *Vatican Council II*, 679

<sup>31</sup> Cf. P.O., No2 in A.Flannery, OP, General editor, *Vatican Council II*, 761

Vatican II created. Vatican II managed to break through, “the authority-conscious model of church and projected an image of the church as people of God.”<sup>32</sup> This inevitably meant that each member had a potential to become holy and participate fully in the life of the church. With this ecclesiology, the exercise of ministry becomes focused towards the good of the body of Christ and not to the temporal human created structures, which tries to focus on the person. This new vision of the church encouraged the local churches in Africa to respond to the local needs in the local way and seek ways and means, which will effectively help to evangelise the African people. Whence, in actualising these dreams the African synod was convoked.

### **3.2 The bishops understanding of the way forward for the African Church**

The bishops of Africa through the African synod could not have thought of a better way of responding to the local needs and the inadequacies found in the models of the church, which Rome through the early missionaries imposed on Africans than to propose the model of the church as a Family of God. The Family model which the Bishops had in mind is what Bishop Patrick Kalilonbe described to me during a short encounter had with him at the Missionary of Africa formation house here in Nairobi during breakfast early this Year. He said the African family, which the Bishops had in mind, was one, which was purified and ridden of all traditional imperfections. That which engages in a dialogue whenever there is a dispute; a Family that has embraced gospel values and integrated them in their respective cultures and traditions. It is in this light that we find the Pope’s opening remarks to the synod agreeing with the bishops on this model of the Church as the Family of God. cf. E A, No23

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<sup>12</sup> M. Browne, SND. *The African Synod, Documentis, Reflections, Perspectives.*4

The Bishops chose this model after analysing the social cultural set up of the African people. African by nature value ties, which transcends the limits of the nuclear families as evident in most western countries. A renowned African theologian Professor John Mbiti once said in his book 'An Introduction to African Tradition Religions' that an Africans existence makes sense only when it is attached to his kin's. He says an African believes in the community (extended family) such that he says, "I am because we are. We are therefore I exist." An African feels his existence when he is living in harmony with other members of the extended family."<sup>33</sup>

They stressed the conceptualisation of the model of the church, as family of God will only be realised by the creation of SCCs. In such communities, which are the cells of the church –as family, "one is formed to live concretely and authentically the experience of fraternity."<sup>34</sup> The Bishops believed strongly that in them the spirit of service, solidarity and common good reigns. Each is impelled to construct the Family of God. This family is entirely open to the world from which absolutely nobody is excluded. It is in these communities, which have these qualities that will provide the best means to fight ethnocentrism's within the church itself and more. widely all nations of Africa thus making the work of evangelisation more effective.

It is appropriate at this moment to state that the African synod did not explicitly tackle the canonical and theological transformation or changes, which should occur to the

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<sup>33</sup> J. -S. Mbiti, *An Introduction to African Tradition Religion*, 4

<sup>34</sup> *The African Synod: Popes opening homily; message of the Synod; message of the AMECEA and IBISA Bishops*, 24

understandings of the Parish as Vatican II, did. This was not forum or the jurisdiction of the Synod. However, the Synod went further and tried to widen the horizon on how the Christian community is to live the gospel in Africa if she has to effectively evangelise her people in line with the challenges posed with the coming of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Synod began by an acknowledgement that, “the task of spreading the good news in Africa would effectively be successful if we adopt the model of the church as the Family of God.”<sup>35</sup> The urgency to come up with a model which touches the core of the African people is, “because in Africa there are millions who are not yet evangelised, the church is faces with necessary and urgent task of proclaiming the good news to all and leading all those who hear it to baptism and the Christian life.”<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the prevalent model was not effectively a help to expedite the process of evangelisation and enable the newly baptised interiorize their faith.

Therefore according to the Africa synod, the essence of evangelisation is three folds, that is,

i, to transform humanity from within and make it new

ii, to build up the church as family of God, an imperfect anticipation on earth of the kingdom of God.

iii, to share in the communion that which exists between God the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit.

These three aspects could not be attained when the people (Africans) come to the knowledge that they belong to a family, which is the universal church. The embodiment

<sup>35</sup> *The Church In Africa*, Post-Synod Apostolic Exhortation *ecclesia in africa*, of the Holy Father John Paul II, Nos59-60

<sup>36</sup> C. McGarry, SJ, ed., *What happened at African Synod*, 78

of this family to an African can only be visualised when he congregates in a small group just as big as an extended family. Having acknowledged the importance of evangelisation in the church in Africa, the African synod went further to recommend on how evangelisation should be carried out. It is important to note that the synod did not reject the active participation of the missionaries in carrying out this mandate but it stressed the involvement of the African Christian family in the context of the SCCs.

For the Synod Bishops, “the African Christian families are a privileged place of witnessing the gospel; a true domestic church; a community which believes and evangelises; the first cell of the living Christian Community and of Society; a School of the gospel and social virtues.”<sup>37</sup> This family, which the Synod envisioned, is the one, which is purified and evangelised. The parents together with their children, “exercise the priesthood of the baptised by receiving the sacraments, by prayers and thanksgiving and by the witness of holy life.”<sup>38</sup> This family is the one, which is, open to other families hence the emphasis of the SCCs. It is in them that this *Koinonia* could be realised.

The symbol and icon, which made the early Christian communities live and share the life of Christ in full in spite of the unfriendly climate, they lived in. The synod stated that, “the SCCs are a place where the church as family is experienced”.<sup>39</sup> These SCCs should be in fact a church with all the attributes of the church such as, “praying community, evangelising community, and a community, which does only read the scriptures but applies them into their lives.”<sup>40</sup> cf. Acts 4, 32

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<sup>37</sup> M. Browne, SND, *The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 17

<sup>38</sup> M. Browne, SND, *The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 17

<sup>39</sup> M. Browne, SND, *The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 17

<sup>40</sup> M. Browne, SND, *The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 17

In this organisation of the church as tabled by the African Synod, the lay people are encouraged to take an active role in the running of their affairs. Thus, In order for this vision to be realised, the synod suggested the enactment of training programs in each diocese, in community organisation, leadership, social and economical fields. With this concept the synod stated that they, "...lay people should fulfil their special mission as baptised and confirmed person who occupy positions of responsibility. There are to be carefully prepared for political, economical and social tasks through solid foundation in the church's social doctrine".<sup>41</sup>

It is vital at this juncture to mention in brief what Synod had to say about the Young people as this have been our main focus is this paper as we shall see in chapter three. On the young people, the synod acknowledges the need for them to be evangelisers to their own peers. The bishops said, "Young people are called to become evangelisers to their peers".<sup>42</sup> It is in this line of thought that in this paper we are arguing the necessity for the youth in Africa to have their own SCCs, which will liase with that of the adults for effective evangelisation.

In making an implicit reference to the parish-oriented-structure church to SCCs – oriented-structure church, the Synod stated that, "the church as family can not reach all her possibilities unless it is divided into communities small enough to foster close human relationships".<sup>43</sup> However, the bishops were quick to outline the vital characteristics, which should encompass such communities. Some of these characteristics are that of missionary oriented community, which makes the word of God as its centre and tries to

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<sup>41</sup> C. McGarry, SJ, ed., *What happened at African Synod*, 82–83

<sup>42</sup> M. Browne, SND, *The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 18

<sup>43</sup> M. Browne, SND *The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 22

meditate upon it and is put it into action. Over and above, these communities are supposed to be able to be unified by love, “a love which transcends the limits of natural solidarities of clans’ tribes and other interest groups”.<sup>44</sup> In prioritising the SCC as the centres for the effective evangelisation in Africa, the bishops did not in any way try to distort the understanding of the Catholic Church as Universal. They acknowledged that, “God’s family is always larger than our Christian community, our parish, our diocese”.<sup>45</sup> The Catholic Church could never be a tribal or a national church. If a Christian community or a local church cuts itself off from the rest it becomes a sect and it is longer catholic. This emphasis on the local church did not entail a uniformity of evangelisation but rather a communion in diversity compatible with the gospel. In this communion each local church brings its own special gift like the adoption of the church as family by the African synod, which brought the richness to the understanding of the church in the universal catholic world.

## **Conclusion**

As we come to the end of this chapter, we would like to stress that our aim in this chapter has been to show the origin of the SCCs and the way they evolved in the New Testament. We have also tried to show how the Vatican Council II tried to create a community centred church as opposed to the pastor centred oriented church. The African Synod in line with Vatican II offered a model of the church as Family of God, which was compatible with the African social and cultural being. And as we are going to see in the next chapter how the SCCs according to the African Synod, is the best medium in which the church as Family could be properly realised.

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<sup>44</sup> M. Browne, SND, *The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 22

<sup>45</sup> M. Browne, SND *The African Synod, Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 23

In the next chapter, we have discussed on how the *AMECEA* Bishops in 1976 came to the decision to adopt the SCCs as a pastoral priority in the *AMECEA* countries.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ADOPTION OF THE SCCs BY THE *AMECEA*

#### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter we discussed in some detail the theological foundations of the SCCs in preparation for our topic in this chapter in which we have critically analysed how the *AMECEA* (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa) Bishops came to adopt the SCCs as their pastoral priority. This resolution came after a series of plenary sessions culminating in 1976 when all the Bishops endorsed the pastoral option of the SCCs. The *AMECEA* is comprised of Zambia, Malawi, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia. Currently it encompasses 7 Catholic Bishops' Conferences with Seychelles as an associate member. In addition, in this chapter, we have also explored how the Archdiocese of Lusaka took this challenge of implementing the pastoral option of the SCCs and the challenges it has encountered till today.

#### **1. The Theological background behind the adoption of the SCCs by *AMECEA***

In order for us to comprehend on how the *AMECEA* Bishops arrived at the decision to adopt the SCCs as a pastoral priority it is important for us first to analyse the ecclesiological and theological background, which influenced the Bishops to arrive at this decision.

We would say that since the beginning of the church and the development which took place later, especially after Vatican II, the theological understanding has been that, “the Church reaches its peak in adhering to the mandate which she received from Christ (of going out to the whole world and make disciples of all nations (Mt28, 19)) through the implantation of the church in an area which then grows and flourishes more or less to various factors”<sup>46</sup>. Then, after a while a time comes when this infant church reaches a stage where it has to continue the functions for which it was meant that is, “to be a sacrament of salvation in the locality where it grew up and took root”.<sup>47</sup> Thus, for this process to come to fruition, Fr.Peter Lwaminda says, this could only be possible,

when that infant church has achieved a point where it can be seen as a community of God’s people; a cohesive group of people bound together by the ties of faith, hope and charity, imbued with Christ vitality and capable of making an impact on the society in which it lives and grows.<sup>48</sup>

This description of the Church by Fr.P. Lwaminda just elucidates what occupied the minds of the Bishops when they were struggling to come up with a suitable pastoral plan, which will effectively help to evangelise the people of God in their respective countries.

The Bishops were convinced that for any Christian Community to reach a stage where it could be classified as ‘a local church’ that is a church which is self-ministering, self-propagating and self-supporting it should at least be entrenched in the culture and Social strata of the people in which it is rooted. This shows that the church has matured. To cream it all, Bishop Patrick Kalilombe says, “The church has become localised”.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> A.Radoli,SOM,ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 87

<sup>47</sup> A.Radoli,SOM,ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 87

<sup>48</sup> Fr. Peter Lwaminda, ‘A Theological Analysis of the AMECEA documents On the Local Church with Special emphasis on the Pastoral Option for Small Christian Communities in A.Radoli, SOM., ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 87

<sup>49</sup> Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, ‘An Overall View on Building Christian Communities’, in Afer Vol. 18,No5 in AFER, Vol.18,No.5,263

Therefore, to develop such a Christian community there is need to plan ahead in terms of, “financial and intellectual self preservation from the very start”.<sup>50</sup> This Community has to have the capacity to integrate and entrench itself in the culture of the people in which it exist thus taking flesh in it making the locals identify themselves with it. When this process is achieved such a community has the impetus of becoming, “...an effective instrument for the formation of the faith and a concretisation of the sacramentality of the church with its implications of the church”.<sup>51</sup> The Bishops understood vividly this concept thus they went further and stated, “The local Community should not merely promote the care of believers within it, but it should also be imbued with the missionary spirit which paves way for Christ for all”.<sup>52</sup> This desire to have such a Christian Community influenced the Bishops to look at the SCCs as a superb vehicle, which will facilitate the actualisation of such a Christian Community, a truly local church.

## **2. Ecclesiological and Social-Cultural motivations behind the adoption of the SCCs**

It is important to note that the other important reason why the Bishops arrived at the decision to adopt the SCCs to be a pastoral priority for the *AMECEA* countries came as, “a result of a pastoral response to the challenges brought about by both civil and *ecclesial* development that were taking place in the region in the 1960’s.”<sup>53</sup> In view of this, the Bishops perceived the hand of God in their discernment of the SCCs during one of their plenary session in which they stated,

We are convinced that the God who speaks to us through and in the scriptures is the same God who is continually speaking to his church today through the signs of the time: the

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<sup>50</sup> A.Radoli, SOM, ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 88

<sup>51</sup> A.Radoli, SOM, ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 88

<sup>52</sup> A.Radoli, SOM, ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 88

<sup>53</sup> A.Radoli, SOM., ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 88

events, situations and conditions of man's life in our day. We take these signs of times in our countries as the challenges of God for his church in the coming years<sup>54</sup>

Some of these changes which engulfed the region during the 1960's were, "decolonization, decrease in the number of missionaries, and a growing secularisation in the *AMECEA*".<sup>55</sup>

These factors influenced the Bishops to identify new pastoral strategies in order to make evangelisation effective and attain the mandate, which the church received from Christ of transforming the faithful to become a real people of God. So, we can conclude with Fr. P. Lwaminda that "SCC's were judged to be an answer".<sup>56</sup> Interestingly enough, today, some African theologians are contemptuous of this pastoral priority because they strongly feel that, "since the initiative came from above (The Bishops) there was no spontaneous response from the people."<sup>57</sup> The laity only became part of the process at the later stage. Therefore, the failure of the SCC to take off in some countries is alluded to this. It is also important to note at this juncture, that in most Latin America countries, BECs (Basic Ecclesial Communities) are successful mainly because the initiative came from the grassroots with a clear defined agenda (coming together and fight for justice in line with the teachings of Christ found in the gospels) as compared to the SCCs in the *AMECEA* where the initiative came from above and their agenda has been found wanting in some places.

Nevertheless, it is also important to note that the decision to adopt the SCCs

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<sup>54</sup> Afer Vol XVI,8

<sup>55</sup> A. Radoli, SOM., ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 88

<sup>56</sup> Fr. Peter Lwaminda, 'A Theological Analysis of the *AMECEA* documents On the Local Church with Special emphasis on the Pastoral Option for Small Christian Communities in A. Radoli, SOM., ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 88

<sup>57</sup> C. McGarry, sj., -R. Mejjia, sj., - V. Shirima, sj., *A light on our path-A pastoral contribution to the African Synod*, 176

should be seen in a broader perspective that is, in line with the developments in the church and especially the recommendations of Vatican II. Vatican II created the ambience, which gave room to different church jurisdiction to create local theologies, which will have a meaning to the local populace as opposed to the old church teachings, which emphasised unity and neglected the aspect of diverseness of the people. In fact, the Bishops were just answering to the call of Vatican II of creating local theologies; a theology, which was contextual. This was in contrast with what was taught before Vatican II that, “Catholics...main task on this earth was to remain in the state of grace so as to get into heaven after death. The church was the construction of the means of grace and truth and earthly matters were totally inconsequential”.<sup>58</sup>

However, as we discussed in the previous chapter about the changes, which took place in the way we define a parish, Vatican II revolutionised this classical teaching. It clearly affirmed that the church is on a, “pilgrim status, journeying along side the rest of human kind. It is a continuous exodus, making its way through temptation and tribulations till by the way of the cross it comes to the light which knows no settings”.<sup>59</sup>

The *AMECEA* Bishops understood this very well that,

to actualise this teaching it entailed going beyond the usual way of coming once a week and congregate around the Eucharistic table. It involved praying and discerning of a new model of the church, which will encompass all the spheres of adherents who were faced with new challenges, which their church was expected to offer answers.<sup>60</sup>

Fr. Peter Lwaminda emphatically says, “SCC’s came up as the only solution”.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> A.Radoli, SOM., ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 88

<sup>59</sup> A.Radoli, SOM., ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 89

<sup>60</sup> A.Radoli, SOM., ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 89

<sup>61</sup> Fr. Peter Lwaminda, ‘A Theological Analysis of the *AMECEA* documents On the Local Church with Special emphasis on the Pastoral Option for Small Christian Communities in A.Radoli, SOM., ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 88

In addition, we can also say that the decision to adopt the SCCs was also influenced by an outcome of, a careful study of the African independent churches and the religious movements which according to Bishop Patrick Kalilombe,

are genuinely an African response to the Christian message; they rely entirely on local resources and expertise in their internal life, ministry and expansion. Their structures and functioning are adapted to the lifestyle of ordinary people...the members of the congregation share in the community task, help and support one another, and integrate their religion with the preoccupation of the internal life.<sup>62</sup>

It will be unwise of us in our discussion of the theological, ecclesiological, and social-cultural motivations behind the adoption of the SCCs if we do not mention Marie-France Perrin Jessy, which most theologians accept as being the catalyst, which enabled the Bishops to adopt the SCCs. This is so because the underlying principle in the minds of the Bishops to come up with this pastoral priority (SCCs) was as Fr Peter Lwaminda says ecclesiological. The Bishops were seeking means and ways of making the local church in these new nations, "as the salt and leaven".<sup>63</sup> Therefore, this vision could only be realised in an environment where, "the church is truly alive and ready to respond to the needs and yearnings of the faithful".<sup>64</sup>

Having said the above we can boldly say that the underlying motivation of the AMECEA Bishops in adopting the SCC as a pastoral priority was in order, "to bring about God's kingdom in the society and to make sure that the body of believers is alive and active so that it can spread this life around them".<sup>65</sup> This meant that the SCCs become a

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<sup>62</sup> Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, 'An Overall View on Building Christian Communities', in Afer Vol. 18, No5 in AFER, Vol. 18, No. 5, 263

<sup>63</sup> Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, 'An Overall View on Building Christian Communities', in Afer Vol. 18, No5 in AFER, Vol. 18, No. 5, 263

<sup>64</sup> A. Radoli, SOM, ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 89

<sup>65</sup> A. Radoli, SOM, ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 90

prolongation of God's salvific work here on earth, "a mystery that we belong to God and share in his life".<sup>66</sup> The consequence of this kind of ecclesiology is that, "wherever there is a Christian, there will be a continuation of God's life".<sup>67</sup> Thus the SCCs automatically become the centre where this missionary outlook emanates from. In order to attain this, Fr. Peter Lwaminda summarises the theological motivations, which was in the minds of the Bishops as concomitant requirement if the process of implementing the pastoral priority would bear fruit. . These are;

- (i) *Koinonia*-the communion of Faith, Hope and Love that is the heart of the church; expressed most fully in the Eucharist; the *kerygma* the witness to and teaching about the risen Christ, "the apostolic teaching", guaranteed by apostolic tradition.
- (ii) *Diakonia*-self giving service for the sake of others, going beyond the limits of one's community, the very mark of Jesus Christ who gave himself totally to the father, for others, for the whole world.
- (iii) *Fidei*-these communities are supposed to be communities of Faith, of witness and service. A community where the faith of the members becomes evident in the way members take interest in the needs and wants of the neighbours be it in social, economical and political needs.<sup>68</sup>

Now having given the brief theological, ecclesiological and social-cultural motivations which helped the *AMECEA* bishops to adopt the SCCs as the pastoral priority, below we are going to summarise the major *AMECEA* plenary sessions which dealt with the issues pertaining to SCCs. This is in order to show how the Bishops moved systematically in acknowledging the importance of implementing the SCCs.

<sup>66</sup> A.Radoli,SOM,ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 90

<sup>67</sup> A.Radoli,SOM,ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 90

<sup>68</sup> Fr. Peter Lwaminda, 'A Theological Analysis of the *AMECEA* documents On the Local Church with Special emphasis on the Pastoral Option for Small Christian Communities in A.Radoli,SOM,ed., *The local church with A Human Face*, 93-94

### *3. THE MAJOR AMECEA PLENARY SESSIONS WHICH LED TO THE ADOPTION OF THE SCCs AS A PASTORAL PRIRIOTY FOR THE AMECEA COUNTRIES*

#### **3.1 The 5<sup>th</sup> Plenary AMECEA session held in 1973 Nairobi, Kenya**

This meeting was significant in a way that for the first time the bishops defined the characteristics of what a local church is expected to have. The bishops believed that, adopting the SCCs would ensure that that the church becomes 'Local'. According to the bishops, "Local church", means a church which is, "self- ministering, self-propagating and self-supporting".<sup>69</sup> Therefore, in the Eastern Africa the bishops believed that this could only be possible if they,

insist on building church life and work on basic Christian communities, in both rural and urban areas. Church life must be based on the communities in which everyday life and work takes place: those basic and manageable social groupings whose members can have real inter-personal relationship and feel a sense of communal belonging, both in living and working.<sup>70</sup>

Therefore, when this is achieved Bishop P. Kalilombe believes that the church has now fully become "incarnated, or authentically localised in a measure in which the living and the running of church life and consciously assumed by the local Christians".<sup>71</sup> This shows that the church has matured and the bishops felt that yes indeed the church in the Eastern Africa has reached this stage.

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<sup>69</sup> Afer, Vol 18, No.5, 264

<sup>70</sup> Afer, Vol 18, No.5, 265

<sup>71</sup> Afer, Vol 18, No.5, 265

### **3.2 The 6th Plenary *AMECEA* Assembly held between 15-22 July 1976, Nairobi, Kenya**

This was one of the most important *AMECEA* plenary sessions in that all the bishops endorsed the adoption of SCCs as a pastoral priority. The Theme for this assembly was ‘Building the SCCs in Eastern Africa’. In this meeting the Bishops stressed that,

the Christian communities we are going to build are simply the most local incarnation of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic church.... The task of building Christian communities is more of creating and developing awareness of what our renewed vision of the church means in pastoral terms and in relationships than one of building structures.<sup>72</sup>

The Bishops closed this session by issuing a strong statement urging all the *AMECEA* Bishops that, “the urgent need to get down into small groups means that there should be a clear statement by each diocese on the pastoral priority of building SCCs and each diocese should draw up the plan of implementation”.<sup>73</sup> This statement in a way marked an official adoption of the SCCs in the *AMECEA* countries. An important element, which the Bishops added to this statement, was their desire to see an active involvement of the lay people. They stated that, “the non-ordained members would be chosen by the community in response to the local needs given adequate preparation and appointed by the church authority”.<sup>74</sup>

### **3.3 The plenary session held in Zomba, Malawi from 13<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> August 1979.**

In this meeting the Bishops once again re-affirmed their desire to see the SCCs

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<sup>72</sup> Afer Vol 18, No.5, 250

<sup>73</sup> Afer Vol.18, No.5, 250

<sup>74</sup> Afer, Vol 18, No.5, 252

be implemented in all the *AMECEA* countries because they felt that, "it was only way of integrating the life of the trinity in the line of the faithful".<sup>75</sup> The importance of this meeting is that for the first time the Bishops summarised the purpose of establishing the SCCs. They categorised the purposes into five categories. That is Theological, Biblical, Missionary, Sociological, Social and Human Development

(a) Theological- the purpose theologically is that Christ prayer for unity among his followers is realised in the SCC-while the community aspect of the church is made concrete in them. Through them the church becomes present within the ordinary people's life experience. They provide an opportunity for sharing responsibility so that everyone is involved in the common task of helping to create Eucharistic communities with Christ at the centre. There are best instruments of africanising the churches at the grassroots.

(b) Biblical-The SCC are a genuine attempt to recover the New Testament sense of community and fellowship since through them people can hear God's word addressed to them so that they are challenged by the gospels.

(c) Sociological-People need to share with each other, to communicate at a deeper level to see a sense of belonging to a primary group that is having the idea of enabling people to relate at a personal level.

(d) Missionary-SCC are the most effective way of developing the mission dimension of the church at the most basic level and making people feel that they are part of the evangelisation.

(e) Social and Human Development-SCC can help to promote a better human life in all aspects, and, by enabling people to participate, in the decisions and actions of the community, they help to free people from various forms of oppressions.<sup>76</sup>

### **3.4 The plenary session held in Kampala, Uganda, May 29<sup>th</sup>-June9<sup>th</sup>.**

The theme of this session was on 'Youth on the move towards the year 2000'. The Bishops discussed mostly on the problems, anxieties, hopes and aspiration that are affecting the Youths in the *AMECEA*. The communiqué that was issued towards the end of the conference was towards the clergy, religious and laity. The issues raised were basically four. That is;

(a) Rapidly changing social, economical, political and cultural conditions

<sup>75</sup> A. Radoli,SOM.,ed., *How Local is the Local Church?*, 82

<sup>76</sup> A. Radoli,SOM.,ed., *How Local is the Local Church?*, 82

- (b) Majority of the Youth in the *AMECEA* face a blank future
- (c) They have to cope with frustrations, discouragement's, apathy and fatalism
- (d) Failure to lead a meaningful life drives them to alcoholism, drug abuse, crime and promiscuity.

Therefore the bishops urged the youths to, “take courage and have a sustained hope in Christ our Saviour who calls you to share in the mission of the church”.<sup>77</sup> They further stressed that, “The responsibility of ministering to the Youths should also be shared with SCCs and parishes in a true spirit of collaboration and complementality”.<sup>78</sup> The youths according to the Bishops have a lot to contribute, “our common search for a better tomorrow for themselves, their children and for everyone in the society”.<sup>79</sup> Their praise of the Youths goes on to state that, “the young are generous people, full of enthusiasm and ready to do well. What they ask of from the adults is trust, confidence, encouragement and to be given more opportunity for participating actively in the life and mission of the church and development of the world”.<sup>80</sup>

### 3.5 The plenary session held in Lusaka, Zambia, August 15<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup>

The Bishops reaffirmed their pledge of enhancing and promoting SCCs in the *AMECEA*. They clearly stated that, “so we repeat that SCC’s are not optional in our churches; they are central to the life of the faith and ministry of evangelisation”.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *Amecea Documentation Service*, No 348,1989,3

<sup>78</sup> *ADS*, No 348,1989,3

<sup>79</sup> *ADS*, No 348,1989,3

<sup>80</sup> *ADS*, No 348,1989,4

<sup>81</sup> *ADS*, No 374, 1992,4

## Conclusion

As we conclude this chapter, we have discovered that really the *AMECEA* was just answering to the pastoral needs of the time. Their desire to see the church in the Eastern Africa to become a Local church was based on their careful analysis of the situation on the ground. The new pastoral needs in the *AMECEA* which came as result of the democratisation the region and the African independent churches successes as Bishop P. Kalilombe says, really posed a challenge to the Catholic Church hence the need to devise pastoral plans to answer the yearning of the faithful in the *AMECEA* countries. In the next chapter, we are going to see how the Archdiocese of Lusaka took this challenge of implementing the SCCs and the challenges which she has encountered until today.

## CHAPTER 3

### **The Implementation of the SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lusaka and their Development**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter follows the background which we have established in our previous chapters. The *AMECEA* countries endorsed the idea of the SCCs as their pastoral priority due to the reasons which we have tried to briefly analyse in our previous chapter. However, in this chapter we have discovered that by the time the *AMECEA* adopted the SCCs to be the pastoral priority in 1976; two main parishes of the Archdiocese of Lusaka had already started to develop the SCCs. The respective Parish Priests in these two parishes had discovered the affectivity, which came about as they divided their respective Parishes in 'small zones' which later came to be known as SCCs. This fact was acknowledged by the Zambia Episcopal Conference *ZEC* during the national wide launch of the SCCs in December 1976 as they stated,

we the bishops of Zambia, remind ourselves once again of our commitment to build Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in line with the recommendations of the *AMECEA* study conference held at Nairobi in July 1976. ...Such communities flourish already in various parts of the Church in Zambia.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *The church at the grassroot Level, SCCs reflections on its development in the Archdiocese of Lusaka.*<sup>4</sup>

The Archdiocese of Lusaka happens to be one of the Archdioceses which had already begun to establish the SCCs.

### **1. The Planting of the SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lusaka**

In accordance with the *AMECEA* mandate of 1976 in Nairobi encouraging all the *AMECEA* Countries to adopt the SCCs as a pastoral priority, the Archdiocese of Lusaka took this head-on even though there was already an existence of SCCs in the Archdiocese since 1969. The first parish to establish the SCCs though at that time they were called 'different zones of the parish' was St Charles Lwanga Parish in 1969. It is located in the urban area of Lusaka City. The parish priest of this parish is said to have borrowed the idea from Latin America where he had some prior pastoral experiences. Thereafter, in 1974, the nearby Jesuit parish, St Ignatius started organising its parish in zones.

It is important to note at this juncture that before 1976, there were no organised structures in place to oversee the implementation of the SCCs in the Archdiocese. The initiative of each priest acted as a working guidance in each parish. The Parishioners were not well prepared to embrace this new phenomenon.

However, as from 1976, organised structures were put in place in the Archdiocese through the pastoral department. They organised seminars, workshops, and catechetical instructions on SCCs. From this time onwards, the SCCs started to spread through out the Archdiocese like a bush fire. Thus, by 1990, it is widely believed that all the parishes in the Archdiocese had established the SCCs or were in the process to organise them.

The nature and organisation of these SCCs developed according to the place where they existed; that is, in urban areas of the Archdiocese they took a different dimension as to that of the rural areas. During this period there was no distinction between the SCCs

for the adults and that of the Youths. To answer the pastoral problem; the unavailability of the Youths at the SCCs some parishes in the Archdiocese begun experimenting the youth SCCs.

Now, having given a general overview of the beginning of the SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, we now going to zero in and give a brief description of the nature and organisation of SCCs (where both the adults and youth meet) in the urban areas of the Archdiocese. We have chosen this because our research was based on the parishes of the urban areas.

Generally, the minimum number of the members of the SCCs is between 20-35 families and these come from the people who live in the same estate or neighbourhood. In order for us to enter into the inner life of these SCCs, we going to summarise the resume which was don by Fr. Padraic Faherty, SPS. (It is important to note that these meeting, which Fr. Padraic Faherty SPS describes, are normally held once a week on a Sunday afternoon). He says

...The catholic women begin to arrive in two's and three's for their weekly meeting. ... each new comer greets those already assembled. ...when full component is present, perhaps twenty or thirty in all. (Basically the majority are women a few men and a handful of youth below the age of 15). A common song help to settle things down and the chairperson opens the meeting with a prayer.<sup>83</sup>

During these meetings, the chairperson relays any news he would have received from the parish. (The irony is that though there are few men attending, the chairperson is normally a man) This news may include the contributions, which the SCCs have to make towards the parish maintenance and also if there are important liturgical celebrations coming up like Lent or Christmas, the chairperson informs the members the roles which

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<sup>83</sup> Fr. Padraic Faherty, 'The life of SCC in my Parish' in A.Radoli, SOM., ed., *How Local is the Local Church?*, 71

they were expected to play at these celebrations. The news might also include the impending visit of the Parish Priest to that particular SCCs. Fr.P. Faherty SPS continues with his description of the SCCs and their link to the parish. He says

A parish is made up of several Basic Christian communities (it's the same concept as SCC) and each community takes its turn in leading the song at the parish mass on Sundays and also providing readers and Eucharistic ministers. It's at the celebration of the Eucharist that the vibrant energy of basic Christian community is seen to the best advantage.

Known locally as *Bungwe* or *ichitente*, each BCC participates in the parish administration through its elected representatives on the parish council. In its local area within the parish, each *Bungwe/ichitente* has elected officials like chairperson, secretary and treasurer. Others may be elected delegates to teach the youths or give instructions to the catechumens.<sup>84</sup>

In some of the parishes, the *Bungwe/ichitente*, have introduced marriage encounters. These are groups which are composed of married couples who have had their marriages consummated and ratified in the church. They discuss their marital tasks and obligations in light of their Christian faith. They also act as support group for each other and at the same time they help to prepare younger spouses for church's marriage ratification. In many parishes according to my research, these groups, "has led to sharing of high order between spouses, a deeper prayer and great blessing on families".<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, the same has played to the disadvantage of the Youths who feel out of place and neglected whenever these marital issues are brought forward during the discussions. The marital issues which are brought during the SCCs sharing make the Youths feel embarrassed and scandalised minding that in an African context these issues

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<sup>84</sup> Fr. Padraic Faherty, 'The life of SCC in my Parish' in A. Radoli, SOM,ed, *How Local is the Local Church?*, 72

<sup>85</sup> Fr. Padraic Faherty, 'The life of SCC in my Parish' in A Radoli, SOM,ed, *How local is the Local Church?*, 72

remain hidden and reserved to the click of elders or are classified as 'bedroom issues' and not for public consumption. In spite of this impact on the youths, Fr.P. Faherty, SPS concludes his description of the SCC in the urban parishes of Lusaka as follows. . He says that these SCCs, "go beyond co-existence; they go beyond good neighbourliness. Like the first Christians, BCCs members aspire to be united, heart and soul" (cf. Acts4, 32).<sup>86</sup>

This description of the SCCs in urban parishes of the Archdiocese of Lusaka give us how the inner life of the SCCs and the dimension they have taken in their development in the Archdiocese` of Lusaka.

In conclusion we can say the following characteristics embraces the SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lusaka.

Δ The majority of members are women, a few men and very few youths

Δ There is a minimum of 30 members during the weekly meetings

Δ Meetings follow the following sequence; opening prayer, bible reading (usually readings are taken from the gospel of that particular Sunday), sharing and a concrete action in terms of how the readings can be applied in their daily lives or the problems they might be facing.

Δ Then the reports from the parish follow.

Δ Finally, before the closing prayer, the members are asked to visit the sick if there are any in the neighbourhood and in this era of HIV if there is a death in the neighbourhood members go to help at the funeral house.

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<sup>86</sup> Fr. Padraic Faherty, 'The life of SCC in my Parish' in A. Radoli, SOM., ed, *How Local is the Local Church?*, 73

## **2. The development of the SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lusaka**

In this section we are going to give a brief description on how the SCCs have developed in the Archdiocese. To mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the plantation of SCCs in the archdiocese, an evaluation was carried to find out how the SCCs have been working and also to find ways and means to improve those areas, which were not developed. Therefore most of the material in this section was taken from the book 'The Church at Grassroots SCC reflections on its development in the Archdiocese of Lusaka'. It was compiled after an evaluation which was done in the Archdiocese after 25years of the official adoption of the SCCs in the Archdiocese in 1976

### **2.1. The successes**

- Δ The successes have been that the local wisdom is been appreciated at the grassroots
- Δ A sense of belonging has developed therefore making the knowledge of one another in the community better
- Δ Leadership has encouraged the participation of women on all levels
- Δ An appreciation of an African family has developed more than before

### **2.2The Failures**

- Δ Poor leadership: lack of skills and lack of training
- Δ Poor attendance of men
- Δ Have become too big
- Δ Lack of promoting active youth involvement

Δ Still long way of becoming self-supporting, self-ministering and self-propagating

Δ Role of priest and religious not clear

Δ SCCs boundaries poorly defined

Having outlined these positive and negative factors, the workshop gave the following areas as needing urgent priority if the vision of the Archdiocese in line with recommendations of the *AMECEA* to make the church in Eastern Africa self propagating self- ministering and self -ministering is to be realised.

Δ That there is a great need to develop a system which enables the faithful understand the scriptures and apply them in their daily lives. The seven steps proposed by Lumko (a Catechetical Institute located in South Africa) was said not to be effective. In other words they were asking for contextualised systems of prayer and reading the scriptures.

Δ Those leadership seminars should be organised on-going process other than 'once in ten years' so that the tradition understanding of leadership as power could be replaced by the Christian understanding of leadership as service.

Δ Skills in facilitating meetings should be inculcated in the faithful because all the time one group of the people dominates the meetings

Δ Involvement of the Youths has been deteriorating hence need to develop a mechanism to encourage them participate in the life of the church at the local level. As the Bemba proverb goes, *imitimi ikula epanga* (the growing trees make the forest). Therefore the future of the church depends on the youths thus their active participation in the SCCs is crucial for the future of the church

Δ Involvement of Men is lacking. Means and ways to encourage them to participate should be cultivated. The realisation of the church as a Family of God entails an active participation of every member of the family

Δ Involvement of women in leadership. Though they are the majority at the SCCs meetings they shy away from leadership roles. Because of this many programs do not take off because they are not involved in the decision making.

## **Conclusion**

Therefore as we conclude this chapter, we can succinctly say that the *AMECEA* bishops had a solid theological, ecclesiological and social-cultural basis to adopt the SCCs to be their pastoral priority in order to complete the process of making the church in Eastern Africa ‘*a truly local church*’. As we have seen in this chapter in many cases like the Archdiocese of Lusaka there has been remarkable success in making the church achieve a maturity-‘being a truly local church.’ However, it has also brought some negative repercussions especially in the involvement of some members of the family such as non attendance of both men and the youths. Thus in the next section we are going to evaluate why many youths shy off from active participation in the SCCs. Thereafter we will give some proposals on the way forward based on the responses we got from the questionnaire we sent to the Archdiocese. We chose the youths because we feel they occupy an important component in the future of the church as pronounced by the *AMECEA* bishops in Kampala during their plenary session which was wholly dedicated to the youths. The Bishop emphatically said, “Young people are generous, full of enthusiasm and ready to do well. What they ask from adults is; trust, confidence,

encouragement and to be given more opportunity for participating actively in the life and mission of the church and development of the world".<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *ADS*, No348, 1989, 4

## CHAPTER 4

# A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCCs IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF LUSAKA.

### Introduction

In the previous two chapters we have tried to explain in detail the Theological, Social-Cultural and Ecclesiological motivations which encouraged the *AMECEA* to adopt the SCCs as a pastoral priority for their respective countries. We have also gone at some length to give a brief history and the challenges which this pastoral option has had in the life and pastoral ministry in the Archdiocese of Lusaka. Therefore, in this chapter, we have analysed critically the challenges which this pastoral option has had on the Youth participation in the SCCs through the questionnaire which we distributed in the Archdiocese of Lusaka. Having analysed it critically we have given our own recommendations on how this pastoral option could be effectively be realised among the youths who seem to be lagging behind in benefiting from the tremendous spiritual fruits which this pastoral option of the SCCs has been yielding among the adults.

### 1. A report from the Questionnaire

Our questionnaire found in appendix one, was designed for the Youths of the Archdiocese of Lusaka who according to the official classification from the Archdiocese range from 15 to 35 years old. The aim of the questionnaire was to find out how the

Youths feel about the SCCs. If they already benefit from the SCCs they were asked to state how and if they don't they were asked also to state the reasons they don't and how they could be improved in order to allow them to benefit from them. It was sent to 7 parishes of the Archdiocese all situated in the urban areas of the archdiocese. These parishes are St. Mary's in Kabwe; St. Charles Lwanga in Kabwe; Sacred Heart in Kabwe, St. John the Baptist in Kafue town, St. Mary's in Chilanga and Mattias Mulumba in Bauleni. We sent about 40 sheets of the questionnaire and we received 33 responses. The questionnaire was distributed randomly to the youths of these respective parishes. Thus below we have tried to summarize the responses we received.

**}{ How old are you?**

The majority of the respondents had the age range of between 16 to 30 years old. A quarter was above thirty five years old.

**}{ How often do you attend Sunday Mass?**

Three quarter attend mass every week whilst the rest once in a while.

**}{ Do you go for communion?**

A half of the respondent participate actively during communion the other half do not because there are under various ecclesiastical sanctions. There either stopped due to early pregnancies or leaving in an illegal marriage

**}{ What do you find interesting about the SCCs?**

There were various responses to this questions nevertheless the ones which ran across was that they enjoyed the bible sharing. The aspect of coming together of the people from the same neighbourhood enabled them to know each other well and assist

each whenever there was a crisis like funeral or a joyous moment like a marriage. Interestingly enough, parishes which had youth SCCs like Mattias Mulumba in Bauleni and St. John the Baptist in Kafue town. The youths in these parishes stressed that they found comfort to hear that the problems they encounter in relationships with their peers and, with their parents was almost similar to all youths. Thus, during their sharing they got encouragement that what each was undergoing was not just unique to himself or herself but run through their age group hence the need to find the positive way of handling their problems in a Christian way

**} What type of age group composes your SCCs (if you already have the Youth SCCs in your parish?)**

**} According to you what are the most important aspects of the SCCs?**

They bring us close to God through sharing the word of God together and apply it concretely in our everyday lives. We have discovered that our Christianity makes more meaning when it transcends the vertical relationship (one way track 'me and my God') and goes to horizontal relationship (my relationship with my neighbour especially those who are in need). Again those youths who already had a separate Youth SCCs exposed the aspect of solidarity and commonality of their problems enables them to look at the faith in more positive way. They feel that they are needed and that they could contribute effectively to the church in their respective homesteads.

**} What are the advantages and disadvantages of the SCCs of both the youths and the adults?**

**Advantages.**

Δ We feel that we are in the family

Δ We learn a lot from the wisdom of our parents.

**Disadvantages**

Δ We feel out of place due to the issues which are discussed like marital problems.

Δ We feel sidelined because all the time we are told that we don't have enough experience hence we can not contribute much to the sharing which goes on during the meetings

Δ We are not given any leadership role even though we all the time forced to be singing during the SCCs meetings.

Δ There are a lot of quarrels over money or accusations of witchcraft which puts us off.

**} What would you suggest so that the SCCs become even much better in your Parish?**

The majority of the youths responded that Youth SCCs should be encouraged and supported by the adults. We should be meeting together with the adults probably once in the month to maintain our family unity. They said that we are able to do much by ourselves though we need an adult to guide us. This guide should be chosen by ourselves because in the past we have been given guides who would like to impose their old ways of doing things on us (This response was given by those youths who already have SCCs

in their parishes). Finally they said that they should be given skills in leadership and organization so that they are able to arrange their meetings in accordance with the proper guidelines.

**What can the SCCs contribute to your parish which other Lay organisations such as Xaverians, Junior Actio and Altar boys can not?**

They said lay organization have limited focus such as altar boys mainly the work is to serve mass, Xaverians follow only one spirituality that is of St. Francis Xavier whilst the SCCs enable them (the youths) to be involved in all sectors of the parish. They sing at some special mass, they clean the church, visit the sick, participate at parish leadership etc.

## ***2. A Critical Analysis of the Questionnaire***

We analysed our questionnaire critically and we came up with the following conclusions. The Youths of the Archdiocese of Lusaka are aware of the importance of the SCCs in their journey to attain their salvation and, also as a means of enabling them to live their Christian faith in a way Christ wanted that is to be of service to each other and especially those who are less fortunate. We also deduced that the majority of the youths in the Archdiocese are committed to the church as it was seen that the majority who attend Sunday mass also participated in sharing the body and blood of Christ.

Having said the above we also observed from the questionnaire that there is a Social Cultural conflict in a way the present SCCs are arranged in the Archdiocese. This could be seen in the way some Youths responded to the fact that when certain issues are raised such as marriage or other social conflicts they feel out of place hence reduce their active participation. Due to this some youths avoid attending the SCCs and just attend

Mass on Sundays. This is exactly what the *AMECEA* wanted to go against 'the Sunday Christians'

We also observed that this is not done intentionally. They adults feel that this is the right way of forming the youths. They come with the traditional mentality that youths should be with the adults in order for them to get wisdom. When the youths are left by themselves they become useless and uncontrollable. Their contribution to social issues is not significant since their experience is very limited.

However in the parishes where the Youth SCCs existed we discovered that most of the youths were contented and they felt that they had an important part to contribute to the church. They show a spirit of responsibility and this is exhibited in the way they carry out different activities in the church such cleaning the parish surroundings, organising the Youth Masses and singing during this mass. They encourage their parish to organise for them workshops of behaviour change (BCP) as a means of reducing HIV infections in their midst; and visiting and feeding the sick and the aged in and around the parish vicinity.

### *3. Recommendations and Proposals*

Having analysed our questionnaire critically we would like to give our recommendations and proposals to the authority in order to facilitate the dreams of the *AMECEA* of making the local church self-ministering, self-propagating and self-supporting. In addition this emphasis of making the church in Eastern Africa 'local' was re-emphasised by the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC) in December 1976 when they said, "we the bishops of Zambia, remind ourselves once again of our commitment to

build Small Christian communities(SCCs) in line with the recommendations of the AMECEA study conference held at Nairobi in July 1976”.<sup>88</sup> Thus, there is a general consensus on the need to build SCCs which signify the presence of our loving Lord Jesus Christ. Further on, the African synod emphasised that the best model which will enable the SCCs flourish was the model of the church-as-family. The synod states that,

The church as Family of God implies the creation of small communities at human level, living or basic ecclesial communities. In such communities which are the cells of the church as family, one is formed to live concretely and authentically the experience of fraternity. In them the spirit of disinterested service, solidarity and common goal reigns. Each is moved to construct the family of God, a family entirely open to God, a family entirely open to the world and from which nobody is excluded. It is such communities that will provide the best means to fight against ethnocentrism within the church herself and within our nations. These individual churches-as family have the task to transform society.<sup>89</sup>

They continued to say that “the new evangelisation will thus aim at building up the church as family, avoiding all ethnocentrism and excessive particularism, trying to encourage reconciliation and true communion between different ethnic groups, favouring solidarity and sharing of personnel and resources among the particular churches.”<sup>90</sup> This could only be realised in the SCCs.

Fr. Eugene O’Reilly, the former Pastoral Co-ordinator of the Archdiocese of Lusaka summarises very succinctly the implications of the above statement of the Synod. He says, “SCCs are described as the cornerstone of the ecclesial edifice of today and tomorrow, places of interiorization of the gospel values, places where the gospel message

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<sup>88</sup> *The church at the grassroot level, SCCs reflections on its development in the archdiocese of Lusaka*, 4

<sup>89</sup> *The Church in Africa*, No89

<sup>90</sup> *The Church in Africa*, No89

is put into practice, privileged places for allowing the church to enter deeply into African tradition society and culture.”<sup>91</sup> Some of the implications of this statement are that

□ In the church as Family all are welcome. There is a “home” and a “sense of belonging” reserved for everyone in the extended family of God, from which nobody is excluded.

□ In this family the tensions that arise (differences, leadership conflicts marriage problem etc) are constructively resolved together and estranged parties are harmoniously reconciled.

□ In the church as family, there is a special place for young members. The youth are the future of the church and should enjoy the life –giving link with the elders of the family.

Therefore, as we can see, the implication of the Synod Fathers has far reaching consequences. Since our focus in this paper is on the youths, we would like to say that due so Social Cultural dynamics of the Family in Africa and in particular in urban areas of the Archdiocese of Lusaka; we believe that the developmental organisation of these SCCs has to take a particular order. It has to take into account what many theologians hold that cultural change of the people affects the theological development of any pastoral option or plan. This is so because culture is as lively as the people make it. Africa is, “today passing from traditionally closed and rural societies to the global village of today’s world. Changes are inevitable but they have to be assimilated according to the people’s identity”.<sup>92</sup> These dynamics of Social-Cultural change which include internet, dress codes, and child rights based on western principles of bill of rights has greatly

<sup>91</sup> *The Church at the Grassroot Level. SCCs Reflections on its Development in the Archdiocese of Lusaka*,8

<sup>92</sup> A. Radoli, SOM.,ed., *How Local is the Local Church?*107

influenced an African Youth and in particular the Youths of the Archdiocese of Lusaka

.Fr. Rodrigo Mejia sj, states,

The youth are more affected by this cultural transition than the older people. They no longer belong to traditional Africa of story telling and proverbs around the bonfire. They receive more from the mass media than from their parents and many of them are unaware of their cultural traditions. They live in a dramatic way of the generation gap between them and their elders because the clan and the family structures of authority are diminishing.<sup>93</sup>

Therefore, in this scenario we suggest that if we have to effectively evangelise the Youths using the SCCs as the model of our pastoral plan in line with the recommendations of the *AMECEA*, *ZEC* (Zambia Episcopal conference) and the African Synod, we need to develop and encourage pastoral plans which fits in this dynamics of Social –Cultural change. In fact we can again agree with Fr. R. Mejia who says, “Pastoral priorities are never deduced from theological principles, but they are commanded by the real needs of the people of God.”<sup>94</sup> He further continues to stress that, “this priority (pastoral) responds not to the theological importance of the issue, but to its urgency and relevance for the historical moments in which the local church finds itself.”<sup>95</sup>

The responses from our questionnaire give us an indicator that where the youths congregated by themselves in the Youth SCCs there were a lot spiritual benefits. They participate actively and contribute to the life of the church and Christian life effectively. Even though they experienced some flaws in their organisation skills and the relationships due to ‘peer dynamics of growth’ the benefits are enormous as compared to the failures recorded. This result is in relation to the response of the Youths in those

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<sup>93</sup> Fr. Rodrigo Mejia.,sj., ‘The Pastoral Priorities of the Local Church in Eastern Africa in A. Radoli.,ed., SOM, *How Local is the Local Church?*108

<sup>94</sup> Fr. Rodrigo Mejia.,sj., ‘The Pastoral Priorities of the Local Church in Eastern Africa in A. Radoli. SOM.,ed., *How Local is the Local Church?*104

<sup>95</sup> Fr. Rodrigo Mejia.,sj., ‘The Pastoral Priorities of the Local Church in Eastern Africa in A. Radoli, SOM.,ed., *How Local is the Local Church?*. 104

parishes where the youth SCCs did not exist. Therefore, we strongly recommend that SCCs of the Youths should be encouraged and developed in the Archdiocese of Lusaka if evangelisation would be effective. In addition the desire of the *AMECEA* to make the church in the Eastern Africa Local with the qualities of self-ministering, self-propagating and self-sufficient will not be realised if the Youths, the future of tomorrow church are not taken on board. And from our critical analysis of the situation on the ground, the Social Cultural dynamic detects that they form their own Small Christian Communities (SCCs). In fact the *AMECEA* bishops acknowledged the importance of the youths in evangelisation when they said, “The responsibility of ministering the youth should also be shared with SCCs and parishes in a true spirit of collaboration and complementarity.”<sup>96</sup> The Youths according to the Bishops have a lot to contribute, “our common search for a better tomorrow for themselves, their children and for everyone in the society.”<sup>97</sup> Their praise of the Youth goes on to state that, “the young are generous people, full of enthusiasm and ready to do well. What they ask of from the adults is trust, confidence, encouragement and to be given more opportunity for participating actively in the life and mission of the church and development of the world.”<sup>98</sup>

These salutations clearly indicate the confidence and trust which our Bishops have in the Youths. However on the ground, we find there is a slow process to encourage the youth and integrate them in the running of the local church (SCCs). The need to have a pastoral option which will engineer the formation of the Youth SCCs is not only

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<sup>96</sup> *ADS*, No 348, 1989,4

<sup>97</sup> *ADS*, No 348, 1989,4

<sup>98</sup> *ADS*, No 348, 1989,4

necessary but urgent since the youth are the seeds for the success of tomorrow's Church in Africa and the world as a whole.

In addition, as I said earlier on, that the Social-Cultural dynamics of this time seem to suggest that when the youths meet with the adults they feel out of place, hence the church needs to take a bold step and encourage the formation of the Youth SCCs in those areas where they are not yet established and, support and encourage them in those areas where they already exist. Fr. Fergus Conlan SMA in support of this view that youths during the meeting are rendered dumb recounts on his experiences when he visited the SCCs in his parish. Though the SCCs were active in his parish he observed that, "the youth were not allowed to express themselves at the meetings."<sup>99</sup> This situation runs across all the parishes in the Archdiocese who have mixed SCCs of both adults and the Youths.

We further propose that in line with the African synod recommendations that the church is a family of God and she should, "give particular attention to the Christian families considered as "authentic domestic churches", not only is the Christian family the first cell of the living ecclesial community...but also fundamental cell of society."<sup>100</sup> There is a great need that the SCCs of both the adults and youth should meet together at least twice in a month. They should not be seen as being antagonistic to each other but as an enrichment of the diverseness of the generation gap. In fact, Fr. E. O'Reilly in his analysis of the implications of the model of the church as family clearly states that, "within the

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<sup>99</sup> Fr. Fergus Conlan, SMA., 'Coordination of Small Christian Communities in the Township of Kitwe' in A. Radoli, SOM., ed., *How Local is the Local Church?*, 75

<sup>100</sup> *The Church in Africa*, No 89

family there is diversity and complementarity of roles and gifts, a 'communion in diversity'.<sup>101</sup> Thus congregating once or twice in the month will enable the mutual growth and enrichment of both the adults and the Youths. The Youths will complement the adult's inadequacy of vitality and novelty whilst the adults will bring their wisdom and experience to create a real Family of God.

In Bemba there is a proverb which says, *amano yafuma mwifwesa yaya muchulu* which means that sometimes wisdom can come from an anti hill into the mountain. Adults can benefit from the sharing of the youths as well as youths can benefit from the wisdom and experience of the adults.

### **Conclusion**

As we come to end of our chapter, we have discovered that having the Youth SCCs in the Archdiocese of Lusaka is not only necessary but it is urgent. This implementation will enable evangelisation to attain its intended goal of making the church, a 'Local church'. This pastoral needs as we have seen in this chapter should not be looked at from the point of bringing competition between the parents and their children, but is should looked at in terms of bringing the gifts of each other in a forum which is accepted by both parties in line with the Social - cultural dynamics of the time. Let us remember the wise insights from Fr.R.Mejia who said, "Pastoral priorities are never deduced from the theological principles but they are commanded by the real needs of the people of God."<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> *The Church at the Grassroot Level, SCC's Reflections on its Development in the Archdiocese of Lusaka*,6

<sup>102</sup> Fr. Rodrigo Mejia..sj., 'The Pastoral Priorities of the Local Church in Eastern Africa in A. Radoli, SOM.ed., *How Local is the Local Church?*,104

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

As we come to the end of our paper we would like to revisit the refined theological synthesis of Fr. Rodrigo Mejia, sj who said, “pastoral priorities are never deduced from theological principles, but they are commanded by the real need of the people of God.”<sup>103</sup> He continues to say, “This priority responds not to the theological importance of the issue but to its urgency and relevance for the historical moments in which the local church finds itself.”<sup>104</sup> Therefore, from the first chapter in this paper until the second chapter, we find that our church has been changing its pastoral priority in line with the social-cultural dynamics which were happening in the secular world.

During Vatican One, the situation entailed that all the faithful needed to go to the Parish for all their spiritual and physical needs. The Parish Priest stayed at the Parish. At that time the practice was effective and it received general acceptance from the church hierarchy and the faithful as the normal way of going about parish ministry. The coming of Vatican two brought different dynamics. The demand of freedom and rights from the citizens, secularisation, and the two world wars impelled the church to come up with the pastoral options which will answers the yearnings of the faithful and be of relevance to

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<sup>103</sup> Fr. Rodrigo Mejia, sj., ‘The Pastoral Priorities of the Local Church in Eastern Africa’ in A. Radoli, SOM.,ed., *How Local is the Local Church*,104

<sup>104</sup> A. Radoli, SOM.,ed., *How Local is the Local Church*.104

them. We see that this in Pope John XXIII who convoked a council in which Archbishops, Bishops and other experts in different church disciplines were invited and they studied critically the present situations in the church, thus they devised pastoral plans which will answer the craving of the faithful in that particular period 1950's to early 1960's. Some of the results of this council (Vatican Two) were that the local Episcopal Conferences were encouraged to create local theologies.

In line with these developments in the church, the *AMECEA* saw a great need of coming up with an effective pastoral plan which will respond to the needs of the people. Some of the needs which happened in this region were an emergency of the African independent churches which began to threaten the very existence of the Catholic Church in Africa, the economical boom which came about due to the independence of most states in the region etc. The best pastoral option which appeared to solve all these problems was the SCCs. After thirty years of their existence of the SCCs we have seen that some important people have been left behind. In our paper we have shown how the Youths would like to benefit from the SCCs but the system in place does not allow them to participate fully. The reasons for this according to our research are that in most places the Youths are not encouraged to meet by themselves. This is what the Youths want. Meanwhile, it is a deniable fact that

Youths especially in urban settings constitute a cultural social setting of their own. In many traditional cultures, they form a separate social group apart from the elders, women and children. In modern society, youths tend to define themselves in opposition to the older generation through a distinction of lifestyle, a code of language an obsession with certain types of music and dancing, a way of dressing and relating to others."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> ADS, No. 472, 1997,10-11

From the Social-Cultural point of view the *AMECEA* session which was charged to evaluate 20 years of SCCs in Eastern Africa came up with further four points which deter the Youths from attending the SCCs. These were:

- a) Any adolescent has a need to separate himself/herself from both children and parents to find his own identity and life style. The expectation of teenagers to join their parents in the SCCs is contrary to their natural inclination
- b) Traditionally young people do not speak in the presence of the adults and so remain passive spectators in the SCCs meetings
- c) Cultural and generation gap is enormous especially in the urban settings. An increasing secularised and westernised youth has very different interest, tasks and priorities than the parents. The agenda of the SCCs does not touch their real life problems.<sup>106</sup>

Most of the above issues have been brought out and analysed critically in our paper, therefore, we would like to suggest that the Archdiocese of Lusaka should rise to the occasion and devise a pastoral priority which will respond not very much to the theological implications involved in having SCCs of the Youths but to the urgency and relevance of the local yearnings of the local Church in the Archdiocese. It would rise to the occasion by developing and encouraging the formation of Youth SCCs. This is the only way forward for the Church in the Archdiocese of Lusaka and other places which have similar problems like Lusaka.

In 1976 when the *AMECEA* was coming up with the pastoral plan of the SCCs this problem of the Youths was not envisaged. Nevertheless, today it is a problem thus there is a great need to address it as soon as possible. We reiterate what we said before the calibre of the Youths of today will determine the calibre of the church of tomorrow. A house built on sand does not stand a strong hurricane but the one built on rock will stand the test of time. Having said the above, our research leaves some questions unanswered.

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<sup>106</sup> *ADS*, No. 472, 1997, 10-11

One of this question is on how the Youth SCCs will exactly work in collaboration with the Adult SCCs. Secondly, if the Church in Africa should be modelled on the Family what kind of Family will it be where the children are separated from their parents The African Synod clearly talks about the purified Family. With the Social-Cultural dynamics which we have outlined in this paper what kind of Family will fit in this set-up?

## **APPENDIX 1: LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>A.A</b>	Apostolicam Actuositatem
<b>Al.</b>	Alii—other persons
<b>Acts</b>	Acts of the Apostles
<b>AMECEA</b>	Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa
<b>Cf.</b>	Confer: compare
<b>Cor</b>	Corinthians
<b>BCP</b>	Behavioral Change Programme
<b>BEC</b>	Basic Ecclesial Communities
<b>E.A</b>	Ecclesia in Africa
<b>Etc</b>	et cetera
<b>Eph</b>	Ephesians
<b>Gal</b>	Galatians
<b>Fr.</b>	Father
<b>IMBISA</b>	The Inter-Regional Meeting of Bishops in Southern Africa
<b>Mk</b>	Mark
<b>Mt</b>	Mathew
<b>No</b>	Number
<b>Nos</b>	Numbers
<b>P.O</b>	Presbyterorum Ordinis
<b>S.C</b>	Sancrosantum Concillium

<b>SCCs</b>	Small Christian Communities
<b>SMA</b>	Society of African Missions
<b>ZEC</b>	Zambia Episcopal Conference

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**Appendix 3:A QUESTIONNAIRE WHICH WAS SENT TO THE YOUTHS  
OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF LUSAKA.**

**{How old are you?**

**{How often do you attend Sunday Mass?**

**{Do you go for communion?**

**{What do you find interesting about the SCCs?**

**{What type of age group composes your SCCs (if you already have the Youth  
SCCs in your parish?**

**{According to you what are the most important aspects of the SCCs?**

**{What are the advantages and disadvantages of the SCCs of both the youths  
and the adults?**

**{What would you suggest so that the SCCs become even much better in your  
Parish?**

**{What can the SCCs contribute to your parish which other Lay  
organizations such as Xaverians, Junior Actio and Altar boys can not?**

## Appendix 4: A LIST OF NAMES OF THE PEOPLE I INTERVIEWED INFORMALLY.

Bishop Patrick Kalilombe retired Archbishop of Lilongwe, Missionaries of Africa Formation House, South B, Nairobi, September 2003

Fr. Albertus. Chitoshi, a diocesan priest in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, CUEA, Nairobi, 26<sup>th</sup> November 2003

Fr Norbert. Lesa, Sdb, Youth Chaplin in the Kabwe denary of the Archdiocese of Lusaka, SDB Utume House, Nairobi, 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2003

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