

The Future of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa: Praxis and Theology

By Joseph G. Healey, MM

1. In the Beginning...

In June, 2011 I lived at Father Michael Kirwen, MM's house near Langata, Nairobi, Kenya while participating in an AMECEA¹ Meeting at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA). Another house guest was Father Laurenti Magesa who was teaching in the Maryknoll Institute of African Studies (MIAS) at the Tangaza University College. At the time I was writing a book that eventually became *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications – CUEA Press Double *Spearhead* Nos. 199-200 (2012). 163 pages. The updated version as of 20 June, 2013 is available as a free e-book on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at:

http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build_new.pdf

I would write drafts of the theological sections of this book in the early morning and then discuss them with Laurenti in the late afternoon. It was a stimulating and enriching experience of theological conversation and dialog – what we now frequently call African palaver theology. Laurenti suggested a process in which I would describe specific Small Christian Communities (SCCs) activities, events and case studies – a kind of summary of SCCs praxis on the grassroots, local level. Afterwards he would theologize on these experiences. We discussed the theological implications and the practical applications. We were really using the steps in the Pastoral Spiral (better known as the Pastoral Circle). Then I would enter the fruit of our conversations in the updated draft of my book the next day.

Laurenti's ideas and insights on SCCs added immensely to the book. In the "Acknowledgements" Section I state: "This book is a team effort, a community effort. Many, many people have contributed anecdotes, data, documents, examples, experiences, ideas, insights, quotations, resources, statistics, stories and suggestions as seen in the extensive list of names in the "Bibliography" and "Index." I mention...The African theologians who have articulated the theological framework for this new model of church from the bottom up."²

¹ AMECEA is an acronym for "Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa." It is a service organization for the National Episcopal Conferences of the nine English-speaking countries of Eastern Africa, namely Eritrea (1993), Ethiopia (1979), Kenya (1961), Malawi (1961), South Sudan (2011), Sudan (1973), Tanzania (1961), Uganda (1961) and Zambia (1961). The Republic of South Sudan became independent on 9 July, 2011, but the two Sudans remain part of one Episcopal Conference. Somalia (1995) and Djibouti (2002) are Affiliate Members.

² Page 5 of the online version of the book on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website retrieved on 5 June, 2013,
http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build_new.pdf

I continue to add to the online version of this book that has now reached 270 pages. Today I did a “Search” in the book for “Magesa” and found 18 matches. As a tribute to Magesa’s 40 years of priesthood and his professional career as an African theologian I will present some of his ideas and insights on Small Christian Communities in this article.

2. Some Historical Anecdotes

But first I want to go back in time to my arrival in Eastern Africa in 1968. As part of my ministry as the Social Communications Secretary of AMECEA based in Nairobi, Kenya I would visit Catholic major seminaries and facilitate workshops in writing and journalism for the seminarians. I met Laurenti at Ntungamo Philosophy Seminary in Bukoba, Tanzania and later at Kipalapala Theology Seminary in Tabora, Tanzania. I have joked with Laurenti that of the thousands of seminarians in my workshops over a five year period he had the “second best” written English of anyone I met. The first was a seminarian in Bukoba whose name I can’t remember and who eventually left the seminary.

Over the years I have valued my personal friendship and professional collaboration with Laurenti. We like to remember that he was born in 1946, the very year that the Maryknoll Society of Fathers and Brothers came to Africa. He has been a lifetime friend of many Maryknollers starting in his home diocese of Musoma, Tanzania. Laurenti has led retreats, given lectures and written and edited books connected with Maryknoll. For many years he has taught in the Maryknoll Institute of African Studies (MIAS). He has been an invaluable advisor to Don Sybertz and me in our African Proverbs and Narrative Theology Project. He has taught at the Maryknoll Headquarters in Maryknoll, New York, USA and authored three important Orbis Books (the publishing house of the Maryknoll Society) as well as contributing chapters to other Orbis Books.

While I lived in Musoma Diocese myself I got to know some of Laurenti’s family including his father Cornelius who was a famous catechist. I used to visit the weekly meetings of SCCs in Musoma. One day I participated in the SCC of Cornelius in Nyamiongo near Musoma Town. After the reading of the Gospel, during the period of Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection Cornelius suddenly got up and gave 20 minute talk on the Gospel. Later he laughingly apologized saying that he knew that the SCC process is to share for five minutes and then give someone else a turn. He joked that as a lifetime catechist he was used to teaching and he got carried away.

Magesa admits he has had relatively little direct pastoral experience with SCCs. But is always eager to read the latest Case Studies and grassroots experiences and integrate them into his theological talks and writings. He encourages others to write about their SCCs experiences. For example, he suggested to me that the best “Final Papers” in our January to April 2013 Seminar Course at Hekima College in Nairobi, Kenya -- TS48: “Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Today” – should be revised and posted on our SCCs Website. And then submitted for publication in the *Hekima Review*. To date two papers have been posted online.³

³ The topics are: “Missionary Life and Outreach of SCCs in Africa and around the World” and “Using the Pastoral Spiral (See, Judge and Act Process) in SCCs in Africa.”

3. Theological Ideas and Insights on SCCs

Now to Laurenti Magesa's ideas and writing on Small Christian Communities. Small Christian Communities embody the values of inclusiveness, sharing, unity and solidarity that form the contemporary family of God. Our models are the "first small community" (the Trinity -- Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and the "first Small Christian Community" (the Holy Family -- Jesus, Joseph and Mary). Magesa boldly states: "Ecclesiologically they (SCCs) are the best thing that has happened since the *New Testament*."⁴

Brazilian Theologian Father José Marins' valuable distinction is that Basic Ecclesial Communities/Small Christian Communities are not a movement in the Catholic Church, but the "Church on the Move." Presently there are 120,000 SCCs in the AMECEA Region and 45,000 SCCs in Kenya alone. SCCs in Eastern Africa derive from Vatican II's ecclesiology of the Church as People of God and are very much a work in process. This implies a change from a clerical, priest-centered ministry to a lay-centered ministry. Magesa points out: "If the pastoral implications of this shift have not been practically fully "digested" in many dioceses in Eastern Africa, as anyone with some ministerial experience in the region will know, there has not been any shortage of theological reflection on this rediscovered ecclesiology of the early church."⁵ He goes on to state:

The best contribution of the ecclesiology of SCCs in Eastern Africa has been to provide a clear theological elaboration of the threefold theological characteristic of these entities. Like any baptized person, each SCC in its members is priestly, prophetic and kingly. As priestly, its life must be based on faith and unceasing prayer to God. As prophetic, it must become an advocate of justice and reconciliation in society. As kingly, it must gather within itself, without undue discrimination, all those who seek refuge in its fold.⁶

The last five years has seen the slow, gradual shift of SCCs in Eastern Africa from being small prayer groups that are inwardly focused to active small faith communities that are outwardly focused including justice and peace issues. This may be the number one challenge to SCCs in Eastern Africa. Many are still prayer groups (emphasizing especially the rosary and popular devotions) and not concerned with the wider social issues. Many SCCs still shy away from justice and peace concerns. For many years theologians like Father John Waliggo from Uganda (who died in 2008) and Laurenti Magesa challenged me and other SCCs animators to help SCCs to reach out more, to look outward. This has encouraged the SCCs in Africa to become more involved in justice and peace issues and social action. A specific example is the involvement of SCCs in the annual Kenya Lenten Campaign coordinated by the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) Catholic Justice and Peace Commission.

⁴ Laurenti Magesa in a private letter to the author, July, 1983.

⁵ Laurenti Magesa, "A Panoramic View of 25 Years of African Theology in East Africa: Foundations, Developments and Prospects" in *Hekima Review*, Vol. 40 (May, 2009), p. 24.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Conversations with Laurenti over the past few years have helped me to expand and deepen Chapter 6 on “SCCs’ Contribution to the Praxis and Theology of the Church as Family of God in Africa.” In large part this has been a SCC response to the two African Synods. Laurenti himself has responded generously and insightfully to Pope Benedict XVI’s call in No. 63 in *The Church in Africa*: “It is earnestly to be hoped that theologians in Africa will work out the theology of the Church as Family with all the riches contained in this concept, showing its complementarity with other images of the Church.” The 1994 First African Synod developed the specific ecclesial identity of the Church as Family of God in Africa while the 2009 Second African Synod focused more on the pastoral and mission activities of this Church as Family of God in Africa, namely to work toward reconciliation, justice and peace.

In this Church as Family of God Model of Church along with parish-based SCCs and Lectionary-based SCCs we can talk of family-based SCCs. These include SCCs that incorporate youth and children into the activities of the small community and “Mother SCCs” that have branches of Youth SCCs (sometimes divided into Senior Youth and Junior Youth Groups) and Children SCCs.

I have also had many interesting conversations with Laurenti on the curriculum in theological institutes and seminaries in Africa. In an interview on 17 May, 2011 he emphasized that if SCCs have been a key pastoral priority (not just an option) in the AMECEA Region since 1976 they should have more prominence in the curriculum such as being a core or required course. Both the current praxis and our discussions led me to refocus the aim of my seminar at Hekima College to read: “To examine how Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are a New Model of Church and a New Way of Being Church in promoting justice, reconciliation and peace in Africa today.”

Most recently Laurenti has written on African Religion and African Spirituality such as his new 2013 Orbis Book *What is Not Sacred: African Spirituality*. He maintains that the incarnational spirituality of African cultures remains vibrant and visible today and has much to offer and teach other cultures, both Christian and not.

In the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africa’s Commitment (Africae Munus)* Number 92 under “Traditional African Religions” states: “The Church lives daily alongside the followers of traditional African religions. With their reference to ancestors and to a form of mediation between man and Immanence, these religions are the cultural and spiritual soil from which most Christian converts spring and with which they continue to have daily contact. It is worth singling out knowledgeable individual converts, who could provide the Church with guidance in gaining a deeper and more accurate knowledge of the traditions, the culture and the [practices] of the traditional religions.”

SCC members on the grassroots have a special opportunity to dialog with members of African Religion. Magesa points out: “It remains to be seen, however, whether this important recommendation will be seriously implemented in the African dioceses, parishes and Small Christian Communities.”⁷

⁷ Laurenti Magesa, “Translating Theology into Pastoral Action, *New People*, No. 137, March-April, 2012, p. 19.

In offering some theological reflections on “The Future of Mission in Africa” Magesa has a section in the book *Exploring the Future of Mission in Africa: In Celebration of Maryknoll’s 100 Years in Mission* on “New Ecclesiological Opportunities in Small Christian Communities.” His original text states:

Another shift in mission in our time is increasingly towards Small Christian Communities of faith. This involves a change in emphasis from large entities, such as parishes, as the basic organizational and pastoral units of the Church, to SCCs. Practically, SCCs provide more personal involvement and interaction by all the members of a given community of faith, and are thus closer and more faithful to the image of “Church as Family.” Therefore, 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.⁸

In the section on “Rethinking the Ministerial Structures of the Church in Mission” Magesa emphasizes:

The rise of SCCs as a new way of being church has brought most powerfully to the fore the truth of the principle that the *church’s needs should determine ministries and not ministries its [the church’s] needs*...the fundamental reason why new forms and styles of ministry should be encouraged and developed is that this development is as much an intrinsic part of the nature of the church as it is an appropriate response to the signs of the times.⁹

I have been at several conferences and meetings where the importance and challenge of this statement -- the *church’s needs should determine ministries and not ministries its [the church’s] needs* – have been forcefully pointed out.

There are two important issues here. First, the shortage of priests is not the determining factor in promoting the growth of lay ministries. By baptism lay people participate in pastoral ministry in their own right. SCCs ministries evolve out of our fundamental and universal baptismal call. Second, the implementation of the key pastoral priority of SCCs calls for priests to participate in a new way in this new model of church. Magesa refers to Swiss historian Father John Baur’s observation that this implies a change from a priest-based apostolate to a people-based apostolate that demands that the priest assume the role of the community-minded inspirational minister.

Over many years I have learned many things from Laurenti. Now I prefer to use the word “family” to cover a whole variety of meanings. Magesa and other African theologians

⁸ See Laurenti Magesa, “Theological Reflections on the Future of Mission in Africa,” Maryknoll 100th Anniversary Symposium 2011, Nairobi, Kenya: Unpublished Paper, 12 pages.

⁹ Laurenti Magesa in Laurenti Magesa and Michael Kirwen (eds.), *Exploring the Future of Mission in Africa: In Celebration of Maryknoll’s 100 Years in Mission*, Nairobi: MIAS Books, 2012, p. 130.

and scholars emphasize that the term “extended family” originates from a Western sociological conception of family structures. For Africans this wide network of grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. is simply “family” or on a wider scale “clan.” Many have pointed out that this wide family network is the Africans’ worst enemy as well as best friend. This family solidarity system (called “the economy of affection”) can help needy members, but the more financially successful members can be constantly preyed upon by their “poor cousins.”

4. Towards an African Theological Method or Process

Along with the content of Laurenti’s theology as described above, I have also discussed with Laurenti the methodology or process of African Christian Theology. I have always admired his humility. After giving a theological lecture he is always open to criticisms and suggestions on improving his oral presentations and his subsequent written articles.

Laurenti is quick to admit that he was trained in Western theological schools and Western theological methods. Equally he has often had to write theological articles following the style of Western journals. He says that the next generation of African theologians, trained in Africa, will bring new creativity and innovation.

Yet after 40 years of priesthood and a lifetime of teaching he is willing to experiment. With Nigerian theologian Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, SJ, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) theologian Benezeth Bujo and others Laurenti is exploring genuine African methods and processes of theology. Today there is an emphasis on a new African Theological Method or Process that is called African Palaver¹⁰ Theology that is both the name of a method/process and the name of the type of content (like Liberation Theology). Today African theologians call for “Christian palaver.” The term *palaver* comes from the Portuguese word ‘*palavra*’, meaning “speech” or “word,” stemming from the Latin *parabola* (“parable,” “speech”).

Method heavily determines/influences content and vice versa. It is a two way process that illuminates and enriches African values and Christian values. It is similar to Mango Tree Theology, Shade Tree Theology¹¹ and Story-telling Theology. This is Theology as Conversation, Active Dialog, Intensive Listening and Learning from Each Other (described as “listening in conversation”) and Consensus. This is a new way of doing African Christian

¹⁰ Due to the considerable investment of time and energy, the idea of *palaver* is a mechanism that has often been derided as a typically African exercise in unproductive talk. But there are positive examples in everyday life such as marriage counseling and consensus at Parish Pastoral Council Meetings. There are also positive examples of using palaver in the political area. Examples are Kofi Anan’s long, patient and seemingly endless discussions with Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga on resolving the Kenya political crisis in 2008 and the various mechanisms for peace making, conflict resolution and social transformation in Africa such as the Gecaca Courts in Rwanda and the “Mato Oput” process in Northern Uganda.

¹¹ Ordinary conversation of and with African village peasants/university students/lay leaders coming together to interpret the Gospel in the light of the pressing challenges of their circumstances. See the ideas of Jean Marc Ela, Emmanuel Katongele and Teresa Okure.

Theology that is conversational, participatory, collaborative, cross-disciplinary, and multi-generational. The starting point of African Christian Theology is both context and experience. Local, contextual theologies can be constructed in Africa with the local community/communities as “theologian.” The SCC is a natural place (*locus*) of theology and theological conversation.

Importantly in Africa the concept of community is three dimensional, encompassing the living, the dead, and those not yet born. Laurenti Magesa explains: “The sole purpose of the African *palaver* aims at creating, strengthening or restoring relationships for the sake of “the fullness” of life of the community through fellowship among all three dimensions of the community.”¹² In addition, the community exists only in relation to the transcendent and the entire cosmos.

A new style of meetings/conferences/symposia has emerged in Eastern Africa. A Case Study of this *palaver* method or process is seen in the development of the essays in the Orbis book *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace – the Second African Synod*¹³ edited by Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator who explains:

This methodology of dialog and “listening in conversation” has been adapted to the purposes of this book. The preparatory phase included a two-day conference in Nairobi, Kenya, in March 2010. The conference served as the occasion for exploring the synodal literature and conducting intensive discussion among the contributors and other invited participants. As a condition for participation, contributors submitted their papers in advance; the papers were distributed ahead of the conference to all participants. At the conference, each contributor briefly summarized the central thesis of his or her paper, following which a designated respondent presented a critical response. Each paper was then subjected to an intensive discussion by all attendees. This volume contains the papers revised and edited for publication in light of the overall discussion and conclusions¹⁴ of the conference. Not all the papers are published in this volume, but the final list of chapters represents the fruit of active dialog and intensive listening among theologians and friends. It exemplifies the practice of *palaver* that emphasizes open conversation in community and prioritizes consensus over confrontation. The conversational ethics of dialog and listening characteristic of the Second African Synod provides the foundation and inspiration for this volume on reconciliation, justice, and peace.¹⁵

¹² Laurenti Magesa in the “Introduction” to Stinton, Diane (ed.). *African Theology on the Way: Current Conversations*, London: SPCK International Study Guide 46, 2010.

¹³ Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011 and Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2011.

¹⁴ Conclusions included using a uniform style in the writing and editing of the essays, for example, using “African Religion” rather than “African Traditional Religion.”

¹⁵ Orobator, *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, page 3.

“Palaver Sessions”¹⁶ refer to the participants engaging in open conversations in view of contributing to and clarifying the understanding of the topic of African Christianity/ African Christian Theology under consideration. A unique feature is that participants actively engage in a cumulative learning process. They don’t just wait their turn to give prepared comments on the original paper. Their comments add to and build on earlier comments. This creates a process of evolving clarity and mutual enrichment.

The published volume reflected the dynamics of these conversations. Kenyan theologian Jesse Mugambi, the publisher of the African Edition of this book, emphasizes that “*palaver* then becomes a ‘conversational’ method of expressing theological insights.”¹⁷ Several essays in the book refer to SCCs including one full essay on “Small Christian Communities: ‘Promoters of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Eastern Africa.’” Magesa’s own essay is “On Speaking Terms: African Religion and Christianity in Dialogue.” He mentions how helpful the process of conference was in writing this essay. Feedback and comments on his initial presentation and the ensuing discussion helped him very much in revising his paper for final publication.

There are similar words to *palaver* in African culture. In a conversation with me Laurenti emphasized that *Indaba* is a term that comes from a Zulu, South Africa word meaning "business" or "matter" and is equivalent to *palaver*. The term has found widespread use throughout Southern Africa and often simply means “gathering” or “meeting.” There are *indaba* groups in traditional African culture where people get together to sort out the problems that affect them all, where everyone has a voice and where there is an attempt to find a common mind or a common story that everyone is able to tell when they go away. It is along the lines of: “This is how we approached it.” “This is what we heard.” “This is where we arrived as we prayed and thought and talked together.”

This is related to *Ubuntu* that has its origin in the Bantu languages of southern Africa such as Zulu. It describes a South African ethic or humanist philosophy that focusing on people's allegiances and relations with each other – the essence of being human. It can be variously translated as “togetherness” or “interconnectedness” or “humanity.” It expresses the saying *I am because we are*. The Swahili word *baraza* refers to both the meeting place and the meeting/conversation itself.¹⁸

There is a connection between and African Palaver Theology and African Narrative

¹⁶ The international Theological Colloquium on Church, Religion and Society in Africa (TCCRSA) is a “Three-year Theological Research Project in the Currents of the 50th Anniversary of Vatican II” to take place in Nairobi in 2013-2015. This conversation theological research seminar will include *Palaver Sessions*, *Baraza Sessions* to provoke discussion and conversation (the art of theological discourse and conversation) and a roundtable on African theology that is a live/informal interactive session.

¹⁷ Jesse Mugambi in an email to the author dated 19 November, 2010.

¹⁸ One has to be very careful in research and proper usage. Our African Proverbs Working Group discovered that the Sukuma, Tanzania word *susu* is similar to *palaver*. But later we learned that it also means “shit” in Sheng, the popular street language in Kenya.

Theology. They are part of each other. They form a union. One type of inculturation theology is an African narrative theology of inculturation. The starting part is African culture, but specifically African oral literature and the wide range of narrative and oral forms: proverbs, sayings, riddles, stories, myths, plays, and songs explained in their historical and cultural contexts. Kenyan Sister Anne Nasimiyu, LSOSF states: "The oral literature of the African people is their unwritten *Bible*. This religious wisdom is found in African idioms, wise sayings, legends, myths, stories, proverbs and oral history."¹⁹ Kenyan theologian John Mbiti adds: "Proverbs are a rich source of African Religion and philosophy. They contain and point to a deep spirituality, as well as theological and philosophical insights. In this case they form a bridge between traditional African religiosity and biblical teaching."²⁰

Laurenti Magesa has always supported and encouraged various efforts in developing African Narrative Theology. There is a mutual illumination and mutual enrichment when African stories and biblical stories are used together. As a Uganda proverb says, *One hand washes the other*. It is not that the biblical parallels validate the African examples. Rather the African stories are meaningful and part of African Christian Theology in their own right. Magesa states:

If we take inculturation/incarnation seriously, the biblical truth, the Christic reality, is already present in these stories by virtue of the values they contain in themselves. The task of the theologian, it seems to me, is to articulate these values, to bring them out as clearly as possible as salvific values, as the reality of divine revelation present differently.²¹

Here is a Tanzanian folktale collected by Laurenti himself called "How the Monkeys Saved the Fish:"

The rainy season that year had been the strongest ever and the river had broken its banks. There were floods everywhere and the animals were all running up into the hills. The floods came so fast that many drowned except the lucky monkeys who used their proverbial agility to climb up into the treetops. They looked down on the surface of the water where the fish were swimming and gracefully jumping out of the water as if they were the only ones enjoying the devastating flood.

One of the monkeys saw the fish and shouted to his companion: "Look down, my friend, look at those poor creatures. They are going to drown. Do you see how they struggle in the water?" "Yes," said the other monkey. "What a pity! Probably they were late in escaping to the hills because they seem to have no legs. How can we save them?" "I think we must do something. Let's

¹⁹ Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, "Feminism and African Theology," *African Christian Studies*, 9, 2 (June, 1993), p. 22.

²⁰ John Mbiti, "Children Confer Glory on a Home," *Draft Introduction to African Proverbs Series*, (Burgdorf: Unpublished Paper, 1993, p. 2.

²¹ Laurenti Magesa in email message to the author dated 30 October, 2010.

go close to the edge of the flood where the water is not deep enough to cover us, and we can help them to get out."

So the monkeys did just that. They started catching the fish, but not without difficulty. One by one, they brought them out of the water and put them carefully on the dry land. After a short time there was a pile of fish lying on the grass motionless. One of the monkeys said, "Do you see? They were tired, but now they are just sleeping and resting. Had it not been for us, my friend, all these poor people without legs would have drowned."

The other monkey said: "They were trying to escape from us because they could not understand our good intentions. But when they wake up they will be very grateful because we have brought them salvation."²²

This story can be interpreted on various levels. Does this story describe how the early expatriate missionaries forced Christianity on the local people without understanding their local context? How much harm and damage did some of these missionaries do to local African cultures? How can Africans, according to their cultural values, feel more at home in the Catholic Church? How can Small Christian Communities contribute to making Christianity relevant to lay people in their parishes?

A final comment on African Theological Method or Process. Laurenti Magesa has always supported and encouraged various efforts in developing local theologies that can be constructed with the local community as theologian: This is the local African Christian community theologizing.²³ Local gatherings of SCCs in Eastern Africa reflecting on their daily lives in light of the gospel can be a real theological locus or theological moment. This is a process of constructing a local, participatory theology. He has encouraged Small Christian Communities members who theologize from their own experience and context, for example, the SCCs that use the annual Kenya Lenten Campaign booklet and the Ndoleleji Research Committee in Shinyanga, Tanzania.²⁴

5. The Future

This present volume or Festschrift is an important book to document, codify and comment on Laurenti Magesa's theological writings. What else is on the horizon? I have

²² Laurenti Magesa in Joseph Healey, compiler, *Once Upon a Time in Africa: Stories of Wisdom and Joy*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004 and on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved on 5 June, 2013, <http://afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-by-season/14-animal-stories/67-how-the-monkeys-saved-the-fish.html>

²³ The Peruvian theologian Father Gustavo Gutierrez, OP says that "the poor have a right to do theology." We can extend this to say that women have a right to do theology, youth have a right to do theology and African Small Christian Communities have a right to do theology.

²⁴ An 8:01 minute video on YouTube called *Opening a Door on African Theology and Music* portrays the life and ministry of this committee. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kf6HC67CbD8&list=UUPt7naU3SfuLxcrIO-Z4YLA&index=8&feature=plcp>

suggested to Laurenti that he get some experts in information technology to set up a website that contains his main theological writings and even post some of his books online. This will enable people around the world to learn more about his theological writings and to use them in their research and writing. At the 29-30, May, 2013 meeting of the Orbis Books Advisory Committee I said: “We have a saying in Africa “History and the future are on our side’ meaning that with the demographic shifts and other changes in the world, more and more importance will be given to the Catholic Church and to society in the Global South such as Africa.” We should share the importance of Laurenti Magesa with the rest of Africa and the whole world.

As the representative of Africa on Orbis Books Advisory Committee we are working on a new project. Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya is preparing a symposium on “African Spirituality” in early 2014 on Laurenti’s new Orbis book *What is Not Sacred: African Spirituality*. Various specialists will present papers connected to the themes of this book. So Magesa’s latest book and thought will continue to radiate outwards.

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NOTE: This is an article to be published in the *Festschrift* (book honoring a respected person) for Laurenti Magesa’s 40th Anniversary of Priesthood in June, 2014. It is under Part Two: “Contribution to African Theology” and Section 4: “Missiology.”