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JOSEPH RODRICK MAHIMBALI

**THE SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES ARE
PASTORAL PRIORITY OF THE CHURCH IN TANZANIA**

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sob orientação de:
Prof. Doutor Luís Miguel Figueiredo Rodrigues

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Abstract

The Church is always looking for better ways to help Christians live the Christian faith well. Among the best way for Christians to live the Christian faith well is through their participation in the church's activities. Looking at one of the great themes of Vatican II, it was to see how Christians can participate well in the activities of their Church. So why, when Pope John XXIII convoked Vatican II, he used the *Italian word aggiornamento* in which it means updating the life of the Church.

Small Christian Communities are one of the many pastoral methods the Church uses to help Christians participate well in the life of the Church. Thus, why, after the Second Vatican Council, many places in the world, especially in Africa and Latin America, immediately began to carry out pastoral realization through Small Christian Communities or Christian communities of the base. In Tanzania things were a little different. The bishops of Tanzania (TEC) and AMECEA decided to declare that small Christian communities are the Pastoral Priority. Catholic bishops in East Africa have chosen to declare CCS as the pastoral priority as the best way to build local churches to be truly self-ministers (self-governing), self-propagation (self-dissemination) and self-sustaining (self-reparation and self-sustaining). This means that the whole life of the Church in Tanzania is built on the basis of small Christian communities. The main capital or source of the Small Christian Communities are Christian families.

Keywords: Small Christian Communities, Family, Participation, Priority.

Resumo

A Igreja está sempre à procura de melhores maneiras que possam ajudar os cristãos a viver bem a fé cristã. Entre a melhor forma de os cristãos poderem viver bem a fé cristã é através da sua participação nas atividades da Igreja. Olhando para um dos grandes temas do Vaticano II, foi para ver como os cristãos podem participar bem das atividades da sua Igreja. Assim, por que razão, quando o Papa João XXIII convocou o Vaticano II, usou a palavra italiana *aggiornamento* em que isso significa atualizar a vida da Igreja.

As Pequenas Comunidades Cristãs são um dos muitos métodos pastorais que a Igreja usa para ajudar os cristãos a participar bem na vida da Igreja. Assim, por que razão, após o Segundo Concílio do Vaticano, muitos lugares do mundo, especialmente em África e na América Latina, começaram imediatamente a realizar a realização pastoral através de Pequenas Comunidades Cristãs ou comunidades cristãs da base. Na Tanzânia as coisas eram um pouco diferentes. Os bispos da Tanzânia (TEC), e da AMECEA decidiram declarar que as pequenas comunidades cristãs são a Prioridade Pastoral. Os bispos católicos da África Oriental optaram por declarar a SCC como a prioridade pastoral como a melhor forma de construir as igrejas locais para serem verdadeiramente auto-ministras (autogovernastes), (auto-propagação) (auto-disseminação) e autossustentação (autossuficiente e autossustentável). Isto quer dizer que toda a vida da Igreja na Tanzânia é construída na base das pequenas comunidades cristãs. A principal capital ou fonte das Pequenas Comunidades Cristãs são as famílias cristãs.

Palavras-chave: Pequenas Comunidades Cristãs, Família, participação, prioridade.

Abbreviations

- AL Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (19th March de 2016).
- AG Ecum. Conc. Vaticano II, Decree On Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes* (7th December 1965).
- AM Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* (9th November 2011).
- AMECEA Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa.
- CEVB Communautés Ecclésiales Vivantes de Base.
- CUEA Catholic University of Eastern Africa.
- EA John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (14th September 1995).
- EG Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24th November 2013).
- EN Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8th December 1975).
- ES Paul VI, Encyclic Letter *Ecclesiam Suam* (6th August 1964).
- GS Ecum Conc. Vaticano II, *Gaudium et Spes* Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (7th December 1965).
- HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus.
- IYCS International Young Catholic Students.
- JNNK Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristu.
- LG Ecum. Conc. Vaticano II, *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (2st November 1964).
- LS Francisco, *Laudato Si* Encyclic Letter (24th May 2015).

NMI John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6th January 2001).

RH John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4th March 1979).

RM John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7th December 1990).

SCCs Small Christian Communities

TYCS Tanzania Youth Catholic Students.

WWT Wanawake Wakatoliki Tanzania.

Introduction

It is a work that wishes to talk about the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania. It is true that Small Christian Communities are in many places in the world. Small Christian Communities has long history in the Church that their history starts from the time of the Apostles of Jesus and went on up to the time of Vatican II when it decided to retake it again. Vatican II is as the pushing engine of the Small Christian Communities in the world because before there were some moments whereby they seemed to cease or to die. The concentration of the Church was not to them as the important figures. Such kind of inputs motivated the bishops of different places to think deep on the Small Christian Communities and to think on how they can be beneficial to their places especially concerning pastoral activities. The bishops of Tanzania and the AMECEA take further steps ahead by declaring SCCs as Pastoral Priority.

The work tries to elaborate and to explain those important keys concerning the declaration of the pastoral priority in Tanzania. It is true that the work does not put everything that concerning Small Christian Communities in Tanzania but it tries to analyse the important key points.

The structure of the work is in three chapters and the subchapters. These chapters are: Chapter 1- Historical Background and development of Small Christian Communities, The current Context of Small Christian Communities in Tanzania and The Reasons for Priority of the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania.

First chapter explains on how the Small Christian Communities began and developed. The history of the Church tells us that the Small Christian Communities began immediately after the departure of Jesus to Heaven. The Apostles and disciples of Jesus started to live in groups and in communities. Holy Bible is a main source of the origin of the Small Christian Communities in the Church. The information concerning them is got in the book of the Acts of the Apostles in which it explains many activities that were done by the first Christians led by the Apostles of Jesus Christ.

Although the concept of the Small Christian Communities existed even before the departure of Jesus. Jesus insisted the community life when He was still with the Apostles and disciples especially when He was talking about the forgiveness, and in this He taught them that they forgive themselves in the communities

before taking a case to further steps. Apart from the Holy Scripture, there are the documents of the Church especially the Vatican II through its documents that tell us on how the SCCs came into realization in the Church and local Churches. The documents: *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World and *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church is named do be the pioneer for the implantation of SCCs in the Church in contemporary time. The spirit of Vatican II was assumed by the magisterium of the Church, that is the Popes. Through their encyclicals and exhortations they continued to emphasize on the importance of the Small Christian Communities for the ecclesial and pastoral activities. Some pope's documents that emphasize on the important of the SCCs are of: Paulo VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Encyclic Letter *Ecclesiam Suam* Apostolic Exhortation; João Paulo II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*; and Francisco, *Evangelii Gaudium* Apostolic Exhortation. Finally, historical origin of the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania started in the year of seventies when the bishops of Tanzania and AMECEA zone started looking for a means for evangelization. Motivated by the Ujamaa political policy of Tanzania decided to establish the Small Christian Communities and later on they declared them as pastoral priority.

Second chapter is about The Current Context of the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania. This chapter gives us the clear picture of Small Christian Communities in Tanzania. The Christian communities are the same but their differences come on the context of on how the Small Christian Communities in particular places they form themselves and set themselves. Looking on the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania that they are communities basing on the families. Families are the important capital for the creation and founding of these communities. Because the SCCs are formed by 10-15 neighbouring families. The Small Christian Communities are basing in administrative setting. It means that they are part and parcel off the administration of the local Churches(dioceses). Lastly, SCCs are the base for vocational source. From Small Christian Communities that the Church's vocations are obtained especially vocation for matrimony, priesthood and religious life due to the closer care that the families get.

Last chapter is about The Pastoral Priority of the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania. It is a part that give us some reasons that led the Church in Tanzania to declare the SCCs are pastoral priority. There are two main reasons: participation of the christians in the activities of the Church. These activities like administration, evangelization, and

promotion and protection of the Human life. Small Christian Communities help all christians to participate well the activities of the Church in which they make them to feel that the Church is their part of life. Another reason is the sharing the christian experiences such on possessions they have, sharing the word of God, and sharing their spiritual experiences. Por Example in Tanzania, the christians are taught on how they can help their Church through their possessions. When they are something to be done in parishes that the Small Christian Communities organise themselves on how to do it. The concept of sharing the possessions for the benefit of the Church and for common good is not new, even it was there since the time of Apostles of Jesus:

1978 saw the birth of Bible Sharing/Gospel Sharing at the Lumko Missiological Institute in South Africa Excellent SCC training manuals began to be published that popularized the Lumko “Seven Steps” Method of Bible Sharing/Gospel Sharing. Altogether there are eight Gospel sharing methods that can be adapted to the local context and situation.¹

Small Christian Communities have become very important help of the Church in Tanzania. It is something to be immitted by other places especially to the secularised world or countries. Although there are some challenges that face them but they still show the importance, thus why the declaration bishops of Tanzania and that of AMECEA is still valid.

¹ Joseph Graham Healey, “Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities / Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa,” in *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-Looking Church*, ed. Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth (Quezon: Claretian Publications, 2013), 188.

Chapter 1: Historical Background and development of Small Christian Communities

The history of the Small Christian Communities in the Church is very well known to many of us, but this work sees that there is a need of telling it so as if there are things that probably forgotten they should be known. Thus, why this chapter wishes to tell and to write the historical background and historical development of them in the Catholic Church. Today, Small Christian Communities are in all over the world in the Catholic Church and they are found in different names. In fact, they do many activities in their local Churches that is in diocesan levels. By using Small Christian Communities, it is an easier and efficiency way that may enable the christians to participate well pastoral life of the Church. The historical back ground of the Small Christian Communities start from the time of the Apostles of Jesus through the creation of the communities of Christians or those believed in Jesus Christ and then, the development of them are seen from the strong input of the Vatican II whereby it openly recognised Small Christian Communities are new *way of living the Church*. And if we are kin enough, we can realise that Vatican II did not change the Church but it updated the face of the Church. That is from the Church that all the activities were centralized on the clergies, to the Church of community of God or “community of the faithful”² whereby many activities were shared and participated by all the christians.

A concept of the Church as the community of the faithful was not eliminated in the life of the Church but it just went in coma. It went to coma because for many centuries the Church was concentrating more on constructing the institutional Church (body of clergy) and the lay people had very small chances to participate many important activities of the Church, and even those activities that were not demanding the presence of the ordained ministers, they were impossible to be given them to do and they had to wait the presence of a priests or even a religious nun or brother. Vatican II helped the Church to update the mindset and to think in big ranges. Vatican II took the Church to her origin, that is to Small Christian Communities. This is to say that, Vatican II tried to emphasize on retaking a lost treasure that was lived by the first christians during the time of Apostles

² Cf. Johannes Feiner and Magnus Lohrer, *Mysterium Salutis, Manual de Teologia Como Historia de La Salvacion La Iglesia*. (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1972), 321.

Jesus and few decades after the Apostles of Jesus. It is a treasure that gave the possibility of having the Church that all christians may find their participation. It is something that was already existed and was not a new doctrine or a “change the doctrine”.³

The emphasis of Vatican II (1962-1965), was to see that the Gospel reaches almost to everybody and everywhere as it was in the times of the Apostles. It believed that when the Christians participate well the activities of the Church, it can be one of good means of evangelization. Participation of Christians in evangelization or in the actions of the Church is to fulfil the command of Jesus Christ that gave all christians for preaching his name to all nations and also to make a Church a place for salvation as the study of sacraments call the “Church as a universal sacrament of salvation”⁴. Small Christian Communities are the forms of Church. Small Christian Communities open doors of participation of christians in the Church.

Looking at the history of the Church from the beginning to the Vatican II, the Church tried many ways for evangelization of the people so that to ensure that the Gospel could reach to many people. She even reached to the point of using other methods and ways that they later brought numerous problems. Through the patronage method, Church decided to offer the rights of evangelisation to some countries like Portugal and Spain to the evangelisation. The method had positive and negative results. One of the negative results that it brought some serious problems in the Church. It is that these countries most the time used the Gospel to establish their flags(colonization) and thus why most of the people that where these countries went like Africa, Asia and Latin America could not differentiate between the missionaries and colonial masters. To be clear that the patronage method was not evangelisation but rather It was Christianisation. These countries were not prepared to take a Gospel to the far nations. Although the aim of the Church was perfect but the method was wrong. To Vatican II is that it demanded full participation of the Christians.

The Vatican II did what we can term as Copernican Revolution when coming to the point or the question of evangelization and pastoral activities of the Church. And also, Vatican II is a turning point of the Church as it brought in the restoration of the Church

³ Cf. Luis Figueiredo Rodrigues, *Teologia Pratica Fundamental e a Palavra Continua a Encarnar* (Braga, 2020), 68.

⁴ Feiner and Lohrer, *Mysterium Salutis, Manual de Teologia Como Historia de La Salvacion La Iglesia.*, 321–68.

by taking us back to roots and origin the Church, that is the Small Christian Communities. It is Copernican Revolution because Vatican II demands the pastoral activities have to start from the very low levels to above. The Christians through their SCCs have to evangelise in different manners such as by their talents, gifts, profession, positions and state of life. This we can support it by the gospel that says: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Mt 22: 37). Thus, why when we observe our Church today, we see the lay people take great part in pastoral activities such as teaching catechism of the Church, administration in the Church, serving on altar and animation different groups of faithful in the Church. This is because these lay people have got a good foundation from their Small Christian Communities.

The Church in Tanzania is continuing pastoral activities including evangelization. In Africa including Tanzania, the number of Christians is growing very high despite the fact that there are other regions like Islamism, Hinduism and African Traditional Religions. From such high number of Christians, Church finds herself happy because she enjoys when doing the pastoral activities. However, challenges will never miss. Due to pastoral drawbacks the Church in Tanzania sees there is a need of finding a practical method of pastoral in evangelization due to the nature of Tanzania as a country and Africa as a continent at large. Nature of life in Tanzania as it in Africa is communal.

In African world, a person is not a person as an individual but is a person as a community or a society. African world defines a person not as an individual but as a community. and as an African proverb denotes, no man is an island. This means that we depend on each other thus the concept of the community life is far significant than anything else in African understanding of life. To this century African world still considers community life whereby their affairs of life are ruled and governed by society and no one can isolate himself or herself from this reality. That is, every person in every society is the part of that same society.

For ensuring that those challenges concerning the evangelization are solved, the Church in Tanzania decided to retake the concept of Vatican II and the primitive Church. The Tanzania Episcopal Conference opted to introduce the idea of SCCs as a pastoral priority. We remember that the Church in Tanzania, also makes part of the conference of bishops of AMECEA in which the declaration of the SCCs as part of priority was passed. In addition, Tanzania is among the pioneers of establishment of the AMECEA zone. The

“*Jumuia Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristu*”⁵ is a Swahili phrase that is mostly used in Tanzania and other countries in Eastern Africa. Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are priority in Tanzania because they really manifest the nature of the Church, that is, the people of God who live together as brothers and sisters and they fully participate in taking the Gospel to the far miles to others:

Continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ, the exaltation of the baptism as foundation the foundation of the christian faith, the performance of the prophetic, priestly and kingly offices incumbent upon the people of God as a whole in their relationship with the world, creates the participation of laity in life of mission and it creates the assistances to all members to spheres of life.⁶

In this academic work, we are going to focus on SCCs as the priority in the Church in Tanzania. We shall try to find the origin of Small Christian Communities in general. We shall be concentrating on different sources such as biblical, and ecclesial source, historical origin of SCCs in the Church in Tanzania. But also, we shall see the different concepts of the Small Christian Communities from different places of the Catholic world.

1.1. Biblical Source of the SCCs

The teaching of the Church is based on three sources which are; the Scripture, Tradition and the Hierarchy of the Church (magisterium of the Church). Also, the Bible has the fundamental origin of the SCCs and the way Apostles and the followers of Christ lived christian faith. There are many passages in the Holy Scripture from the Old Testament to the New Testament that have already given the concepts of the existence of such kind of the communities. In the New Testament, that is, the Book of the Acts of the Apostles holds the exact origin of the small christian community in the Church. The book of the Acts of the Apostles narrates the life, the activities of the first christian communities especially on how they lived Christian faith as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The concept of small christian community was already manifested by itself even before the departure or ascension of Jesus Christ. It is because wherever Jesus Christ was passing during his public mission that some anonymous christian communities or

⁵Jumuia Ndogondogo za Kikristu is Swahili phrase used mostly in Tanzania and other countries that form one block of Eastern Africa. Swahili is a language spoken in Eastern Africa region.

⁶ Nicodème Kalonji Ngoyi, “Small Christian Communities / Basic Ecclesial Communities,” in *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-Looking Church*, ed. Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth (Quezon: Claretian Publications, 2013), 53.

christian groups were emerging for the purpose of living the teachings of Jesus Christ. This fact is proved by the returning of the disciples of Jesus Christ from preaching activities. The apostles reported to Jesus concerning the christian communities or groups founded on the ways and those communities were performing some activities that Jesus was doing, and they said: «Master, we saw someone driving out demons in Your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not accompany us. “Do not stop him,” Jesus replied, “for whoever is not against you is for you» (Lk 9: 49-50).

Jesus put the aspects of reconciliation and forgiveness in the communal dimension when he was teaching his disciples on how to forgive somebody and on how to enter into the reconciliation between two sides that quarrelling. According to Jesus is that the community has its importance on resolving the problems. That is when christians are in conflicts and before taking a problem to the judicial stages that it should be first taken to a community. But when a brother in the community can't listen to the members of the community, other measures can be taken: «If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the Church. And if he refuses to listen even to the Church, regard him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven» (Mt18:16-18). The Church is referred to a christian community.

Small Christian Communities bring the Church together and they help the christians to live in love. Love that Jesu Christ wished when he was forming the communities of his followers. Always insisted love among the apostles and disciples. Jesus new that the community to remain firm and united in faith needs the love thus why he was repeating always that they should love one another. And when the community of Jesus Christ assembled on the day of last supper, Holy Thursday, he insisted by saying: «A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another» (Jo. 13:34-35). It is how the christian life should be and today we can use that message of love that Jesus Christ wished to be in christian communities to be in the Church.

The gospel of Matthew provokes and calls to attention to a beginning of Small Christian Communities and the Church. It brings to an ecclesiological question of that if Jesus established a christian community or a Church. Looking on this statement of Jesus Christ: «For where two or three meets in my name, I am there among them» (Mt 18, 20).

It is a statement that gives a notion of the concept of the christian communities that Jesus was already having. We find that after his ascension to heaven, the apostles and the disciples started living in the communities by living the teaching of Jesus Christ. In fact, from those first christian communities found in Jerusalem we have got the Church found by Jesus Christ, the “corporis Mysterium”.⁷

The Gospel according to Saint Luke narrates to us the event of the two disciples of Emmaus who were on the way to their community at the latest time. Those disciples did not recognise or knew a person whom they walked together with if he was Jesus Christ. The narration tells us that they recognised Jesus at the table when Jesus Christ broke the bread in the community and give them:

They recognised him in the breaking of bread, in another words that they recognised him that He is also the member of the community when he reminded them on the sharing of the possessions: «In order to underscore the significance of the experience of Jesus Christ’s presence I suggest, as a paradigm, the account of the disciples on their way to Emmaus (Lk 24:12-35), which, to my mind, outlines the path of faith, emphasising both its demands and the necessity to join a religious community in order to bear witness.⁸

In the introduction of the topic, we have said that although Holy Scripture gives us many facts concerning the concepts of SCCs and the origin but the most concerned book in the Bible about the origin of the SCCs, it is the book of the Acts of the Apostles. It is the book that narrates a lot the activities of the apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ. One of the activities were the forming of the christian communities or forming the early Church which enabled the evangelization and other missionary activities. Chapters 2:4:5 of the Acts of the Apostles talks more about such communities.

Looking on the (Acts 2: 42-47; 4:32-35; and 5:12-16) that give the summary of the life of the early christians that is on how they lived their faith:

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts2:42-47).

⁷ Cf. Feiner and Lohrer, *Mysterium Salutis, Manual de Teologia Como Historia de La Salvacion La Iglesia.*, 325.

⁸ André Kabasele Mukenge, “The Biblical Approach of Basic Ecclesial Communities –Aspects of Their Fundamental Principles,” in *Smal Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-Looking Church*, ed. Klaus Kräme and Klaus Vellguth (Quezon: Claretian Publications, 2013), 6.

The quotations above show and narrate the main activities of first christian communities during the time of the Apostles of Jesus Christ. Those activities were done by the early christian communities that most of them are done by our today's christian communities.

No one can say that Small Christian Communities are somethings invented, and have no any believable source. They have some sources of their origin. Thus, why Church takes them as the important elements for living Christianity and the faith of the Church.

The biblical foundations of the Basic Ecclesial Community's approach to pastoral care are usually located in the Acts of the Apostles. Indeed, "the new way of life", which would, in future, prove significant for adherents of the "new way", is described therein in several synopses (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; 5:12-16). I beg to differ and take the liberty of suggesting an alternative point of departure: the community of disciples after the Passion of Christ.⁹

As we have seen from the passage of the Acts of the Apostles, the small christian community of at those time are the foundational pillars of the SCCs of today. That is, they give us many christian values which are to be taken and lived by the current SCCs in the Church, as author Mukenge writes that «A Basic Ecclesial Community is a place of common prayer which retains a link with the official houses of prayer. In the Acts of the Apostles, members of the community break bread and praise God in their various places of residence continue to visit the temple».¹⁰

The book of the Acts of the Apostles narrates ministries and responsibilities of the communities of at those time made by the apostles and disciples. One of the main activities that were done by the Apostles in their communities was making sure that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is moving on through their preaching and teachings. They used different methods and ways so as people might know the truth of the Gospel and then to accept the call to Christianity:

And everyone was filled with awe; the apostles worked many signs and miracles. And all who shared the faith owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed. Each day, with one heart, they regularly went to the Temple but met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved, (Acts 2:42-47).¹¹

⁹ Mukenge, 4.

¹⁰ Mukenge, 11.

¹¹ Mukenge, 10.

The event of Pentecost proves the presence of Small Christian Communities from very beginning of Christianity. The event found the Apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ closed themselves in community in Jerusalem. The bible tells us that: «when the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:1-4).

According to the tradition of the Church, the Pentecost event is the birth of the Church. If this is the fact, we can say that Church was born from the Small Christian Communities and therefore She has all rights of seeing them as the important elements in the Church and they deserve a special care so as they may produce good christians who can be the yeast of evangelisation and other activities of the Church. The multitude heard the joyous voices of the communities that we can interpret these voices as the voices that testify christian faith: «The community envisages integration of this nature from the outset, something which can be inferred from the fact that everyone hears the disciples' testimony in his own native language (Acts 2:8)».¹²

The book of the Acts of the Apostles is continuing mentioning other events that proves the origin of the Small Christian Communities in the Church. From the Acts 15, it talks about the meetings of the different christian communities that they were held in Jerusalem for resolving the problem of welcoming the christians of other origins especially those who were not circumcised according to Jewish culture. The meeting is famously known as the Jerusalem Council:

The Acts of the Apostles not only describes communities in which all is well; it also recounts difficulties, ordeals and conflicts which mar life in the early Christian community. It teaches us how to overcome conflicts within the Church. The most interesting example of this doubtless occurs in Acts 15:1-35, an episode which is commonly referred to as “The Council of Jerusalem”. This passage shows us that the conflict is resolved via communication; the various viewpoints are heard and contrasted (verses 7, 12, 13 and 22); the role of the elders is emphasised (verses 6, 22 and 23); the special status of the “apostles” is acknowledged; and the subordination to the Holy Spirit is clearly underscored (verse 28).¹³

¹² Mukenge, 9.

¹³ André Kabasele Mukenge, “The Biblical Approach of Basic Ecclesial Communities –Aspects of Their Fundamental Principles,” in *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-Looking Church*, ed. Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth (Quezon: Claretian Publications, 2013), 11.

The early Small Christian Communities were not only found in Jerusalem but also in other parts of Roman empire like in city of Rome, city of Constantinople and other parts within the Roman territories. This expansion of the christian communities was due to the missionary journeys that the Apostles and disciples were doing, and also the christian communities were formed where the Apostles and disciples escaped to avoid those who were against Christianity. During the first to three centuries of Christianity that some christians could meet for their activities in some christian's homes, Lydia for instance, offered her house to be as a meeting venue for her brothers and sisters in Christ (Acts 16:15, 40). Priscilla and Aquila not only turned their house into a house Church (Romans 16:4-5); they were also actively involved in Kingdom work and encouraged Paul and Apollo in their ministries (Acts 18:2-5 and 26). Others who hosted local Churches in their homes were Gaius (Romans 16:23), Nymphas (Colossians 4:15) and Titus Justus (Acts 18:7).¹⁴

Therefore, the Holy Scripture proves to us that the existence of the SCCs in the Church is not something just came up without any fundamental base. The few biblical passages and quotes that we have seen they give us reality of the origin of Small Christian Communities in the Church.

1.2. Ecclesial documents on the SCCs

In this subchapter, it is about to see how the Church looks the Small Christian Communities. Here we will see the development of the Small Christian Communities that are found in the documents of the Church. That different documents try to explain and to emphasize of the importance of SCCs. We will find the encyclics, exhortations of the Popes, councils and synods that talks about these communities in the Church. They are some documents that were written by some popes for explaining how the SCCs are important. In these documents of the Church that they show the necessity of development of the SCCs for many activities like evangelization, administration of the local Churches, missionary's works and even normal life of the people.

One of the important documents that emphasize the importance of the SCCs is the Second Council of Vatican (Vatican II) and it is considered to be a pioneer for the

¹⁴ Mukenge, 20.

reestablishment of the Small Christian Communities in the Church. As we know that the council of Vatican II was held in Vatican (1962 to 1965).¹⁵ The council was called by Pope John XXIII. The Pope used the Italian vocabulary when he convoking it, that it was *aggiornamento*.¹⁶ The word means to update and not to change or to declare a new dogma".¹⁷ In that Pope said that« a surprise, a radiation of supernatural light a great clarity in eyes and hearts. But, to the same time a fervour, a great fervour that waked up itself suddenly all over the world». ¹⁸ Therefore, the Vatican II was for updating the teachings of the Church that they could fit with the time. One of the updates was done it was concerning the pastoral activities of the local Churches (dioceses and parishes).

The really thirst of the Church that it was provoked by Vatican II was to see that the faithful could participate fully in the activities of the Church such as pastoral activities, that include evangelization and administrative activities of their local Churches. The experience that it was there before Vatican II to re-establish such communities was that almost everything was done by the priests or the religious people even those things could not need the presence of them but the system of the Church did not allow them to do them. Thus, why when some people are asked what they know about Church, they simply mention pope, cardinals, bishops, priests, deacons and religious people (nuns, sisters, and brothers). The truth is that such kind of mentality that the christians have, it is because they were not given good participation in their Church and they only remained to do what were told. The Church was very hierarchical in pastoral realization that could not allow that open participation and the christians were like the game watchers with little impacts in their christian faith.

Vatican II has read the signs of time. Why? Because today, the great part of the Church's activities need complete participation of the faithful and the christian communities. The reestablishment of the SCCs was like a preparation of such kind of the Church in modern time. For example, in most countries in Africa and Latin America the Small Christian Communities produce the lay people who take care of the Churches, lay people who go for missionary's activities, and also prepare people for being catechists and the extraordinary ministers of sacraments. Vatican II can be named as a prophet who

¹⁵ Casiano Floristán, *Vaticano II Um Concílio Pastoral* (Lisboa: Sotecla LDA, 1990), 15.

¹⁶ It is na Italian word which means updating, renewing or making something new.

¹⁷ Cf. Floristán, *Vaticano II Um Concílio Pastoral*, 35.

¹⁸ Floristán, 34.

had foreseen the importance of the SCCs in modern world in which it is experiencing the shortage of priests and the religious people who were in frontlines in carrying the mission of Jesus Christ in the Church.

One of the documents of the Vatican II that pin points Small Christian Communities is *Lumen Gentium*. The *Lumen Gentium* number 9 defines the Church as: «t the People of God» (LG 9). Here we must put it very well that when talking about the people of God it means the baptized ones in the Church. And those who are not baptised in the Catholic Church but follow the formula of baptism (Trinity). This fact does not deny the fact that all people are belonging to God and therefore all deserve to be called the people of God. But later on, at the Extraordinary Synod of 1985 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, then later known as Pope Benedict XIV proposed replacing the notion of the “Church as People of God” with that of «Church as communion».¹⁹ The word communion has more theological meaning than only the people of God because the word is referred to the Eucharistic concept of “communion” as it is used by theologian Walter Kasper when he wrote on the aspects of the sacraments of the Holy Eucharist.

Such concept of the *communion* or Church that was brought by Vatican II is from a Greek vocabulary or concept of *Koinonia*. The vocabulary means a house or a home of people or the community of people. Vatican II relate the Church with *koinonia* that is the community or home of people who live together for a certain purpose. And the purpose of this house of God is to live the christian faith that was taught and left by Jesus Christ. In fact, such kind of life was brought by the Vatican II in the Church is named to be a “new way of being the Church”.²⁰ *Koinonia* as translated, it is that, the Church opens a new horizon of the understanding the Church in the modern time especially an ecclesiological concept that is: «the ecclesiology of Vatican II is understood from the first chapters of *Lumen Gentium* in a key to communion. A communion is translated to a

¹⁹ Pablo Richard Guzmán, “Ecclesial Base Communities: A Look Back and a Look Forward,” in *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-Looking Church*, ed. Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth (Quezon: Claretian Publications, 2013), 45.

²⁰ Cf. Diego Cadri, “The Development of Small Christian Communities in the Catholic and Among the Lugbara People of Uganda After the Second Vatican Council: A Historical, Theological and Pastoral Investigation,” ed. George S. Worgul (Duquesne University, 2007), 155.

Greek Koinonia vocabulary equivalent to participation, solidarity, unity or communion».²¹

Pope Joao Paulo II commented on the concept *communio* given by Vatican II by saying that:

the elements are much characteristics of the Vatican II are the Church are like the people of God and communion, hierarchical authority like a service, the participation of all her members triple missions (sacerdotal, prophetic and royal) and efforts of the Church in ecumenism.²²

Apart from the document of *Lumen Gentium* another important document is the *Gaudium et Spes* especially on number 2 and number 3. The document does not talk directly about the SCCs but calls for the Church to be aware with the signs of time that the Church is experiencing. Signs of time that Church sees are the challenges and the outcomes of the science and technology that lead to secularisation of the society and the lost of the active participation of the christian in the Church. In this call, the Church is called to respond the pastoral challenges that she is facing. One of these responses should be an active participation of the christians in the activities of the Church.

At the beginning of the document, the council addresses itself without hesitation, not only to the sons/daughters of the Church, and to all who invoke the name of Christ, but to the whole of humanity (G.S.2). It affirms its solidarity with the entire human family and conceives of its mission as continuing the work of Christ, who entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not to be served (G.S.3). It calls the Church to read the signs of the times. It describes the condition of men/women in the modern world. There is a true and profound social and cultural transformation that has an effect on the religious sphere of human life. “Science and technology have transformed the face of the earth and extended human domination over space and time.”²³

There are also some documents published by the Popes or Holy Fathers that talk about the Small Christian Communities in the Church. As we have already seen in some pages before, that these documents are encyclicals, exhortation and speeches. These documents are the continuation of the emphasize for SCCs that through these documents the Church emphasize the development of the Small Christian Communities as the important elements. Then we take these documents as one of the sources of historical

²¹ Joseph Graham Healey, “Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities / Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa,” in *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-Looking Church*, ed. Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth (Quezon: Claretian Publications, 2013), 152.

²² Floristán, *Vaticano II Um Concílio Pastoral*, 35.

²³ Austin Flannery, *The Basic Sixteen Documents: Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations, A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language* (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 164–65.

development for the Small Christian Communities in the Church. Most of the popes that when they were writing their documents did not forget to write on the SCCs and to emphasize on their importance in the Church: Thus, why every pope when coming to papacy tries to write to the christian concerning these communities his concerns on them:

The Church has addressed in some of its papal documents the idea and practice of Small Christian Communities Some of these documents include: The Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*; the Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*; the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops and its final report; the Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*; John Paul II's 1990 Encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*; and other papal statements.²⁴

The encyclic of the *Redemptoris Missio* (The Mission of Redemption) of Pope John Paulo II shows the great concern on the SCCs as the elements important in the Church especially in organising the parish life:

These are groups of Christians who, at the level of the family or in a similarly restricted setting, come together for prayer, Scripture reading, catechesis, and discussion on human and ecclesial problems with a view to a common commitment. These communities are a sign of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization, and a solid starting point for a new society based on a civilization of love. These communities decentralize and organize the parish community, to which they always remain united. They take root in less privileged and rural areas, and become a leaven of Christian life, of care for the poor and neglected, and of commitment to the transformation of society. Within them, the individual Christian experiences community and therefore senses that he or she is playing an active role and is encouraged to share in the common task. Thus, these communities become a means of evangelization and of the initial proclamation of the Gospel, and a source of new ministries. At the same time, by being imbued with Christ's love, they also show how divisions, tribalism and racism can be overcome (RM 51).

Pope John Paul II calls such type of evangelization through the SCCs is a new way of evangelization and new way of living Christianity:

For missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when it is given to others! It is in commitment to the Church's universal mission that the new evangelization of Christian peoples will find inspiration and support (RM 2).

Redemptoris Missio continues showing the importance of the SCCs in the modern world and today we are not only talking about the modern world but rather the digital world. That people find conformable in technology than participating religious activities. The documents recognise the duties and responsibilities done by these christian groups:

A rapidly growing phenomenon in the young Churches - one sometimes fostered by the bishops and their Conferences as a pastoral priority - is that of "ecclesial basic communities" (also known by other names) which are proving to be good centres

²⁴ Cadri, "The Development of Small Christian Communities in the Catholic and Among the Lugbara People of Uganda After the Second Vatican Council: A Historical, Theological and Pastoral Investigation," 180.

for Christian formation and missionary outreach. These are groups of Christians who, at the level of the family or in a similarly restricted setting, come together for prayer, Scripture reading, catechesis, and discussion on human and ecclesial problems with a view to a common commitment. These communities are a sign of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization, and a solid starting point for a new society based on a "civilization of love (RM 51).

The encyclic sees that the present SCCs as the real images of the of the christian communities that were there during the early Church, at the time of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, whereby the early christians lived in "fraternal communion" that is "of one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32):

Indeed, a true Christian community is also committed to distributing earthly goods, so that no one is in want, and all can receive such goods "as they need" (cf. Acts 2:45; 4:35). The first communities, made up of "glad and generous hearts" (Acts 2:46), were open and missionary: they enjoyed "favour with all the people" (Acts 2:47). Even before activity, mission means witness and a way of life that shines out to others (RM 26).

Pope John Paul II in the encyclic suggests that the today's evangelization should focus on such christian communities because they are witnessing the really image of Church that She has a mission of evangelization:

Then there is the community of believers, which in its way of life and its activity bears witness to the Lord and converts the Gentiles (cf. Acts 2:46-47). Then there are the special envoys sent out to proclaim the Gospel. Thus, the Christian community at Antioch sends its members forth on mission; having fasted, prayed and celebrated the Eucharist, the community recognizes that the Spirit has chosen Paul and Barnabas to be "sent forth" (cf. Acts 13:1-4) (RM 27).

The missionary's responsibility is not only for the ordinary ordained ministers and the religious persons but it is the communal task, for the whole Church. This, it is what the encyclic tries to mean. That all the baptised have the responsibility of making sure that the Gospel is preached from the basic levels of the Church:

In its origins, then, mission is seen as a community commitment, a responsibility of the local Church, which needs "missionaries" in order to push forward toward new frontiers. Side by side with those who had been sent forth, there were also others, who bore spontaneous witness to the newness which had transformed their lives, and who subsequently provided a link between the emerging communities and the Apostolic Church (RM 27).

The Church in Africa shows the potentiality for the Universal Church because of still having many active participants, vocations for matrimony, for priesthood and for religious life. But the potentiality should be well taken care so as to remain firm all the time. By knowing this. Pope John Paul II in the African Synod reminds the bishops of Africa on the importance of using the SCCs as the instrument of evangelization of Africa:

In January 1989, Pope John Paul II announced the African Synod to promote pastoral solidarity among the Churches in Africa. He wanted to involve the whole People of God and all levels of the Christian community, in preparation of the Synod: individuals, small communities, parishes, dioceses and national bodies.²⁵

The document of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI shows great concern and care on SCCs. The document was published after the synod of the bishops in Rome on the theme of Evangelization. That is: «the 1974 synod of bishops in Rome, on the theme of evangelization in the modern world, was followed by a document or apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI issued the apostolic exhortation in 1975 and it summed up the synod discussions».²⁶

The document addresses the issue about the mission in the world and how the Church can carry it in the best ways in this contemporary world which she is challenged by high development of science and technology, in which it challenges the spreading of the Gospel. Then Small Christian Communities are found to be possible solutions:

The last Synod devoted considerable attention to these "small communities," or *communautes de base*, because they are often talked about in the Church today. What are they, and why should they be the special beneficiaries of evangelization and at the same time evangelizers themselves? According to the various statements heard in the Synod, such communities flourish more or less throughout the Church. They differ greatly among themselves both within the same region and even more so from one region to another. In some regions they appear and develop, almost without exception, within the Church, having solidarity with her life, being nourished by her teaching and united with her pastors. In these cases, they spring from the need to live the Church's life more intensely, or from the desire and quest for a more human dimension such as larger ecclesial communities can only offer with difficulty, especially in the big modern cities which lend themselves both to life in the mass and to anonymity (EN 58).

And also:

Such communities can quite simply be in their own way an extension on the spiritual and religious level- worship, deepening of faith, fraternal charity, prayer, contact with pastors of the small sociological community such as the village, etc. Or again their aim may be to bring together, for the purpose of listening to and meditating on the Word, for the sacraments and the bond of the agape, groups of people who are linked by age, culture, civil state or social situation: married couples, young people, professional people, etc.; people who already happen to be united in the struggle for justice, brotherly aid to the poor, human advancement. In still other cases they bring Christians together in places where the shortage of priests does not favour the normal life of a parish community. This is all presupposed within communities constituted by the Church, especially individual Churches and parishes (EN 58).

²⁵ AMECEA Pastoral Department *The African Synod Comes Home: A Simplified*, Paulines Publications Africa (Nairobi, 1995), 9.

²⁶ Cadri, "The Development of Small Christian Communities in the Catholic and Among the Lugbara People of Uganda After the Second Vatican Council: A Historical, Theological and Pastoral Investigation," 181.

The document of the *Africa Munus* of Pope Benedict XVI emphasizes the same things concerning Small Christian Communities in the Church especially in the growing Church in Africa. *Africa Munus* looks the SCCs as the solution for many challenges that facing the Church in Africa and the society of Africa especially concerning the problem peace and justice:

It can be helpful for you to form associations in order to continue shaping your Christian conscience and supporting one another in the struggle for justice and peace. The Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and the “new communities” are fundamental structures for fanning the flame of your Baptism. Bring your areas of competence to the life and activity of the Catholic universities, which continue to grow following the recommendations of the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (AM 131).

We have the privilege of having the current Pope who is coming from Latin America, Pope Francis. In Latin America, SCCs is something serious in the dioceses of Latin America and most probably the Pope Francis lived them as a normal christian and later on as the bishop of Argentina. Thus, why in most of his writing such as the encyclics, exhortations and other documents he speaks about the SCCs by showing their importance in the Church. In this note we remember some of the documents of Pope such as the encyclic of the *Evangelii Gaudium* (the Joy of the Gospel).

Since his beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis shows his attention on the life of christian in the Church especially on the dimension of Church as the community of the faithful. For Pope Francis the concept of the *communio* that it defines the Church. That the Church should define herself between the people and not in the offices and careers: «the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters» (EG 28).

Pope Francis is dreaming of the Missionary Church that can reach everywhere and to every person. It is a dream that can be seen as the utopic dream but is a realistic dream when and if Church continuing recognizing the SCCs as the best way of making the Church Missionary:

I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation (EG 27).

The SCCs are the wealthy and richness of the Church because of their evangelical nature, as the encyclic testifies:

Basic communities and small communities, movements, and forms of association are a source of enrichment for the Church, raised up by the Spirit for evangelizing different areas and sectors. Frequently they bring a new evangelizing fervour and a new capacity for dialogue with the world whereby the Church is renewed. But it will prove beneficial for them not to lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the particular Church (EG 29).

Pope insists that the local Churches especially through bishops must use the SCCs as the strategical missionaries for evangelization:

The bishop must always foster this missionary communion in his diocesan Church, following the ideal of the first Christian communities, in which the believers were of one heart and one soul (cf. Acts 4:32). To do so, he will sometimes go before his people, pointing the way and keeping their hope vibrant. At other times, he will simply be in their midst with his unassuming and merciful presence. At yet other times, he will have to walk after them, helping those who lag behind and – above all – allowing the flock to strike out on new paths (EG 30).

The exhortation of *Ecclesiae in Africa* concentrates for the Church in Africa. It could be something strange if the document don't mention and see the importance of the SCCs as the privilege and vital points for the pastoral activities of the Church and the evangelization in Africa. This is because the nature of the African life is still determined and justified by communal basing: «Above all these communities are to be committed to living Christ's love to everybody, a love which transcends the limits of natural solidarity of clans, tribes or other interest group» (EA 89).

Lastly, the bishops of Africa through their declaration is that the SCCs are the important privileges for the evangelization in Africa and the whole Church in the world. For Africa, such communities are having the fundamental role of living the Christianity and living the Gospel and missionary spirit.

In the spirit of ecclesial communion so clearly proclaimed by Vatican II, the Bishops of Africa and Madagascar emphasize the essential and fundamental role of Living Christian Communities: priests, religious and laity united in mind and action with their bishop. It is the clear task of these communities, rooted and integrated as they are in the life of their peoples, to search deeper into the Gospel, to set the priorities of pastoral planning and activity, to take the initiative called for by the mission of the Church, to discern, in a spirit of faith where there can be continuity between culture and Christian life and where cleavage is necessary in all aspects of life that hinder the penetration of the Gospel.²⁷

²⁷ Joseph Graham Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, 53.

1.3. The Origin of Small Christian Communities in Tanzania

African lives are still depending on communal living where by people define themselves in the community. The Africans to large extent depend each other in their daily life. For example, when in a society happening anything to a family such as mourning, feast, and other things, is that an event is for whole society. Thus, why when the Small Christian Communities were introduced in the Church in Africa and most especially in Tanzania is that they were not something new but only a continuation of the African culture. We can say it in another ways that SCCs is another way of living the African cultural and life because: «the Small Christian Communities observing from the African Church perspectives have influenced mainly the diakonia and koinonia aspects».²⁸ This is one of the many reasons that Church in Tanzania did not hesitate to welcome the Small Christian Communities.

Most parts in Tanzania and Africa in general are still villages or most of the people live in villages. In the villages people live together as on family and one community. The villages or communities in Africa is again an advantage in building Small Christian Communities because of their nature of living such as the collaboration of the families. What we call a village community is the aggregate of clustered households composed of different families which need not belong to the same kin group. That is «the village or settlement is the most acceptable basis for community in Africa. It is the most reliable human community. The village community is composed of both kinsmen and neighbours, and neighbourliness and good company are the predominant ideals of village life».²⁹

The spirit of individualism in the world is growing speedy in everyday whereby many people feel comfortable when they are alone and separated from others. Such spirit threatens the growth of the society and even the growth of the Church. Church is the important institution that can help people to regain their spirit of togetherness. Our SCCs help our African societies or Tanzanian societies to have communal life which enable people to participate together in many activities:

An African does not merely talk about community, but rather he or she lives and experiences community every day in the family, village and clan. An African community

²⁸ Cf. Pius Rutechura, “The Pastoral Vision of Basic Christian Communities / Ecclesial Communities,” in *Small Christian Communities-Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-Looking Church*, ed. Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth, 2nd ed. (Quezon: Claretian Publications, 2013), 272.

²⁹ Cadri, “The Development of Small Christian Communities in the Catholic and Among the Lugbara People of Uganda After the Second Vatican Council: A Historical, Theological and Pastoral Investigation,” 81.

can be described as a neighbourhood in which everybody knows everybody, and the members are actively involved in the life of the group, constantly and fully. For example, in a typical African community like a village, people build houses together, work on subsistence farms, and attend village meetings, funerals and weddings together. The people participate in planning community events together. The African experience of community life is not different from the established basic Ecclesial communities.³⁰

Before the coming of christianism in Africa or particularly in Tanzania, they existed already the African religions. The African religions did not talk about Jesus Christ but they talked about their virtues. One of the virtues or dimensions that was taught by the African Religions was the dimension of the community life. That the leaders of these religions insisted on the life of togetherness that enabled people to live as brothers and sisters of one father and one mother. The communal dimension in African societies is still very strong up to this time compared to many western religions or to christianism. In African cultures that everything is for a community.

Both the living and the dead are perceived to be members of the whole community. The ancestors are considered to be the guardians of society. It is they who preserve peace, harmony and stability. They are responsible for bringing new life into the community. Hence, there must be a good relationship between the living and the dead members of society. A tremendous religious character is attached to this, especially at funeral rites and re-burial rites at the grave. For example, some of the first harvest and some beer or water is put aside for the ancestors.³¹

The History of Tanzania as a country started in 1964 due to the union of two countries, Tanganyika and Zanzibar. A history of christian faith and evangelization go back up to the first coming of the Missionary of the Holy Ghost Fathers to the coastal sides of Tanzania that was in Zanzibar in 1860 and in Bagamoyo in 1867.³² And after many years of the evangelization in Tanzania, it was founded an ecclesial conference known as the Tanzania Episcopal Conference. It was primarily recognised by the British government in 1957 and then was approved officially by the Holy See on 1st January 1980.

There is a need of talking a little bit about a history of Tanzania as a country and as the ecclesial part. And when knowing these two histories, we will able to know Small Christian Communities and the Church in Tanzania better. Tanzania as other countries in African continent had passed in the same history of colonization. That was when the western countries dominated Africa through colonization which was legitimized in the

³⁰ Cadri, 79.

³¹ Cadri, 84–85.

³² Cf. Paul V. Kollman, *The Evangelization of Slaves and the Catholic Origin in Eastern Africa.*, I (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 1.

Berlin conference (1884-1885). Then, Tanzania found itself under the colonial dominations, by Germany of about 40 years before it was given to British power when after Germany lost the first world War (1914-1918). We have to remember that Tanzania as the country is due to the union of two independent countries which willingly decided to unite themselves to form one country, Tanzania. These countries were Tanganyika that got its independence on 9th December 1961 through Julius Kambarage Nyerere (1922-1999), and Zanzibar that got her independence through the revolution on 12th January 1964 through Sheikh Abeid Amani Karume (1905-1972). On 26th April 1964 these two countries united to form Tanzania, and Julius Kambarage Nyerere became the first president of the United Republic of Tanzania. Tanzania is a secular state whereby all kinds of faith and beliefs are permitted under the constitution of Tanzania. Thus, why they are many different religions like Christianity, Islamism, Hinduism, and other African traditional religions.³³

After this unification the country adopted the socialist politics, which is called Ujamaa. Ujamaa is a political ideology that a country adopted for running its activities, especially politic and economic activities. Ujamaa meant:

eliminating ideological differences, maintaining equality, and getting rid of all forms of injustices and exploitation. It also aimed at designating the roles of men and women within a broader conception of national familyhood. To promote mote the people-centred development in the country, that «the Declaration issued a blueprint of socialism and self-reliance that among other things called for workers and peasants to stop “begging” and to build a “socialist Tanzania through [their] own sweat.”³⁴

The christian faith in Tanzania has long history since the first coming of the missionaries of the Holy Ghost Fathers as we have said already. These missionaries of the congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers entered in Tanzania through two places. At first, they entered through Zanzibar in 1860 and at second they entered through Bagamoyo in 1867. Then later were followed by different groups of missionaries such as Missionaries of White Fathers (Missionaries of Africa)³⁵, the Franciscans, the Benedictines. The missionaries divided themselves to the places for evangelization. For example, the Benedictines from Germany concentrated much in the southern-east parts of Tanzania like in the diocese of Mahenge and Songea³⁶. But unfortunately, the German

³³ Cf. Martin Sturmer, *The Media History of Tanzania*, 1st ed. (Salzburg: Ndanda Press, 1998), 103–6.

³⁴ Salvatory S. Nyanto, “Ujamaa, Small Christian Communities, and Moral Reform in Western Tanzania, 1960s–1990,” *Catholic Historical Review*, 2017, 317.

³⁵ Cf. Peter George Kafumu, “The History of Evangelization in Tanzania,” *Africa Tomorrow*, no. 1 (2017): 229.

³⁶ Cf. Kafumu, 234.

missionaries had to be replaced by the missionaries from Switzerland. The missionary from Switzerland were the Capuchin Missionaries of Minor orders of Franciscans. The reason for replacing the German Missionaries was that when Germany lost the first World War (1914-1918).³⁷ But also, they went other groups of missionaries of non-Catholic christians like the Anglicans and Lutheran missionaries.³⁸

The first missionaries (Holy Ghost Fathers) came to Tanzania for the special mission of liberating the African slaves who were sold to go to some European countries and American countries. From those purposes, that where and when the evangelization for spreading Christianity started. As we know that in Zanzibar and Bagamoyo there were great markets of slave trade in the coastal regions of East African countries. From Bagamoyo and Zanzibar the Christianity went all over the east African region:

From the outside the program of evangelization envisioned since the mission's founding in 1860 seemed to be unfolding as planned. The move from the first mission on the island of Zanzibar to the coastal mainland at Bagamoyo in 1868 and from there to other stations in interior of the present-day Tanzania by 1882 had apparently proceeded smoothly and Spiritan staffed five missions in eastern Africa.³⁹

To make sure that the christian religion is for to be a permanent religion of the people around these places where the missionaries were evangelizing that they started the plan of education for the native. Many skills of life without forgetting the religious education were given to them. In the formation of the local Church the missionaries did only construct the centres for religious studies but: «besides the liturgical practices in the chapel, the Zanzibar mission in the 1860's also pursued regular scholastic education of a rudimentary sort. To what extent the girls were included in the early education is not clear, but classroom for the girls was planned in December 1863, and they certainly had catechism before that, for Baur remarks finding them better than the boy.⁴⁰

The local Churches in Tanzania were already prepared by the missionaries through the preparation of the formation houses for the local priests. The missionaries built the seminaries for the priesthood and religious life centres. That is « the formation of indigenous clergy stood at the center of the missionary strategy of the Vatican and

³⁷ Cf. Kafumu, 335–36.

³⁸ Cf. Kafumu, 225–27.

³⁹ Paul V. Kollman, *The Evangelization of Slaves And the Catholic Origin in Eastern Africa.*, I (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 1.

⁴⁰ Cf. Kollman, 112.

Libermann, and the Holy Ghost missionary in western Africa, Kobés, had made it a priority in his renowned mission.⁴¹

Then from these historical backgrounds of the evangelization of Tanzania in which it resulted to strong christian in faith. From such reality, it is where we see the necessity of the establishment of the Small Christian Communities came into the Church in Tanzania. Today the Church in Tanzania has thirty-five dioceses and all of the dioceses are under the native bishops. And also, good news is that due to these efforts of evangelization in Tanzania that it resulted to have a first African cardinal who even participated the second council of Vatican, that is Laurean Cardinal Rugambwa (1912-1997). Laurean Cardinal Rugambwa (1912-1997) was elected as a cardinal by Pope Paul VI as is shown in the appointment letter called "Letter of Paul VI to Cardinal Laurean Rugambwa, Bishop of Bukoba of 14th July 1964: « Knowing our love for Africa, Beloved Son, you are aware that it would have been Our dear desire to be present in person at the Centenary Celebrations of Catholic Missionary Activity in East Africa. It is, however, a consolation for Us to send you this message of felicitations and good wishes, which We entrust to Our Venerable Brother Sergio Pignedoli, Titular Archbishop of Iconium and Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples». (Letter Of Paul VI to Cardinal Laurean Rugambwa, Bishop of Bukoba) (Vatican, July 14, 1968)

Today when we are talking is that the number of christians is increasing every day. The increasing number of the christian results also the increasing number of birth of vocations like the priesthood, religious life and marriage vocations in the Church. The christians are willingly to participate with their Church in different activities such pastoral activities in the parishes though their pastoral groups like the group of catholic women called by Swahili language WAWATA, the youth group called Tanzania Youth Catholic Students (TYCS), and the Pontifical Infancies (Watoto wa Kipapa wa Yesu). Therefore, the coming of the missionaries in Tanzania it was the beginning of christian faith and the beginning of Catholicism in Tanzania.⁴²

When coming to talk about the origin of the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania we should not forget the contribution of the *Ujamaa ideology or policy* that

⁴¹ Cf. Kollman, 145–46.

⁴² Cf. Paternus Cleophace Niyegira, "To Explore the Catholic Church Role in Shaping Social Leadership Development in Tanzania: A Case Of Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC)" (Mzumbe University, 2019), 52.

Tanzania adopted or created for running its political and economic activities. The ideology got many successes in political and economic life of Tanzania. One of the successes that today we can talk, it abled to unite all people of Tanzania to live like brothers and sisters without any serious cohesions among themselves. Tanzania has about 120 ethnic groups therefore it was needed a philosophy or an ideology that could be used to unite all people of Tanzania. Thus, why the political leaders of that time found *Ujamaa ideology*⁴³: «President Julius Nyerere envisioned Ujamaa to mean living together in a village, farming together, marketing together, and collaboratively sharing resources as a community».⁴⁴ This success and others gave reasons the Church in Tanzania to be interested with Ujamaa ideology the way is used to shape the country by living communal life. Thus why « the period during independence from 1961 to 1980 was characterized by the Church supporting Ujamaa police and Africanisation of the Church».⁴⁵

The Ujamaa ideology had something that the Church in Tanzania wished to have through the Small Christian Communities. The wishes of the Church in Tanzania were to bring the faithful together from the low levels and the faithful could participate all the life of the Church through their communities. The setting of the societies during Ujamaa is that the government created the Ujamaa villages and within those villages also were created some communities. Each community had 10 to 15 families and famously were known as Vitongoji and were led by leaders called *Balozi wa nyumba kumi*⁴⁶ in English is ambassadors of ten houses.

The first Tanzanian President, Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere capitalized on the traditional family institution in his Ujamaa political setup. He started the ten-cell governing Ujamaa system. Every 10 families would establish a self-governing and self-sustaining unit. This increased the peoples' participation in the political, social and economic governance from the grassroots.⁴⁷

Therefore, some Catholic religious leaders became interested in the Ujamaa ideology the way it formed the civil society. The most remarkable leaders of the Church in Tanzania were Bishop Christopher Mwoleka of Rulenge Diocese who wished such system to be adopted in the Churches in Tanzania. This bishop wanted the participation of the christians in the Church could start from the family levels. He was the first bishop

⁴³ Cf. Martin Sturmer, *The Media History of Tanzania*, 117.

⁴⁴ Nyanto, 316.

⁴⁵ Niyegira, "To Explore the Catholic Church Role in Shaping Social Leadership Development in Tanzania: A Case Of Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC)," 57.

⁴⁶ Cf. Nyanto, 318.

⁴⁷ Kilaini, "Communities:, Small Christian Experience, Sharing the Tanzanian Pastoral," 2.

in Tanzania to make the Small Christian Communities official pastoral priority of his diocese and important means of evangelization: In 1974 he could boldly and proudly be able to tell the Tanzanian bishops of his choice. In fact, he already made a governing structure with different functions for members of the SCCs. Much of this was copied by other dioceses and finally by the national directory of Small Christian Communities».⁴⁸

We cannot say that Ujamaa ideology give birth to Small Christian Communities in Tanzania. But Ujamaa ideology motivated the bishops of Tanzania to think on something that could make the christians to participate fully the activities of their Church, from the family levels up to diocesan levels. The Ujamaa villages were used by the government to implement their activities from low levels of the societies. The citizens participated very well and fully the activities of their government in a communal way. In those times of ujamaa villages that nothing was done to anybody or by anybody in government unless is approved by the leaders and the members of that community. Today the SCCs in Tanzania have copied many things from Ujamaa especial on the organization of the communities. Thus, why the Church in Tanzania from that example of the Ujamaa ideology did not hesitate to establish the SCCs and to declare they are “pastoral priority”⁴⁹ in Tanzania.

The Church is always illumined by the Holy Spirit of what to do and how to do. The establishment of the SCCs in Tanzania is a work and power of the Holy Spirit. As sister Ishengoma writes it in her book:

The growth of SCCs in all the dioceses in Tanzania is the work of the Holy Spirit. Listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches (*Revelation 2:7*). *Jumuiya* transforms a parish into a communion of communities. SCCs helps the parish to really become a living family of God. The National Lay Council in Tanzania in 1998 required that the election of lay leaders in a parish starts from the level of SCCs and moves upwards.⁵⁰

The establishment of the SCCs in Tanzania began in 1970s when Church in Tanzania through their bishops of those time opted to begin and to establish the SCCs. The establishment came to its realization through the synod of bishops of 1972. That is « that they declared the formation of Christian Communities pastoral priority number

⁴⁸ Kilaini, 2.

⁴⁹ Cf. Kilaini, 2.

⁵⁰ Rita Ishengoma, “How Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Build the Church as a Family of God from the Grassroots Up in the Local Church,” in *Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Embrace the Word of God* (Mwanza: St. Dominic Pastoral Centre in Mwanza, 2014), 1.

one, because they functioned as the smallest unit of the Church next to the family».⁵¹ Then when it reached 1974 that the synod of the bishops of Tanzania in 1974 declared that every diocese must have the Small Christian Communities and they should be used for the pastoral activities: «In 1974, the Tanzanian Episcopal Council (TEC) circulated the resolutions of the meetings held by all bishops, in which the fifth resolution demanded the dioceses commit themselves to establishing Christian Communities in the next five years».⁵²

In June, 1975 the Tanzania Episcopal Conference passed a resolution to promote SCCs throughout the dioceses. In November 1975 Mwoleka and the Diocesan Directors of the Lay Apostolate implemented this resolution by developing a step-by-step plan for starting SCCs throughout Tanzania. He coined the saying: “There is no blueprint for building SCCs.” SCCs grow, develop, evolve in different ways from below. If SCCs are a new way of being Church from the local level up, a certain searching, experimentation and dying and rising will continue as the grassroots tries to evolve this new enculturated model of Church and the seed of a new model of society. Mwoleka also stated that in his diocese “the entire pastoral work will be carried out by means of Small Christian Communities.”⁵³

Some bishops are named to be the pioneers of the establishment of the SCCs in Tanzania and AMECEA zone:

Christopher Mwoleka, the deceased bishop of Rulenge Diocese, Tanzania who was the founder of SCCs in Tanzania, already saw this pastoral challenge in the 1980s when he identified the pressing need for an effective and enculturated method of Bible Reflection in Eastern Africa that goes beyond the small prayer group model. Just as Africa needs an “appropriate technology” for economic development, the Catholic Church in Africa needs an “appropriate methodology or process” for Bible Reflection that connects the Bible to the real issues of our daily life and includes personal and communal faith sharing.⁵⁴

The establishment of the SCCs in Tanzania did not just end in Tanzania but also went to other neighbouring countries that make the conference of bishops known as the AMECEA. The AMECEA plenary study conference of 1979 was held at Zomba, in

⁵¹ Nyanto, “Ujamaa, Small Christian Communities, and Moral Reform in Western Tanzania, 1960s–1990,” 323.

⁵² Nyanto, 323.

⁵³ Joseph Graham Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, 54–55.

⁵⁴ Joseph Graham Healey, “We Create the Path by Walking: The Involvement of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Peacebuilding in Eastern Africa,” *The Journal of Social Encounters* 1, no. 1 (2017): 14.

Malawi from August 13 to 16, 1979. The delegates were asked to give a report on the implementation of the aims and spirit of the 1976's study conference during the conference of 1979. Some delegates, on the one hand, had a fairly clear notion of the Small Christian Communities, while on the other hand some delegates thought that Small Christian Communities meant sub-parishes or outstations. The main understanding of Small Christian Communities in other dioceses was that they were organized to take up parish collections, and up to the present this confusion still persists.⁵⁵

For example, the AMECEA conference held in Zomba in Malawi gave away new energy for the establishment of the Small Christian Communities in AMECEA zone and Tanzania. That is in August 1979, when the delegates arrived for the AMECEA plenary study conference at Zomba, Malawi, instead of gathering in a large hall, they were surprised to find that they were divided into small groups that were directed to separate rooms. Each group was to discuss two questions on the first day of the conference. The first question asked was: "What has been your experience of Small Christian Communities in your diocese?" The second question asked was: What are your expectations for these few days of study together? No position paper was presented in the plenary study conference, but instead, the groups read relevant passages from Scriptures, like (Acts 2:42) (Apostles' instruction, communal life, breaking of bread, prayer) and (I Cor. 12:27) (Charisms). They reflected quietly on the passages and shared the fruit of their deliberations. The reading of relevant Scriptural passages, reflections, and sharing took a considerable length of time, and all the delegates took it very seriously because this is what they would do in their various dioceses.⁵⁶

The meeting of the bishops discussing the development of the Small Christian Communities gave bishops a wider range of understanding well the SCCs and then gave the bishops the desires of seeing that the SCCs are continuing strongly than before. The experience of listening, reflection, sharing and celebration in small groups deepened the delegates' understanding of Small Christian Communities. It is that «different discussion groups came up with resolutions and these resolutions were articulated by Fr. Brian

⁵⁵ Cadri, "The Development of Small Christian Communities in the Catholic and Among the Lugbara People of Uganda After the Second Vatican Council: A Historical, Theological and Pastoral Investigation," 99.

⁵⁶ Cadri, 100.

Hearne. He clarified and developed them into the main aspects of Small Christian Communities along with their Ecclesiology and practical steps for implementing them».⁵⁷

Since the establishment or foundation of the SCCs, the Church in Tanzania keeps reviewing them so as to see that they are doing well. The Church in Tanzania is really committed to these communities because they give out positive results in the Church:

The Catholic commitment to Small Christian Communities only grew over the next three decades. After a fifteen-year evaluation period, the East African bishops in 1992 reaffirmed SCCs as a pastoral priority. In 1998 the Tanzanian bishops announced that parish council leaders would be drawn from the ranks of existing SCC leaders, further integrating SCCs into traditional parish leadership structures.⁵⁸

Some studies concerning the development of the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania show that between towns and villages that SCCs are more alive in the village than in towns due to the social and economic complications that the Christians are facing daily in towns. For example: «Alphonse Timara argues that “in the urban areas (of Tanzania) the poorer people show greater vigour and interest in SCCs than the rich”, and Kieran Flynn claims that “it is the participation within the life of the poor that gives SCCs their relevancy and legitimacy».⁵⁹

After founding these communities that they are undergoing formation and directions from the dioceses and the parishes so as they may remain the Christian Communities and not otherwise. The pastoral document like *Caritas Est* of the TEC is one of the remembered documents that promoted the Small Christian Communities by insisting a serious for these communities:

In the 1995 Lenten letter The Laity of Tanzania ‘‘You Will Be My Witnesses’’, the bishops asked the Church to give seminars and sermons to help the Christians read the scriptures and understand the Word of God especially in the Small Christian Communities Even recently in 2008 in the letter God is Love ‘Deus Caritas Est, they remind the people in the SCCs to remember the poor and needy in their midst. They advised each SCC to have a fund to help the needy. They say this fund can help in life necessities like education, health and catastrophes.

As we know that the establishment of the Small Christian Communities in the Church especially in Tanzania, it is as we said that are for Christian to live their faith by

⁵⁷ Cadri, 101.

⁵⁸ James Jay Carney, “The People Bonded Together by Love: Eucharistic Ecclesiology and Small Christian Communities in Africa,” *Modern Theology*, 2014, 303.

⁵⁹ James Jay Carney, 306.

participating fully of what is of the Church. We can say that the SCCs make the christians to feel that they are very closer to their Churches:

He started lectionary-based small communities in Rulenge called *Vikundi vya Injili* (Swahili for “Gospel Groups”). Gradually they become known in Swahili as *Jumuyia Ndogo Ndogo za Kristo*. They were neighbourhood communities of families that would come together for prayer, Bible Sharing and practical activities. They paralleled the *Nyumba Kumi Kumi* (Swahili for Ten Houses), the socialistic plan of villagization of President Julius Nyerere and the Tanzanian Government to group houses/homes/families together in the same geographical area. This was part of the policy of *Ujamaa* (Swahili for “Familyhood”).⁶⁰

In some pages above we have seen that the SCCs are the continuation of African cultures of communal life. It is culture that defines the African societies:

That is Providentially, the Small Christian Communities, if developed on the right lines, will eventually replace the traditional African extended family or the clan. Just as Baptism transforms a natural baby into a child of God, a small Christian community is nothing else but a baptized clan. The clan with all its culture, ethos, relationships and institutions is not destroyed but purified and transformed.⁶¹

Today when we are talking about SCCs is that the number of the SCCs is growing every day in the Church in Tanzania by increasing numbers of them:

The Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, counts over 2,300 SCCs spread across all forty-eight diocesan parishes. This equals an average of nearly fifty SCCs per parish, transforming local Tanzanian parishes into what one commentator has called a “communion of communities.”¹⁴ While there are about 8,000 lay faithful for every Catholic priest in the region, the ratio of lay faithful to SCCs is only 300 to 1.⁶²

And the TEC through its pastoral development gave out the recently statistics of the SCCs in 34 dioceses which shows that there are about 45, 491 of the SCCs:

The Pastoral Department of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC)²⁵⁸ has compiled statistics on the number of SCCs in 22 of the 34 dioceses in the country as of 2013. The total is 45,491. SCCs with the leading dioceses as follows: 5,837 SCCs: Moshi Diocese, 5,823 SCCs: Morogoro Diocese, 3,682 SCCs: Shinyanga Diocese, 3,040 SCCs: Dar es Salaam Archdiocese, 2,860 SCCs: Rulenge-Ngara Diocese, 2,738 SCCs: Njombe Diocese, 2,731 SCCs: Iringa Diocese, 2,700 SCCs: Mbulu Diocese.⁶³

SCCs in Tanzania has become the example and can be imitated on how they developed their SCCs. Some countries outside have been interested with the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania. That is: «from Tanzania will remember that three or

⁶⁰ Cf Joseph Graham Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, 47.

⁶¹ Cf Joseph Graham Healey, 48.

⁶² James Jay Carney, “The People Bonded Together by Love: Eucharistic Ecclesiology and Small Christian Communities in Africa,” 304.

⁶³ Joseph Graham Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, 110.

four years ago, a group from Germany came to Bagamoyo to learn about Small Christian Communities»⁶⁴.

1.4. The concepts of the Small Christian Communities

As we see in the introduction of this work on the origin of the Small Christian Communities that have their origin from the early life of Christianity through the Apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ. Most of the stories concerning such communities found in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. But this fact does omit other facts. That is there are also other parts in the bible give the concepts of the origin of the Small Christian Communities Then later the SCCs christian communities started to have the weight in different places in the life of the Church as Cecil McGarry writes that:

It was seen that there are good reasons to justify the choice of adjective qualifying or identifying those communities such as, “basic, living Christian, ecclesial, small” etc, according to the origin and the emphasis given in various places. It was clear that the term, “ecclesial” insists on the link between small Christian community and the universal Church; “living” expresses their vitality and their celebratory and salvific dimensions; “basic” stresses their identity as Church which understands and wants to put in practice the true place of laity, a Church renewed from the grassroots, a Church of the poor, who are recognized as, “cornerstones of the ecclesial edifice;” while, “small” emphasizes rather the dimension that allows for and fosters mutual personal knowledge and relationship.⁶⁵

In Tanzania and AMECEA zone such communities are called Small Christian Communities As we know that in Tanzania is a Swahili country which means the language that is mostly used is Swahili language. Thus, why Small Christian Communities are called in Swahili *Jumuia Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristu (JNNK)*.⁶⁶

The Small Christian Communities are not only in Tanzania but are all over the world in Catholic Church. But every place they have their own names. These names are like «Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is used in Eastern Africa region; Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs); Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) and Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs), the terms frequently used in the Latin American context».⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Cf. Joseph Graham Healey, 844.

⁶⁵ Cecil McGarry, *What Happened at the African Synod?* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africaya, 1995), 139.

⁶⁶ It is a Swahili language. It is official language and the language much spoken in eastern Africa such in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Congo.

⁶⁷ Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth, *Small Christian Communities (Fresh Stimulus For a Forward - Looking Church)*, ed. Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth, 2nd ed. (Quezon: Claretian Publications, 2013), 1.

The term 'basic' refers to the bottom or base of a hierarchical society from which such a community arise and in certain areas like Africa or India they represent a geographical and pastoral division of a parish for the purpose of better catechetical, liturgical and missionary animation.⁶⁸

According to the Bishops' Conference of the Democratic Republic of Congo, defines these communities as: the Communautés Ecclésiales Vivantes de Base or Vibrant Basic Ecclesial Communities, hereinafter referred to as Basic Ecclesial Communities, as follows.⁶⁹

Also, the *Redemptoris Missio* defines the SCC as «a sign of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization and solidarity, starting point for a new society based on a civilization of love» (RM 51). In such definition is that the life of the christians is basing on aspects of “mutual sharing of prayer, meal (sustenance) and wisdom.”⁷⁰

The AMECEA defines the SCCs as:

A small neighbourhood, parish-based group in an urban or rural area in Eastern Africa that is a pastoral model of Church. Participants in this study defined SCCs as a small group of about 10-15 people who meet weekly usually in their homes (but sometimes in a parish, a school or another institution), to reflect on the *Bible* especially the Gospel of the following Sunday, and connect it to their day-to-day activities.⁷¹

In the same meeting of bishops of Tanzania, Bishop Denis Kiwanuka from Kotido in Uganda, in line with Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (RM 51) that: «Small Christian Communities as Communities where common people seek to live the Christian message to the full in the daily concrete situation of their lives».⁷²

Then: «This vision that conditions very profoundly catholic conscience about the Church, it forms a part of the conception of the Church as a community of the faithful as

⁶⁸ Cf. Michael Amaladoss, “Ecclesial Dimension of Small Christian Communities,” in *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-Looking Church*, ed. Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth (Quezon: Claretian Publications, 2013), 153.

⁶⁹ Cf. Ngoyi, “Small Christian Communities / Basic Ecclesial Communities,” 53.

⁷⁰ Cf. Rutechura, “The Pastoral Vision of Basic Christian Communities / Ecclesial Communities,” 272.

⁷¹ Susan M. Kilonzo Gumo Njoroge, Rose M., Sussy, “Small Christian Communities Involvement in Evangelization through Catechetical Instructions and Charity Activities in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County, Kenya,” *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 5, no. 12 (2017): 1952.

⁷² Hyacinthe Thiandoum, “African Synod: Position Paper” (Rome, 1994), 6.

the assembly of a lot of subjects or entities(peoples) that believe in the revelation of God in the Church, have become a unique subject of the faith».⁷³

The definitions of Small Christian Communities show that these communities are not the christian groups like the spiritual groups that are four for living a certain spirituality but the SCCs are for living the Churches life as the key words explain themselves that:

The term ‘community’ does not refer to the formation of spiritual fellowships in the sense of spiritually like-minded Christians, organised in a wider context, for example at the diocesan level or beyond. Rather, the key concept for a Small Christian Community is that of *communio*, that is a Church fellowship that can be experienced specifically within a local Church and thus within a parish and a pastoral context. The reference point continues to be the communion of the entire Church. For this purpose, Small Christian Communities endeavour to be Church at the truly local level, as outlined, in particular, by Vatican II.⁷⁴

The Small Christian Communities is to live the love of Christ that is in the Church and can be well lived in through Church’s communities:

the pastoral vision of Small Christian Communities can be better understood as a new sign of vitality and synergy at grassroots within the Church, a valuable instrument of formation and evangelization, indeed one of the most effective ways for nurturing a new society based on a civilization of love.⁷⁵

After looking on the meaning of Small Christian Communities that are found in different places in the world in the Church, we can conclude by the general conclusion given by Cecil McGarry that:

The Small Christian Communities are described as places where the whole people of God are mobilized to be Church and to evangelize, and their advantages in this regard are detailed as follows: The concept of family in Africa expresses in concrete imagery, the profound ecclesiological idea of a communion of believers, a fellowship with diversity of roles and persons. There are some theological, pastoral and ecclesiological advantages in using the concept of the Church as family of God, and Small Christian Communities can derive theological enrichment and missionary motivation from that concept.⁷⁶

The Psalmist remind us that:

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is when brothers live in harmony! It is like fine oil on the head, running down on the beard, running down Aaron’s beard over the collar of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon falling on the mountains of Zion. For there the LORD has bestowed the blessing of life forevermore (Psalm 133:1).

⁷³ Feiner and Lohrer, *Mysterium Salutis, Manual de Teologia Como Historia de La Salvacion La Iglesia.*, 323.

⁷⁴ Franz-Peter and Tebartz-van Elst, “Exploring Closeness – Small Christian Communities as Hubs of Pastoral Care,” in *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-Looking Church*, ed. Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth (Quezon: Claretian Publications, 2013), n. 101.

⁷⁵ Rutechura, “The Pastoral Vision of Basic Christian Communities / Ecclesial Communities,” 277.

⁷⁶ Cecil McGarry, *What Happened at the African Synod?*, 5.

Chapter 2: The Current Context of Small Christian Communities in Tanzania

In this chapter we are going to see some elements or structure of the Small Christian Communities which are in Tanzania. As we all know that Small Christian Communities are in the whole Church or everywhere in the Church. When we were looking on the definition and meaning of Small Christian Communities, we have seen different meanings and interpretation from different places. This shows that even the settings of these communities differ from one place to another. Thus, why we prefer to show how the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania are look like and how do they set themselves so as to be as the communities of christians.

Small Christian Communities in Tanzania have different settings and appearances. In facts these settings and appearance are very general but also it does not deny fact that there are some minor differences from one diocese to another diocese depend the nature of the place. In this topic we will see some these settings that small christians are having. The Small Christian Communities are: SCCs are the family Basing Communities, Small Christian Communities are administrative organs in the dioceses and parishes, Small Christian Communities are small Churches at christian homes, and Small Christian Communities are places for prayers and vocational promoters.

2.1. SCCs are the Family Basing Communities

Any community depends on people. People who can take charge of the activities that are to be done in that community either political community or religious community. Church also needs people so as they take Church of the activities that are in the Church, and not only people but the prepared christians. The case of the Small Christian Communities is that they depend on the families. Small christian communities are formed from the low levels that is from the families. Our Small Christian Communities in Tanzania they are formed form certain quantity of the christian houses. That is our small christian are formed by 10 to 15 families. It means that 10 to 15 is a community. Therefore, the christian families are very important in our parishes and dioceses. «The christians who decides to establish a Small Christian Communities shall be the

neighbouring houses and after agreeing themselves that to solve their problems commonly as christians».⁷⁷

It is to say that there is no way we can talk about the SCCs in Tanzania without touch the importance of the families in the Small Christian Communities. The families or homes are taking all responsibilities of the communities that are belonging to. Looking on the interpretation of the Church is that Church is the family of God. Therefore, our families that form Small Christian Communities have already that sense of Church is family of God. Thus, Church is considered to be a family:

The model of the Church as family of God in Africa is a call for the Church to be a communion, and Small Christian Communities are cells of the Church as family. In them, Christians live concretely and authentically the experience of Christian love in a spirit of service, care and sense of the common good. They also have a lot to contribute to the universal Church. They make Christians go beyond their colour, religion and ethnic groups. Small Christian Communities are a means to make God's Kingdom present in our societies today.⁷⁸

Our Small Christian Communities in the Church particularly in Tanzania are our homes because are the places that the christians feel more comfortable than any place. It is ridiculous that a person cannot feel happy or comfortable at his own home. He or she is either, oneself or a home has a problem. Knowing this peculiarity that Tanzania's bishops and with other bishops of Africa met to discuss the importance of the family in our SCCs on the topic called "*The Church-as-Family and Small Christian Communities*". One of the phrases given by the bishops in the meeting states that: «The Church, the Family of God, implies the creation of small communities at the human level, living or basic ecclesial communities. These individual Churches-as-Families have the task of working to transform society».⁷⁹

To show that the christian families are the base and the corner stones of the SCCs that many local Churches or dioceses in Africa show such attention to families. The synod of Arua diocese in Uganda through the diocesan bishops showed a responsibility that Churches(diocese) have to the families for the creation and maintaining good SCCs:

⁷⁷ Leodegard Massawe, *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo Za Kikristo*, ed. Amedeus Msarikie, 6th ed. (Moshi: Moshi Bookshop, 2016), 22.

⁷⁸ Cadri, "The Development of Small Christian Communities in the Catholic and Among the Lugbara People of Uganda After the Second Vatican Council: A Historical, Theological and Pastoral Investigation," 208.

⁷⁹ Joseph Graham Healey, "Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities / Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa," 190.

The ongoing formation center shall organize further courses regarding the formation and growth of such communities. Structurally, the Small Christian Community is the most local unit of the Church. The family is the domestic Church, but of its very nature, it has to reach out to other families, and the Small Christian community is made up of several family groups. Family catechesis is, therefore, at the heart of the formation of Small Christian Communities.⁸⁰

We know that the strong SCCs are the results of the strong christian families and the strong christians are the results of the strong small christian communities. Therefore, the Church has no any option concerning the families in the Church and in the SCCs. When the SCCs meet, they make sure that the participation of the families is high and active especially the participation of children so as they may learn and take the SCCs as their homes of living and they are free to express their christian faith: The families are where the Church finds her source thus why “a family is a Church at home”⁸¹. That is:

Small Christian Communities cannot be firm and be a small local Church without the strong and true christian families. The lack of true christian families make our Small Christian Communities to be like that stupid man in the Bible found on Mt. 7:26-27 who built his house on some sands. It rained, flood came, strong winds came and destroyed the house.⁸²

Many or some African families or Tanzanian families found themselves practising some bad cultures and traditions which destroy the growth of their faith and their families. The SCCs themselves take some measures as the family of God correcting themselves through smoothly ways so as family or a member of a family may be free from such problems of wrong beliefs or wrong cultures:

Our criteria for evaluating traditions and customs that lead our families is a commandment of love and other Jesus’ instructions. These things will help us to know the wrong traditions that may destroy our families and true traditions that develop our families for being reserved.⁸³

The concluding message of the African Synod of Bishops concerning the Church as a family and Small Christian Communities’ states that:

The Church, the Family of God, implies the creation of small communities at the human level, living or basic ecclesial communities. In such communities, which are cells of the Church as Family, one is formed to live concretely and authentically the experience of fraternity. In them the spirit of disinterested service, solidarity and common goals reigns. Each is moved to construct the Family of God, a family entirely open to the world from which absolutely nobody is excluded. It is such communities that will provide the best means to fight against ethnocentrism within the Church itself and, more widely, within our

⁸⁰ Frederick Drandua, *A Local Church Living Committed To Christ: Acts of the First Synod in Arua Diocese* (Kampala: Marianum Press, 1990), 35.

⁸¹ Cf. Massawe, *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo Za Kikristo*, 16.

⁸² Massawe, 1.

⁸³ Massawe, 1.

nations. These individual Churches as Family have the task of working to transform society.⁸⁴

The prayerful families will result the prayerful communities of christians thus why the Church in Tanzania always insists the families to create their homes as small Churches by having some christians signs and symbols that are permitted by the Church so that their children may grow in such condition of faith: «the christian families are the Churches at the homes, it is better that such Churches to have the christian symbols and signs at homes, like the holy cross, the images of saints, statue of saints, and the Bible. The family can reserve a place in the house chapel-liked for the prayers».⁸⁵

Knowing the importance of the christian families in the Church pope dedicate one of his writings to christian families. That is the encyclic of the *Amoris Laetitia*. For him the family as (AL 69). The simple definition of Small Christian Communities in Tanzania is that “a small christian community is a communion of families”.⁸⁶

2.2. The Small Christian are Administrative Organs in the Parishes

The Small Christian Communities are not the independent Churches but they are pastoral elements in the Church. Therefore, they are present must be connected and recognised by the local Churches. The bishops and their parish priests have the right of their establishment. Then their presence must help the parish to run their activities especially the administrative activities. Thus, why we easily say that the Small Christian Communities are administrations of where they are found. They hold the administrative dimensions:

From an institutional point of view, Small Christian Communities are an expression of the new model of the Church and a challenge to the old one. In them, one recognizes that all authority in the Church is at the service of communion, and they structure the Church on this principle at the local level. Through Small Christian Communities as institutions the Church moves from a chiefly hierarchical and clerical Church to a Church communion and Church family, in which each person has his/her place, feels at home, and actively participates in building up the community according to the charisms of each.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Maura Browne, *The African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, ed. Maura Browne (New York: Maryknoll, 1996), 78.

⁸⁵ Massawe, *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo Za Kikristo*, 16.

⁸⁶ Cf. Joseph Graham Healey, “Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Promote Family Ministry in Eastern Africa,” *The Annual Journal of Hekima College*, 2014, 1.

⁸⁷ Cecil McGarry, *What Happened at the African Synod?*, 144–45.

When looking at the structure of the Church in Tanzania is easily to understand that the small christian community make part of the administrative column. The structure of the Church in Tanzania is that the Church's structure starts from very basic levels that is from the Small Christian Communities to above. Thus, why when coming to the point of looking for the council of the lay people in the parishes, the election must start form the levels of the SCCs.

A key turning point for the growth of SCCs in Tanzania was promoting a model of Church from the bottom up. The implementation of the new Constitution of the National Lay Council in 1998 required that the election of lay leaders in parishes throughout Tanzania start at the level of SCCs and move upwards. This insured that the parish council leaders would be chosen from those who were already leaders in their SCCs, thus true representation from below. Such decisions gave full confidence to the faithful and opened new possibilities for the laity in the local Church.⁸⁸

In every small christian community there is a leadership for coordinating the members in that community and to connect the community with a parish. The leaders found in these communities are there to serve others and not govern others. In another way of speaking is that the leadership in the Small Christian Communities is a service for the faith of all christians:

The leaders in the Small Christian Communities are those that seen they have some leadership characters. The members who have good characters, good spirit, self-sacrificing person will be chosen for the different services in SCCs due to their talents. Those leaders shall be for the three years and then SCCs do the elections.⁸⁹

Most of the leaders in the Small Christian Communities are elected democratically so as to get those people who are well known by the christians by their efforts in the Churches. The leaders that we are talking about are: «chairperson, secretary general, and treasurer»⁹⁰ but also, they are leaders appointed by the councils of the small chrstian communities for collaborating with main leaders:

In this model of neighbourhood, parish-based SCCs, the SCCs officially participate in the parish leadership structures. The SCC is an official ecclesial structure in the parish. Each SCC (or a group of SCCs) has a representative on the outstation, Subparish or Parish Council/Parish Pastoral Council. Elections start at the level of SCCs and move upwards. This ensures that the parish pastoral council leaders are chosen from those lay people who are already leaders in their SCCs.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Joseph Graham Healey, "Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities / Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa," 191.

⁸⁹ Massawe, *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo Za Kikristo*, 23.

⁹⁰ Nyanto, "Ujamaa, Small Christian Communities, and Moral Reform in Western Tanzania, 1960s–1990," 324.

⁹¹ Joseph Graham Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, 851.

The structure of the small christian communities is made up from the numbers of the families or homes. The homes or families must be those neighbouring homes and not just a home. And most of the time when the Small Christian Communities grow and become many to a certain place, they form outstation of the parish and at the future may form a parish

Consisted usually of members of groups ranging from five to twelve families. They chose a man or woman in whom they had confidence as their leader. The leader was commonly called the guardian (*mlezi*) because members trusted him or her to lead them in religious and social affairs.⁹²

As the parts of the administrative structure is that the SCCs leaders, they make sure that the services in Churches are done by collaboration of the rest members by using their different talents that God has given them. The leaders of the SCCs are the people who always are for the development of the christians.

The members have different talents and these talents are not the same to all members. Then by using these talents is how we can develop and strengthen our Small Christian Communities And strengthening of the Small Christian Communities will depend on how the powers of leadership are used. But everybody is to use his or her position for the good of the community.⁹³

The christians are normally ready to collaborate and participate the activities of their Churches through the Small Christian Communities and their different christian groups. But sometimes they need the good leaders that can help them on how to participate well and fully. Thus, why the leaders in the Small Christian Communities are very important for the growth of the Small Christian Communities and the faith of christians. The leadership in the Small Christian Communities is to lead and to show example:

There are different ways of using the leadership power and authority. There are military style, industrial style, and social style. The objectives of the military in military are to win a battle and the chief executive officer in any industry is to get profit. But the objectives of the leaders in the Small Christian Communities is a growing and strengthening of the SCCs in faith and deeds that are full of unity and love.⁹⁴

In Small Christian Communities in Tanzania is that the leadership is something found in the pastoral directory of the conference episcopal of Tanzania. This means that the responsibilities of the Small Christian Communities are very well defined. It is not

⁹² Nyanto, "Ujamaa, Small Christian Communities, and Moral Reform in Western Tanzania, 1960s–1990," 324.

⁹³ Massawe, *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo Za Kikristo*, 26.

⁹⁴ Massawe, 27.

something a leader or anybody in any community can do something that it is out of the order:

The chairperson or assistant chairperson shall take care all that all the activities of his or her small christian community goes well in corporally and spiritually. All he or she must make sure that all who were given the responsibilities in the community fulfil these responsibilities. He or she is also required to maintain good relationship with neighbouring communities.⁹⁵

And in addition:

The secretary is very important figure in the Small Christian Communities because are many activities and responsibilities depend on the secretary. He or she is the one who receives a report and keep it writings in the book of the small christian community of every week when the community meets for the prayers. And will present a report kept when is needed by the community.⁹⁶

One of many responsibilities of the SCCs as the administrative organ is to make sure that the christians are well living and observing the norms of the christian faith. the leaders are normally giving the information to parish priests when happening something abnormal among the christians in communities. For example, some christian tend to cheat when they want to celebrate the sacrament of matrimony by trying to some concubines: «Thus, why these marriage councils monitored and regulated sexuality in western Tanzania functioned as a form of power which crossed paths with state efforts to exercise power through the vehicle of the ujamaa».⁹⁷

2.3. The SCCs are places for Vocational Promoting

In some countries is that Church is experiencing the high vocational scarcity. When talking about vocations we refer to matrimonial life, priesthood and religious life. In western countries like Italy, France, Portugal, Germany that formerly were known as the givers of the vocations especially of priesthood today they are undergoing the lack of such vocation. This situation has many effects in the life of christians in the world especially when concerning their faith. In Africa the situation is different. Today the seminaries are fully of seminarians and religious formation houses are full of aspirants. The parish's Churches celebrate sacrament of matrimony most of the time.

⁹⁵ Massawe, 18.

⁹⁶ Massawe, 18.

⁹⁷ Nyanto, "Ujamaa, Small Christian Communities, and Moral Reform in Western Tanzania, 1960s–1990," 328.

In Africa are many methods that are used to make sure that the christians remain believing and remain giving the vocations to the Church and for the Church. One of the methods that the Church in Tanzania is using is through the Small Christian Communities. The Small Christian Communities are very important elements for the growth of faith and most especially the growth of vocations that have already have mentioned above.

As we all know that the families are the source of people of every society. TO know this is that small chrsitian communities are very serious in making sure that the family becomes the better place for the christian faith. In this, SCCs promote the sacrament of marriage. The youth are advised to get marriage so as to live as the responsible families and respected families in the Church. the Small Christian Communities are not only promoting them but also protecting them so as matrimonies remain faithful:

In exercising their power to regulate sexuality and the social conduct of members, Small Christian Communities prohibited movements into other Christian denominations and religions. Relations before marriage with non-Catholics were also interpreted as acts of dishonour. At Kipalapala Parish, members and leaders of the Christian community accused Gusia Panda of having a clandestine sexual affair with a young Moravian Brethren man, Suma Yona, with whom she had a baby. The chair of the Christian Community, along with Gusia Panda's parents, ordered her to meet the parish priest to settle the case, but the lady never appeared.⁹⁸

In Tanzania, the Small Christian Communities have people which are responsible for vocation of marriage in the communities. These people are used to solve the problems that are happening in the families like those families that parents are used to fight themselves. These people go to such families to solve the problems by talking with couples and even they report to councils of the Small Christian Communities so as to take further steps if the problem is big and tough:

To know the reality of the family and to receive the challenge of the couples, to finds some ways that can help to solve the marriage problems, to send the difficult marriage cases to the parish committee, to make sure that the youth the receive the sacrament of matrimony and the dowry should be the obstacle.⁹⁹

According to most of the African cultures, a marriage is the most important event in the life thus why when somebody decides to get marriage, a whole society becomes happy. It is a same reality to the Church in Africa or Church in Tanzania that marriage is something important. That is the «third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization, in

⁹⁸ Nyanto, 328.

⁹⁹ Massawe, *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo Za Kikristo*, 19.

Rome from 5-19 October, 2014. This synod defined the status questions (Latin for the state of the question) of the topics of family and marriage.¹⁰⁰ And also: «the SCCs are an important support group for families and promotes a family culture. The SCC is both a place and a path for the pastoral care and evangelization of families and marriages. This praxis of SCCs in Africa is contributing to the development of the theology of the Church as Family of God».¹⁰¹

The priests and religious people are very important in the Catholic Church. Many places in the world catholic Church are experiencing the lack of the priests and religious people. In African especially in Tanzania the demand of priests and religious people is becoming high every day because of the high growth of the number of the christians. Therefore, there is need of making sure that the number of priests is increasing by taking care of the vocations which are found in the parishes.

The Small Christian Communities in Tanzania have become very important places for taking care of the vocations by making sure that the youths are growing very well physically, morally, spiritually and academically. The Church in Tanzania is normally asked the SCCs to give the recommendation on a youth (girl or boy)who wants to join seminary or a formation house so as to know if he or she deserve to join such life: «Other responsibilities of the mlezi included encouraging Christians to pay the tithe, advising the chairperson of the community about baptism and funeral arrangements, reporting to the priest about the conduct of seminarians on his or her street, and attending the meetings organized by the chairperson, at least once every two months».¹⁰²

And also:

The communities of the place where candidates for priesthood or religious live should always be consulted before these are admitted to the seminary or novitiate. Finally, Catholic schools should be encouraged to give their students experience of how their faith can be supported and grow in Small Christian Communities Out of the reflection of the groups, came the proposals on Small Christian Communities that were considered valid for the whole continent.¹⁰³

In holidays the seminarians are taken care and guarded by their families and Small Christian Communities. And at the end of the holidays that the Small Christian

¹⁰⁰ Joseph Graham Healey, "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Promote Family Ministry in Eastern Africa," 2.

¹⁰¹ Joseph Graham Healey, 2.

¹⁰² Nyanto, "Ujamaa, Small Christian Communities, and Moral Reform in Western Tanzania, 1960s–1990," 324.

¹⁰³ Cecil McGarry, *What Happened at the African Synod?*, 142.

Communities write a report on how the seminarians and candidates for the religious life lived their holidays. The report of the seminarian's behaviour was presented to the catechists and the parish priest at the end of the holiday before they returned to the seminaries. The rationale for this practice was to ensure that seminarians demonstrated a good example to society and members of the Christian Community as a foundation for the growth of a strong African clergy.¹⁰⁴

Frankly speaking is that the Small Christian Communities are important elements in promoting the vocation in Tanzania and other places in Eastern Africa. Small Christian Communities proud themselves when finding somebody is ordained or getting marriage. They do proud themselves because of their efforts of taking care of such vocations.

In Tanzania, the seminarians in major and senior seminaries don't pay the tuition fees. It is their dioceses of origin that a responsible for paying fees. Due to some economic factors that the dioceses sometimes find themselves that cannot afford a cost of paying fees. Therefore, christians have a duty to participate with their local Churches to contribute for the formation of seminarians and religious life's candidates. Due to these facts is that these communities take the large part of the christian life of Church in Tanzania.

¹⁰⁴ Nyanto, "Ujamaa, Small Christian Communities, and Moral Reform in Western Tanzania, 1960s–1990," 329.

Chapter 3: Pastoral Priority of Small Christian Communities in Tanzania

This chapter is tending to talk about the reasons that led Church in Tanzania to declare Small Christian Communities are the priority for the pastoral activities. The Oxford Dictionary defines term priority as: «something that you think is more important than other things and should be dealt with first»¹⁰⁵. Under this definition from the dictionary is that the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania were given the primary importance. There are many ways that the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania manifests their pastoral importance in Tanzania. Such importance led the bishops of the Church in Tanzania and that of AMECEA to declare objectively that the Small Christian Communities are priority:

The Catholic bishops in Eastern Africa chose this SCC pastoral priority as the best way to build up the local Churches to be truly self-ministering (self-governing), self-propagating (self-spreading), and self-supporting (self-reliant and self-sustainable). The three selfs are essential characteristics of SCCs as the base/basic level of the Church, and by extension, of the Local Church. This is a real self-actualization of the Church.¹⁰⁶

The fathers of the synod of Africa believe that the success of the Church in Africa cannot be realized without having strong pastoral methods in which the christians can feel that the Church is part and parcel of their faith and life. The Small Christian Communities help the Church to become really a family of God. The Church as a family cannot reach its full potentiality unless she creates the environment of being like a family that permit the christians to have that closeness. 'The creation of such communities in urban and rural areas is of the utmost importance, for they are instruments to break down the barriers of natural alliances of tribe and other interest groups, in order to allow the Christian communities to live as one family, the family of God. Christianity is more than out tribes, nations and other social dimensions. Thus, why there are always formations given to Small Christian Communities so as they may avoid such temptations. The leaders of the SCCs they are normally attend the formation sessions on how to lead their communities.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Albert Sydney Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, ed. Antony Cowie, 4th ed. (London: Oxford Univesity Press, 1989), 988.

¹⁰⁶ Joseph Graham Healey, "Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities / Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa," 188.

¹⁰⁷ Cecil McGarry, *What Happened at the African Synod?*, 142.

A priority of the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania is seen mostly in two things: Participation of the Christians in the pastoral activities and Sharing of the Christian life.

3.1. Participation of the Pastoral activities of the Church

All christians are called to participate the life of the Church through their difference talents and gifts that God has given to each christian. Most of the time the christians wish and have a desire to participate the activities of the Church but they find difficult to do so because sometimes the environment is not friend to them to do so or the christians are not well prepared to take any pastoral activities in the Church. Such kind of challenges called the Church and most especially the Church in Tanzania to think more or to think big on how to make it possible. The easier solution that can make christians in Tanzania is the use of the Small Christian Communities Small Christian Communities create many chances that can enable any christians to participate the pastoral life of the Church. Thus, why the Church in Tanzania declared them to be the priority.

3.1.1 Participation in Administration

The Small Christian Communities have been very important elements for leadership in the dioceses and parishes. The ecclesial leadership in Tanzania is extended up to the Small Christian Communities' levels. Just to remind, before the implementation of the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania is that the administrative structure ended with the parishes that did not allow huge participation of the christians in the life of the Church. All decisions were taken from those levels and even if the decision needed the participation of the christians, it was impossible because there was no clear Church's platforms which permitted it. Thus why: «Several official documents of the leadership of the Church in Eastern Africa affirm the enduring value, pastoral necessity and ecclesiological status of SCCs in the dioceses and archdioceses of the region.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, "Small Christian Communities as a New Way of Becoming Church: Practice, Progress and Prospects," *Marquette University* 1, no. 1 (2013): 116.

After the implementations of the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania, then the leadership of the Church went up to down levels of the SCCs (family levels). In Tanzania's parishes, there are councils or boards of the lay people from the level of the Small Christian Communities and goes up to diocesan levels. The councils or boards of the Small Christian Communities is a base of creating the councils of other levels or stages in the Church in Tanzania like the council of outstations, council of the parishes and even the council of the dioceses. When looking on this structure, we see that the members of the parish's councils are those christians that come from the Small Christian Communities. These leaders or members of the councils are obtained through the elections and appointments from the all levels that is of the Small Christian Communities, outstations, parishes and finally of the dioceses. And «Let us remember that the leaders of the SCCs are lay people».¹⁰⁹

In fact, such kind of participation of the christians in leadership of the Church through their Small Christian Communities it gives them more confidence and love to their Churches. And if anything is needed to be done by them is that it could be easy to be implemented by them because it is coming from them through the participation of their leaders.

In this participative leadership, makes the pastoral activities being very collaborative between the pastors of the parishes and the christians especially on making sure that the christian's faith is growing every day. The leaders in the Small Christian Communities are not like the polices but are those who are there to make sure that all things concerning the christian faith are going well and also the christians participate well the affairs of the Church. Thus, why many services sacraments that is intended to be given to a certain christian, that process of it must start from the Small Christian Communities. For example, christians (man and woman) want to receive sacrament of matrimony is that they don't just go to a parish priest but they must start the processes from their Small Christian Communities. Then members of the Small Christian Communities discuss it and take the resolution or discussed matters to other stages up it reached to the parish priests, or for celebrating it or otherwise.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Graham Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, 52.

Therefore, when looking on the administrative structure of the Church in Tanzania in now days, that the Small Christian Communities make the most important part of it. The figure below shows such kind of the participative administration of the Church of in Tanzania.

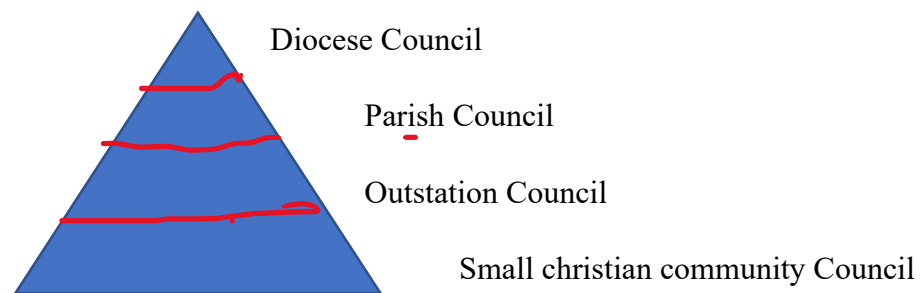


Figure 1. A figure that shows how the lay people leadership is of the Church in Tanzania.

Therefore: «SCCs represent a form of ecclesiological devolution that allows lay Christians to assume and exercise leadership roles at local level. Accordingly, lay Christians facilitate activities such as catechesis and the planning and preparation for various sacraments».¹¹⁰

3.1.2. Participation in Evangélisation

The work and responsibility of evangelization is for all christians. We remember that when Jesus was ascending to Heaven, he ordered his Apostles and disciples that: «go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you» (Mt29:19-20). This command did not end only to them or did not end only at that time but it is for all christians and for all times. Sometimes there were some conceptions that

¹¹⁰ Orobator, “Small Christian Communities as a New Way of Becoming Church: Practice, Progress and Prospects,” 119.

the work of evangelization is only for the bishops, priests, religious people and catechists forgetting that it is for all baptized ones.

The bishops of Tanzania realize it and use all their efforts that the Christians may know it and may participate in it. A simple and efficacious method for doing it is through SCCs that were implemented for doing so. Today there are over 180,000 Small Christian Communities in the nine AMECEA countries. For example, Tanzania has over 60,000 and Kenya over 45,000 SCCs. We can describe an African SCC as the Domestic Church, the Church in the neighbourhood. SCCs are also called domestic communities of faith. 90% of the SCCs in the AMECEA Region are geographical/territorial, parish-based groups that are an official ecclesial structure in the Eastern African pastoral model of Church, an official pastoral policy and an instrument/ vehicle/tool of evangelization.¹¹¹

Church in Tanzania and that of AMECEA takes them in a serious note because she knows that it is one of the methods that the Christians may feel comfortable and courageous to participate in the evangelization. From the beginning of the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania that the bishops and other leaders of the Church have never stopped to insist on the importance of the Small Christian Communities for evangelisation in Tanzania and even for other places:

Cardinal Polycarp Pengo of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and the President of SECAM, calls SCCs a special or privileged instrument of evangelization. Tanzanian theologian Laurent Magesa emphasizes: For the future of Christian mission, specifically in Africa, we can say without hesitation that the development of small faith communities is an indispensable requirement. They can play a major role in the New Evangelization.¹¹²

The Small Christian Communities are able to mobilize the Christian to create different means or ways for evangelisation such as by insisting on their members to join the existing pastoral groups like WAWATA, TYCS, Regio Maria, Apostolic Infancy, and other groups. It is the Small Christian Communities that know very well their Christians and they may give them a certain task of evangelization according to their capacities and understanding. One of the activities of the evangelisation that lay people do that are done under the umbrella of the SCCs is visiting people in the determined communities that who are challenged by different problems such as the sick people, orphans, disabled people and those people who are scarcely hear the Word of God and scarcely visited by the

¹¹¹ Joseph Graham Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, 1102.

¹¹² Joseph Graham Healey, "Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities / Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa," 196.

priests. Small Christian Communities visit always these people to their homes and centres of living and they pray with them:

For example, besides the Eucharist celebrated on a regular basis in SCCs, sacraments, such as baptism, marriage, anointing of the sick, and burial, are offered through the network of Small Christian Communities. This arrangement gives a vivid expression to SCCs as the Church in the neighbourhood.¹¹³

The visits of the SCCs do not omit the importance of the visits of the priests to the sick people but for the Small Christian Communities is part of their participation of pastoral activities of the Church and also is part of Christianity.

The Church still needs the vocations because such vocations are parts of the evangelisation. But getting them, it needs preparation of the conducive environment. The Church is already in some places experiencing the scarcity of some vocations like of matrimony, priesthood, religious life and catechists. Today, the lay people have become the central promoters of such vocations of the Church that different to those previous times when the priests and the nuns used to walk parish to parish to search for the youths who could join seminaries and the formation houses for religious life. Sometimes the youths who were joining the seminaries and the religious life were not prepared morally, culturally and even academically. This led some of them not to reach to the final stages. But Small Christian Communities take attention to their young people and due to this they become potential for the priesthood, religious life and to be the catechists. Getting these figures is to promote and participate evangelisation.

The Small Christian Communities also participate the evangelization by helping the catechists who are the primary teachers of the word of God in the parishes and outstations. They help them to improve their life standards so as they may feel conformable in doing the Church's works. Many times, the catechists are forgotten by not regarded as important figures in the Church. Therefore: «we need to forget the past structures which catered to their needs and we need to create new and just structures that will improve their intellectual, human and material needs».¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Orobator, "Small Christian Communities as a New Way of Becoming Church: Practice, Progress and Prospects," 119.

¹¹⁴ Frederick Drandua, *A Local Church Living Committed To Christ: Acts of the First Synod in Arua Diocese*, 11.

Therefore, from a pastoral point of view, Small Christian Communities are means of integral evangelization and a field of inculturation, where people can learn to pray, and use symbols and practices that arise out of their own traditions, so that their faith and life can become one. They are also an excellent situation from which to discover and promote lay ministries, which serve the needs of the local community.¹¹⁵

3.1.3 Participation in human life promotion and protection

The Church's considers life in special gift from that is why the document of the Magisterium says that: « The Church is perennially concerned for the integral development of every man and the whole man» (AM 70). From this quotation we recognise that the Church has a responsibility of seeing that human being's life is developing positively in all dimensions, that is physical development, spiritual development and psychological development. All people need such development, they are either christians or non-christians. Looking on the history of African nations since from their beginning up to these times, that they have passed in many good or bad histories. Some African countries passed in bellic situations like civil confits. Other countries passed in the religious conflicts like in Tanzania. In Tanzania there was not such war situations but they were some conflicts that were brought by some fundamental Islamic groups. All these situations need the Church interventions by giving her christian education and formation.

Africa is the land of many cultures. Most of these cultures are good and they help human growth and development. It is hard to mention all good cultures. But one of the challenges in African cultures is concerning genders. In many of the African cultures that the women are not regarded as the group that can take great responsibility or participate important things like going to school, being leaders of the societies, possessing the properties in the societies. The Church has such responsibility of making sure that all people and all genders are equal before the Lord and before the Church. The women and men are given equal measures and chances when coming to the matter of the Church. Small Christian Communities are the place that are used to make sure that these kinds of cultures are corrected through educating their christian members. Looking on the Small

¹¹⁵ Cf. Cecil McGarry, *What Happened at the African Synod?*, 144.

Christian Communities in Tanzania you will find that participation of women in taking the positions like leadership in the parishes and other chances is increasing daily: «Notwithstanding this situation, ample room exists for a positive valuation of SCCs as the place where women “assume a voice in a patriarchal culture” as well as relative authority and prominence in the community of the Church».¹¹⁶

Children protection is one of the responsibilities of the communities or societies. Church is a part of society and therefore she has that duty of protecting the children from all threats and harms. We hear in many places either in Tanzania or outside Tanzania that some children are violated in socially or sexually. Small Christian Communities help the families on how they can take care and protect their children. the children are taught on how to associate well with people and if anything, different happen they must to report to their parents or to the elders. Such kind of care and attention that are given by the Church through the Small Christian Communities help to protect the children from any kind of abuses. In SCCs are people who are responsible for the children, that children may feel very open to talk with them.

Some years back that is around 2008 to 2015, Tanzania found itself in great challenge of religious conflicts between some Islamic groups against christian religions. Such conflicts led to the destructions of some Church’s properties and death of some christians. Despite its reputation for peace and stability in a troubled region, the East African country of Tanzania is experiencing a rising number of militant Islamist attacks that have targeted local Christian leaders and foreign tourists, as well as popular bars and restaurants. These attacks, which began in 2012, rarely make the headlines of international media.¹¹⁷ In Zanzibar one priest was shot to death by Islamic terrorist gangs.¹¹⁸ But all these went down or off by dialogue between the two parts:

Such collaboration in promoting common human and spiritual values may lead them to encounter each other at deeper spiritual levels. As a matter of fact, the Second Vatican Council did launch a movement towards an ongoing inter-religious dialogue, which a developing positive appreciation of other religions as facilitators of salvific divine human encounter has further encouraged.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Orobator, “Small Christian Communities as a New Way of Becoming Church: Practice, Progress and Prospects,” 118.

¹¹⁷ Andre LeSage, “The Rising Terrorist Threat in Tanzania: Domestic Islamist Militancy and Regional Threats,” *Strategic Forum*, no. 288 (2014): 1.

¹¹⁸ Cf. LeSage, 6.

¹¹⁹ Amaladoss, “Ecclesial Dimension of Small Christian Communities,” 161.

The Small Christian Communities do participate very well in dialogues because most of such kind of conflicts happen where the common citizens are living and where the common Christians are living. Thus why «the Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace. the Message of the Bishops of Africa to the People of God states: Here we would like to reiterate the recommendation of Ecclesia in Africa about the importance of Small Christian Communities». ¹²⁰

The interreligious dialogues are parts of the human formation and education. People or the Christians must be taught the meaning of dialogue especially the interreligious dialogues. Without such knowledge or education that always, societies can find themselves in conflicts or fighting against each other in the name of their religions as we are experiencing today in many places like Central Africa, Nigeria, Somali, and other many places in the world. Religions are for praising God only through many ways without hating and hurting others. Thus, now day the Church consider interreligious dialogue as one of the primary elements of Christian life. Dialogues bring peace, justice and love. In the diocese of Arua, among the Lugbara people, there is the Office of Peace and Justice, headed by Rev. Dr. Natalino Vura. Very little has been done in this area. It is important to note that an understanding of peace and justice has something to say about the inner life of the Catholic Church itself. It is to defend the sacred value of the human person or human dignity. This is to be carried out in families, Small Christian Communities, parishes, dioceses and the entire Catholic Church, as a result, at every level of Catholic world. ¹²¹

Promoting cultures is one of the promotions of human life and protecting the human dignity. Christianity is pro-cultures thus Vatican II calls it as ‘‘inculturation’’ ¹²². When the first missionaries arrived in Africa for the first time that most of them considered African cultures as witchcrafts and almost, they had no meaning before Christianity. For example, it was forbidden to baptise a person by using their African name without knowing the meaning of these names. Such kind of orientation led to the

¹²⁰ Joseph Graham Healey, ‘‘Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities / Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa,’’ 192.

¹²¹ Cadri, ‘‘The Development of Small Christian Communities in the Catholic and Among the Lugbara People of Uganda After the Second Vatican Council: A Historical, Theological and Pastoral Investigation,’’ 156.

¹²² Cf. Estela Padila, ‘‘Basic Ecclesial Communities in Asia,’’ in *Small Christian Communities (Fresh Stimulus for a Forward -Looking Church)*, ed. Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth, 2nd ed. (Quezon: Claretian Publications, 2013), 261.

death of many good African names. But through the Small Christian Communities Church understands the cultures of the natives of Tanzania other places where there are SCCs. Pius Rutechura considers Small Christian Communities to be a fertile ground for the inculturation of the Gospel and the healing of wounds. He recalls the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, in which Small Christian Communities are described as a “sign of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization, and a solid starting point for a new society based on Preface a “civilization of love”.

Life is a gift from God and therefore all of us we are called to protect it and to promote it by any good means.

3.2. Sharing of Christian Experiences

When reading the history and origin of the small christian community during the time of the Apostles, one of the concrete elements of those christians was practising was the element of sharing of what they have for the benefit of community. The Small Christian Communities in Tanzania share also their possessions, talents, for the benefit of their communities and the Church. it is a christian value that calls for heart of charity.

3.2.1. Sharing of Spiritual Experiences

The spiritual sharing helps the christians to grow spiritually. The book of the Acts of the Apostles tells us that the apostles of Jesus shared among themselves the word of God, the shared body of Christ. The Small Christian Communities in Tanzania have the same demand of sharing their spiritual life among themselves. To make sure that the christian grow spiritually and in faith they normally meet in their Small Christian Communities for praying. They meet officially once per week praying in their homes that is in the house of one christian.

On Sunday’s Masses Christians don’t get a chance of reflecting and sharing the word of God among themselves. It is only the priests celebrating those Masses share with christians through their homilies. But the christian are required to read and to know the word of God. The Small Christian Communities give chances the christian members of the Small Christian Communities to reflect and to share among themselves the word of

God when they for praying during the week. It is normally the reading in their prayers is that gospel of the coming Sunday. when Christians go to the Church on Sunday is that they have already read, reflected and sharing. Thus why «SCCs combine *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflections and practical action/outreach. SCC members are called to be missionary disciples». ¹²³

Another dimension of the spiritual sharing through different prayers of the Church. Due to the complications of times, in our Churches we don't pray the other prayers that we were taught when we were doing catechism. In many Churches of the parish that before the holy Mass on Sunday normally that the christians led by the catechists or anybody elected pray the morning prayers that are found in the book called "Chuo cha Sala" in English can be translated that "school of Prayers". It is true that many of the parishes have already started to abandon such prayers especially in towns. But now days these prayers are prayed in the Small Christian Communities Then the Small Christian Communities become the place of teaching the christian prayers after finishing their and forgetting their long-time catechism.

The devotions and novenas sometimes are not given the priorities. In the catholic Church, they are some devotions which are traditionally important. We talk about devotions like praying Holy Rosary of Mother Mary. The Christians are called to pray the rosary of mother Mary personal or as a group. As a group it is hard to pray it on Sundays when the christian go for the Holy Mass instead such devotion is prayed in the Small Christian Communities when they meet for praying. On May and October that is the months for Mother Mary (Month of Rosary) the Small Christian Communities do meet every day for praying instead going to the Church. It is very interesting that they pray in every house of the member of the Small Christian Communities.

Then the Small Christian Communities helps the christian to share the spiritual life to large extent and also the christian learn form their own spiritual experiences like the reflecting and sharing the word of God, remembering some prayers that some have already forgotten since they finished catechism, they don't open again the books of catechism.

¹²³ Joseph Graham Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, 1095.

3.2.2. Sharing of life's Experience

The Christians as the sons and daughters of God have that desire of sharing their life experiences of both sides that is of the Church and not of the Church. Sharing their experience makes the Christians to know themselves very well and makes them to have that life of Christ in them. We remember the story of the apostles or disciples of Jesus Christ who came back home and narrate their pastoral experiences. In their pastoral experiences they told Jesus Christ that they found someone who was casting demons and they stopped him: «“Master,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him» Lk.9:9 because he is not one of us. There is also the pastoral experience given by the apostles of Jesus Christ that they were very happy telling Jesus Christ that the demons obeyed them. They said: «The seventy-two returned with joy and said, Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name» (Lk.10:17).

Initially, it is important to state that the pastoral ministry offered by the Basic Ecclesial Communities (CEB = communautés Ecclésiales de base) aims to meet the challenge of establishing caring communities in which faith is lived out in daily life by paying closer attention to believers' lifestyles and tangible desires; communities which not only exist formally and institutionally, but which offer scope for spontaneity and in which diverse charismatic manifestations are given space to emerge; smaller communities than the conventional parish communities, in which the practices of agape, sharing and solidarity are encouraged via human intimacy. In short, communities tailored to human needs in which the humanity of faith is experienced, as Cardinal Malula wished: “We must urge the current parishes to divide themselves into small communities tailored to human needs.”¹²⁴

The Small Christian Communities are for creating the fraternity that Jesus Christ created. The Fraternity is created through knowing each other and knowing each other is created through the sharing of the life experiences. When the Small Christian Communities meet apart from praying also, they give themselves the chances of sharing their lives their successes, challenges, joy and pains. Through such sharing many problems are resolved in the levels of the communities before reaching far or other stages. For example, the challenges happening in families especially concerning marriage they

¹²⁴ Mukenge, “The Biblical Approach of Basic Ecclesial Communities –Aspects of Their Fundamental Principles,” 5.

are normally resolved by the Small Christian Communities or the conflicts between family and family are also resolved. The gospel teaches that the christians should resolve their problem in the community's levels before reaching to further or legal stages:

If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the Church; and if they refuse to listen even to the Church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector (Mt. 18:15-17).

The sharing of life experiences of the Christians through their SCCs helps Church to know their christians well and even to help them well when any help is needed such a spiritual or humanitarian help is needed. The Church is a family of people of God therefore these people are called to live as brothers and sisters of the same parents.

3.2.3. Sharing of the Possessions

The Church in Africa is a growing Church. for many times is depending form the donations from other people outside Africa especially in Europe and Africa. Today, Church in Africa is getting financial challenges due to the shortage of financial supports or lack of financial supports from those donors. The donors are not again interested in religious activities and even the economic challenges that facing the world leads to such challenges that facing the Church in Africa. Due to such situations that the Church in Africa and particularly in Tanzania finds the way that she can supports herself through their own means.

At the time of the apostles the christians shared their possessions: «There was not a needy person among them, because those who were owners of land or houses were selling them, and bringing the proceeds of the sales and placing the money down at the apostles' feet. Then it was distributed to each as anyone had need» Acts. 4:32-33. This old image of those christians it is reflected in our Small Christian Communities today that our christian share their possessions such as money property and even ideas to one pocket. One they put in one pocket they used for the purposes of their communities and the purposes of their parishes. The purposes of the communities are like helping the member of the communities when getting problems such as sickness or losing one of the members of the family. The common pockets of the communities are also helped to develop the

communities like buying books for prayers, preparation for the feast of the patron saint of the community.

The Small Christian Communities have become very helpful for the development of the parishes through their contributions. Today many new Churches are built by the contributions of the christians that are done in their Small Christian Communities when there is any need of contributions the christians use their common pockets to give for the development of the parishes. Small Christian Communities are schools that teach the christians and the whole society that the resources that God has given us are for the common good of the whole universe.

Conclusion

In the work we have seen a clear reality of the Small Christian Communities on how they important in Tanzania. After seeing them, that no one can deny the truth of the important contributions of the Small Christian Communities of the Church in Tanzania. The pastoral activities in Tanzania have become a little bit easier than before the coming of the SCCs to their implementations. Their efficacy is seen in the Church and outside of the Church. Thus, why motivated the AMECEA to declare that SCCs are the priority. Today, all dioceses and parishes have Small Christian Communities.

The priority that was declared by the bishops of the AMECEA it is an alarm that the Church is always open to welcome any pastoral creativity that can help the christian to live their christian faith as it is by SCCs. Small Christian Communities have helped even those who don't go to the Church for different reasons to know what is going on in the parish or in universal Church through the information that the Small Christian Communities give their members every week when they meet.

The Small Christian Communities are very good links between the christian and their dioceses and parishes. Formerly, all information were given in the Church after the Holy Mass of Sunday because it was only the place and time that the priests could get almost all christians. But now days because of the presence of the Small Christian Communities all the important information is given in the Small Christian Communities

when they meet for the prayers or through their leaders who can use only few minutes to reach all the christian houses in the area. As we know that the christian communities are made up by the neighbouring families of christians.

The Small Christian Communities are also good links between the Church and the civil societies. Members of the Small Christian Communities collaborates with other people in different activities. For example, during political activities especially in general elections of the leaders of the country that the Small Christian Communities are used to educate the christians on the importance of the right of voting of the leaders they want. The Small Christian Communities sometimes welcome the government experts to explain to the christian concerning elections.

Participation and sharing carry great and whole theme of the Church in Tanzania. These two elements show the difference of the Church in Tanzania and other places in the world. I happen to visit some diocese in Europe like the dioceses in Portugal and dioceses in Germany. For example, in Germany, almost that the christians are not formed to participate the activity of the Church. This year from on April I was in the diocese of Stuttgart that I wondered to see that even in some parishes that pay the Holy Mass servants for serving the Mass. It is a kind of a church that the sense of belonging is almost dead instead the church has become more professional and economic (no money no service).

The Church in Tanzania and in AMECEA zone opt the Church that participates the pastoral activities as the part of their faith and not as professional part. And also, another option is about the sense of sharing of the possessions. The Church in Tanzania did the prophecy of the time. It is true that who shares the possessions does not mean that is rich but has sense of to use small he or she has for others also. Today the world is suffering from great disease of individualism and accumulation of resources. Even within the Church that a spirit of individualism and accumulation is growing every day. This spirit of individualism and accumulation affect the life of the Church especially in carrying the pastoral activities.

Through the Small Christian Communities, the christians are taught the spirit of sharing their parts of their possessions for the Church and even to help each other within their SCCs. Today, when we are speaking, that there are many projects which are done by SCCs through the little contribution. There are also a lot of charity helps that are offered by the Small Christian Communities to different places like in the orphanage

houses, hospitals, houses for the disabled people. The Christians feels that the Church is theirs and not only of pope, bishops, priests and religious people.

In everything that is done by human being that some challenges are there. In all goodness and successes of the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania, they also have some challenges that sometimes hinder the growth of these communities.

One of the challenges is that the Small Christian Communities have given very big power to control the life of the christians in the particular places. That is many services that christians are willing to get from the Church that their processes must start from the Small Christian Communities. For example, about the right of christian burial ceremonies. Some of the christians were denied by the Small Christian Communities to get that right is only because he or she was denying giving the contributions or was not attending the Small Christian Communities' celebrations and services. The priests of parishes can't do otherwise out of what the christian communities recommend. Therefore, the Small Christian Communities are sometimes becoming the judicial places instead home churches.

Another challenge is utility or numbers of the contributions that the parishes are imposing to the christians that sometimes other contributions are not important for the growth of the parishes. Sometimes the SCCs are ordered to contribute money for buying a car for the newly ordained priests so as to promote vocations in the diocese or the parishes. And also, sometimes these contributions have no feedbacks on how they are used or they were enough for projects. Such kind of situation is a big burden to christians and also demoralised them. It omits the essence of the sharing possessions as it was done by the first christians who sold their properties and they take the money to the common pocket.

Another challenge is a participation of the christian to the SCCs. The records show that the most participant of the SCCs are the women and children. That is a Plethora of studies have observed the tendency of SCCs to attract a predominantly female membership, leaving out the influential male members of the community.¹⁴⁰ One of the greatest challenges for the communities today is to succeed in getting men involved in

the life of SCC. It has been noticed that SCCs tend to turn easily into simple prayer groups where the presence of women prevail.¹²⁵

Finally, such kind of challenges do not omit the truth that SCCs are important in the Church and specially in Tanzania. The declaration that was made by the bishop concerning the Small Christian Communities was and is not a mistake but it is a *prophecy* of the time. Now it is a time to sit and to evaluate the efficacy of SCCs so to see if they may carry other important activities in the Church. In Latin America they have already started thinking on the importance of having some ordinary ordained ministers in the communities so they may perform some activities that are only done by them. In Tanzania the celebrations and the services of the SCCs are still continuing to take place in the homes of the members of the SCCs by rotation. Small christian communities don't do their works especially meeting for the prayers on Sunday. On Sunday all christians are required to go to the churches.

¹²⁵ Cf. Orobator, "Small Christian Communities as a New Way of Becoming Church: Practice, Progress and Prospects," 117.

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