

**TANGAZA COLLEGE**  
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**THE CHURCH AS THE PERFECT MODEL  
OF  
COMMUNICATION**

**MODERATOR**

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**A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the  
Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies**

**NAIROBI 2004**

## TO

I dedicate this work to the Spiritan Province of Angola for having given me the precious opportunity to do my theological course in at Tangaza College, the Catholic University of Eastern Africa.

I also dedicate this work to my Mum and Dad for having wholeheartedly communicated abundant life to me.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is always a sign of gratitude and consideration to thank people who in one way or another have helped you to accomplish successfully any kind of work. By so being, I come in a special way to give thanks to God, my patron and patroness saints and my ancestors who never left me to get despaired in all my years of formation and education.

My vote of thanks goes to my Moderator, Rev. Dr. David Blowey who diligently helped and supported and accompanied me in this challenging work. To him I owe big thanks. Likewise my vote of thanks is extended to all my teachers in Tangaza College who have inspired me a lot during the period of formation that I have been with them as their student.

I acknowledge the faithful contribution of all my confreres at Spiritan House and my friends especially Joaquim Kapango de Almeida C.S.Sp., Pedro Valinho C.S.Sp., Caroline Gesami, Andrea Heath and many others who always encouraged in this work.

My word of thanks goes to Bonaventure Wasswa who helped with the proofreading of the first draft of this paper. Also in a very especial manner I want to thank father Paul Chuwa my rector at Spiritan theologate for his encouragement, cheerful spirit in all the works we were doing. Most of all I want to express my gratitude for his last proofreading and contributions.

## STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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

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

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

“The word ‘communication’ is historically related to the word ‘common’. It stems from the Latin verb *communicare*, which means ‘to share’, to make common, and which in turn is related to the Latin word for common: *communis*.”<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, “everything, which leads to being together, to having something in common, can thus be called communication.”<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, “In its broadest sense, ‘communication’ covers everything which brings people closer together, unites and binds them in one way or another.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus, “when we communicate, we make things common. We thus increase our shared knowledge, our ‘common sense’ -- the basic precondition for all community.”<sup>4</sup>

The human community, in particular, the Christian community, has its foundation in the communication of God who in His own initiative made Himself to be known. That is why the Blessed Trinity is the foundation of all human communication. With the event of the Incarnation, the communication of God to human beings gains human voice, attitude and closer relationship.

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<sup>1</sup> K.E. ROSENGREN, *Communication: An Introduction*, 1.

<sup>2</sup> K. MULLER – T. SUNDERMEIER – S.B. BEVANS, ed., *Dictionary of Mission*, 73.

<sup>3</sup> K. MULLER – T. SUNDERMEIER – S.B. BEVANS, ed., *Dictionary of Mission*, 73.

<sup>4</sup> K.E. ROSENGREN, *Communication: An Introduction*, 1.

The Church — the mystical Body of Christ — comes to continue fulfilling the same revelatory salvific plan of God, following the same mission of Jesus Christ. In this Church of Christ, communion, fellowship, open dialogue, and mutual sharing in love are the key words. The Church has the mission to continue to witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus in her proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

In this work, we intend to analyze how the Trinity is the foundation of all communication and how the Church with her divine and human elements comes to be the vehicle of the perfect communication of God to Christians. Lastly, we will take the Small Christian Communities as places whereby effective communication can take place. Therefore, pastoral workers should constantly look for new methods and skills of communicating effectively the Gospel of Jesus, the one who is *the* perfect communicator.

#### **a) Motivation**

Looking at the way we express our theological knowledge to the people of God in the pulpits, during catechesis, at meetings, in conversation with several groups in the parishes, with friends not conversant with theology, and in our programs on the radio or television, I saw a real need to improve the way we pass on the message of the Gospel. A lot of communication skills are needed.

Also another thing which motivated me to write this paper on the field of communication in the light of systematic theology, though I am not the first one to do so, was to show how the science of social communication is not limited only to electronic and print media but most of all the science of communication is at the core of all theologies within the main stream of theology.

During my theological formation I felt a need to develop my knowledge in the interdisciplinary area of systematic theology, communication theology and the Bible. I also wanted to give my humble contribution to this area of communication, which is new in the rank of theological studies.

**b) What are the objectives of this paper?**

- a. To give a much wider view and understanding of communication as a subject not limited simply as an instrument of media.
- b. To show communication as having a primary source: God Himself in His Trinitarian dimension.
- c. To show the relationship between theology and communication, giving their importance in the pastoral activity of the Church as the Body of Christ.

**c) What is the scope and limitations of this paper?**

- a. This Paper is essentially interdisciplinary, that is, biblical, systematic and communication.
- b. It is essentially a work researched from the library.
- c. It does not make use of interviews.
- d. And lastly it aims at the “Church as the perfect model of communication,” as the title suggests. Though with her human imperfections, the Church — called to be the ‘salt and light’ of the world — is formally called to be perfect.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE THEOLOGY OF COMMUNICATION

#### 1.1. Introduction

Patrick Granfield in his reflection on the theology of the Church and communication says, "The theology of communication is related in a special way to the Church and ecclesiology."<sup>5</sup>

The main objective of this chapter is to draw our attention to how communication comes to be important in the scene of God's revelation. The aspect of God's self-communication in its Trinitarian approach will make the foundation of all the work. In this chapter we will deal with God's self-communication, and the Incarnation as a way of communication. Then, we will say something about Christian communication: For a Christian is the one who is surrounded and overwhelmed by this profound communication of God which is manifested in its final stage in Jesus Christ through the Incarnation.

Accordingly, we invite you to start with the item on this first chapter.

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<sup>5</sup> P. GRANFIELD, *The Church and Communication*, 4.

## 1.2. Trinitarian Communication as a Basis for Communication

Speaking of the Trinitarian communication two terms must be referred to and defined, that is, 'immanent' Trinity and 'economic' Trinity. What is it all about?

Our answer to this question will not exhaust the mystery, which surrounds the Trinitarian reality.

On the one hand 'immanent Trinity' "refers to the reciprocal relationships of Father, Son, and Spirit to *each other*, considered apart from God's activity in the world."<sup>6</sup> On the other, 'economic Trinity' "is the historical manifestation of that eternal self-communication in the missions of Jesus and the Holy Spirit."<sup>7</sup> Further, LaCugna referring to the theology (*theologia*) and the economy (*oikonomia*) in the life of the Trinity says that "Theology is defined as the mystery of God's intimate life *within the Trinity*, and the economy as God's works in creation and salvation-history."<sup>8</sup>

In other words, both realities either the immanent or economic Trinity are based in the common aspect of relations — the relation of the three divine persons: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. That is to say that "The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that the 'essence' of God is relational, in other words, God exists as diverse persons united in a communion of freedom, love, and knowledge."<sup>9</sup>

It is only because God wished it that we come to know Him not as One but One in Three. This self-communication of God was effectuated through the Incarnation of Jesus. Jesus in the economic Trinity comes to show with the maximum evidence the *ad intra* life of God (Father, Son and the Holy Spirit and how they operate among

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<sup>6</sup> C.M. LACUGNA, *God for Us*, 212.

<sup>7</sup> C.M. LACUGNA, *God for Us*, 212.

<sup>8</sup> C.M. LACUGNA, *The Doctrine of the Trinity in Commentary on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, ed. M.J. WALSH, 67.

<sup>9</sup> C.M. LACUGNA, *God for Us*, 243.

themselves), though without eliminating the aspect of mystery, which the human mind is not able to grasp fully.

So, human communication does not find anywhere else to base its communication but in the Trinity. God who made human being in his image and likeness (cf. Gn 1:24) made them persons for and in relation, just as he is a communicative relation of the three divine persons. That is why God made a helper (cf. Gn 2:18) so that human being does not feel lonely but in communion, love and constant communication with another and with Him.

### 1.3. God's Self-communication

“The whole of revelation is a practice in God's communication to God's creatures, a practice which Pope John Paul II sees occurring on the two levels of creation and grace (*Dominum et Vivificantem* 50).”<sup>10</sup>

It is very clear that God was always communicating himself to his people. In communication we could say that the message of God to his people was processed through different media. In other words, God's self-communication was progressive so that the clarity of his message could be without distortions. It was “a revelation that deepened progressively with the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets, until it reached its unsurpassable climax in Jesus Christ.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, “by divine Revelation God wished to manifest and communicate both himself and the eternal decrees of his will concerning salvation of mankind.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> K. MULLER – T. SUNDERMEIER – S.B. BEVANS, ed., *Dictionary of Mission*, 74.

<sup>11</sup> A. DULLES, *Models of Revelation*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> VATICAN II, *Dei Verbum*, 6. All references to Vatican II documents are from A. FLANNERY, ed., *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*.

God was very much aware of the importance of the clarity of his message; thus he had to use the right medium so that people would know him and his designs. In this sense, "Revelation means God's disclosure of himself to the human race."<sup>13</sup> No one could ever have known God if he himself had not communicated who he is to humanity. "God speaks to man from within the world, taking man's own experiences as a starting point, entering so intimately into his creature that the divine kenosis, to be fulfilled later in the incarnation, already has its beginning in the word of the Old Testament."<sup>14</sup> Therefore, humanity free as it is enters into communication with God only because God himself allows that to happen. It is through the overflowing love of God that humanity comes to experience this eternal love of God the Father who, in His eternal love, sent his Son to the world so as to redeem it from its evil. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, humanity regained the favour of sons and daughters of God in his eternity.

#### **1.4. Incarnation as Communication**

"In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by prophets; but in these last days He has spoken to us through a Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world" (Heb 1:1-2).

The reality of the Incarnation is considered as the apex of all communicative aspects of God's self-revelation and communication to his people. God could not speak in any better or more perfect way but through the Incarnation. Hence, "Incarnation and evangelization are communication activities which rest on the Holy Trinity and the sending of the incarnate Son of God (Mt 28:16-20)."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> E.J. GRATSCH – J.R. CIVILLE – R.J. LAWRENCE, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 5.

<sup>14</sup> H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Word and Revelation*, 102.

<sup>15</sup> K. MÜLLER – T. SUNDERMEIER – S.B. BEVANS, ed., *Dictionary of Mission*, 75.

It is very evident how serious this communication of God is. God did not want to leave doubts of clear communication of his message to his people and the deep love he had toward them. Therefore, the only one to give a clear view of his message had to be only the one who understands him fully, the one who is in perfect communion with him, who knows him and who is in life with him: Christ, the Word himself, who was from the beginning. Consequently “God has given Godself to us in Jesus Christ and the Spirit, and this self-revelation or self-communication is nothing less than what God is as God.”<sup>16</sup> “The word testified to is Jesus Christ, the eternal word of the Father, the word who took flesh in order to witness, represent and be, in the flesh, the truth and life of God.”<sup>17</sup>

While in the Old Testament it was said that it was not possible to see God face to face, in the New Testament this reality has been overcome. Jesus himself said, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9), because “the Father and I are one” (Jn 10:30). Hence we can see that here, God took a concrete face, no longer an abstract one, the unseen reality, a tangible one: a human face. He is the baby boy born by the Virgin Mary called *Emmanuel*, God-with-us. God is no longer a stranger. It is the beginning of a closer relationship between God and humanity. God speaks now a *total* human language. God who used to communicate through signs and historical events, through human experiences, through the mouths of the prophets, this time he communicates through his only Son Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Incarnation closes the chapter of God’s self-communication to humanity. Humanity grasps more objectively who God is through Jesus Christ, the perfect image of God.

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<sup>16</sup> C.M. LACUGNA, *God for Us*, 209.

<sup>17</sup> H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Word and Revelation*, 9.

Jesus the perfect revealer of his Father does not come with a different message. Jesus comes to communicate the love of God toward his people; Jesus comes with the message of the Good News of salvation. So, "Like any other rabbi, Jesus gathered disciples or followers around Himself. They shared in His mission and were equipped with power to accomplish it."<sup>18</sup>

### 1.5. Christian Communication

"Christian communication must be understood above all within the center of Christian *communio* and from *communicare* of Christian life."<sup>19</sup>

The sharing of the life of the Word of God in our liturgy, the sharing of the Body and Blood of Christ in our eucharistic celebrations, is solely done when we communicate love to each other just as Jesus did while giving witness to the overflowing love that comes from his Father who loves us and so gave to us as a command. Hence, "a very first precept for Christian communication is not to obfuscate or block this divine power of the message by human means or stratagems."<sup>20</sup> That is why Patrick Granfield says, "Christianity is a religion of communication."<sup>21</sup> Further, Bernard Lonergan remarks, "the Christian Church is the community that results from the outer communication of Christ's message and from the inner gift of God's love."<sup>22</sup>

However, this body is still active because the head is in permanent communion with it, and so the head -- Christ -- communicates life to his body through the Holy Spirit so that the body continue to live. Therefore, "the Church is by its very nature also

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<sup>18</sup> E.J. GRATSCH – J.R. CIVELLE – R.J. LAWRENCE, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 91.

<sup>19</sup> P. GRANFIELD, *The Church and Communication*, 93.

<sup>20</sup> P. GRANFIELD, *The Church and Communication*, 57.

<sup>21</sup> P. GRANFIELD, *The Church and Communication*, 1.

<sup>22</sup> B.J. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, 361.

communication.”<sup>23</sup> This is because the Church has to communicate what Jesus said and did. For that reason all Christians are called to bear witness. This witness is “the primary form of Christian communication.”<sup>24</sup>

## 1.6. Conclusion

In the Trinity we find the right model of our human communication; and so, this communication of God through the Son in the Holy Spirit, done in perfect relation of communion in love, is the one which overflows in the Church. The Trinitarian communication existing between the three persons, suggests *unity* in *diversity* between the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is what Christ Jesus suggests to his followers that they be one just as he is one with his Father (cf. Jn 17:11).

Therefore, the Church in order not to contradict herself has to take up God’s model of communication. The Church in order to communicate God’s message needs to be imbued in God’s mystery and to figure out in Christ Jesus what the real channels and tools are so that people can say ‘Yes’ to the current voice of God in our present world. That is why the Theology of the Body of Christ in communication.

Therefore, we must say that, “There is continuity between the mission of Jesus and the mission of the Church.”<sup>25</sup> How does this continuity happen, is the question to be answered in the next chapter.

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<sup>23</sup> K. MÜLLER – T. SUNDERMEIER – S.B. BEVANS, ed., *Dictionary of Mission*, 74.

<sup>24</sup> P. GRANFIELD, *The Church and Communication*, 57.

<sup>25</sup> E.J. GRATSCH – J.R. CIVELLE – R.J. LAWRENCE, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 92.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE THEOLOGY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST IN COMMUNICATION

#### 2.1. Introduction

Patrick Granfield says that “The Church is the realization of the community of communication between God and humanity on earth. The Church carries within herself the mystery of the ideal *communio*.”<sup>26</sup>

In this chapter our main focus will be on the theology of the Body of Christ in communication and its answer to the divine mission. The Church by communicating the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to herself, that is, to her members and to the world, witnesses to the gospel and life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is why we outline in this chapter, in the first place, the Church as Communion and in communication; followed by the second point centered on various models of the Church guided by the structure of Avery Dulles<sup>27</sup>, but keeping the focus on the communicative aspects of these models.

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<sup>26</sup> P. GRANFIELD, *The Church and Communication*, 95.

<sup>27</sup> See A. DULLES, *Models of the Church*.

## 2.2. The Church as Communion and in communication

### 2.2.1. What the Church is all about?

According to the “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church”, *Lumen Gentium*, “the Church, in Christ, is the nature of sacrament — a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men ”(L.G. 1). Furthermore, in different ways the same Dogmatic Constitution presents several images of the Church such as a sheepfold, the sole and necessary gateway who is Christ (Jn 10:1-10); a cultivated field, the tillage of God (1Cor 3:9); building of God (1Cor 3:9); Jerusalem which is above and yet our mother (Gal 4.26; cf. Apoc 12:17); the Church as the Body of Christ (Cf. L.G. 6-7). With the African Synod another concept of the Church, that is as a family, is stressed as an essential ecclesiological outlook of the Church in Africa.<sup>28</sup> That is also one of the aspects of Small Christian communities or Basic Christian communities: the relationship of the Church as family, that is, as microcosmic churches within the reality the universal Church of which Christ is the head.

The doctrine of the ‘Body’ is very important in our present study, because it is through this ‘Body’ that our expression of *unity*, communion and communication finds realization, that is, it is through one another as members of the same ‘Body’ that our uttermost communion with the Trinitarian God finds fulfillment. That is because this ‘Body’ is not any other kind of body but the mystical Body of Christ, the second person of the Trinity. Just as the Spirit of love is the one that is the binding force Jesus and his Father in unity, so too it is the same Spirit which is binding in the mystical union between Christ and the Church, that they become one as the oneness of branches to a vine.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. F.J. SHEEN, *The Mystical Body of Christ*, 8.

### 2.2.2. *The Church: a mystery of communion and communication*

God's self-communication and the revelation of his will, "that all should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature (cf. Eph 2:18; 2Pet 1:4)" (D.V. 2). In essence the Church belongs to and is centered on the mystery of the paschal event of Christ, that is, the death, resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

So, the communion and communication of the Church is effectuated in two distinct levels, that is, the Church as both divine and human, with her invisible and visible elements is called to maintain this mysterious dialectical tension in her unity without forgetting their distinction, although in this dialectic the divine aspect has primacy as suggested by the first document of the Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 2.

The Church has come into existence through the work of the Trinity; she is the sign and instrument of the Kingdom of God, of Christ's reign, and so in this way constitutes the body of Christ (L.G. 1-5. 7). It is because of the sacramental aspect of the Church that *Lumen Gentium* justifies its argument about her being the mystical Body of Christ, both divine and human.

This shows how it is not possible to speak about the Church without referring to God who is the source and origin of all communion and communication.

The Church as "the light of the world and the salt of the earth" (Mt 5:13-14) is an instrument of salvation for all people: she is the presence of the Mystical Body of Christ on earth, existing first and foremost for the communion of people with one another and with God.

### 2.2.3. *The Fundamental doctrinal qualities of the Church namely: The Church as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.*

#### a) **The Church as One**

*Lumen Gentium* tells us that, “[...] the universal Church is seen to be ‘a people brought into unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’” (L.G. 4). In this way, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* makes clear this fact when it refers to the Church’s oneness saying that it is so because of her source, that is, the unity existing between the three Persons of the Trinity. With the fact of the Incarnation Jesus confirms this unity by bringing people together, and through the power of the Holy Spirit the Church continues the same mission of fostering communion among her members and God (cf. C.C.C. 813).

The Church from her very beginning was conscious of this unity. This was the aspect of communion that Paul always emphasized in his letters to the different churches that he had founded. All were at the service of Christ; though they maybe different, all answer to the common and one Church of Jesus Christ.

#### b) **The Church as Holy**

The Church is also considered to be holy; her holiness flows directly from the source from which she stems — the Triune God. She is an entity set apart just for God and to serve him alone. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* implies the Church is being sanctified and renewed by her bridegroom Jesus Christ — the head of the Church — who removes all the imperfection caused by the sins of her members (cf. C.C.C. 824). Thus she becomes the instrument of salvation of all those who turn to her with faith.

A distinction must be made between the aspect of the holiness of the Church and her sinfulness too for that matter. *Unitatis Redintegratio* and *Lumen Gentium* speak of the Church as an entity, which needs constant purification and renewal because of the sins of her members (cf. L.G. 8, U.R. 4, 6). However, the holiness of the Church is not

dependent on her members. The Church is an eschatological entity participating in the salvation of her members.

Therefore, formally the Church is holy (cf. U.R. 7).

### **c) The Church as Catholic**

The Church of Christ is a universal Church, a “catholic” Church. Just as the Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms, “she proclaims the fullness of faith. She bears in herself and administers the totality of the means of salvation. She is sent out to all people. She speaks to all men [...] encompasses all times” (C.C.C. 868).

The aspect of the catholicity of the Church has its source on the Trinity (cf. L.G. 1). This catholicity implies universality that is unity in diversity. This is what is implied on paragraph 3 of *Lumen Gentium* 13.

### **d) The Church as Apostolic**

The apostolicity of the Church is concerned with the relation the Church has to the apostles.

The Church founded by Christ is recognized of being faithful to the apostolic succession. This tradition is being kept as the truth to be held in the One, Holy, Catholic and subsequently Apostolic Church of Christ. This chair is recognized in the Catholic Church through the presence of the apostolic succession of Peter the apostle. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, “Christ governs her through Peter and the other apostles, who are present in their successors, the Pope and the college of bishops” (C.C.C. 869).

### **2.3. The Models of the Church**

We are dealing with possible images either metaphorically or analogically related to the approximate 'mother' image of what is supposed to be the Church. The reality of the Church constitutes a fundamental truth that is unavoidable because everything we are, do and have as Christians is deeply related to the Church in one way or another. Therefore, the Church being led by the Holy Spirit invites people to understand what God's plan is for each one of them, which, then, culminates into salvation for everyone.

It is important at this point to know that the models which follow are those with which Avery Dulles dealt and are mentioned by the Second Vatican Council, namely: the Church as Institution, the Church as Mystical Communion, the Church as Sacrament, the Church as Herald, and the Church as Servant.

#### ***2.3.1. The Church as Institution***

When we speak about any institute, we are dealing with an organization or a visible structure which is guided by certain norms and regulations which people are bound to follow. This helps in the smooth running of the matters of political organization of the institute. The Church though a divine reality and with unfathomable mystery, is also a visible reality, with a visible structure and government.

Here we see the Church as hierarchical. It is known that this power of governance in the Church claims its source in Jesus himself. "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt 16:19). Therefore, it is a divine command. However, God, in order to show this power to his people, sent his only

Son who lowered himself to the level of a slave and embraced the human reality, even human fragility.

This model presents an image of the Church wherein her communicative feature is a descending communication.

It would be unfair to the overall reality of the Church as mystery if the concept of Church as institution obfuscated it. "The institutional elements in the Church must ultimately be justified by their capacity to express or strengthen the Church as a community of life, witness and service, a community that reconciles and unites men in grace of Christ."<sup>30</sup>

### ***2.3.2. The Church as Mystical Communion***

Speaking of the Church as Mystical Communion. We are dealing with a communion of God's people within the perspective of Christ the head of his body the Church. Hence, "The Body of Christ, as distinct from any natural organism, has a divine life-principle. On most explanations this is said to be the Holy Spirit."<sup>31</sup>

This model of the Church points out the involvement of the entire *corpus fidelium* in building up the Body of Christ. Each one of the members has an important role to play in this body and a stone to hold in this building. It is true that this model, though rooted very much in the Bible, may seem to reprove the institutional model of the Church. However, the deeper reality is that this model may also have its own weaknesses, for the Church is not only a spiritual structure but is also a visible one, entailing the institutional organization of her people.

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<sup>30</sup> A. DULLES, *Models of the Church*, 42.

<sup>31</sup> A. DULLES, *Models of the Church*, 46.

### 2.3.3. *The Church as Sacrament*

This model of the Church comes to balance the two previous models, that is, the institutional and the communal Church. In other words the visible aspect and the invisible one, the internal and external realities. Therefore, the sacramental aspect of the Church constitutes the link between the two. The Church produces signs and symbols so that people may see through them the grace of God in the life of the Church.

Subsequently, the Church is a tangible reality, which “[...] signifies that grace as relevantly given to men of every age, race, kind, and condition. Hence the Church must incarnate itself in every human culture.”<sup>32</sup>

### 2.3.4. *The Church as Herald*

Just as Dulles says, “This model is kerygmatic, for it looks upon the Church as herald — one who receives an official message with the commission to pass it on.”<sup>33</sup> The mission to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord Jesus is at the heart of the Church. The Church is invited always to the breaking of the Word of God in her liturgical celebrations either during the Eucharistic celebration or outside it by the act of sharing this Word among the members of the community.

Pope Paul VI says, “The Church is the depositary of the Good News to be proclaimed,”<sup>34</sup> and in the following paragraph he adds, “having been sent and evangelized, the Church herself sends out evangelizers. She puts on their lips the saving Word, she explains to them the message [...], she gives them the mandate which she herself has received and she sends them out to preach.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> A. DULLES, *Models of the Church*, 66.

<sup>33</sup> A. DULLES, *Models of the Church*, 71.

<sup>34</sup> PAUL VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15.

<sup>35</sup> PAUL VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15.

The Church, in this circumstance within her humility passes God's message to the world so that the world may be able to listen to the voice of God.

### 2.3.5. *The Church as Servant*

The Church is also characterized as Servant. This model of the Church is participatory and constantly discerning the signs of the times wherever the Church of God is found. This is the type of Church that in her humble state is always ready to help the world, to work for it, so that the world might be able to respond positively to the final call, fulfillment and consummation that is God.

Just as in the example of Jesus Christ who came to serve and not to be served who came to heal the sick, to reconcile sinners to his Father, to liberate the captives and the weak, to bind up wounds (cf. Mt 4:24; 8:16, 20-28; Lk 5:32), so too the Church has been left with the same mission for the world.

## 2.4. Church as Communication

"The Church is, in all its dimensions, the *communio* willed by God: with God, among all humans, and for the world."<sup>36</sup> It is absurd to think of a Christian church which is a 'dumb' church. This is why "the Church is a worldwide communication network seeking to bring the human family into union with God."<sup>37</sup>

The Church could be contradicting herself if she did not communicate to the world the message of Jesus Christ. This message of Jesus Christ was given to the Church as the *custos* of all sacraments for the salvation of all people. In other words, the Church is called to be "the salt of the world and the light of the world" (Mt 5:13-14), and so

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<sup>36</sup> P. GRANFIELD, *The Church and Communication*, 80.

<sup>37</sup> P. GRANFIELD, *The Church and Communication*, 4.

“evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity.”<sup>38</sup>

So then, how can the Church evangelize effectively without first being in communion so that communication in her and among her members can be possible?

The command of Jesus, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you”(Mt 28:19-20), is surrounded by the aspect of communication.

The Church has always to communicate and witness to the Gospel of Jesus; she is commissioned to proclaim his *kerygma* on the Kingdom of God. The Church with her command received from our Lord Jesus Christ has to continue his mission on earth, that is, of saving people and leading them to God. Although God is not bound to save his people *only* through the Church, yet she is the perfect channel through which people can be saved more easily.

## 2.5. Conclusion

The Church stemming from the Trinitarian life of God is missionary and communicative in her essence just as Christ is. The Church is a communion of love of her members with one another and God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to the Church as People, Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit (C.C.C. 804-805. 807.809-810). Further in her doctrinal aspect of the Church the Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to Church as One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic (C.C.C. 866-869).

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<sup>38</sup> PAUL VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14.

With this epigrammatic conclusion, we move on to the third chapter and the last where the focus is centered on the dynamics of Jesus as an effective and perfect communicator upon whom pastoral workers can base their ministry primarily through Small Christian Communities as practical places for the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus.

## CHAPTER THREE

### APPLICATION: CHOICES TO COMMUNICATE THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD

#### 3.1. Introduction

This last chapter presents an application to what we have been discussing through the previous two chapters, mainly the aspect of communion and active participation of the members in the mystical Body of Christ as the outcome of the perfect Trinitarian communion among the three divine Persons: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is from the Trinity that the Church draws her life, strength and renewal.

The Second Vatican Council has emphasized a more participatory, promoting communal, and dialogical type of Church, shared responsibility and team ministry. The people of God, members of the Mystical Body of Christ, are invited to be in permanent communion with one another.

Small Christian communities were born in this perspective: the desire for a closer and more active relationship between the members of the Church, creating a sense of belonging through a more participatory and creative attitude of the members. In other words, they were to create an ecclesiology of communion.

In this chapter we will have three sub-items: Small Christian Communities as places of communion; then, Christ the effective communicator *par excellence* as the real

model of pastoral agents for the proclamation of the kingdom of God; and the last sub-item will concern Christian witness.

### 3.2. The Small Christian community: Place of communion

Starting with the intervention of Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa* 89, we read:

The Church as family cannot reach her full potential as Church unless she is divided into communities small enough to foster close human relationships [...] Above all, these communities are to be committed to living Christ's love for everybody, a love that transcends the limits of the natural solidarity of clans, tribes or other interest groups.

The African Synod Fathers state six characteristics of Small Christian Communities.<sup>39</sup>

- i) Primarily they should be places engaged in evangelizing themselves, so that subsequently they can bring the Good News to others.
- ii) They should be communities, which pray and listen to God's word.
- iii) They should encourage the members themselves to take on responsibility.
- iv) They should learn to live an ecclesial life.
- v) They should reflect on different human problems in the light of the Gospel.
- vi) Above all, these communities are to be committed to living Christ's love for everybody, a love which transcends the limits of the natural solidarity of clans, tribes or other interest groups.

Since the early 1970s the African bishops turned their attention to Small Christian communities as a new way on the rank of pastoral orientation from this time on; so, Small Christian Communities became an obvious reality within the mega churches particularly in Africa.

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<sup>39</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 89.

Communion in the Small Christian Communities is the key word. In the Small Christian communities the communal aspect in the life of the Christians is not an abstract reality. So, “This *communion* takes *visible* form in ‘the community of faith, hope and charity through which [Christ] communicates truth and grace to all men.’”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, this communion “[...] finds expression in the *communion* in faith, the *communion* in sacraments, charisms and charity, and in the mutual sharing of possessions for ‘the help of the needy and of [the] neighbours in want’.”<sup>41</sup>

The Small Christian Communities grow within the universal Church of Christ. They are not separated entities, though relatively independent from each other in their way of acting. By the fact of being made in small groups within the same Church They come to be more spontaneous in their action and their faith more experiential. That is why O’Holloran says that “A place where the true nature of the Church and its identity with Jesus become obvious is in the small Christian Community.”<sup>42</sup> As we have already said Small Christian Communities foster togetherness, and closer communion with one another, for they are members of the same group with the same goal: sharing gifts in the love of Christ who is the beginner of this work of salvation.

In actual sense the Small Christian Communities set the example of harmony in the life of the Trinity. “The Trinity is a community where there is intimate loving and sharing, full participation of the three members, absolute equality of persons, and outreach to the other.”<sup>43</sup> Moreover, God who created us did not create so that we could live alone but with the other, and in order to be creatures of relation just as the Trinity is

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<sup>40</sup> M.J. WALSH, *Commentary on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 229.

<sup>41</sup> M.J. WALSH, *Commentary on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 229.

<sup>42</sup> J. O’HOLLORAN, *Small Christian Communities: Vision and Practicalities*, 17.

<sup>43</sup> J. O’HOLLORAN, *Small Christian Communities: Vision and Practicalities*, 14.

made up of three persons who are in constant and harmonious relation with one another. In Genesis we read: “Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gn 2:18). So, created in the image and likeness of God, human beings were set to be always in communion with one another. Though sin disrupted this harmonious and happy communion Jesus Christ came to rebuild the broken relationship with God and with one another. Therefore, “If to be Church is to experience and reflect the intimate life of loving sharing that characterizes the Trinity, then this is best achieved in small groups,”<sup>44</sup> just as Small Christian Communities.

### **3.3. The Blessed Trinity: The mirror of the Small Christian Community**

The Blessed Trinity is considered to be the perfect community. That is, the three divine persons, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit “exist as distinct in order to be able to be joined by communion and love. What really exists is a divine community.”<sup>45</sup>

This divine community — the Blessed Trinity — throws as much light as the human being is able to receive so that through this light the human being comes to perfection too.

The life of the Trinity based on the mutual sharing of love, reciprocity, self-divine communication between the three Persons, is the design for human beings to follow in establishing Christian community.

This shows how intimate the life in the Trinity is, whereby no person tries to overpower the other but always preserving their distinction in each one’s role. There is a total self-giving and self-surrender to one another in a mutual relation in love.

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<sup>44</sup> J. O’HOLLORAN, *Small Christian Communities: Vision and Practicalities*, 17.

<sup>45</sup> L. BOFF, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 53.

This Trinitarian relation comes to be obvious with Jesus, most of all with the effect of the Incarnation and above all during the ministry of Jesus his death and resurrection. Going to the Bible we read: “the Father and I are one” (Jn 10:30); “the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (Jn 10:38; 14:11); “Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you” (Jn 17:21).

Without forgetting the human imperfection aspect of life which can influence this human Christian community, the Trinitarian community is there as the ideal, not the utopia, so that in daily struggle Christians may attain that perfection wished by God since the time of creation.

That is why the apostles in their teaching took very seriously the aspect of *koinonia*. This is what is portrayed in Acts 2:42-47.<sup>46</sup>

This can show how important and necessary it is that the Small Christian communities be not just isolated groups but united in their members and united to the universal Church at large, with Jesus as the head of the local, regional and universal Church.

In such a way the possibilities of inculturation are more open to the local churches and within their Small Christian Communities, however, keeping always in mind the common doctrine that the universal Church holds.

With their difficulties, the Small Christian Communities particularly in Africa have to face the challenges yet to be overcome such as: tribalism, regionalism, political

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<sup>46</sup> The biblical reference states that, “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers. And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

divisionary systems, and on, things that distort a clear communication, communion, *koinonia*, sharing in love, common reciprocity, things which influence negatively on the breaking of the bread together and prayer life.

Though a challenge for the Small Christian Communities in Africa, this reality of division can be a source of open discussion among the members in the light of Christian values inspired by the Gospel of Jesus.

That is the importance of teaching people from the grassroots the values of Christianity and the exercise of the power of transformation that starts not just in the Small Christian Communities but from the families at home.

#### **3.4. Christ the effective communicator *par excellence* as the real model of pastoral agents for the proclamation of the kingdom of God**

“The aim of communication is to help people interpret their existence in the light of what God has done for them as manifested in Jesus.”<sup>47</sup> As an effective communicator, Christ wanted to bring people closer to God, to show them the unceasing love of his Father towards his people. Jesus manifested this love through the proclamation of the Kingdom of God liberating from their sufferings the captives, the marginalized, the sick and sinners.

More than ever we need to learn how to communicate if we want to be effective in our sharing, transmission and proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus. For that we do not have any other teacher but Jesus. Christ was, is and will always be the teacher of communication to those who want to follow him.

As we already mentioned, God used different means of communication so that he could be understood; however, “Jesus was His method *par excellence* (Heb 1:2) the

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<sup>47</sup> W.F. FORE, *Television and Religion*, 48.

best communicational bridge ever produced.”<sup>48</sup> Therefore, we do not have to look for other methods of communication, but rather we should look at how Jesus lived the Gospel, how he taught people and how he was able to communicate the message that he brought from God for the people with so much effectiveness.

For that matter, formation of communication skills is very important for pastoral agents. People in charge of parishes, groups, catechesis, those in formational training as priests and lay leaders of the Church are urged to have basics in communication skills, not just electronic communication but also the dynamics of communication in general, that is, human arts of communicating with effectiveness in the imitation of Jesus.

### **3.5. Conclusion**

The small Christian communities are places of great participation in communion, and definitely they are places of common service done in love, in a the spirit of total humility and self-surrender to the needs of others.

While in a big community we may find an individualistic living of the Gospel, in the small Christian communities the sense of belonging is much more felt. Love and sharing are easily put into practice. They foster daily communion with God and with one another in the image of Trinitarian relation, love, and communion.

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<sup>48</sup> C.H. KRAFT, *Communication Theory for Christian Witness*, 2.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

The Church is essentially communicative. She draws all her communication from the Trinity. Because of this reason the Trinity is the mirror of any of the Church's communities.

Human beings created in the image of God, were created essentially to be in community hence to communicate.

In this Trinitarian communication, Jesus Christ is the perfect self-disclosure of the Father and of the whole immanent relation. In other words, the loving, mutual love, self-surrender and giving of the persons in the level of immanent life of the Trinity comes to be explicit in the life of Jesus the one who was sent by the Father to communicate his love and grace.

The Church as a result of the Trinitarian love has the mission to continue to communicate the same love and grace from God to his people. So, if the Church does not want to loose her track she needs to look always at the life of Jesus as the only one who was able to reveal the Father and so the whole Trinitarian mystery, and from him to draw strategies for new pastoral methods in active participation, communion and sharing in love. In this work of the entire and universal Church everybody is called in a special way to collaborate and participate with creativity so that a true communion of the people of God may come to a fulfillment.

Finally, we conclude by saying that for the Church — from her universal level to the Small Christian Communities — her *only* effective means of communication and communion among her members is that we allow ourselves to be guided by the light of the Blessed Trinity who is by essence the perfect community of abundant love. By understanding this sacred mystery Christians will be able to live in communion and love with one another.

## ABBREVIATIONS

### Biblical Books

1Cor	1Corinthias
2Pet	2Peter
Acts	Acts of Apostles
Apoc	Apocalypse
Eph	Ephesians
Gal	Galatians
Gn	Genesis
Heb	Hebrews
Jn	Gospel of John
Mt	Gospel of Matthew

### Others

BCC	Basic Christian Communities
C.C.C.	The Catechism of the Catholic Church
Cf.	Confer
D.V.	<i>Dei Verbum</i>
L.G.	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
SCC	Small Christian Communities
U.R.	<i>Unitatis Redintegratio</i>
Vat. II	Vatican II Document

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